A Light in the Darkness: Argentinian Photography During the Military Dictatorship (1976-1983)

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A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS:
ARGENTINIAN PHOTOGRAPHY
DURING THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP
(1976-1983)

by

Ana Tallone

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

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by

Ana Tallone

Adviser: Katherine Manthorne

In 2006, on the thirtieth anniversary of the military coup that brought Argentinian democracy to a halt, a group of photojournalists put together an outstanding exhibition of images from the dictatorship.¹ This dissertation critically engages with the most enduring photojournalistic works produced during this period and featured in the landmark retrospective. By researching the historical context of these photographs, I aim to underscore the important contributions photojournalists made not only during the dictatorship, but also in its immediate aftermath, when the most iconic images were republished in printed publications including newspapers, magazines and books. As a starting point, I review the initial phases of photography in Argentina, and sui generis photojournalistic ventures. I then demonstrate that the field became very quickly divided between fine art photography and photojournalism. The first part of my dissertation points to the contradictory attitudes of the renowned photographers Sara Facio and Alicia D’Amico, who publicly praised the work of socially engaged photography in international colloquia, while at the same time disregarding the work of young photojournalists. Many of the photojournalists of the 1980s took a political stance, which was manifest in the exhibitions they

organized. I argue for the historical significance of these photojournalists’ exhibitions as artistic points of resistance to official discourse at the time. Next, I identify news images as photojournalistic icons that have been repeatedly reused in diverse contexts after their original publication, articulating new meanings based on available social knowledge. I engage with the different uses of the term icon for such images. Finally, I analyze the official visual discourse during the dictatorship period to argue that the relevance given to “the visual” during those years indirectly benefited photojournalism. I conclude by studying the 2006 exhibition that inspired this project, because it represented a milestone for the recognition of photojournalism in Argentina. I also indicate directions for future research regarding the current state of institutions of memory by describing photographic works that have dominated the gallery spaces of such establishments in recent years, and hint at the future for photojournalistic icons.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without the guidance of my committee members, help from friends, and support from my family. I would like to thank my adviser Dr. Katherine Manthorne for her supervision, patience and understanding. She has been a fundamental supporter throughout the entire dissertation process, and worked her magic to accommodate the particularities of this endeavor. I am also thankful to Dr. Anna Indych-López and Dr. Jordana Mendelson, for their attention to my text and insightful suggestions. I am forever indebted to Dr. Mendelson for helping me frame this project theoretically. She has been extraordinarily generous in her mentorship throughout my graduate studies, not only providing her insight and patiently correcting my writing but also offering her warm friendship. I am also thankful to Dr. Geoffrey Batchen who through his sharp observations helped me improve this manuscript tremendously and was willing to participate in my final defense committee at the last moment. They have all been a constant source of inspiration, and I have been honored to have them on my defense committee.

I also want to acknowledge the marvelous team of professors that I had at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. They were not directly involved in this project but they were fundamental in persuading me to continue with my graduate studies. Thanks to Anne Burkus-Chasson, Rachael Z. DeLue, Jonathan Fineberg, David O'Brien, Lisa Rosenthal, Oscar E. Vázquez. Special thanks to Okwui Enwezor, who while teaching at Urbana told me that “I was PhD material.”

Many individuals and institutions have aided me in my research in Argentina including the staff at the Hemeroteca de la Biblioteca Nacional Argentina, Espacio para la Memoria, and Equipo de Antropología Forense, especially to Silvana Turner, and the Archivo ARGRA. Lucila
Quieto and Inés Ulanovsky not only shared their stories with me, but also executed an important archival reorganization from which I benefited enormously. In New York I consulted the Columbia University Libraries and the Newspaper collection of The Research Libraries of The New York Public Library. I appreciate the help received by their staff.

I owe my deepest gratitude to the photojournalists and artists, who graciously answered my questions and shared material from their own collections, including Abel Alexander, Víctor Bugge, Rafael Calviño, Pablo Cerolini, Daniel García, Andy Goldstein, Eduardo Grossman, Adriana Lestido, Pedro Linger Gasiglia, Edurado Longoni, Gonzalo Martinez, Julio Menajovsky, Oscar Pintor, Ximena Torres, Carlos Villoldo, and Rafael Wollmann in Argentina. In New York, I would like to thank Susan Meiselas and Fred Ritchin for meeting me and for their suggestions.

Special thanks goes to Pablo Lasansky who not only shared his story with me, but also shared his contacts, facilitating my research for this dissertation. I am incredibly grateful to those photojournalists, such as Dani Yako and Eduardo “Negro” Frias, who shared their moving stories.

A very special thanks goes to my friend Tainá Caragol for reading early versions of several chapters, and for constantly encouraging me. Thanks also to my friend Florencia Tateossian not only for her constant warm words but also for providing help while I was away from the United States.

I am also grateful to my colleagues and fellow students at the Graduate Center, Mitra Monir Abbaspour, Marisa Lerer, Daniel Quiles, Jenny Tobias who generously shared their own research to help my writing at critical moments and encouraged me with their examples.

My friends were sources of constant encouragement and provided a much needed laugh when I most needed it, especially Sebatián Anapolsky, Vanesa Albamonte, Martinica

To my scholar friends, Pilar Arcidácono, Fernanda Page Poma, Laura Lenci, Ernesto Semán and Ariel Yablón, who clarified important historical details, provided sources and key articles, I am also grateful. To Facundo Bargalló who not only helped navigate the tricky words of academic work and maternity challenges but also called my attention to important sources. To Horacio Medina who gave me his own collection of old magazines. These were key primary sources for this research, and to Hernán Iglesias Illa who clarified journalistic terms for me.

I am also grateful to Carolina Duek for helping with preliminary research for this project, Tara Sullivan for editing the different chapters while always adhering to my crazy deadlines, Mike Bloch who edited the second chapter, Emma-Kate Symons who edited this acknowledgements and Gillian Sneed for editing the last version of the entire dissertation.

I would also like to thank my family in Buenos Aires, especially my mother Mirta Cuenca, who has written me daily since I moved to the U.S., and my sister María Inés Tallone, for her friendship and care. Although my father Ricardo Tallone passed away in the early stages of this project, he was an important help and supporter during the first years of my graduate studies.

No words are enough to thank Daniel Kerner for his patience and help, and for providing me with true love. He made my academic life possible. He was always there cheering me up through good and bad times. This dissertation is dedicated to him, to our two children, Teo and Cala, and to my mom.
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“Never art but always meaning.”

–Roland Barthes¹

Introduction

In 2006, on the 30th anniversary of the last military coup in Argentina, a group of photojournalists guided by Pablo Cerolini put together an outstanding exhibition compiling photojournalistic images of the dictatorship.² The aim was to refute the widespread belief that there were no images that could depict those dark years.³ The military government attempted to silence political activities with the systematic implementation of illegal kidnappings and murders, and the general consensus was that the same thing had happened to the images documenting that period. Displaying the results of an extensive search through media and private archives, the exhibition proved everyone wrong. Seeing the exhibition made me realize how little was known about the practice of photojournalism in the country in general, and the lack of studies analyzing its role under the last dictatorship in particular. Inspired by what I saw, I researched the private archives of photojournalists, periodical publications, and personal memoirs to see how photography in Argentina changed under adverse political situations, and if that had an impact on the images produced. At the same time, I recognized some of the images

created during those dark times and I wondered if others also remembered the same photographs. If those photographs formed part of the country's shared collective memory, then might they be considered iconic?

This dissertation is not an exhaustive history of Argentinean photography, something that is needed given the sparse, incomplete, and poorly documented bibliography available on the subject.\(^4\) Rather, I approached this project as a contribution to the growing field in a way that mirrors Mary E. Schwartz’s and Mary Beth Tierney-Tello’s approach, who together characterized their work on Latin American writing and photography as a contribution to the “expansive gesture” in the field of photography. They correctly point out that in Latin America “photography has been manipulated as an instrument of the state while it has also served as a strategy of resistance.”\(^5\) In my thesis I study this duality of photography’s instrumentalization in Argentina within the extreme political and social context of the dictatorship that lasted from 1976 to 1983.

This regime presented itself as a “process of national reorganization” and had a more ambitious agenda than previous military regimes. A junta composed of the leaders of the army, the navy, and the air force became the most important political body. The members of the military junta attempted to change the country’s political culture with a nationalistic and anticommunist agenda.\(^6\) In order to advance these goals the regime unleashed an unprecedented

\(^4\) Throughout this dissertation I engage with the most relevant published material and I point out their shortcomings when feasible.
degree of violence against civil society. It was a traumatic period in Argentina’s history. Though they were regarded as “dangerous” by the military regime, photographs were among the few images still visible in that repressed society. While publicly condemning the reproduction of “unfavorable” photographs as a punishable crime, the regime made extensive use of photographic media, which unintentionally contributed to its status as evidence. Although the scholarship analyzing artistic practices and photography in the country has grown in size and quality over the last two decades (1994-2014), “the study of photography under the dictatorship is still a pending matter.”

This dissertation critically engages with the most enduring photojournalistic images produced during the dictatorship and featured in the 2006 exhibition. By researching their historical context, I aim to show the importance of the photojournalists’ work, not only during the years of the dictatorship, but also in its immediate aftermath, when the most iconic images were republished. I explore how some photographic news images transcended their historical

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7 Justified to end “terrorist” activities from leftist groups, the military implemented a plan of clandestine detention of suspects from the political opposition. Without proper trials (not even clear charges) thousands were disappeared. (This implies that the bodies were never found). See Norberto Asquini, Crónicas Del Fuego: Luchas Populares, Peronismo Y Militancia Revolucionaria En La Pampa de Los ’70 (Santa Rosa, Argentina: Ediciones Amerindia, 2005); Alicia García, La Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1991); Paul Lewis, Guerrillas and Generals: The Dirty War in Argentina (Westport: Praeger, 2002); David Rock, Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History, and Its Impact (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Enrique Vázquez, PRN, La Ultima: Origen, Apogeo Y Caida de La Dictadura Militar (Buenos Aires, Argentina: EUDEBA, 1985).

8 Silvia Pérez Fernández, “Fin de La Dictadura, Inicio de Disyuntivas: La Fotografía Argentina Frente a La Recuperación de La Vida Constitucional,” Ojos Crueles. Temas de Fotografía y Sociedad. 3 (Fall 2006): 48. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.
context, “withstanding the test of time” in order to acquire new meanings. Thus, my dissertation analyzes the process through which this occurs and its implications for historical memory.9

The military government’s first decree on restrictive activities explicitly mentioned images.10 Given its emphasis on the publication and distribution of news it is safe to assume that it had photographs in mind. The military government feared the media. Photography theory has long established that photographic images work as “evidence” because of their automated mechanical reproduction.11 In addition, photography’s privileged relationship with the past has been summed up in Roland Barthes’s famous dictum “have been there” that refers to the mechanics through which a photographic image communicates. Photography, especially photojournalism is a privileged witness.12 Photographs, however, are more complex than mere transcriptions of reality. The elements inside the frame work like words in sentences, and at the same time the text that surrounds the images influences a photograph’s meanings. These elements are in constant dialogue with the context of the publications in which images appear, as well as with the social and personal circumstances of the viewer. Barthes focuses on advertisements, but his ideas have been applied to photographic images in other fields. In Caroline Brothers words: “Barthes’ oeuvre is important not simply for the insights it offers into

10 “Al que por cualquier medio difundiere, divulgue o propagare noticias, comunicados o imágenes con el propósito de perturbar, perjudicar o desprestigiar la acividad de las Fuerzas Armadas, de seguridad o policiales.” Eduardo Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer: La Prensa Argentina Bajo El Proceso (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Colihue, 1998), 23.
the mechanics of photographic meaning, but for exposing the structured links between a photograph’s contents and the culture within which that image has currency.”

Barthes’s observations about photography were rooted in the semiotics of the image. Charles S. Peirce’s tripartite explanation of the working of the sign is fundamental in this regard. Photography is indexical (there is a physical light-based relation between the object and the resulting photograph), but also iconic in the sense that it maintains a formal similarity between object and photograph. At the same time, some photographs can acquire symbolic status and may influence the narration of the events involved in the images. The context—the institutional use of the image as well as where it is published—is a key factor in the interpretation of meaning. In fact, scholars of rhetoric have engaged with photography in print to understand the specificity of images “as rhetorical documents” by analyzing the contexts of their production and circulation. And as Susan Sontag has pointed out, how the viewer narrates the picture plays a role in its signification, as do the identities of the narrator and the audience after the post-structuralist turn.

In my dissertation I will focus on photojournalism as a profession and its most reproduced images to try to understand how they functioned as iconic images within the context of Argentinean society. I pose the questions: In their function as iconic images, were they also art? And, are they forms of rhetorical communication discourse that bridge photography’s

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stakes as art and document? Photojournalistic images have received increasing attention from art history, as well as history and communication studies. In this dissertation I aim to review the practice of photojournalism in Argentina by engaging with the theories from these interrelated disciplines while also paying attention to the contextual meaning of photojournalism in Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

Many historians see photojournalism as one source, among others, for assessing the “collective attitudes of the societies that consumed them.” Mass media photographs have been identified as another terrain where ideological battles unfold because as Brothers points out “a photograph is invaded by ideology.” In studying photojournalism, Brothers defends texts that surround images, such as captions, headlines and the accompanying stories, as well as the graphic design layouts themselves, as elements that “help determine a specific reading.”

Photojournalism signifies, as does any form of photography, at the level of icon and index, but the meanings of photojournalistic images are also tinted by the headings, captions, associated texts, and images surrounding them, as well as the ideological orientations of the publications in which they appear. However, the reading of photojournalistic images can change. As Brothers explains “these elements play a new role in any republication that the images have.” I focus on images that were republished enough times to acquire independence from their original publication; I attempt to show how the ideology that permeated the original publication of the images in question fluctuated with various social changes and how this in turn enabled new readings of them.

17 Brothers, War and Photography, 868.
18 Ibid., 727.
19 Ibid., 898.
20 Ibid., 18.
Communication Studies have shown that photojournalistic images are at the center of public space, which is occupied principally by mass media, receiving more exposure and subsequently more viewership than artistic endeavors confined to the museum, gallery or specialized book.\(^{21}\) As such they require a customized framework for analysis. Their message, although contrived by the media where they have been published, achieves an important degree of autonomy. These ideas challenge the belief that if the photograph has not been staged it shows what really happened.\(^{22}\) Photojournalistic images are still considered a “transparent medium” to some degree and have a privileged assumption of veracity.\(^{23}\) In this false assumption of transparency lies the rhetorical power of photojournalism.

Given the amount of information that photojournalistic images carry, it is even more important to understand how these images work, how they communicate their message and how they impact the viewer. Barthes argues that images used in advertising succeed when they trigger a viewer’s memory to recall all past images, objects, and previous associations.\(^{24}\) The viewer, therefore, does not see in a vacuum, but rather from her own emotionally charged social and historical position. It is a subjective gaze. This understanding can also be extrapolated to the study of photojournalistic images. The reading of a photograph is always historical and depends on the reader’s knowledge, just as if it were a real language. This common language is a shared social knowledge. By the 1950s, *Life Magazine*’s first picture editor Wilson Hicks had already begun analyzing how photojournalism operates in the viewer’s mind. Describing this phenomenon, he wrote: “the x factor being the reader’s own contribution to the communicative

\(^{21}\) Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 471.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 380.
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
chemistry…. the reader supplies material from memory and imagination to round up and enrich what is being conveyed to him. Thus he elaborates and evaluates by drawing on his experience and knowledge.”25 Photojournalism works within these assumptions of shared experiences. Recent scholarship agrees: “the strategic use of the photo … is possible only because of the social knowledge being communicated.”26 Still, it is necessary to inquire how this social knowledge evolves over time and impacts the reading of such images.

Given its circulation in the public sphere of mass media, these images create “a sense of shared experience … [based on] the act of common spectatorship.”27 The shared experience of viewership is key in providing emotional identification, or a sense of belonging, in the social collective.28 Images help to articulate and concretize diffused and ambiguous public discourse.29 Cara Finnefan has argued that “Conceived rhetorically, photography may be understood as an art of the contingent, a visual habit of picturing social, political, and cultural life.”30 I agree. In addition, photojournalistic images have to be understood as sites of “discussion, controversy, [and] multiple projections.”31 News images materialize the social preoccupations of a determinate social group that shares basic cultural knowledge and reacts to the images emotionally. In other words, “photojournalism is a social embodiment of public concerns, it evokes the social knowledge and emotional responsiveness necessary for alternative

26 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 10.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 14.
30 Finnegan, Making Photography Matter: A Viewer’s History from the Civil War to the Great Depression, 197.
31 Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 381.
interpretation.”  

It is important to note the word “alternative” here, because there is a possibility for different interpretations in each iconic photojournalistic image. As I will argue when analyzing the Argentinean case, photojournalistic images can have opposite interpretations depending on who the viewer is and the historical moment. As Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites argue: “While an image can contribute to an ‘affirmation of patriotic citizenship’ other times it operates as a critique.”

Also, scholars agree that photojournalistic icons have an impact at the emotional level of spectatorship. Although the kind of emotion fluctuates greatly, “images are in fact read differently according to subjective experience.”

Finnegan summarizes the complexity of the photojournalistic image in the idea of “eventfulness of the photographic encounter.” She incorporated the concept of event to call attention to the many factors at play that meet on the image and its spatio-temporal circumstances and how when those shift the image shifts its rhetorical specificity again. Hariman and Lucaites state that “There is a slippage in meaning.” In this eventfulness photojournalistic images speak but always in a “subjective voice.” “Voice” is understood as the story that the photograph might tell. Barbie Zelizer explains that it “refers to the ways in which an image’s meaning is used for a wide variety of strategies and objectives, all of which increase over time and space.” I show how this voice changes with circulation, and how the fact that a photograph can have multiple utterances explains its usefulness for re-publication.

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 387.
34 Brothers, War and Photography, 898.
35 Finnegan, Making Photography Matter: A Viewer’s History from the Civil War to the Great Depression, 196.
38 Ibid.
In addition, photojournalism has been identified as “a premier visual practice for articulating democratic life,” and an “important technology of liberal-democratic citizenship.”³⁹ It is an activity that has been understood as capable of mobilizing political action.⁴⁰ I cannot affirm that photojournalism fueled political action in Argentina, but I will show how the practice not only survived, but actually thrived under the last dictatorship. In fact, I argue that photojournalism adapted to undemocratic circumstances. Although many photojournalists narrated the experience of internalizing censorship, and, as a result, avoided certain images for fear of retaliation, they still managed to occupy an “intermediate zone between hegemony and resistance.”⁴¹ According to Harriman and Lucatis it is in the creation and navigation of that zone that photojournalism succeeds.⁴² Argentinean photojournalism of the 1970s and 1980s achieved just that. As I will explain in detail, photojournalists organized exhibitions with the material that could not find space for publication in the mass media, and provided images when the mass media changed its ideological orientation. I also highlight the absence of a discussion of photojournalism’s role in the critical debates over what happened under the dictatorship as well as its marginal presence in the few books analyzing photography during this period.

The dissertation is organized into four independent analytic units. Interwoven throughout the dissertation is a thread that looks closely at the evolution of photojournalism in Argentina. There are only a few comprehensive bibliographies that recount the developments of photography in the country. The first unit of this dissertation establishes a timeline reviewing the main photographers and their contributions to the field. The first chapter is a chronology of the history

³⁹ Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 18.
⁴¹ Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 10.
⁴² Ibid.
of photography in Argentina from its beginnings, which highlights the fact that in the nineteenth century there were no clear divisions between the fine arts and the press. However, these two strands were separated as soon as photography was institutionalized. I examine fine art photography in Argentina to demonstrate what high-level photographers who did not work for the press achieved before the dictatorship in terms of training and awards. I call attention to the stark contrast between these photographers and photojournalists, who for the most part were just members of the press reaching for the nearest camera to document what they saw. Finally, I show how during the dictatorship photojournalism was marginalized from critical debates in the field, despite the fact that photojournalism played a central role during those darks years.

The role photojournalism played during the dictatorship is the focus of the second chapter. I study the years under military rule and photojournalists’ exhibitions during that time. I argue that these exhibitions were key to the field in terms of creating a more professionalized, socially engaged and visually interesting branch of photojournalism. These exhibitions provided rare opportunities for photojournalists to claim independence from the media and to manifest dissent in a repressive society. Contrary to the widespread belief that every aspect of cultural life in the country went into hibernation during those dark times, I argue that the dictatorship had a “positive” influence on photojournalism. In fact, I conclude that the profession of photojournalism in the country changed because of—and in spite of—the adverse political situation.

The third chapter is the theoretical core of this project and is where most of the images are analyzed. In this section, I focus on the photojournalistic images that have been repeatedly republished after their initial inclusion in the previously studied exhibitions. Photojournalistic images that were frequently reused have been called icons. I engage with the concept of the
iconic image to establish its usefulness in the context of the Argentinean dictatorship and its aftermath. To understand why some images have become iconic, it is necessary to trace their history of appropriation and circulation.⁴³ I study the history their republication and suggest interpretations of them that attempt to explain their repetitive use by framing them as “simplified glimpses of the past” that serve prevailing ideologies at the time of republication. Scholars agree that images become symbols if they are constantly reproduced.⁴⁴ I study the images in detail to understand why they have been repeatedly selected and have become markers of collective memory. I see them not as isolated phenomena, but rather as the consequences of historical processes that precede them and also transcend them. In spite of the control that the military regime exercised on the flow of information, photographs still circulated in the press, and the military government also made extensive use of them.

The military government’s use of photography is the subject of the fourth chapter. The regime attempted to neutralize social resistance and to build popular legitimization through modern propaganda techniques. I therefore study the official use of photography in two main contexts: the first one could be called the public face, and deals with official photography in popular magazines, propaganda campaigns, and the creation and distribution of false news. These efforts were mainly focused on convincing the opposition of the social improvements enabled by the regime. The second context was a more private use of the photography, for which the audience was the army and its supporters. Although hidden from society at large, the military regime put many photographs into circulation in order to leverage their status thereby giving, unintentionally, more relevance to photography overall within the dictatorship.

In the conclusion, I return to the 2006 exhibition and the current status of these iconic photographs. In this exhibition, many photojournalistic images gained widespread recognition and were included in the permanent exhibitions of several newly created institutions of memory. However, they were quickly replaced by other images. Over the last decade, artists working with photography have created images that compete with these iconic photojournalistic images to embody the memory of those obscure years. I review the most commonly reproduced of these new photographic works, signaling their strength, but also their limitations. I conclude by calling attention to new curatorial efforts that keep iconic photojournalistic images in circulation and that maintain their importance for social memory, as “news images are useful for viewers struggling to make sense of unsettled events of a difficult and complicated nature,” such as the last Argentinean dictatorship.

45 The most important memory institutions are the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos (Space for Remembrance and Human Rights) on the premises of the former navy school of mechanics (Ex-ESMA), and El Parque de la Memoria both in the city of Buenos Aires. There are also institutions in the main provincial cities such as Museo de la Memoria, Rosario; Museo de Arte y Memoria, La Plata; and Museo de la Memoria, Córdoba.

Chapter 1

A History of Photography in Argentina: Fighting for a Place

In order to understand the role that photojournalism played during the Argentinean military regime of the 1970s, a critical review of the country’s history of photography is needed given that it is not available elsewhere.47

The first part of this chapter examines photography’s pioneers in Argentina, including a short history of photography and photographic media developments. It also looks at the beginnings of photojournalism. In the second part, I review the practices of art photography in Argentina, in order to show its pre-eminence over photojournalism before the 1976-1983 dictatorship. I show how so-called independent photographers monopolized the socially engaged role for themselves, organizing and participating in international colloquia, and exhibiting in the few available venues dedicated to photography, erasing photojournalism from the few specialized books available.

1. Early Photography in Argentina

Photography arrived in Latin America soon after its first public presentation in France in 1839. According to surviving records, Abate Louis Compte was the first photographer to visit the region, but the arrival of photography to Argentina lagged behind the rest of Latin America. Even though Buenos Aires was a port city where important ships from Europe

48 In early 1840, Compte, a daguerreotypist aboard the French ship L'Orientale, reached Bahia, Brazil, the first stop of a longer itinerary. Compte next made a longer stop in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s capital at the time, where the new development captivated the attention of the Emperor Dom Pedro II, who became an important supporter of the art and an amateur photographer himself. There was, however, at least one person experimenting with the technique in Brazil as early as 1829: Hercules Florence, originally from France, but based in Campinas. Florence sought to print images produced through the camera obscura with a substance that reacted to solar light. He produced his first photographic image in early 1833 using silver nitrate. However, in spite of Florence’s successful endeavor, photography became known as an imported invention through images taken by travelling photographers, such as Compte. Foreigners from Europe or the United States arrived in Latin America aboard ships taking these early photographs during stops in various ports. One such visitor, Charles DeForest Fredericks, an innovative American photographer, traveled throughout Latin America from 1843 to the early 1850s, working for short periods of time in the main cities of Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Argentina. Others came and stayed, spending their entire lives in Latin America and training the next generation of local photographers who then took the innovation to remote cities and villages. Unfortunately, the images that survive from this period are rarely signed and hard to attribute to a particular photographer. See Miguel Angel Cuarterolo and Jeremy...
habitually stopped, the French navy had blocked port access at the time of Compte’s trip.\footnote{49} As a result, the closest encounter Argentineans had with the new technique was in 1840 through a press report recounting the story of an Argentinean citizen who witnessed first hand a daguerreotype produced in Montevideo, Uruguay.\footnote{50} This earliest surviving report is from Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson y Mendevile, a woman of high social and political standing, who wrote of the invention in a personal letter to her son Juan, a member of the opposition party in Argentina that resisted the dictatorial power of Juan Manuel de Rosas. Mariquita was also a person with strong political views.\footnote{51} Her support of freedom and national independence was the reason for her exile in Montevideo at the time she wrote the letter. Even though photography was initially associated only with the higher social classes, and was perceived as “a plaything of a frivolous Sunday afternoon in a Victorian Parlor,” its mediated arrival to Argentina linked the activity to dissent to some extent.\footnote{52} Several press reports about the new procedure followed this initial account shortly thereafter.\footnote{53}

The earliest news reports about the establishment of a photographic studio in Argentina are from 1843, when John Elliot, an American, announced the opening of his photographic studio in Buenos Aires; it functioned for a year. Another studio opened at the same time, owned and run by Gregorio Ibarra, a Spanish lithographer. However, a few months after the opening,

\footnote{49} The blockage lasted for three years (1838-1841).
\footnote{50} Facio, \textit{La Fotografia En La Argentina}, 13.
\footnote{51} For more information about Mariquita’s fascinating life see María Saenz Quesada, \textit{Mariquita Sánchez} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Sudamericana, 1998).
\footnote{52} Hicks, \textit{Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography}, 109.
\footnote{53} Abel Alexander, \textit{Apuntes Históricos Sobre El Daguerrotipista Charles DeForest Fredricks, 1823-1884, En La Argentina} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Adolfo Alexander Museo Fotográfico Archivo Histórico, 199u) n.p.
Ibarra announced a raffle: the prize was one of the studio’s photographic cameras; presumably a sparse clientele made the extra equipment redundant in such a small market.

Two photographers—Benito Panunzi and Christiano Junior—are recognized as the first important Argentinean photographers, although neither of them was born in the country and they had already produced an important body of work before moving to Argentina. Panunzi, born in Italy in 1819, collaborated with the famous photographer Felice Beato, who probably taught Panunzi the trade. He traveled extensively as a photographer, working in India and China and during the Crimean War. After arriving in Argentina in 1862, Panunzi lived in Buenos Aires but traveled frequently outside the city to take pictures of the local population. Three years after moving to Argentina, he published *Vedute di Buenos Aires*, a small album featuring 15 photographs pasted on cardboard. The images represented a wide range of subjects, from urban landmarks to views of the countryside and “gauchos” (cowboys).^54^

Panunzi opened his *Fotografía Mayo* photographic studio in Buenos Aires, but after a few years he moved to Uruguay, where he worked as a war reporter. Many of Panunzi’s images have been lost and attributing surviving photographs to him remains problematic because he did not sign his work. Most images featuring gaucho scenes from this time period are attributed to Panunzi, but recently Abel Alexander and Luis Priamo, two Argentine photography connoisseurs, were able to re-assign some images to Esteban Gonnet, a French citizen who started his career as a photographer in Argentina.^55^ Both photographers worked in studios on 25 de Mayo Street, the colonial center of the city close to the port, and their images bore this address as an identifying mark instead of a signature, which led to the confusion. By 1870, Panunzi had returned to Italy where he died in 1886.

^54^ Alexander, Cuarterolo, and Toyos, *Soldados 1848-1927*, 44.
Panunzi gained international recognition as an Argentine photographer after being featured in Erika Billeter’s comprehensive exhibition *A Song to Reality* in 1981, which featured his most famous image, “Portrait of Cacique Casimiro Bigue from the Tehuelches Tribe” (Fig. 1.1).\(^{56}\) It is a superb portrait in which it is easy for the viewer to empathize with the chief, who appears defeated, even if still wearing a headdress and robe. Comparisons made to Félix Nadar and Julia Margaret Cameron’s work are probably rooted in the image’s emotive power.\(^{57}\) Although Panunzi spent only a few years in the country, he became the quintessential Argentine photographer because his subject matter matched a stereotype of the local population.\(^{58}\) The gaucho became an iconic image for the whole country.\(^{59}\) This kind of subject matter—exotic and naïf, representing an existence threatened by modern times—fit perfectly with the idea promoted in Billeter’s historical account of an essentialized image of Latin America.

Christiano Junior (José Christiano de Freitas Henriques Junior) was born in the Azores, an archipelago of Portugal.\(^{60}\) His prolific career as a photographer began in Brazil around 1855. His pictures of slaves—sold as *cartes de visite*—and elephantiasis patients, which were most


\(^{57}\) Sara Facio affirms this connection, although all efforts to locate the actual source have been unsuccessful. Yet, I think it is an interesting comparison, and it is easy to see some similarities with Cameron’s treatment of her subjects: the bust length portrait, the emphasis on the glossy eyes, and the detached gaze. Although in Panunzi’s images the gaze indicates resignation more than a proper lady’s manners. On the other hand, the comparison with Nadar is forced and completely artificial. See Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 30.

\(^{58}\) For a historical account see Tulio Halperin Donghi, *José Hernández Y Sus Mundos*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Debolsillo, 2006).


likely commissioned, have recently received international acclaim.\textsuperscript{61} He had owned at least two studios in Brazil, one in Maceio, and another in Rio de Janeiro, before opening another in Montevideo, Uruguay. Then, in 1867, Christiano migrated to Buenos Aires, from where he continued to operate the Montevideo studio as a branch of his Buenos Aires studio. His studio in Buenos Aires was impressively successful, and by 1869 he had at least seven employees, and attended to five clients a day on average. In 1878 he sold his studio and archive to the Witcomb & Mackern gallery, the predecessor of what would go on to become the most popular photography house in Argentina in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{62}

Part of Christiano’s success was due to his ability to participate in the social events of the emerging city, where he became acquainted with public figures and politicians. He even published an album of “celebrities” of the country featuring political leaders such as Domingo Fautino Sarmiento, Lucio Victorio Mansilla, Luis Saenz Peña, and Adolfo Alsina.\textsuperscript{63} Christiano’s personal relationship with local celebrities was part of his success. However, other photographers befriended politicians as well and did not enjoy Christiano’s acclaim. I attribute the current acclaim for his work today to his unique viewpoints, especially noticeable in his cityscapes. His images emphasize the geometric lines of buildings and urban settings as an alternative to panoramic vistas and conventional points of view. This formal arrangement and organization gives his photographic work a more modern aesthetic. For example, Christiano’s

\textsuperscript{62} Witcomb & Mackern was a gallery that first included painting and photography. It was famous for the photographic portraits by Alejandro Witcomb. Importantly for our purposes is that the gallery accumulated more than a million historical negatives that later were donated to the Archivo General de la Nación. See Billeter, \textit{A Song to Reality}, 24.
\textsuperscript{63} In addition, Christiano was a member of the recently formed \textit{Sociedad Rural Argentina}, an association that still today groups the most influential social and economical personalities of the country, and in 1875 became its official photographer. Abel Alexander, Luis Priamo, and Beatriz Bragoni, \textit{Un País En Transición (1867-1883) Christiano Junior} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Fundación Antorchas, 2002), 24.
picture of Victory Square emphasizes the angularity of the park. The diagonal lines seem to project toward the viewer instead of receding into the photographic space, as is the case with a previous shot by Panunzi of the same subject (Figs. 1.2 and 1.3). In addition, while from his elevated vantage point Panunzi captures the rest of the city behind the governmental buildings, Christiano, from a lower point of view, emphasizes the building’s silhouette against the open sky. As a result, the image is clearer and has stronger contour lines, which reinforce its overall geometric feeling. Given Christiano’s compositional decisions, the urban landscape is not the main subject of the image. Rather the lines formed by the borders of the plaza and its footpaths become the protagonists of the photograph.

Christiano Junior’s reputation as a revolutionary figure can be attributed not only to the formal quality of his shots, but also to the method he implemented for selling his photographs. He made albums with vistas of the city and its landscape, as well as other traditional places. Other photographers had already created albums of Buenos Aires as souvenirs for travelers, but these were usually customized according to the client’s specification and selection of images from an array of options. In contrast, Christiano’s albums were “ready made,” published as a closed set of images closer to the tradition of the Voyage Pittoresque albums. One is comprised of twelve images featuring famous locations and monuments with extensive descriptive text in four languages: Spanish, German, French and English. In spite of the fact that his native language was Portuguese, and he could have access to the Brazilian market, he did not include that language in his selection, or at least there are no surviving albums in Portuguese. Christiano hired professionals to write the texts, which went beyond mere captions,

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64 Ibid., 34.
65 I thank professor Katherine Manthorne for suggesting this relation.
transforming the album into a hybrid closer to “modern photo reportage.”  \footnote{66 Alexander, Príamo, and Bragoni, \textit{Un País En Transición (1867-1883) Christiano Junior}, 25.} The texts were not solely descriptions of the photographed scenes, but moreover expressed a political stance in line with the modernizing view of the \textit{Generación del 80}, which formed the political elite in the last decades of the nineteenth century. \footnote{67 Ibid.} For the intellectuals as well as politicians of this generation, faith in infinite progress was a key element of their outlook and political project. Facilitated by rapid economic growth, much of the urban infrastructure was built at the time. In contrast with Panunzi, who celebrated the gaucho figure through his photographs, Christiano rejected the image of the gaucho as the personification of the Argentine people, not only by excluding such subjects from his albums, but also by including written introductions where he openly manifested his preference for showing the “unquestionable signs of progress” such as monumental new buildings. \footnote{68 Another reason Christiano became a key figure in the Argentinian history of photography is because he was the only photographer of the time to leave a written account of his profession, including the number of clients and his service fees, in addition to his general thoughts about the role of photography in society. It is unknown where he learned photography. (Unfortunately, he still is known internationally only for his Brazilian work.) In the last decade through the Argentinian foundation, Antorchas, a book has been published featuring Christiano’s work in the country written by Argentinian specialists. Unfortunately, there have been no international repercussions, and his work and surviving negatives kept at the Archivo General de la Nación have been ignored in international publications that celebrate his previous trajectory in Brazil. See Alexander, Priamo, and Bragoni, \textit{Un País En Transición (1867-1883) Christiano Junior}; and Azevedo and Lissovsky, \textit{The Photographer Christiano Jr}.}

2. Photography and Print Media

There is evidence that photographers aimed to make their work suitable for print media from the earliest phases of photography’s development, but it took almost a hundred years and several innovations to make this possible. The actual story behind how photography became so widely accepted in the press is still unclear given the lack of research and the incomplete state
of newspapers’ archives. Well-organized trade unions representing illustrators, engravers and draftsmen presented some resistance to the incorporation of photographs. Writers and editors protested that photographs, much like all other types of illustrations, were taking up valuable space from the writing, believed to be the priority in terms of content. Moreover, given the high cost of a newspaper, until the 1830s newspaper readership was mainly composed of upper-class citizens. When technological advances in printing made newspapers cheaper, marking the emergence of the “penny press” in reference to its one-cent price, middle and working-class citizens began to buy papers. They did not have much leisure time to read, thus illustrations slowly gained more space in the printed pages given their ability to convey information instantaneously. By the 1850s, some European and American newspapers included hand-copied illustrations with the text “from a daguerreotype.” While the initial acceptance of photography in Argentina lagged behind that of the United States and much of Europe, its use of print media was much more in step with the northern hemisphere. As early as 1864, *El Correo del Domingo*, the newspaper with the biggest distribution in Buenos Aires, based its illustrations on photographic material. By 1877 it became possible to combine a proto-photographic film with a wood engraving plate, opening the way for the mechanical reproduction of images. On March 4, 1880, Stephen H. Horgan reproduced the first photograph by mechanical means in the *Daily Graphic*, a newspaper published in New York. By the mid-1880s, newspapers were using photoengraving with the quality of a facsimile, but sparsely.

In the 1890s, the half-tone technique became faster and more accurate in the 1890s. By August 1890 it was possible in Argentina to print a photograph mechanically. *El Sud Americano*

71 Hicks, *Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography*, 23.
was the first local newspaper to use the new technique, although only for a special edition
dedicated to *La Revolución del Parque*.\(^{72}\) Still the widespread adoption of the technique was slow.\(^{73}\) In 1904 *The Daily Mirror* in the United Kingdom, became the world’s first newspaper to use only photographs. It took time for United States-based newspapers to follow suit. *The Illustrated Daily Press*, which used photographs was launched in 1919; while *The Times* incorporated photographs regularly only in 1922.\(^{74}\) However, from 1900 onwards, illustrated magazines expanded the publication of photographs. In Argentina, *Caras y Caretas* an illustrated magazine published monthly and founded in 1898 was the first national publication to incorporate photographs frequently.\(^{75}\)

Printed photographic material underwent another revolutionary development in 1907 with the perfection of the telegraphic transmission of photographs. Nevertheless, it was only after the First World War that photo-telegraphy became widespread in newspapers worldwide. In 1926, portable equipment that allowed photojournalists to send their materials back to newspapers from their on-site locations out in the field was available. During this early stage many photographs were published as “little films,” represented by several consecutive frames showing a dynamic event, reinforcing the difference between photography and “handcrafted” illustrations in terms of veracity. Concerns about what would be appropriate to publish increased as the photographs for the press became more available. For example, during the First World War, the governments of all the countries involved played an important role in deciding what images were published. As a result, the carnage of the war was never visible. Despite this censorship after the conflict, the illustrated press became fundamentally photographic in form.

\(^{73}\) Hicks, *Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography*, 25.
and content and the profession of the photojournalist, as we understand it today, came into existence. It was around this time that the German-born pioneer of modern photojournalism Erich Salomon started to work. His candid images changed how statesmen and politics were represented in photography. Salomon benefited from a technological innovation: he used a new camera called the Ermanox. Its faster lenses gave it the capacity to produce excellent images with interior light. Furthermore, his personal relationships granted him access behind closed doors, enabling him to photograph politicians in casual poses. The results were candid images of private meetings that made the viewer feel closer to how politicians worked. In sum, he played an important role in shaping what a news photograph should look like. His influence on photojournalism was widespread, and the notion that photojournalists had to be close to those in power to obtain candid and more revealing pictures had a strong impact on the practice in Argentina.

3. Photojournalism

Robert Capa’s coverage of the Spanish Civil War is considered an inaugural moment in modern photojournalism. But there had been other pioneering photographers documenting armed conflicts around the globe including James Robertson and Roger Fenton (covering the Crimean War); Matthew Brady and Alexander Gardner (covering the American Civil War); Agustín Casasola (covering the Mexican Revolution); and closer to this case study, Esteban

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Garcia\textsuperscript{79} (covering the Triple Alliance War) providing “danger-free involvement” where the viewer could feel the ferocity of the armed conflict from the comfort of his parlor chair.\textsuperscript{80}

Capa benefited from the improved portability of cameras. New technologies of the period allowed him to send his material promptly from the field. In addition, better film quality was available, making it possible to capture shots faster. As a result, Capa was able to take his shots in an unobtrusive way, being in close proximity to the actual combatants. Capa believed that if the pictures were not good then it was because the photographer was not close enough to the action, an attitude that captures the bravado spirit of the stereotypical war photographer, and which became a photojournalistic ideal.\textsuperscript{81}

Capa and his contemporaries also profited from the expansion of photographically illustrated magazines, representing a so-called “golden age” from 1935 to 1955. Life, a leading weekly news magazine in the United States founded in 1936 strongly encouraged photojournalism; Look, another U.S.-based weekly was launched in 1937; and Picture Post was launched in Britain in 1938. These publications followed a long tradition inaugurated by the German magazine Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung (1892) and the French periodical Vu (1928).\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{79} In Billeter’s account, Panunzi figures as leaving Argentina for Uruguay to make pictures of the War. However, there is no further information in this regard and I was unable to locate another source to corroborate this information. Billeter, A Song to Reality, 18.

Esteban García’s pioneering work in photographing the Triple Alianza war has not yet received the academic attention that it deserves. Unfortunately, it exceeds the aims of the dissertation. For more information see Amado Becquer Casaballe, Imágenes El Río de La Plata, Crónica de La Fotografía Rioplatense 1840-1940, ed. Miguel Angel Cuarterolo (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial del Fotógrafo, 1986).


\textsuperscript{82} Hopkinson, “Introduction to Scoop, Scandal and Strife: A Study of Photography in Newspapers,” 299.
Finally, another milestone in the history of photojournalism—which had an important impact on Argentine photojournalism—was the founding of agencies controlled by photographers, the most famous one being Magnum.\textsuperscript{83} Magnum recruited the most important photographers of the time who worked as their own editors. Robert Capa founded the agency in partnership with Henri Cartier-Bresson, David Seymour (known as Chim) and George Rodger in 1947. Capa and Cartier-Bresson each added their unique spirits to these endeavors. Capa, in addition to his talent, brought the characteristic dose of bravado, while Cartier-Bresson contributed to the more artistic understanding of photography. For example, he taught aspiring members to look at the pictures upside down to call attention to the compositions, in addition to the subject matter.\textsuperscript{84} The agency was conceived with an understanding that photography had the potential for an open political stance. In the agency’s members’ hands, photography would be a “stimulating force to influence opinion and sometimes speak for those with no voice.”\textsuperscript{85} This idea of photojournalism as a profession engaged with the social and political position of the most disadvantaged groups would make an impact on how the activity would be seen and practiced in the upcoming decades. According to Russell Miller, who did the most exhaustive research on the agency, “Magnum raised the standards of photojournalism and injected it with moral support, self respect and gravitas.”\textsuperscript{86} Conceiving of the practice in those terms would influence Argentine photojournalism later on. How this understanding changed the profession in

\textsuperscript{83} Certainly, there were other agencies focused exclusively on photography before. In 1919 the International News Pictures and Wide World Photos, mostly associated with the \textit{New York Times}, started operations. In 1923 Acme Newspictures began working, while in 1927 the Associated Press News Photo Service was founded. However, photographers were not in complete control of their production. Hicks, \textit{Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography}, 25.

\textsuperscript{84} Russell Miller, \textit{Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front Line of History} (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 84.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., ix.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
the country and, ultimately, how it acquired self respect and gravitas under the military
dictatorship will be explained later.

4. Early Photojournalism in Argentina

The history of photojournalism in Argentina is sparser than in North America since there
are few reliable sources. The earliest photojournalistic image dates from 1852 (Fig. 1.4). It
depicts an important political event with the main municipal building, the Cabildo, in the
background. The picture was taken after the revolution of September 11, 1852, in which the
province of Buenos Aires fought to become an autonomous territory. It shows the occupation of
Buenos Aires with troops from the Confederation. Unfortunately, the image is severely
damaged. As a result, it is not easy to understand the foreground or center of the scene, or where
the photographer was standing. The photograph does depict people crowding the Cabildo’s
balconies as well as a large balcony on the adjacent building. The people visible on the
balconies seem to be looking down to observe the invading troops gathering in the public square
below. It was a well attended the event. However, there is no indication as to whether any
violence was occurring at the instant the photograph was taken. An obelisk, known as May’s
Pyramid, can be seen on the left side, which is severely damaged. It is interesting to compare it
to the images studied previously in this chapter, to see how the monument changed. Inaugurated
in 1811, the obelisk was crowned by a globe, as seen in this photograph. It was renovated in
1856 under the supervision of local artist Prilidiano Pueyrredón, at which time the globe was
replaced by an allegory of Liberty, among other modifications. The photograph is signed
“Carlos Fredricks and Company.” Fredricks probably produced these kinds of images as
souvenirs for travelers or as mementos for the participants. While Fredricks was not a
photojournalist, nor were his photographs ready to be printed in the media, he clearly understood the importance of the event and the camera’s adequacy as a means for recording it, which resulted in its visual record. He probably produced these kinds of images to sell as mementos, but there is no evidence that his project was successful.

The next available example is from 1854 (Fig. 1.5). It is an anonymous image also showing Buenos Aires’s main square and obelisk. But this time the angle is different and the Cabildo is not featured. Instead, the Cathedral dominates the background. The image was taken from a marketplace called La Recova, probably from the roof of one of the buildings, given that the view is from the top down. It records the citizens of Buenos Aires swearing in a new constitution, declaring their independence from the rest of the country in a short-lived separatist moment. While both images feature monuments and buildings as components of the cityscapes, they differ from the better-known images taken by Benito Panunzi or Christiano Junior in that they show the Cabildo and the obelisk only as markers of place.\footnote{It is interesting to also see the different use that the Plaza de Mayo Pyramid had. While in the first image we see the clean contour of the obelisk, in the second, flags and banners surround it. The battalions used the pedestal and monument’s body to show their presence. For more information about Buenos Aires’s monuments see Carlos Vigil, \textit{Los Monumentos Y Lugares Históricos de Argentina} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Atlántida, 1968), 54.} Unlike Panunzi and Christiano, whose objective was to record the city, the main focus in this photograph is the event. The city is just a background for the action. Hence, these pictures’ function was to record a moment with political implications, and as such they can be considered early examples of photojournalism, at least in terms of intention.

It is Antonio Pozzo, however, who can be considered the first Argentine photojournalist, a reputation that dates back to 1879 when he accompanied General Julio Roca in his Patagonian military campaign, known as \textit{La Campaña al Desierto}. In fact, Pozzo was known for getting as
close as possible to the conflicts he documented. Born in 1850 in Italy, he migrated to Argentina as a child where he learned the trade from John A. Bennet and Thomas Helsby.

John A. Bennet and Thomas Helsby had established themselves in Buenos Aires by 1945. They published advertisements for the photographic studios bearing their names in the local newspapers.\(^88\) In the same year, Bennet opened the first photographic gallery in the city. However, it was a short-lived arrangement; the photographer left the city a few years later for Bogotá, Colombia. Before leaving the country, Bennet photographed Miguel Otero, governor of the province of Salta, earning the photographer a place in local history for being the author of the oldest extant photograph in Argentina today.\(^89\) Helsby was the first photographer to sign his photographs—at least the oldest surviving signed photographs are from his studio—and for this he too holds an honorary place in the local history of photography. In addition, he was better versed in the commercial aspects of photography than his competitors, and presented his photographs encased in “elegant boxes” replicating books with golden pages. He proudly claimed to have produced 600 portraits. Helsby’s studio was the best in the city. According to Miguel Angel Cuarterolo, a large skylight provided plenty of light and improved the quality of his images.\(^90\)

Pozzo later opened his own studio, where he specialized in portraits. His close relationships with the politicians of the time led to portraits of the important political leaders of the period, which were exhibited permanently in his studio creating a *sui generis* national portrait gallery. During the military campaign Pozzo became the de facto official photographer, and produced at least two commercial albums with images from this military incursion to the Argentinean South. His vision of the bellicose campaign was rather idyllic and peaceful. He

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\(^89\) Ibid., 1:15.

focused on unspoiled nature, and when indigenous populations were protagonists in his images, the scenes were tranquil and peaceful (Fig. 1.6). The army did not encounter as many indigenous groups as expected, but the fact that no resistance or confrontation is featured in Pozzo’s work raises questions. This thematic choice becomes an important element through which to tell the story, and Pozzo’s images reinforced the idea of a completely peaceful endeavor, rather than the conquest of an occupied space. His albums openly served as propaganda, serving the government’s official version of the history, one in line with the most conservative historical accounts.

In two shots Pozzo photographed the formations of the army and his shadow is visible in the foreground (Fig. 1.7). This was probably a mistake or miscalculation, although, it is interesting to see them as a conscious act of self-inclusion. He was after all also a combatant when the circumstances required and was named assimilated captain. Unfortunately, Pozzo’s role in the photographic world after this campaign remains obscure.

The next milestone in the history of photojournalism was the creation of the Sociedad Fotográfica Argentina de Aficionados in 1889. It functioned as a professional organization with the specific mission of exchanging knowledge, promoting trade and showcasing its members’ work in its annual exhibition. It functioned until 1926. Reaffirming the group’s identity, its members did not usually sign their work, using instead the name of the association as identification.

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93 Cuarterolo and Longoni, El Poder de La Imagen. Apuntes Sobre Fotografía Periodística, 23.
Although members of the association did not express it openly, they approved the modernizing atmosphere of the times. Curiously, the most important body of surviving work is the series of gaucho pictures made by Francisco Ayerza to illustrate a special edition of José Hernández’s epic poem *Martín Fierro*. At first, this could be seen as a contradiction with the general vision of the society since its affiliates, all members of the upper class, shared a modernizing vision and believed in the ideals of the *Generación del 80* and its faith in urban progress. But a closer look reveals that Ayerza’s images are highly posed and their artificiality is obvious. The gauchos are posed in studied compositions, and the traditional elements of their clothing spotless, a fact that makes them appear more like they are wearing costumes than real people in action. The images do not transmit the feeling of a celebration of a lived tradition; on the contrary, they are inundated with nostalgia, emphasizing the most picturesque aspects of gauchos, portraying them as an already dead tradition (Fig. 1.8).

Another contribution of the *Sociedad* was to provide images of the country’s natural wonders, organizing photographic expeditions to inland sites, many of which would later become main tourist attractions, for example Iguazú Falls, which was photographed in 1908. This replicated a phenomenon, which had already taken place in Europe and North America, in which by 1850 there were several amateur associations organized as topographical surveyers. However, by 1860, national records offices commissioned by each country’s government replaced these amateur associations.94 In Argentina, these missions were generated by the civil society—photographers—and remained unoficial for many decades.95

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95 I have not been able to establish the first official photographic expedition yet, but it is hard to believe that there were none. I am thus leaving this point open until further information becomes available.
According to Andrea Cuarterolo, the first real agency of graphic reporters, grouping together photographers and other professionals, most likely graphic artists, was created in 1907. Unfortunately, there is not a reliable source to back up this information and that year sounds suspiciously early since it was only in 1919 that International News Pictures and Wide World Photos were founded as news picture agencies designed to provide coverage for large groups of newspapers, followed by Acme News Pictures (later United Press) in 1923, and the Associated Press News Photo Service only in 1927. As the available information is so scarce, I side with scholars who defend Alejandro Samuel Witcomb’s studio as the first agency.

Witcomb was originally from England, and at the beginning of his career he was a partner of Christiano Junior. As previously mentioned, Witcomb acquired Christiano’s archive when he left the city in 1880. Witcomb’s studio became the most prestigious one in the city. It was a place where customers could have their portraits taken, and buy albums produced independently by hired photographers who traveled throughout the country. Hence, in its modus operandi, Witcomb’s studio functioned as a de facto agency. The studio also forms part of the history of photography in Argentina given its trademark group portraits with elaborate props, which reinforced the illusion of wealth. Christiano’s archival efforts and his studio became the repository of historical images, which were exhibited regularly on the premises. Although many images and their records have been lost, a catalogue survived from a 1944 exhibition featuring 600 daguerreotypes. This was the biggest exhibition of photography since its beginnings in the country. That is an impressive number even by today’s standards. Although Witcomb

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97 Hicks, Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography, 25.
98 Sara Facio and Alejandro S. Witcomb, Witcomb - Nuestro Ayer (La Azotea Editorial Fotográfica, 1993).
99 Billeter, A Song to Reality, 25, 55.
100 Facio and Witcomb, Witcomb - Nuestro Ayer, 30.
assigned stories and marked subjects for the photographers, their activities were never related to dissent; on the contrary, the studio catered to the upper class, and presumably supported the status quo. The assigned images were mostly used to publish albums by the Witcomb studio, rather than to be sold for publications. Witcomb studio gained prestige by producing all of the official presidential portraits until 1970. In addition, the studio’s gallery space was used for many fine art exhibitions: the gallery celebrated more than 1900 exhibitions from its opening in 1878 until its closure in 1971. It also operated subsidiaries in the cities of Rosario and Mar del Plata.101

The *Sociedad Fotográfica Argentina de Aficionados* is considered the first official photojournalistic agency in the country because it provided images for the media. Specifically, it provided images to the prestigious magazine *Caras y Caretas*, which was the first publication to use photographs on a regular basis, even though it was also famous for its political cartoons.102 The magazine, created in 1890 in Montevideo, moved to Buenos Aires in 1898 where it enjoyed enormous success for 41 years. Unlike previous publications, which targeted upper-class society, *Caras y Caretas* targeted the educated middle class. In addition to publishing images taken by independent amateur photographers from the *Sociedad*, it became the first publication to have a permanent staff of photographers. Unfortunately, the pictures are not properly credited.103 The only names available are those of Salomon Vargas Machuca, who presumably acting as a photo editor was responsible for most of the magazine’s technical and stylistic innovations from the first years until 1922; and Modesto Sanjuan, who was responsible

103 The only name that appears on some images is José de Arce. See Sara Facio, “Investigación de La Fotografía Y Colonialismo Cultural En América Latina” (Hecho En Latinoamérica. Segundo Coloquio Latinoamericano De Fotografía, México D.F.: Consejo Mexicano de Fotografía, 1981), 104.
for the work produced by photojournalists, probably by assigning stories and selecting the images.\textsuperscript{104}

The magazine, which covered news, sports, arts and society, defended photographs as important sources of information in themselves. The magazine’s mission statement asserted that the only valued information was photographically-produced information, because it was considered to be more objective than the written report. Echoing European publications, \textit{Caras y Caretas} began incorporating photomontages by the 1920s, showing that the magazine was as avant-garde as its European counterparts, and that Buenos Aires’s cultural elite was up to date with the latest artistic trends. In addition, the special consideration of the photograph as an irrefutable piece of information was also an original stand for a magazine, given that the contemporaneous magazine \textit{Time}, for example, incorporated photographs but stated that: “[the magazine] has a ‘feel’ for pictures and a belief in their value [but only] as amplifiers of text.”\textsuperscript{105}

By 1921 the first magazine dedicated entirely to photography was launched in Argentina, a fact which reveals the increasing popularization of the media. Titled the \textit{Correo Fotográfico Sudamericano}, its editors had the ambition to surpass national boundaries to reach the entire South American continent.\textsuperscript{106} It featured a variety of images made through photography, disregarding the division between photojournalistic versus artistic intentions. The importance given to photographic images in printed publications grew exponentially during the twentieth century. The newspaper, \textit{La Nación} was the first major media outlet in the country to include photoengraving in the first years of the twentieth century, first in advertisements and then as


\textsuperscript{105} Hicks, \textit{Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography}, 37.

\textsuperscript{106} This was not a unique phenomenon. Many publications aimed to be a continental endeavor. Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, \textit{Ensayos Argentinos. De Sarmiento a La Vanguardia} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ariel, 1997), 60.
complements to news stories. It also published many photographic images printed in sepia in its Sunday supplement, although these were not photojournalist images, but rather pictorial photographs that attempted to follow standards and conventions taken from painting. The organizational structure of La Razón, a daily newspaper founded in 1905, included a special department of photography and a network of correspondents from around the country from its start. However, it was with Crítica, a daily founded in 1913, that pictures acquired a new status as informative components in their own right. Its tabloid format included bigger and more scandalous headlines accompanied by photographs, which made it more accessible to a readership with limited spare time to read the paper and a poorer knowledge of the language, competitive advantages in a city with a high number of lower class immigrants. In a few years, the paper conquered the middle-class market. However, the competition grew rapidly with the emergence of other illustrated newspapers such as El Mundo (1926), Noticias Gráficas (1931) as well as illustrated magazines such as Atlántida (1918) and publications that catered to specific audience niches, like sports, El Gráfico (1919), and women, Para Ti (1922). During the first decades of the twentieth century the boundaries between photojournalism and photography as art were blurred. However, by the 1920’s with the incipient institutionalization of the practice, the separation between what would become fine art photography and photojournalism emerged.

5. Photography as Art: Recognition and Consolidation

As photography increasingly carved out its own space in the mass media, another fight was underway in other centers of art. Since its creation, photography’s status as art was
controversial. This was the case in countries around the world and Argentina was not an exception. Photographers had two main strategies for validating their profession. The first was to create clubs and associations where their own peers would act as judges and supporters, for example, the aforementioned Sociedad Fotográfica Argentina de Aficionados. The second strategy was to follow as closely as possible the techniques deployed in painting, mainly in terms of composition, but also in terms of how they manipulated negatives and prints to add the “artist’s touch” in a style known as pictorialism. These two strategies can be perceived as the causes of the eventual split in photography’s subsequent development between art and journalism. On the one hand, as I have outlined in the previous pages, photographic clubs culminated in photojournalism in Argentina. On the other hand, the photographers that understood photography as another form of art followed or at least attempted to follow in the footsteps of museums, books, and exhibitions, and can be understood as the predecessors of art photographers. The following paragraphs retrace the early developments of photography as art, carried out by independent photographers, to show that even though there were some important developments to improve the status of photography these did not include photojournalism.

The Museum of Fine Arts of Buenos Aires organized the first photography contest in 1927, but there are no surviving records of the images presented. The archives show that all of the members of the jury were painters who probably favored pictorialism. Immediately following that, the National School of Fine Arts began offering a major in photography in 1928, almost certainly encouraged by the success of the contest. One photographer, pictorialist Alejo Grellaud directed the program, assisted by two painters: Carlos Ripamonte and Enrique de la Cárcova. De la Cárcova, probably Ernesto de la Cárcova’s son, is an obscure figure with no
clear affiliation, whereas Ripamonte was a known painter.\textsuperscript{107} He was also a member of the \textit{Nexus} group (1907), which defended art with \textit{criollo} subject matter, in favor of art that depicted foreign elements, which was brought to the country by the growing number of immigrants. Ripamonte was clearly a conservative artist.\textsuperscript{108} Furthermore, Grellaud was in no way a revolutionary figure, and has been described by photographer Sara Facio as “the prototypical amateur,” favoring conventional shots and \textit{costumbrista} subjects.\textsuperscript{109} The first photographic contest at the Museum of Fine Arts at Buenos Aires and the creation of a major in photography at the National School of Fine Arts might appear as weak proof that photography had become more recognized. However, it is important to note that these were the two most important art-related institutions in the country at the time. Also, these two sites for the visibility of photography allow one to infer that most likely there were other smaller, informal spaces for the teaching and diffusion of photography, for which there are no records. In fact, only the larger and more prestigious institutions left written accounts. In other words, despite the lack of records, the 1920s was a time when photography’s relevance in the art world increased and it began to be recognized as a valid form of artistic expression. Even so, photographers had not yet developed an innovative photographic language, but rather attempted to imitate painting in terms of subject matter and composition. Still, the events mentioned attest to the consolidation of photography in Argentina as a form of artistic expression, which finds its closure in 1930 with the celebration of the first annual international salon dedicated exclusively to

\textsuperscript{107} Ernesto de la Cárcova was a well-known Argentinian painter and held important positions in the National School of Fine Arts. His most famous work is \textit{Without Bread or Work} completed in 1893. Jorge López Anaya, \textit{Historia Del Arte Argentino} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: emecé, 1997), 61–63.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 87.
\textsuperscript{109} Facio, \textit{La Fotografía En La Argentina}, 45.
photography.\textsuperscript{110} This salon laid the groundwork for the next decade when the most important figures in artistic photography emerged: Horacio Coppola, Grete Stern and Annemarie Heinrich, who by quality and prestige became the holy trinity of Argentine photography.

The 1930s were a golden age of artistic photography in Argentina. The most famous artists working with photography all converged in this decade to influence the later development of photography. All three of them began to work during these years and each would become a master in his or her own field: Coppola, the city; Stern, the imagination; and Heinrich, the seduction of the celebrity. They benefited from a vibrant artistic scene, considering that during the 1920s artists such as Emilio Pettorutti, Xul Solar, Norah Borges, Alfredo Guttero, and Horacio Butler had all returned to the country after long residences in Europe and brought with them the latest artistic trends. During the 1930s this influx of creative figures and influences did not cease. On the contrary, because of the political instability in Europe, artists such as Juan del Prete and Antonio Berni also came back to the country and helped to modernize the artistic world. According to Gonzalo Aguilar, until this moment photography had still not achieved the status of a fine art. This was achieved, he argues, only after 1935 thanks, in large part, to the contributions of Coppola, Stern and Heinrich.\textsuperscript{111} However, I disagree with Aguilar. My research has indicated that photography’s status as art was encouraged during the preceding decade by specialized institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts and National School of Fine Arts. Still, it is true that the most successful works of art using photography emerged after 1935 with these three masters who developed a specific aesthetic independent from the canons of painting. Until this moment in history, there was no

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
clear photographic vision. These three artists were the first to give Argentine photography an artistic identity with its own aesthetic.

Horacio Coppola was the most famous and prestigious Argentine photographer.\textsuperscript{112} Coppola came from an upper class family of Italian immigrants with intellectual interests and rapidly became part of the Argentine intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{113} Coppola befriended Jorge Luis Borges, who would later become Argentina’s most famous writer and who was responsible for introducing Coppola to other intellectuals. Coppola’s first undertakings with images were done though cinema. According to Juan José Guttero, in the 1930s it was easier to access Sergei Eisenstein’s cinema than the photography of Edward Weston or Paul Strand.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, Coppola’s first influences in the understanding of images came through cinema rather than photography.\textsuperscript{115} During the first decades of his career Coppola experimented with both cinema and photography. His first acclaimed photographic work came when he provided images for Borges’s book \textit{Evaristo Carriego} published in 1930 (Figs. 1.9 A and B).\textsuperscript{116} The book featured two of Coppola’s images taken in 1929 portraying typical immigrant housing in the new neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. The typical architecture of these houses is a simple boxy structure with clear lines called “spontaneous Cubism” by art critic Adrián Gorelik.\textsuperscript{117} This fortuitous Cubism is emphasized in Coppola’s images through the flattening of space. These


\textsuperscript{114} Juan José Guttero, “Coppola,” in \textit{Fotógrafos Argentinos Del Siglo XX} (Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982), 1–2.

\textsuperscript{115} Coppola was involved in the creation of the first cinema club of Argentina and became its firts president. Ibid., 1.


photographs inaugurated the romance between Coppola and the city of Buenos Aires, which would be his most successful subject.

Borges also facilitated the publication of Coppola’s photographs in *Sur*, a literary magazine to which Borges was a contributor.\(^{118}\) Coppola was featured twice in 1931 and gained the praise of Jorge Romero Brest, the most important art critic of the time.\(^ {119}\) This newfound relationship, combined with his friendship with the Cubist painter Alfredo Guttero, and his attendance at the two Le Corbusier conferences in Buenos Aires convinced Coppola to travel to Europe on two occasions. During his second trip, he decided to stay longer and attended the prestigious Bauhaus art school in Germany. At the Bauhaus, Coppola refined his vision and embraced what can be called the photographic gaze. This way of seeing photographically features real subjects, mostly urban architecture, and employs extreme close ups, foreshortening, untraditional framing or arbitrary superimposition to emphasize the strangest elements in the familiar, and to underline the geometric quality of the designs. With the closure of the Bauhaus, Coppola moved to Paris, where he became a photographer for Christian Zervos’s prestigious publication *Cahiers d’Art*. During his time in Paris, he met important artists such as Marc Chagall and Henry Moore, whom he captured with his camera. In addition, this stay coincided with Brassaï’s publication of *Paris de nuit*. Coppola, who lived in the same hotel as the Hungarian photographer, was probably able to see those images first hand and

\(^ {118}\) *Sur Revista Trimestral*. It was published by the Argentinian poet and writer Victoria Ocampo, and had an international board committee with famous personalities such as Ernest Ansermet, Drieu La Rochelle, Leo Ferrero, Waldo Frank, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Alfonso Reyes, Jules Supervielle; José Ortega y Gasset. Jorge Luis Borges integrated the writer team board together with Eduardo J. Bullrich, Oliverio Girondo, Alfredo González Garaño, Eduardo Mallea, María Rosa Oliver, and Guillermo de la Torre.

began inspired to emulate that work upon his return to Buenos Aires.\textsuperscript{120} The stay in Europe would transform not only his work but also his personal life. He married German photographer Grete Stern and, together, they escaped the War in Europe. After a brief interlude in London, they travelled to Argentina together in 1936.\textsuperscript{121} Victoria Ocampo, a famous Argentine poet and founder of the literary magazine \textit{Sur}, organized the first Coppola and Stern photography exhibition (in the Southern Hemisphere) with enormous success at the end of 1935. The city Mayor visited the show and immediately commissioned Coppola to photograph Buenos Aires for the 400\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the founding of the city.\textsuperscript{122} Along with the publication of a photography book, Coppola applied his interest in the cinema to the making of a documentary film, which recorded the 1936 construction of the obelisk of Buenos Aires under the orders of Alberto Prebisch, the city’s most important proponent of modernist architecture. Coppola was one of the people responsible for constructing the mythology of Buenos Aires as the Paris of the South, starting with these first works and fueled by his never-ending fascination with the city, as captured in his photographs. He emphasized in his pictures the European influence on its architecture, and utilized an uncanny approach to superimposition “a la Atget.” In 1937, aware that the economic possibilities for an art photographer were limited, Coppola created a photographic publishing house. In this way he was able to publish his own photographic book featuring images of archeological pieces from La Plata Natural History Museum.\textsuperscript{123} However, this commercial endeavor was not completely successful and for his next publication, which

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Alberto Prebisch and Ignacio B. Anzoategui, \textit{Buenos Aires, 1936: Vision Fotográfica Por Horacio Coppola}. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1936), 50.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Fernando Márquez Miranda, Horacio Coppola, and Grete Stern, \textit{Huacos, Cultura Chimú} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones de la Llanura, 1943).
\end{itemize}
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portrayed the work of the Brazilian Baroque sculptor Alejadinho in Mina Gerais, he had to rely on funds from the Brazilian embassy obtained only in 1955, thirteen years after the original shots were taken. During the 1960s, Coppola gained increased recognition, and participated in several exhibitions. For example in 1969 he had his first show at the Museum of Modern Art of Buenos Aires. Coppola was a talented photographer and his influence transcended professional boundaries. He influenced artistic photographers as well as photojournalists who recognized this by including his work at ARGRA’s gallery many years later.\textsuperscript{124}

Grete Stern was already an established photographer with her own studio in Germany before moving to Buenos Aires. She studied drawing and design in Stuttgart, and photography with Walter Peterhans in Berlin. When he left for his teaching appointment at the Bauhaus in Dresden, Stern stayed on to run his studio, along with fellow student Ellen Auerbach.\textsuperscript{125} She helped Coppola to gain admittance to the famous school, which she had attended for a year in 1930. The studio she shared with Auerbach called \textit{Ringl & Pit} was avant-garde in its approach to the image, especially for advertising. Their images were celebrated not only in specialized circles, but also in art publications such as the Parisian \textit{Cahiers d’Art}.\textsuperscript{126} Following a short interlude in London, where she made memorable portraits of celebrities and intellectuals such as Bertolt Brecht, she immigrated to Argentina in 1936 with Coppola.

In Buenos Aires she focused on portraits. Photographer Saamer Makarius described her portraits as “gray faces” because as a result of her soft treatment of light, they had neither strong

\textsuperscript{124} ARGRA- \textit{Asociación de Reporteros Gráficos de la República Argentina}. Further information later.
shadows nor contrast. She continued portraying intellectual figures; many of her subjects were also her friends, including the artists Emilio Pettorutti, Juan Carlos Castagnino, Lino Enea Spilimbergo and Antonio Bern, and the writers Jorge Luis Borges, Ernesto Sábato, Parpagnoli, and Maria Elena Walsh. However, what received the most critical attention was a series of photomontages she did for the women’s magazine *Idilio* from 1948 to 1951 (Figs. 1.10 A and B). These photomontages were created following the narratives of dreams submitted by the magazine’s readers, who sent their stories in to receive an interpretation by Gino Germani. Germani was one of Argentina’s main scholars, responsible for introducing modern sociology into the country. In these texts he criticized the popularity and banalization of psychoanalysis. Stern’s photomontages were a visual articulation of these theories. Looking at the images it is possible to reconstruct the concerns of middle-class women of the time. Given Stern’s trajectory, they were legitimized as art early on and exhibited in the Foto Club Argentino in 1967. Her impact on the photographic world was due not only to her work as a photographer, but also to the invitation in 1956 from Jorge Romero Brest for her to organize the photographic section of the National Fine Arts Museum. In spite of the greater recognition held by Coppola’s works today, it was Stern who was the first photographer to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Buenos Aires in 1965. The couple divorced in 1942, but they

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continued to cross paths frequently as they both formed part of the cultural elite of Buenos Aires. They created a virtuoso circle in which it was the photographers who encouraged and promoted painters and sculptors. For example, the first Madi exhibition was held at Stern’s home in 1945. In turn, the photographers received support and validation as artists. Stern remained close to the artistic elite and exhibited her work internationally starting in 1975 when a retrospective exhibition of the work of former Bauhaus students was held in Berlin.132

The third key figure in Argentine photography was Annemarie Heinrich, the local master of the glamorous celebrity shot. Like Stern, Heinrich was a native German, who migrated with her family to Argentina when she was a child. From an early age, while she was still a schoolgirl, she worked as an intern in different photographic studios in Buenos Aires. The studios were all by run by German émigrés: Melita Lang, Rita Branger, Sivul Wilensky and Nicolás Schonfeld.133 She attempted to study at the School of Fine Arts, but abandoned her studies due to her weak Spanish. When she was just 18 years old, she opened her own studio in her house. Soon thereafter photography became the main source of income for her entire family. She eventually decided to rent a better space in the center of the city closer to the theaters. Her career grew exponentially in the late 1930s and 1940s with the development of the national film industry and the popularization of radio soap operas.134 Heinrich played a key role in creating local celebrities and benefited from the publication of magazines that exclusively featured these

133 It is interesting to note three were women, who suffered restrictions in other professional fields at the time but not in the photographic world. See Raúl di Giulio, “Heinrich,” in Fotógrafos Argentinos Del Siglo XX, ed. Centro Editor de América Latina. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982), 3.
public figures, including the most famous one at the time: Radiolandia.\textsuperscript{135} Heinrich, who was fascinated with dance and scenery, also photographed the international stars that performed at the Teatro Colón. It was this opulent opera house that inspired and drove her to develop her characteristic glamorous photographic look, in which she magisterially manipulated artificial light and extreme shadows, using texture, and interesting objects to add a level of sophistication to the figures (Fig. 1.11). According to the Argentine photographer, Juan Travnik, “Annemarie had the subtle capability of observation to retrieve from every portrait, a deep sparkling look, a unique, magical gesture.”\textsuperscript{136} In Argentina there was also a prosperous movie industry and publicity shots for films were also commissioned from Heinrich. By 1957, the first exhibition exclusively of celebrity shots was held in the commercial gallery of the department store Gath & Chaves displaying more than two hundred and fifty of her images.\textsuperscript{137}

Heinrich’s role in photography extended beyond her own studio. She worked tirelessly for the betterment of the trade, and for the improved status and working conditions of photographers in general. She was a founding member of the Foto Club Buenos Aires in 1945.\textsuperscript{138} She also participated actively in other associations such as the Asociación de Fotógrafos Profesionales and the Comité Central de la Federación Argentina de Fotografía. While these associations were not instrumental in the formation of the majority of famous photographers in Argentina, they did help to disseminate knowledge and to create some kind of network among their members. Heinrich also cofounded two other important projects, which I

\textsuperscript{135} Heinrich did Radiolandia’s cover shots for over forty years. Alejandro Eujanian, Historia De Revistas Argentinas 1900-1950. La Conquista Del Público. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Asociación Argentina de Editores de Revistas, 1999), 112.

\textsuperscript{136} Juan Travnik, Grandes Maestros de La Fotografía Argentina: Sentimiento de Imagen. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Estudio Heinrich Sanguinetti, 2006),100.

\textsuperscript{137} Di Giulio, “Heinrich,” 6.


These three photographers are important in terms of their photographic production, but also because they helped photography acquire a status as a fine art, and greater professional prestige for photographers.\(^{139}\) Although photojournalists do not usually cite these figures as direct influences, their work elevated the quality of images available and raised the general standards used to evaluate photography. They inaugurated a new way of seeing photographically in the country. Yet, in spite of their international origins, they are not well known outside of the country.\(^{140}\)

In sum, the 1930s marked an era of consolidation of photography as a fine art culminating in 1939 with the publication of the first comprehensive book about photography.\(^{141}\) While the impetus of photography as art continued, and these three photographers continued working and expanding their professional horizons, the 1940s saw the emergence of other important developments, which focused on the value of photography as a historical document. The first exhibition of daguerreotypes took place in 1942, and was organized by Julio F. Riobó,

\(^{139}\) Aguilar, “La Pasión de La Geometría.”


\(^{141}\) Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 47.
who was the most important connoisseur of early photography in the country.\textsuperscript{142} In 1944, the Witcomb Gallery functioned as a second venue for the show. At the same time, there were some initial attempts to create a national or provincial museum dedicated exclusively to the medium, which never materialized.\textsuperscript{143}

In addition, given political and social changes throughout the country, photography acquired a new role: as a tool for propaganda. In the 1940s a new political regime, Peronism, revolutionized the way of doing politics in Argentina. One of its objectives was to incorporate the masses of urban workers into the political scene. Images and party paraphernalia were key in the articulation and diffusion of the Peronist ideology. This political movement coincided with the larger volume of images being published due to technological advances. But the kind of images that were being published were also related to the political climate. Peronism was a movement that strongly relied on the charisma of its leader General Juan Domingo Perón, and his first wife Eva Duarte de Perón or Evita, and photography helped to consolidate their power. Images of them became widespread along with images of sports. It was then that photography started to be a tool of power since “state formation takes place, in part, in the visual sphere.”\textsuperscript{144}

According to Sara Facio, the images that circulated were systematically controlled.\textsuperscript{145} The government exercised a high level of censorship. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explain how Peronism utilized images and photography.\textsuperscript{146} What is relevant for this dissertation

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{145} Facio, “Investigación de La Fotografía Y Colonialismo Cultural En América Latina,” 105.
\textsuperscript{146} I will explain the relation between Peronism and photography in more detail in chapter 4.
in regard to Peronism is that the regime, with its military roots, had a strong nationalist agenda and this element worked as a rationale behind the historical value placed on the medium.

It is within this context that the most important trade union for photographers, ARGRA, the Asociación de Reporteros Gráficos de la República Argentina, was founded in 1942. Although originally independent, the association soon came under the direct influence of Peronism, as did the majority of workers’ unions at the time. This influence became especially acute during 1947-1951 when the government expropriated the majority of the media to create an official company—ALEA S.A.—which owned seventeen newspapers, ten magazines, two agencies, forty radios and the only TV channel. A Peronist decree created the photojournalist’s statute in line with the legal support that all unions received during the populist regime. Furthermore, by 1951 President Juan Domingo Perón recognized photojournalism as a specific trade by naming December 20 as the day of the photojournalist. In the beginning, ARGRA was an informal association with unclear objectives and no concrete benefits for its members. There were no significant changes in the organization of photojournalism until the 1970s. However, during the 1950s and 1960s individual photographers became more prominent giving the profession a new momentum.

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147 Cora Gamarnik, “Historia de ARGRA,” Asociación de Reporteros de la República Argentina, aRGrA, (n.d.).
6. Between Two Worlds: Modern Photojournalism in Argentina

Argentine publications of the time did not usually confer photographers proper credit, so when they did it was a signal of the individual’s fame, at least among photographers. From the 1930s to the 1950s Juan Di Sandro, a staff photographer of *La Nación* dominated the photojournalist scene. Few figures acted as a bridge between artistic circles and the photojournalist world. Di Sandro was a photojournalist, but from early on held exhibitions of his works, winning in 1942 the first prize in the first photographic salon of the journalistic association, *Círculo de la Prensa*. In 1943 he showed his works at the Foto Club Buenos Aires, presenting photographs closer to the conventional shots exhibited there: portraits and landscapes with traditional compositions. He worked at the newspaper his entire professional career from 1914 until his retirement as a chief photographic editor in 1968. He photographed innumerable subjects with his Speed Graphic camera, a rarity in Argentina. He was an innovator who looked for extreme angles, even carrying his own ladder to get to advantageous points. His nocturnal scenes were revolutionary for the time (Fig. 1.12). His images provided stimulating examples in the worn-out publications for a country that after a promising period in the 1920s and 1930s, had remained isolated from international photojournalistic trends in the 1940s and 1950s. It is not clear what kind of training he had, but he worked incessantly. In the 1960s he

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151 The *Círculo de la Prensa* was an association of journalists founded in 1891. By 1896 Bartolomé Mitre, Jr. was its president. Mitre’s family had founded and owned the newspaper *La Nación* in 1870. As a result, the development of the *Círculo* and the newspaper was closely tied. Given a lack of records, it is my conclusion that the photographic salon of 1942 was actually in honor of Di Sandro, who was the star figure of the newspaper’s photography. There were probably others salons, but no records survived to report them. See Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 70.

By the 1960s the publication of several illustrated magazines along the lines of *Vu* or *Life* drove the demand for photojournalistic pictures, and photojournalism achieved a new level of professionalization. One of the photographers responsible for this change was Francisco Vera from the publishing house Atlántida, who acted more as a graphic editor than a photographer and encouraged a new approach to capturing subjects, selecting the shots and giving more physical space to the images in the page layout. Still, most of the photojournalists he worked with had no formal training, and the majority remained anonymous. Usually they were self-trained, or took courses through amateur organizations of photographers, since the department of photography of the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes still favored pictorial photography.

7. Saderman, Rivas and Makarius: Thinking about Photography

In addition to the indisputable prestige of the figures from the “holy trinity” that started in the 1930s, throughout the following decades others photographers’ work started to impact the development of photography in the country. They are not well known outside of Argentinian photographic circles. But their work as well as their teaching influenced the practice of the trade. Anatole Saderman, Humberto Rivas and Sameer Makarius were photographers that

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153 Whelan, Robert Capa at Work: This Is War: Photographs 1936-1945, 15.
marked the trajectory of the field. They were not as famous as the artists from the “holy trinity,” but they produced noteworthy images and through their pedagogical and theoretical work they are fundamental elements in the reconstruction of Argentine photography. These photographers were rescued by younger generations of photojournalists and reclaimed as predecessors, showing that younger photojournalists had a more interesting and complete conception of their own trade. Most of the photojournalists interviewed acknowledged that they had learned about the use of light, composition, and framing from one or all of these artists, something that is especially important considering that the majority of them did not have any other formal training.\textsuperscript{156}

Anatole Saderman was one of the most important figures for photographers in Argentina. However, he has received scarce academic attention.\textsuperscript{157} Born in Moscow, he moved to Germany where he studied art history and drawing. He was close to the Russian intellectual expats in pre-War Berlin. He was a talented illustrator and he paid for his studies making


posters to announce the new films in cinemas. He escaped the rise of Nazism, first going to Paraguay, then to Uruguay. There, he was commissioned to write journalistic chronicles about the Americas, including taking the photographs to accompany those pieces. His first attempt at photography was thus through journalism. He learned the trade from Nicolás Yaroboff, another Russian. Later, working as an assistant in optical laboratories he learned the chemical aspects of photography. He returned for a short interlude to Paraguay where he opened the first photographic studio that relied only on artificial light in that country. In 1930 he moved to Buenos Aires, where for the first four years he was in no condition to open his own studio. When he finally did, he manufactured his own equipment, such as diaphragms and modified lenses. Although he always worked with photography, he became close to painters and sculptors early on. In 1937 he published a book titled Retratos de Plásticos Argentinos (Fig. 1.13), a collection of portraits of artists that was so groundbreaking it led the local art critic, Ricardo Figueira to affirm, “for many years a visual artist without a Saderman portrait was like a man without a face.” To be portrayed by him became a trophy in itself. The definitive acknowledgment of his artistry came in 1960 when the Fondo Nacional de las Artes acquired 300 photographic portraits of visual artists recognizing their value as testimonies. He went on to show his work in several institutions such as Museo Municipal Juan Castagnino and Museo de Arte Moderno. Saderman closed his studio in 1974, signalling the end of an era. Although, there are no records of his activities as a teacher, Saderman participated actively in amateur photography clubs. He wrote a famous essay in an ironic tone, enumerating ten pieces of advice for photographers that was a modest attempt to systematize the practice. In it he talked about

159 This list is interesting on its own. I see it as a proto-conceptual work of art in the style of Sol LeWitt’s Paragraphs on Conceptual Art (1967).
working with emotions, and not losing the faith and the passion in what one does. He rejected extravagant shots, preferring instead direct and non-manipulated photographs. Although, as mentioned, Saderman worked for a short time as a photojournalist in Montevideo, ARGRA honored him by including him in its gallery. The generation of photojournalists working in the 1980s reclaimed him as a predecessor, even though Saderman never attempted to align himself with the photojournalistic agenda. On the contrary, his approach to the métier was as an artist.

Humberto Rivas was another key figure in Argentine photography. Like Saderman, he studied drawing in his youth. Rivas even developed a long career as a fine arts painter, while collaborating with publicity agencies. In photography he was self-taught, and later he recognized that the major problem of photography in the country was the lack of schools providing adequate technical and theoretical information.\(^{160}\) He believed that a good photographer had to be familiar with the general history of art, and the lack of this formation, especially in Argentina, prevented photographers from becoming real artists.\(^{161}\) Rivas launched his career as a photographer exhibiting his works in the well-known *Galatea* gallery in 1959. On that occasion, Rivas met Juan Carlos Distéfano, director of the recently founded *Instituto Torcuato Di Tella*, who acted as a link to the artistic community. A year later, Rivas joined the *Di Tella* as a photographer but continued his activities as a painter until 1968. There, in a place where art experimentation was encouraged and supported with funds and materials, Rivas’s production acquired a new level.\(^{162}\) In addition, he became familiar with international


publications and photographs of Alfred Stiglitz, Richard Avedon, and August Sander. Before that experience, Rivas was only familiar with Cartier Bresson’s work. He befriended Saderman and Sameer Makarius and, in 1960, he became part of Forum, a group of photographers that worked to have photography recognized as art with more presence in the museums. With the closure of the Di Tella, he joined the Centro de Investigación, Arte y Tecnología for a short period. In his first acclaimed exhibition in 1975, he showed portraits influenced by Avedon (Fig. 1.14). Given the increasing violence leading up to the coup, he fled the country in 1976 for Barcelona. His career in Spain grew exponentially. He continued doing some work in advertising, but he also taught at the Grup d’Art Fotográfic de Barcelona. It was a good time to be working in photography in Spain, because many photographers were trying to improve the status of photography in the creative arts. He never returned to Buenos Aires, although his work did appear in a few more exhibitions in Argentina, and he maintained his personal links to other photographers.

Sameer Makarius is the third figure that combined theoretical or pedagogical work with the practice of artistic photography in Argentina. He had an itinerant life. Born in Egypt, he studied drawing, painting and sculpture first in Germany, and later in Hungary, where he participated in the first exhibition of non-figurative art in 1946. He was part of the Hungarian Group of Concrete Art, which had contact with Max Bill. Through Max Bill, Makarius met Werner Bischof, a Swiss photographer and photojournalist who was the first member to join Magnum after the four founders. After these encounters Makarius started what would become a definite switch to photography.\(^{163}\) Before moving to Argentina in 1953, he was an active member in that group of Concrete Art and only after three years of residing in the country, he

\(^{163}\) Osiris Chierico, “Makarius,” in Fotógrafos Argentinos Del Siglo XX, ed. Centro Editor de América Latina. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982), 4.
founded ANFA for *Artistas No Figurativos Argentinos*. Then, playing on his double role as a painter, he joined the *Arte Nuevo* group with Arden Quin and Aldo Pellegrini. He also participated in the *Otra Figuración* exhibition in 1961. However, his major impact in the history of Argentine photography came through his founding of *Forum*, and through his writings about photography. His work as a curator was also important; he not only organized his own exhibitions, but also those of other photographers, the most important one being *Vida Argentina en Fotos* in 1981 at the *Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires*, which travelled to other venues. In regard to his images, he was a highly innovative photographer in that he created completely abstract images through shooting directly, or by manipulating the negatives to different degrees (Fig. 1.15). These abstract images are color photographs, but he called them “*Projectos grama*.” Makarius was a versatile figure. He published a successful book with vistas of Buenos Aires following Coppola’s tradition in 1960, while two years before he had dedicated himself to shooting close ups of plants and vegetables. In 1967, he exhibited 150 portraits of local artists at the Museum of Modern Art as Saderman had done some time before.

This overview of these three figures shows that they had traditional art training before taking up photography and that they wrote about the medium with an awareness that critical thinking, better distribution and a theoretical framework were necessary to bring the practice of photography to a new level. They all were acutely concerned with the lack of serious institutions for the teaching of the trade and vocalized their complaints. The three were close to

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164 Museo de Arte Moderno, *Vida Argentina En Fotos*. The Museum of Modern Art, a pioneer in the exhibition of photography, has been in operation since 1956. However, from 1956 to 1960 it did not have its own building, so it organized its shows in galleries or artists’ studios. Then in 1960 it gained a physical space inside the San Martín theatrical complex. From there it acquired a clearer identity, although it was called “the ghost museum” given that the building was shared with many other artistic endeavors. It was only in 1986 when it earned a new independent building in San Telmo. However, given the country’s economic troubles the building did not open until 2010.
visual artists and considered themselves as such, although they felt, justifiably, that their status was not yet undisputed and they had to work to change that perception.

8. Groups as Validation

One clear sign of the validation that photographers from the 1940s on started to acquire was the fact that they organized groups for peer reviews, aware that the photo clubs were too amateur in terms of technique and too conservative in terms of aesthetics. The earliest one was *La Carpeta de los Diez* or The Folder of the Group of Ten, alluding to its original number of members, and to their methodology of work, in which each photographer circulated a print and a white page for commentaries in a binder.\(^{165}\) *La Carpeta* functioned from 1952 to 1959 with some volatility among its members.\(^ {166}\) As a group they also organized some exhibitions outside of the museum circuit. Original members included Annemarie Heinrich and Anatole Saderman; Di Sandro only participated in some of the activities, and Eduardo Colombo, who also worked mostly as a photojournalist, joined the group in the later years.

In 1956 Makarius, along with photographers Max Jacoby, Pinélides Fusco, Juan Bechis, and Rodolfo Ostermann created the group *Forum* to promote photography’s status and to advocate for the inclusion of photography in museums. Unlike *La Carpeta*, the main objective was to promote photographers’ work rather than to obtain peer feedback. Within a short period of time, José Costa, Julio Mauvesin, Humberto Rivas, and Lisl Steiner joined the group, which exhibited its members’ work until 1960. For the first *Forum* exhibition in 1956 at the *Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori* Argentine art critic, Aldo Pellegrini, wrote a text that served as

\(^{166}\) Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 57.
the group’s manifesto. In it, Pellegrini proclaimed that photography was art, but located the responsibility in the photographer: “Photography is art if the man behind the camera is an artist.” 167 The criteria for evaluating a photographic image as art thus depended on the photographer’s intentions and purpose, not the content nor the aesthetics of the image. On two occasions Pellegrini noted that photographers are active members of society and part of the social climate of the era. He stated that “[the photographer] takes his own stand before the facts … he would like to be the spokesman for his peers.” 168 Although Pellegrini did not characterize the photographer’s position as political per se, it is clear that the group had an interest in impacting society beyond aesthetics. They conceived photography as a subjective expression, the result of the conjunction of the photographer and his time, with the goal of changing and impacting society. Aware that these goals were ambitious, the manifesto concludes by stating that if the group could not achieve all its aspirations, at least its work would help to raise awareness and facilitate the achievement of those goals in future generations. This is compelling given that the next generation actually did take up this call. However, it was the photojournalists of the 1980s, rather than the visual artists, who achieved it.

9. Sara Facio or The Matriarch of Photography

By the 1960s the status of photographers had clearly improved. The field was welcoming for new and innovative figures and Sara Facio and her associates dominated the photography scene from that point on. A strong personality, Facio became the matriarch of modern photography in the country. She changed the field not only through her work as a

168 Ibid.
photographer, but more importantly as an editor, historian and curator. She was encouraging of other photographers, organized exhibitions and gave Argentine photography a historical context through her publications. Her contribution to the field of Argentine photography is enormous. However, she neglected to include some important photographic developments in her historical books in the field that became the canonical resources for the subject of photography in Argentina. People and groups not featured in Facio’s accounts have been forgotten in the history of photography in the country.

Facio graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in 1953. She travelled to Europe and studied art history for a year in Paris. Upon her return, through her friendship with her classmate at the Academy, Alicia D’Amico, Facio made her first foray into photography. D’Amico was the daughter of an optician who had a small photography studio and photographed social events. In 1960 Facio did an apprenticeship with Annemarie Heinrich, and by 1961 she was competing successfully in some international salons. She learned to photograph in color at the Kodak laboratories in Rochester. She mastered photographic technique early on in her career. Facio and D’Amico opened their photography studio together, which would last until 1985. They did various kinds of photographs, from publicity shots to photo-essays for the press. Before long, their fame and prestige grew exponentially. From 1966 to 1974 the pair had a weekly column in La Nación, in which they reported on the world of photography including: exhibitions, international colloquiums and relevant books. They also used the space to disseminate technical information about photography, which years later they compiled and published as a book.¹⁶⁹ This not only gave them visibility in a national newspaper, but also the opportunity to promote certain photographers, while disregarding others. They became the authority of photography in

Facio and D’Amico did not work as traditional photojournalism. Nonetheless, they did produce memorable pictures covering current events. Facio’s well-known image of a group of young people mourning the death of President General Perón in 1974 is an example. Facio covered the event for an international media organization, but upon seeing the widespread sorrow, she decided to take more photographs. The most famous one of that series is *Los Muchachos Peronistas* (Fig. 1.16). It features three young men and a woman. They were all in their early twenties, wearing the fashions of the day. It is a close up shot that portrays them from the shoulders up. They seem to be looking straight into the camera, although upon closer scrutiny it is apparent that they are looking to the upper left of the camera. Given the proximity of the shot, they are probably aware of the photographer’s presence. The central figure’s eyes capture the viewer’s attention, and his well-lit face becomes the focus of the picture. He would become one of the *desaparecidos* during the military regime that would take power just two years later.\(^{170}\) However, the picture fails to transmit a clear emotion. Without knowledge of who they are (Perón supporters) and what they are doing (attending the leader’s funeral), and what their future would be (disappeared), they do not communicate emotionally with the viewer. They do have straight faces and somber gazes, but this can be attributed to a myriad of factors. The only clear clue that the image is one of mourning is the black band that covers the flag, but given that the flag is not unfurled, but rather folded over the shoulder of the central figure, it is hardly visible. The expression on the young faces is not easily identifiable. It is thus not an iconic photograph, as the term will later be defined.\(^{171}\) It is part of a series that Facio did during

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\(^{171}\) See chapter 3.
that day, but it is not clear where it was originally published. It was published repeatedly in later years, not to evoke that moment but rather as an example of Facio’s dexterity. It was never re-appropriated.

Facio and D’Amico’s fame was not, therefore, associated with photojournalism, but rather with their authorial identities. Their first achievement in this direction was the publication of a book of photography titled *Buenos Aires Buenos Aires*. In contrast to Coppola’s previous endeavor portraying the city, in Facio’s work the urban architecture is not the protagonist. Facio focuses on the inhabitants of the city, mostly in interior shots. She shows not only the splendors of the town, but also its vices including marginal areas and lower class people (Fig. 1.17). Although Saamer Makarius had already published two books with comparable topics, *Buenos Aires y su Gente* (1960) and *Buenos Aires, mi ciudad* (1963) (Figs. 1.18 and 1.19), in her historical texts and numerous interviews Facio fails to acknowledge his influence. Given the small size of photography circles of the time, and the thematic similarities between their works, it is hard to believe that she was not influenced by Makarius’s publications.

Makarius includes people in his shots, but keeps a distance. They are part of the cityscape, walking or driving. They are not the protagonists of the picture but rather as anonymous as the buildings. It is actually this anonymity that is the protagonist of the shots. It is the unknown urban crowd that is the main subject in *Buenos Aires y su Gente*, while in the second book the different people acquire more relevance. In contrast, Facio’s images are more intimate, portraying the actual inhabitants in different settings, many times in their homes or workspaces. Thus, although the images are not portraits, they give the protagonists an identity through their activities. While the books are different in terms of style, it is still important to call the attention to Facio’s overlooking of Makarius in her historical narrative, because it is not the
only case where Facio fails to credit her predecessors or consistency in providing sources. Although her books are fundamental resources for Argentinean photography, they are written from a very personal point of view.

Facio and D’Amico’s follow-up book was *Humanario*. It was the result of an official commission to record the conditions of the facilities of a mental institution through photography. Once there, they decided to do a series of photographs portraying the calamitous situation of the insane residents. These images were produced in the early 1960s, but the book was only published in 1976, exactly two days after the military coup. The book had an introductory text by Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, who according to Facio had been previously censored. However, the writer always denied having been censored or persecuted, despite the fact that he lived in Paris and had openly leftist political inclinations. The book’s title also played with this connection to the Argentine writer, who in 1951 had published his first book of short stories titled *Bestiario*. Facio affirms directly that the book was censored, but she fails to give any more details. My conclusion is that bookshops, afraid that *Humanario* could have been censored for the photographic content or for Cortázar’s text, did not offer it. As a result, the book was in fact unavailable, but likely not officially censored.

What is indisputable is Facio’s contribution to Argentine photography with the founding of the first publishing house exclusively dedicated to photography, La Azotea, in 1973. The beginnings of this editorial house were rather fortuitous. María Cristina Orive, a photographer from Guatemala was visiting the Argentine poet Victoria Ocampo, who happened to be Facio’s neighbor. As a joke each woman answered what she would do upon winning the lottery. Facio

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said that her dream was to open a publishing house for photography. Orive thus offered the initial capital. So the two new friends teamed up and in 1973 La Azotea began to function. Given that they did not have a lot of capital for the business, the first publications were actually postcards. Orive and Facio travelled to Paris and visited Agathe Gaillard, who was opening a photography gallery in Paris. She was an immediate supporter of the project and not only agreed to sell the postcards in her gallery, but also recommended bookshops and specialized institutions. Soon their postcards were available in several international museum gift shops.

La Azotea was a successful endeavor that kept working and publishing books for thirty years. The first one was Humanario, which after that ill-fated beginning, was a success with the return to democracy. Facio recognizes that, thanks to Cortázar’s introductory text, the book has been sold out for many years. The first period of operation coincided with the dictatorship, as a consequence the activity of the publishing house was rather limited. Still, these years were not completely futile. La Azotea published Actos de Fe en Guatemala, a photographic book of Facio’s visit to Orive’s country in 1980. The focus of the book is on the religious rituals of the region, which mix catholic and pagan beliefs. It is a celebration of syncretism, visible in the architecture as well as in the costumes and celebrations. Again, the focus of the images is on the people and its activities, without being portraits. The images are an explosion of color, which successfully convey the vivid rites. Then in 1981, La Azotea published a compilation of contemporary photographers Fotografía Argentina Actual. It showed the full-page images in black and white. Besides Facio and D’Amico it included photographs by Oscar Pintor,

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Guillermo Gruben, Diego Goldberg, Daniel Rivas, Daniel Merle, Carlos Lennon, Andy Goldstein, Eduardo Comesaña, Humberto Rivas, Guillermo Loiácono, Jorge Aguirre, Juan Travnik, and Olkar Ramirez. Each author had a short accompanying text in Spanish, French and English, since the editors used every opportunity to offer their books internationally. With this book La Azotea mapped the territory of photography in the country. It inaugurated a series of books that defined who was who in the world of Argentine photography. Given the scarcity of such publications, La Azotea became the indisputable authority in defining who was doing relevant work in the field of photography. The photographers chosen all deserved to be included and merited recognition. However, the photographers that were excluded proved that the criteria for selection was highly subjective, and was based on Facio’s personal relationships.

In addition to La Azotea’s publications, three important events changed the course of Argentine photography during the dictatorship. The first one was the celebration of the first colloquium of Latin American Photography in 1978. The second milestone was the formation of the Consejo Argentino de Fotografía in 1979, and the third one, the first exhibition by a group of photojournalists in open defiance of political restrictions in 1980, as well as a revised version in 1981. Facio’s role in the two first was key. However, she is completely absent from the photojournalism exhibitions organized at the time.

10. Hecho en América Latina: The First Latin American Colloquium on Photography

In May 1978 in Mexico City photographers and scholars from the region congregated to discuss the problems of the field in the region. Although mostly forgotten from the history of
Latin American photography, the debates that unfolded over the course of these few days were of paramount importance. It was the first opportunity for photographers from the region to show their work, since an exhibition was carried out at the same time as the conference. More importantly, it was the first opportunity to think about the scope, ramifications and implications of their own profession. There is no register of all of the participants, but there was a book, which compiled the talks given during the colloquium.\footnote{Consejo Mexicano de Fotografía, ed., \textit{Hecho En Latinoamérica. Primer Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía} (México: Consejo Mexicano de Fotografía, 1978).} Thus, it is possible to access the names of the presenters and the content of the discussions. This became the first published material on Latin American photography as a whole. In addition, at least in the case of Argentina, the participants formed productive networks after the event.

The main organizers of the colloquium were Pedro Meyer and Raquel Tibol, members of the \textit{Consejo Mexicano de Fotografía} created in 1977. Although Tibol was originally from Argentina, she had left the country in her youth and developed her career as an independent art critic in Mexico. The colloquium was thus a Mexican effort, inspired by similar events celebrated in that country for other disciplines such as the \textit{Congreso Nacional de Artistas Plásticos} celebrated in 1972. D’Amico, Orive and Facio contributed to the activities. D’Amico and Orive each presented a paper, while Facio in partnership with D’Amico exhibited photographs. It is not established if they also collaborated with the organization of the event, but it is clear that their work with La Azotea was recognized as a pioneering regional effort for the benefit of photography.

Many authors talked about “social photography” as intrinsically Latin American. As a kind of image that only the Latin American photographer was able to produce because he or she
was able to understand the contradictions of the region. However, the characteristics of this style were never addressed, and thus an interesting point remained rather vague and elusive.176

It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the papers were inscribed with a radicalized leftist discourse related to the political conflicts in which most of the countries in Latin America were immersed at the time. The big exception was Cornell Capa’s presentation.177 He had worked in the region and denounced the calamitous state of publications and conditions of photographers. Camilo Lleras, from Colombia, also complained about the lack of publications and institutions for teaching and promoting photography, mentioning as exceptions Facio’s and D’Amico’s aforementioned column in *La Nación* and Boris Kossoy’s writings in Brazil. Many presentations also mentioned the old debate regarding photography’s lack of objectivity. The most articulated position was that of Giselle Freud, who discussed the impact settings have on photographic images in changing their intended meaning.

After reviewing historical publications that used photography in Argentina, Alicia D’Amico used her presentation to denounce the censorship that reigned in the region. She rightly pointed out that there are different kinds of censorship, the most obvious one being explicit prohibition by the authorities in power. She elaborated that there is also censorship from religious institutions and from publications that are beholden their own economic interests. She analyzed Argentine photojournalism and explained that it was difficult to work, given the censorship that had already been internalized, meaning that before pressing the shutter to make a photograph, photographers avoided controversial subjects a priori. However, she pointed out

176 See for example the presentations by Cornell Capa, Alicia D’Amico, Giselle Freud, Mario García Coya, and Raquel Tibol in *Ibid.*
that the situation was changing for photographers. They were slowly maturing. She argued that it was a strong political commitment that best characterized photojournalism. She affirmed that in Latin America, the photograph had become a form of actual testimony. According to D’Amico, photographing is an “act of consciousness.”\textsuperscript{178} Through the photograph, she continued, the author “thinks and feels.”\textsuperscript{179} This is the ideology of the picture. The position of seeing photography as completely engaged with politics and with the fight for freedom in the continent, was also advocated in Tivol’s talk. She also argued that journalism took photography out of the salon and provided it with more social relevance. Orive also praised the work carried out by photojournalists.

According to Andy Goldstein, a photographer who attended the colloquium, it was an opportunity to meet new people and to be known. He went alone to the colloquium, but once there befriended Facio and D’Amico.\textsuperscript{180} According to Facio, during the colloquium a Latin American committee was organized with the function of replicating the model of the Mexican Consejo de Fotografia in each country. As a result, the Argentines created the Consejo Argentino de Fotografía (CAF) together with Annemarie Heircheich and Juan Travnik in 1979. Later Oscar Pintor and Julie Weisz joined the group. They worked for the diffusion of Argentine photography inside and outside the country, and as Facio explained, the CAF supported all kinds of photographs as a means of expression during years of limited freedom.\textsuperscript{181} D’Amico and Orive strongly supported photojournalism with their presentation at the


\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{180} Andy Goldstein, interview by author, Tape recording. Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 11, 2007.

\textsuperscript{181} Facio, \textit{La Fotografia En La Argentina}, 61.
In 1980 they organized an exhibition of their own work. Unfortunately there are no surviving records, neither of this exhibition, nor of other CAF activities. At this point, it seems that Facio and her group supported and encouraged the development of professionals in photojournalism. The book *Fotografía Argentina Actual* included people working as photojournalists and from the fifteen photographers featured, five participated that same year in the first exhibition of photojournalism: Aguirre, Grueben, Loiácono, Longoni and Merle. Facio and D’Amico did not participate. The efforts of the independent photojournalists are only briefly mentioned in Facio’s historical narrative and completely marginalized from creative photography. She writes: “By the mid 1980s, with the return of democracy, artistic photographers found an environment that was again conducive for creative work.”\(^{182}\) Disregarding the images produced and exhibited during the dictatorship by photojournalists. Given the small scale of the Argentine photographic community, and the fact that both Facio and D’Amico, and the group of young photojournalists working at the time were all opposed to the military dictatorship, and had similar understandings of photography’s role as social testimony and political statement, it is notable that they did not collaborate with each other more. This lack of collaboration was detrimental to photojournalism at first. In fact, as this dissertation shows in the next chapter, it was detrimental to Argentine photography as a whole.

\(^{182}\) “Se puede decir que recién a partir de mediados de 1980, con la bienvenida de la democracia, los fotógrafos creativos renacieron, se informaron de lo que ocurría en el mundo libre y comenzaron a crear.” Ibid., 98.
Chapter 2

Photojournalism as Dissent

This chapter delves into the repercussions of the military regime within the photojournalism profession. In spite of individual cases of political persecution and kidnappings, photojournalism as a profession benefited during this turbulent time. I argue that as a result of the military dictatorship, photojournalism became a more professional activity with a defined political identity and renewed prestige, although as shown in the previous chapter, the profession was divorced from artistic venues.

I analyze in particular the photographic exhibitions held in 1980 and 1981. Given the scarcity of cultural events, these two exhibitions, which were organized by informal associations of photographers, received ample attention: thousands of people attended and the national media also covered the events amplifying their impact. I analyze some of the images based on their aesthetic value, but I also contextualize these exhibitions by showing how they functioned to manifest dissent.

1. Photojournalism during the 1970s: The Creation of Agencies

Political and social unrest was a constant in Argentina during the 1960s, a decade during which two democratically elected presidents—President Arturo Frondizi in 1962 and President

Arturo Illia in 1966—were overthrown by military coups. As a consequence, the 1970s started under military rule. In 1973, the Peronist party, which had been proscribed since 1955, recovered power. However the radical positions of its followers, ranging from the extreme right to the extreme left, provided a new level of volatility. In this context Perón, in his third and last term as president, issued a decree that prohibited international news agencies from providing national coverage to the local media. At the time, the main news agencies in Argentina were United Press International (UPI) and The Associated Press (AP). Both had provided news coverage for national and international media, but following Perón’s decree they were forced to focus only on the international media, since the distribution of news for the local media was prohibited.

Given this scenario, editors from different publications decided to come together and organize agencies for the local demand. The most relevant for this dissertation is Noticias Argentinas because it understood photographs as an essential part of news reports giving photographers a prominent role. Thus this agency became of paramount importance in the development of photojournalism in the country. It had an entire photographic division with its own staff of photographers even though the majority were hired as freelancers. Before the creation of Noticias Argentinas, the photojournalistic image was subject to the selective criteria of the editor-in-chief, with complete indifference to the photographer’s intentions or

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185 Most news agencies in Argentina catered exclusively to one publication, instead of having several publications as clients. Therefore their political views, and also their economic fates, were linked to those of their clients. Many publications during the dictatorship were short-lived and the agency associated was destined to the same fate.
186 The law was enforced until 1978 when the regulation changed because of the Soccer World Cup.
187 Lasansky, interview.
preferences. According to Daniel García, the photography director of the Agence France-Presse (AFP) in Argentina, before the dictatorship photojournalism was seen as a door to the world of newspapers, but not as an end per se. It was what one did while waiting to become a “real” journalist. Noticias Argentinas helped to change that perception.

The experience of Noticias Argentinas served to provide photographers with an opportunity to gain independence and self-confidence in their trade. For example, after working at Noticias Argentinas, a group of photographers, among them Eduardo Grossman, César Cichero, and Victor Steinberg, created SIGLA (the Spanish acronym for Servicio Informativo Gráfico Latino Americano) in 1974-75, an agency in which photographers were in control of the entire production process. Like in its predecessor, Magnum, the photographers at SIGLA were involved in the editing process. This was a big step for the profession because, as explained above, the selection of photographs for the most part was under the editorial department’s domain. SIGLA photographers exercised their authorial rights over images and gained relative independence. SIGLA worked as a cooperative and provided images mainly to the partisan newspaper Diario Noticias. Unfortunately, due to economic instability, they were forced to close down in 1979.

Later that same year, Noticias Argentinas split up into different agencies, as a result of an association between the four main newspapers and the military government to produce paper in the face of a paper shortage. This close collaboration between the newspapers with the

190 Cora Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción De La Primera Muestra De Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura” (presented at the 5o Jornadas de Jóvenes Investigadores Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2009), 8.
191 Ibid., 5. SIGLA also worked with photographers outside the country, such as Paulo Santiago from Brazil.
regime was not welcomed within the ranks of the news agency.\textsuperscript{192} While one group remained at Noticias Argentinas, another leftist group created a separate agency called Diarios y Noticias (DyN) with the state as a shareholder. DyN became operational only around 1981-82, under the directorship of Miguel Angel Cuarterolo, and would go on to have an important role mainly in the circulation of information regarding the Falkland’s War in 1982.\textsuperscript{193} Since Miguel Angel Cuarterolo was a photography enthusiast, he encouraged the photographers’ work.\textsuperscript{194} Throughout the agency’s history several of the most prestigious photojournalists worked there: Amado Bécquer Casaballe, Eduardo Frías, Adriana Lestido and Dani Yako.

In 1982, the main photographer during the Falkland’s War, Rafael Wollmann, along with Tito La Penna, Silvio Zuccheri, and Eduardo Bottaro formed \textit{Imagen Latino Americana} (ILA), in an attempt to serve international media present in Argentina and abroad and to gain a certain degree of autonomy. Regrettably, as is the case with all these agencies, no written records survived and the chronology has to be reconstructed from oral accounts, which cannot be considered completely reliable and which often contradict each other.\textsuperscript{195}

2. The Military Junta and the Press: Beyond Censorship

The same day that the military overthrew the civilian government on March 24, 1976, a communiqué was issued stating that anyone publishing information that could somehow be interpreted as damaging to the new regime would be prosecuted and sentenced to ten years in

\textsuperscript{192} As mentioned in note 184, it was a common practice to cater exclusively to one publication.
\textsuperscript{193} The coverage of the Falklands War will be analyzed in chapter 4. Still, it is important to mention that according to \textit{Noticias Argentinas}’ archive this agency was the only agency to report the truth during the armed conflict and that was the reason it was forced to close.
\textsuperscript{194} He later wrote about photography. See his complete works in the bibliography.
\textsuperscript{195} García, interview; and Pablo Lasansky, interview.
prison.\textsuperscript{196} The wording was vague enough to encompass all the activities that could represent the slightest level of opposition, discouraging any kind of criticism. Interestingly, images were specifically mentioned, and were considered as damaging as any other piece of information. The military arbitrarily abided by the photojournalistic maxim that states: “There is no softening or hushing the voice of the photograph. It must be allowed to say what it wants to, or be censored entirely,” and chose, not surprisingly, the second option.\textsuperscript{197}

As soon as they took power, the military junta met with the main representatives of the media to indicate what the regime expected from them. Four weeks later, they verbally forbade any kind of reference to subversive episodes, the finding of corpses, killings, kidnappings or disappearances unless they were first acknowledged in the official bulletin.\textsuperscript{198} It was an effective way of controlling and censoring information. It must be clarified that even though the vast majority of killings and crimes were carried out in secrecy, there were a few assassinations conducted out in the open in public spaces. In those cases the armed forces staged the crime scene in an attempt to make the assassination appear to be a dispute between two equal opponents, favoring the official version of what happened.\textsuperscript{199} It was a way to acknowledge certain victims, who often had been killed under totally different circumstances than those presented.\textsuperscript{200} On other occasions, corpses displaying clear signs of torture washed ashore, but not many made the news.\textsuperscript{201} The information published in all the newspapers was eerily similar,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 23–4.
\item Hicks, Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography, 107.
\item Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 23–4.
\item Cora Gamarnik, “Imágenes de La Dictadura Militar. La Fotografía de Prensa Antes, Durante y Después Del Golpe de Estado de 1976 En Argentina,” in Artículos de Investigación Sobre Fotografía (Montevideo, Uruguay: Centro de Fotografía, 2011),60-64.
\item The most famous case was the kidnapping of Norma Arrostito who in the newspapers appeared as dead during an armed confrontation. See more information below.
\item Natasha Niebieskikwiat, “La CIDH Entrega Hoy 130 Fotos De Víctimas De ‘Vuelos De La Muerte’,” Clarín (Buenos Aires, Argentina, December 15, 2011), sec. Política. The question of
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inspiring the famous expression that all the newspapers were the “cadena nacional” (national channel) referring to the moment when all TV channels transmitted the same program: a presidential speech. There was no room for questioning.

The military government was cautious enough, at least officially, to never enunciate the word censorship. However, it effectively controlled the press, although to what degree is still debated. Many publications were forced to stop circulation as a result of direct orders, or by the editorial houses’ own decision if they thought that shutting down was the safest move under the intimidating circumstances. This was the case with Cuestionario, a partisan publication. Others underwent intervention, meaning that the top positions were filled with people close to the government’s agenda, this was the case of La Opinión. In addition to the more informal verbal orders, the regime created a new office in charge of controlling press content, COMFER (the Spanish acronym for Comité Federal de Radiodifusión) and a service with the suggestive name of “Previous Reading,” which functioned from the official executive building La Casa Rosada. These changes had a precarious legal status until officially incorporated into the law in 1980-81. Still, they were fully obeyed at the time.

In regard to the photographic images produced, there was an important change in terms of the kind of pictures published in the months immediately before the coup and those published

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how much information about the finding of corpses made the news during the dictatorship is controversial. It is a common belief that the population at large did not know the extent of what was going on behind the closed doors of the military repression centers. However, some inexplicable findings of corpses were reported in the press. León Ferrari, the Argentinian artist with a disappeared son, saved those newspaper clippings from March to December 1976 and used them in a conceptual work of art that disputes the “we did not know.” Thanks in part to the MoMA exhibition in 2009, English publications on Ferrari have grown recently. See Luis Perez-Oramas, Leon Ferrari & Mira Schendel: Tangled Alphabets, 1st ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009).

Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 24.

Ibid.
after the coup.\textsuperscript{204} Prior to the coup, images of bombings, street violence, corpses and death were abundant, even in conservative newspapers such as \textit{La Nación}. Material losses and destruction caused by the seditious forces were usually the emphases. (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2). The change in the photographic content published in the press can be attributed to several factors. First and most importantly, there was the explicit order to stop the publication of violent or critical images, as mentioned. As Diana Taylor argues, “the image of the dangerous, ‘crazy,’ ‘irrational’ left-wing movement was to a great extent created by the various factions of the Right.”\textsuperscript{205} Newspaper coverage of daily life in Argentina emphasized and focused on civil disturbances over the period of 1973-76.\textsuperscript{206} Before the coup, images of bombs, destruction and violence were featured often accompanying the written condemnation of such terrorist acts. The main reason was that as an interest group, the leading newspapers and magazines agreed with the military’s agenda.\textsuperscript{207} As Robin Andersen states in analyzing visual material in Latin America: “It is not the fact that the press published pictures of chaos that makes them singularly ideological, it is the fact that they consistently presented chaotic images to the exclusion of so many others, thereby presenting chaos itself as the totality of experience that makes them ideological.”\textsuperscript{208} The press was not only filled with chaotic images, but also news articles and the way the information was presented were also biased. In addition, an ad campaign by the nationalist organization Liga Pro Comportamiento Humano asked for a military intervention.\textsuperscript{209}

\textsuperscript{204} Gamarnik, “Imágenes de La Dictadura Militar. La Fotografía de Prensa Antes, Durante y Después del Golpe de Estado de 1976 En Argentina,” 58–60.
\textsuperscript{205} Taylor, \textit{Disappearing Acts}, 54.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Blaustein, \textit{Decíamos Ayer}, 30.
\textsuperscript{209} See Chapter 4.
Then the coverage switched following March 24, 1976 and those types of images were rarely seen afterwards. They practically vanished from newspapers and illustrated magazines and they were replaced by images of peaceful discourse, military parades and sports. Journalist Eduardo Blaustein in his analysis of press coverage during the first years after the coup describes it as “support by omission.” While newspapers did mention armed confrontations during the dictatorship, they rarely published images of the dead. When the victims were officials—military or police—only their archival identification portrait, a frontal or three-quarters profile, was published. Blaustein points out that this type of photograph was embarrassing for photographers because of their lack of originality and repetitive character. In contrast, when the dead were from the “rebel” groups, no picture or portrait was published. These individuals were denied a photograph, not even one from official documents or police files. This was done perhaps in an attempt to render them anonymous, denying the possibility of empathy from the viewer or reader with the victim. There was, however, at least one famous exception. When Norma Arrostito, a leader of the Montoneros guerrilla group who was responsible for one of the most repudiated terrorist acts against the military, was kidnapped, the military lied to the press and issued a false statement reporting her death. This false information was published with accompanying pictures, showing the staged scenario of the death, and other images showing her face, probably from police files. The inclusion of pictures made even fabricated information credible to the viewer and highlights how the military consciously manipulated the media.

210 Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 31.
211 Eduardo Blaustein quoted in Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” note 7.
212 Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 163–5.
213 See chapter 4, section “Lying with Pictures,” for more detail about this problem.
It is important to keep in mind that when the military assumed power, the repression of “subversive” forces had already been in force for some time. In fact, the most visible struggle was coming to an end since leftist guerrilla groups had been severely weakened before the coup; the more virulent years were 1974-75, immediately before the coup. In later years, violence was eliminated from the streets, limited mostly to acts carried out in clandestine centers out of the public’s sight. As a result, the military argued that they had brought peace to the streets. Media scholar Cora Gamarnik confirms that two newspapers, *El Mundo* and *Noticias* were forced to close before the coup. She also narrates the story of a journalist forced into exile, but again, this was in the years immediately before the coup.

During the dictatorship the junta kidnapped many journalists, but their disappearances or arrests seem to be tied mainly to their political activities in trade unions or associations, not to their work as journalists. According to data published in *Nunca Más*, a report from The National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) created under the sponsorship of President Raúl Alfonsin on December 15, 1983, to investigate the fate of the desaparecidos and other human rights violations, 1.6% of all disappeared persons were journalists. The official report consisted of over 50,000 pages of documentation, including each individual case documented in a numbered file. CONADEP recorded the forced disappearance of about 9,000 people over the period of 1976-1983, although the commission noted that the actual number could be higher (estimates by human rights organizations usually place it at 30,000 persons). The report also confirms that about 600 people were “disappeared” and 458 were assassinated.

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(by death squads such as the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance) during the Peronist governments from 1973 to 1976.

The report estimates that by 1977, 100 journalists were assassinated while another 200 were imprisoned illegally. However, there is no specific mention of photojournalists. From later unofficial, informal accounts, it can be concluded that 23 photojournalists were disappeared and killed during the dictatorship.\(^{217}\) The highest number of victims corresponds to the first two years of the regime.\(^{218}\) My research cannot confirm the commonly held belief that press photographers were targeted specifically. Sara Facio affirms that many photojournalists were affected “not only because their job was now limited, but also in their own physical integrity. Many were disappeared, and many abandoned the country for security reasons.”\(^{219}\) However, she does not provide any evidence, nor does she mention a specific episode. The only incident narrated is from a previous military government that ruled the country from 1966 to 1973, when the acting president, General Juan Carlos Onganía closed an exhibition of the photographic book *Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires* by Sara Facio and Alicia D’Amico because Julio Cortázar, who had criticized the government from Paris, wrote the book’s introduction. Facio also mentions exiled photographer, César Cichero as “being too risky for Buenos Aires” to support her argument of the persecution against photographers.\(^{220}\) But Cichero’s most significant image is the one that shows General Juan Domingo Peron’s wife, Isabel Martínez de Perón, Isabelita, as president just months before the coup, giving a speech at the main branch of the worker’s union (CGT for its acronym in Spanish) (Fig. 2.3). The picture, Facio alleges, contributed to


\(^{218}\) This list does not include the forced exiles.

\(^{219}\) “Los reporteros gráficos se vieron afectados no sólo en su trabajo, que se fue limitando, sino también en cuanto a su integridad física. Hubo desaparecidos, y muchos otros dejaron el país en busca de seguridad.” Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 105.

\(^{220}\) Ibid., 116.
Isabelita’s fall, since she appears like a puppet, with crazy looking eyes and exaggerated gestures, while the men that surround her smile openly, unable to hide their laughs. The immediate conclusion is that the president is insane and her ministers laugh at her. This was a widely circulated image and it reinforced her already negative public image. I agree that this photograph contributed to bringing Isabelita into disrepute, but again this image corresponds to the period before the coup, and Facio fails to identify any other politically important picture by Cichero. Although it is an unfavorable image, it was not a “stolen” photograph. On the contrary, it was taken at an official speech, not a risky circumstance in itself, and it was ultimately functional to the military regime that was already conspiring to overthrow the government.

On the other hand, photojournalists, aware of the selective process that their pictures suffered once they turned them over to the agency, often shot with two cameras, made extra shots or used entire rolls that were kept for their personal archive.221 As a result, they possessed many images that were never published, nor stored in the agencies’ archives.222 Also, there was a black market for the sale of images to foreign media.223 Many photographers benefited from this practice, especially during the 1978 World Cup hosted by Argentina. In fact, according to Cora Gamanik, this was also the way that photographs of the human rights organization Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo made it into publications outside the country.224

The most dramatic narration about the pressures and abuses suffered by photojournalists under the dictatorship comes from photographers Aldo Amura and Amado Bécquer

221 Calviño, interview.  
222 Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 6.  
223 Ibid.  
224 Ibid.
Casaballe. They affirm that five out of ten photographers from the Montoneros publication *El Descamisado* were disappeared. It is not clear when these kidnappings and killings happened, although it is known that the magazine closed in 1974. Again, the specific acts would correspond to the period before the coup, coinciding with the period of early but severe repression of the left. In addition, Carlos Pesce, another well-known photographer, explains that the assignment for which he received the most threats was his coverage of a civil demonstration in 1974. In conclusion, despite accounts that claim that photographers were persecuted, to date, there is not enough evidence to prove an organized targeting of them.

To call attention to this discrepancy between Facio’s account and the actual incidents registered is not, however, to minimize the terrorizing atmosphere that reigned. The directors of four publications (Jacobo Timmerman from *La Opinión*; Robert Cox from *The Herald*; Horacio Agulla from *Confirmado*; and Julian Delgado from *El Cronista Comercial*) and Oscar Serrat, director of the local office of *Associated Press*, were all tortured, forced into exile or disappeared. The danger was real and strongly felt. According to Jerry Knudson, approximately 400 journalists fled the country after receiving death threats aimed at them or their families. The first incident of repression against journalists during the dictatorship was a search conducted at the office of Noticias Argentinas in 1977. According to Daniel García, the search was aimed at locating a specific photographer and his rather innocuous picture showing the face of a soldier guarding a military operation at the *Hospital Italiano* in the city of Buenos Aires where the army was trying to capture two alleged members of the Montoneros guerrilla movement. The picture was taken with the camera hanging from the neck of the photographer at

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226 Facio, *La Fotografía En La Argentina*, 111.
the height of his stomach and the face of the soldier was not clearly visible, and even less recognizable was the location, but it still unleashed repression.\textsuperscript{228} This episode reverberated in the small circles of photojournalism in Argentina, undoubtedly reinforcing the already sensed feeling of vulnerability.

From my own research I can affirm that at least two photojournalists who were kidnapped and tortured, survived. Dani Yako, one of the most admired photographers among his peers, was kidnapped when he was nineteen years old. He had just finished high school and was working as a freelance photojournalist at Noticias Argentinas while studying to become an architect. He attended the most prestigious and politicized high school in the country, the \textit{Nacional Buenos Aires}, the school with the highest number of students kidnapped and killed during the most horrible years of the dictatorship from 1976 to 1978.\textsuperscript{229} He received threats for his work as early as 1974 when he covered an event involving the violent action of the paramilitary group \textit{Triple A}. In October 1976, when he was kidnapped, it was motivated by his personal relationship with Graciela Feinstein, who was not involved with the guerillas, but was a member of the Communist Party of Argentina. His freelance position with Noticias Argentinas saved his life, as the director of the agency at the time, Horacio Tato, interceded on his behalf to get him released. When Yako returned to the house from where he had been taken, he found that many items were stolen, although, his photographer’s bag was intact.\textsuperscript{230} Eduardo Frías, an older photographer, was also kidnapped and tortured but released. Though he was more reticent to talk about what happened to him, in a personal interview he explained that only recently during one of the civil trials that are still ongoing, he found out that he was kidnapped

\textsuperscript{228} García, interview.  
because his name appeared in the phonebook of a subversive leader, but not for his actions as a photographer.231

From existing material evidence, we can infer that there was not a systematic coercion of photographers during the dictatorship. The reason for this lack of systemic repression remains uncertain and puzzling, given the regime’s awareness of the communicative power of photographic images. A possibility is that the military focused on persecuting journalists and people in charge of the publications rather than the actual authors of the images. The military probably concurred with the photojournalistic principle that “the most important thing that can happen to a picture is being published” rather than being produced/shot.232 In addition, the majority of coercive activities were carried out secretively, and even if some photojournalists may have had the opportunity to shoot a compromising picture, they probably refrained because they knew what kind of images would be published and the risk was too big for an image that would not be published. Self-censorship was a reality that all journalists and photographers experienced and recognized later on. Taylor explains that the general population’s fear of being identified as “subversive” increased due to the imprecision of rules applied to what were often arbitrary decisions taken by those acting in the name of the military government.233

Still, a few images of dissent were produced, and published only later. One of the most fascinating examples is a picture that shows soldiers taking position before a military action on the street, while the pedestrians seem to be unaware of what is happening (Fig. 2.4). It is a photograph taken on September 17, 1976, and the author remains unidentified. It was located in Clarín’s archive but it was not published at the time, since it did not record any news. For this

232 Hicks, Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography, 92.
233 Taylor, Disappearing Acts, 11.
reason, it is a compelling image that records how violence became a part of every day life that people got used to and as a result they did not change their routines in any way. This photograph became known after its inclusion in Pablo Cerolini’s fundamental compilation of photojournalism of the time *En Negro y Blanco*.²³⁴

The picture is shot from an elevated window. It is an image from the top down in which, given the extreme foreshortening, the architectural shapes appear as abstract figures. However, the image does not follow Alexander Rodchenko’s extreme angles and radical vertical foreshortening, through which people are reduced to points. Here, although taken from a diagonal, we can observe the totality of the bodies, and as a consequence we can identify the characters. On the bottom right corner we see a pale triangle, out of focus given its proximity to the camera, which is the outside cornice of the window. By its inclusion in the frame, we understand that the picture was a quick shot. Its author did not have the time to set the camera in the most advantageous position. We assume that the photographer was semi hidden inside a house or office. The people are not aware of being photographed. The image feels stolen.

The geometry of the image is compelling. On the upper part we observe the building across the street, with the first floor extending out the sidewalk creating an inverted triangle that works as an arrow guiding our gaze to the main character of the image, a senior citizen. The sharp angle of the bigger triangle appears menacing, and intensifies the feeling of imminent danger. However, it is not a record of action or violence. It is a candid representation of business carried on as usual. However, there is nothing typical in having soldiers with weapons taking position on a city sidewalk while an old man goes shopping and a high school student observes the scene. It is visual testimony of how, during exceptional times, such as during dictatorships, the parameters of normality change.

3. A New Generation: 1980

The first fissures in the reign of the military regime appeared by the early 1980s. In August, the newspaper Clarín published an open letter questioning the fate of the disappeared. Important personalities and celebrities, including writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, sports figures, such as recent World Cup Soccer champion César L. Menotti, and politicians signed it. Immediately after, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo submitted a public petition to the government and Clarín published the entire text.235 These two facts show how the newspaper was changing its editorial orientation against the government. In October, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, an Argentine activist, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in denouncing the military repression in Argentina. Although the local press did not publish his speech, the news about the prize spread rapidly. At the same time, newspapers started to report that during soccer games fans sang the prohibited Peronist march in open defiance of the rules.236 These events prove that the social climate was changing inside the country.

By mid-1981 the novel experience of Teatro Abierto marked the local cultural scene.237 Teatro Abierto was a festival that featured plays that addressed, at least tangentially, the dark times of repression. More than 200 people worked on the festival, including actors, directors, writers and technicians. It was an instant hit.238 Aware of its success and its clear political nature, the military regime burned down the theater, demonstrating that though the repression

235 Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 2.
237 On the impact of such experiences in Argentinian cultural life under military rule see Taylor, Disappearing Acts.
and violence had diminished, it had not ended. However, the destruction of the theater did not succeed in silencing the festival; as a result, its popularity and reputation actually skyrocketed. Even more important figures joined the initiative. Teatro Abierto completed the planned eight weeks at another theater on loan with more capacity. The festival’s increased popularity defined the event’s identity as a clear manifestation against the military regime even more, and encouraged the organization of similar events in other fields such as Danza Abierta, Música Siempre, and Poesía Abierta. At the same time, July 1981, the civil politicians organized a multiparty coalition to demand the end of the military regime. When one of the most important opposition leaders Ricardo Balbin died in September 1981, his funeral service became a crowded political act against the military dictatorship.

At the same time that these social and political changes were taking place a new generation of photojournalists emerged. They approached the profession with a renewed vision. The changes had started slowly during the 1970s and Noticias Argentinas, as mentioned, fomented those changes. Before the 1970s most photojournalists had no technical education and arrived to the trade accidentally. A famous case, for example, was former boxer Aron Calniker, who became a photographer and covered social events for the publishing house Perfil. However, by 1980, photojournalists had better formal training and a new understanding of the profession. Although a level of informality persisted in the profession, most photographers of

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240 Among others, the recent winner of the Nobel Prize, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, and the famous writer Jorge Luis Borges.
241 This political transformation did not occur in a void. Four years of repression and bad economic policies precipitated the decline of civil support for the dictatorship. Nonetheless, it was only after the scandalous defeat in the Falklands conflict, that civil society took a more openly defiant stance. Still, the military took more than a year to agree to have elections and transfer the power to a democratically-elected civil president.
this generation had attended some kind of school for photography and workshops, and learned from magazines featuring important international figures, such as the Capa brothers and Henri Cartier-Bresson.\textsuperscript{243} Figures like the Capas and Cartier-Bresson were key in the development of photojournalism.\textsuperscript{244} The founding members of the mythical Magnum agency were renowned for their shots achieved through their proximity to the action, but also, in Cartier-Bresson’s words, for being able to capture “the decisive moment,” when the “significance of the event” coincides with the “organization of forms” becoming a memorable picture.\textsuperscript{245} In addition, these international figures understood photojournalism as a political stance. They valued their own work as a way of fighting against injustice. This understanding of the profession would be key for Argentine photojournalism at the time.

The generation of Argentine photojournalists of the 1980’s had a clearer political stance than previous generations of photojournalists who did not have a group identity or understand their profession as a way of manifesting their political preferences. The younger generation working in the 1980s embraced the profession as an act of resistance. Photography was understood as “an act of political militancy” in a context where traditional political activities were censored for the most part.\textsuperscript{246} They actively sought to “represent reality more accurately.”\textsuperscript{247} Their political stance became a pivotal part of their professional identity and was

\textsuperscript{243} When questioned about training, photojournalists first answer was usually “self-taught.” However, when asked to expand in personal interviews, they usually mentioned courses or workshops in photo clubs or other community institutions. See the bibliography section for a list of interviews.

\textsuperscript{244} Although not as famous as his brother, Cornell Capa worked as a photojournalist in Latin America during the 1950s, making some important pictures especially for \textit{LIFE Magazine} depicting President Perón’s second term. Philip Gefter, “Cornell Capa, Photographer, Is Dead at 90,” \textit{The New York Times}, May 24, 2008, sec. Arts / Art & Design, l.


\textsuperscript{246} Lasansky, interview.

manifested in their interest in documenting and exposing the violence of the dictatorship. In clear contrast to what had been happening from the beginning of the military reign until the 1980s, beginning in 1981, photojournalists documented repression on the streets more frequently. Photojournalists’ new mentality coincided with a greater atmosphere of dissent, which created more acts of resistance to the military order and its subsequent repression. Cora Gamarnik concedes that the big change in the relationship between the military government and photojournalists occurred in 1981, when there were more public episodes of resistance.248

Some of the most politically significant images taken during this period show violence against photographers recorded by their own colleagues.249 One of the most famous cases took place in October 1981 when a group of 200 students protested in front of the Ministry of Education. During the repression, the police beat photojournalist Sergio Vijande who had to be hospitalized. The press reacted and published not only the images of the repression, but also the images of the photojournalist in his hospital bed. Social condemnation escalated to such a level that the chief of police visited the hospital and offered to pay Vijande’s medical expenses.250 By 1982 the military government was showing clear signs of weakening, and public demonstrations against military rule became more frequent. During a massive demonstration on March 30, 1982 in Buenos Aires’s main square, the repression was merciless and caused one death. Photographers were persecuted on that occasion and an order to confiscate or destroy photographic equipment was recorded in images (Fig. 2.5).

248 Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 15.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid., 3.
4. Exhibiting Photography

In November 1980, a small group of photojournalists put together an exhibition adopting the name *Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos* as the curatorial board. This exhibition made visible the changes previously explained: a new understanding of the profession that reflected a better technical training and an open, defiant political stance. Even though most were members of ARGRA, they disagreed with its executive committee during those years, and came together independent of any formal organization. According to one source, ARGRA had been under military control since the coup. In any case, the main disagreement among the members of the Grupo and the board committee at ARGRA was because they accused ARGRA of obliquely collaborating with the regime by holding only sports-related exhibitions (a naïve or “neutral” subject matter that in a highly politicized environment was interpreted as supporting the status quo). In addition, Lucio Solari, ARGRA’s president at the time, curated and held an exhibition of photographs taken by policemen at the association headquarters, which was interpreted as in direct support of the regime.

The Grupo exhibition’s organization started when Carlos Pesce, a photographer for *El Descamisado*, Osvaldo Jauretche, a Montoneros militant photographer, and Aldo Amura met to discuss what they could do with the photographic images not being published. The idea was to finally show the images kept in each photographer’s personal archive. The first meeting of the Grupo was at Aldo Amura’s house in downtown Buenos Aires. The meeting was planned for ten people but more than fifty photographers attended, marking the eagerness among other photographers for such an event. The original plan was to show images not directly confrontational to the military regime, but rather ironic pictures that used humor in a critical

251 Ibid., 9. However, this information was not corroborated in personal interviews.
way. This was Jauretche’s idea. However, he was kidnapped, released and exiled before the show opened.\textsuperscript{253} The call was open and based on word of mouth. The only rule concerned quantities: three pictures per author. Each photographer would act as his or her own photo editor and curator. Amura and Pesce can be considered the main organizers, although the group had no hierarchies and its association was informal.

The experience of \textit{Teatro Abierto} on July 1981 worked as an extra stimulus.\textsuperscript{254} In October 1981, a year after the first meeting in Amura’s home, the actual photography exhibition took place at a small community center off the artistic circuit, the Centro de Residentes Azuleños. The show was publicized as a memorial to three photojournalists, Alberto Rodríguez, Nemesio Luján Sánchez and Víctor Hugo Hernández, who had died in an aerial accident while working for \textit{Crónica} a year earlier.

In spite of its humble aims the exhibition had extraordinary repercussions. More than 5000 people attended the show over 13 days. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and many other militants for human rights visited the show recognizing its importance and validating the reputation of the show as an instance of resistance and dissent. Some local celebrities also came, including actors Susú Pecoraro and Boy Olmi, and singers Víctor Heredia and Léon Gieco. Their visits attracted even more press to the exhibition.\textsuperscript{255} One of the organizers, Carlos Pesce was interviewed on TV, while the newspaper \textit{La Prensa} published a special supplement about it.\textsuperscript{256} Even though only one photographer from \textit{Clarín} participated in the show, Bécquer Casaballe, the Sunday

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{253} Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de la Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante la Dictadura,” 7. The main reason behind this kidnapping is not clear, but of course it impacted photojournalistic circles.
\item \textsuperscript{254} Tarruela, “La Mirada Indiscreta: Los Fotógrafos Que Sufrieron La Represión y Se Rebelaron.”
\item \textsuperscript{255} Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 9.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Cerolini, interview.
\end{itemize}
magazine that circulated with the newspaper published an article about the exhibition, including a shot of the gallery space and a statement by Robert Capa about the photographers’ commitment to portraying reality. The article emphasized the young ages of the participants, which was around 30.257

According to oral accounts, it was a modest exhibition that presented the work of 70 photographers with a total of 185 pictures. The images were not framed and the wall labels only showed the numbers that matched the brochure. Some had short titles, but many were untitled, denying the possibility of any additional contextualization to the images. In deciding to show only titles, and not even that much in some cases, the photographers anticipated that the audience, eager for information, would dedicate the necessary attention to avoid overlooking the content and meaning of the images. The organizers also assumed that visitors had the necessary background knowledge to perceive the pictures without requiring the information usually provided through captions.258 As mentioned, photojournalism works on a shared knowledge, a communal experience that makes the images intelligible.259

The only exhibition material that survived is a brochure titled *El Periodismo Gráfico Argentino*, signed by the *Grupo*. It was a photocopy folded into three sections featuring the titles of the images organized by author, with a number corresponding to the images displayed on the walls of the exhibition space, the *Grupo*’s logo—an owl with semi opened photographic diaphragms as eyes—and a short text by the journalist Jose Ignacio López, who would become a member of the first democratic government after the regime (Fig. 2.6). In his text, López

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257 Longoni, interview.
258 “Perception being the process by which the mind evaluates those images in terms of experience and knowledge.” Hicks, *Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography*, 59.
259 See, for example, the seminal work on photojournalism by Robert Harriman and John Louis Lucatis appropriately titled “No Captions Needed.” See Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*. 
highlighted the availability and visibility of scenes that escape normal vision, but are rescued by the photographer who “sees” better. He mentioned the three deceased photojournalists to reinforce the idea of the exhibition as a tribute, although he also considered the show a tacit effort to defend freedom of speech, including visual expression. Finally, he concluded by arguing for society’s need for images that reveal the reality of the times, adding, in a clear reference to current political events, that reality was there and that it did not change, even if “we refuse to look at it.”

Horacio Cardo, an illustrator at Clarín, created the symbol of the owl, chosen for the nickname given to photojournalists covering soccer games. “Buhos” (Spanish for owls) were believed to bring bad luck, and because the photographers spent the games watching from behind the goal, the fans accused them of attracting the rival’s goal. Photographer Horacio Mucci suggested the photojournalists chose the owl as their symbol in defiance of the bad luck myth.

Few of the images exhibited survive and there are no visual records to study the actual exhibition, for example the sequence of images or their wall placement. However, a rough idea of the subject matter of the exhibited photographs can be obtained from their titles and oral accounts regarding the show. The photographs documented various subjects, not all of which were political, although most used irony or humor to achieve a level of criticism. For example, Miguel Ángel Cuarterolo photographed the Economic Minister José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz while sleeping during a Congressional session. While in part this was a criticism of the minister for not paying attention to the parliamentary session, it can also be interpreted as...

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260 Original brochure. Pablo Lasansky’s private collection.
261 Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 10.
262 Calviño, interview; García, interview; Lassansky, interview; Longoni, interview.
criticism of his economic policies, which were having a negative impact on the population’s standard of living.

More images with social content emerged during this time, showing urban poverty or the slums that increased in size during those years, which undermined the government’s official discourse of having improved the country’s socio-economic conditions. For example, Carlos Pesce showed a bootblack’s box with its humble contents chained to a post alluding to crimes in the city. Although subtle, this was a criticism of the military government, which partially justified its intervention in politics as a way of rendering the country safer for its citizens. Again, this reading requires a shared knowledge of the military’s agenda and propagandistic speech that could be elusive to people outside the specific audience that the exhibition attempted to engage, comprised of Argentinean citizens who were against the military regime.

However, none of the images featured the level of repression and violence that characterized the military regime. There were no photographs of corpses that floated ashore in the river with signs of torture, for example.264 Nor were there photographs from the military expeditions or operativos in which some murders were acknowledged, and which had already been published in the newspapers with the military government’s approval.265 No picture featured the clandestine centers of detention.266 None illuminated the degree of torture, the number of people disappeared, nor the amount of pain inflicted. There was no photograph that made the national trauma visible. There was a picture by Francisco Pizarro showing a police car

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265 See the aforementioned case of Norma Arrostito.
266 To photograph a military building was forbidden. For example, in a personal interview Andy Goldstein narrated an episode when he was detained for a couple of hours because he was taking pictures of airplanes at the city’s airport in Buenos Aires in spite of the fact that the airport was surrounded only by perimeter bars and was completely visible. Goldstein, interview.
burning while some men lay down on the floor held at gunpoint by the police. But it is an image from 1973 before the coup.\textsuperscript{267} Jorge Durán included an image that is telling in light of the information that was later made available (Fig. 2.7). It shows military personal entering a humble house in a shantytown. From today’s perspective the viewer can imagine the sad fate that awaited the detainee of that hunt, but it is a guess since it is not explicitly in the image. On the other hand, Daniel García included a photograph that showed the brutality of the military in “organizing” the line to buy World Cup tickets (Fig. 2.8). García recounts that the military asked him to move and not to take pictures while they hit the civilians standing in line just to make them move. García was able to capture the moment because he shot the image with the camera hanging from his neck at waist level. Until the image was revealed to him in the dark room, he was not sure what kind of shot he had just taken.\textsuperscript{268} Luckily, it is a good and clear image that illustrates the abuses civil society had to endure.

This exhibition was the first time that the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo were featured in a photojournalistic image on public display, thus acknowledging their existence. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were a group of women with no previous political associations who met one another in their search for information about the whereabouts of their disappeared sons and daughters. Tired of futile searches, they decided to abandon their individual efforts and organize themselves as a group. From an initial meeting held on April 30, 1977, which was attended by the fourteen founding members, the group eventually grew into the most visible advocate for justice.\textsuperscript{269} They congregated in the public square Plaza de Mayo, but given that it was forbidden


\textsuperscript{268} García, interview.

\textsuperscript{269} Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 2.
to meet in public spaces, the police gave the order that they “circulate,” which is why they walked in a circle. The first meeting was held on a Saturday. The second meeting was on a Friday. Then they moved the day to a Thursday and kept that day for decades. During the first walks they recognized each other because they each held a nail in the palm of their hands.\textsuperscript{270} Later they decided, as a group, to cover their heads with the white shawl or headscarf, as a reminder of a white cloth diaper, given its strong connotation with motherhood. Soon after, they embroidered their children’s names and the dates of their kidnappings on their headscarves.

From early on the Mothers understood that they needed to form an alliance with journalists and photojournalists, especially those working for foreign agencies in order to gain visibility. In the early years, they attended the tours of international figures, including politicians, writers and celebrities, in an effort to call attention to themselves and their cause. The first photograph published in an Argentine newspaper, \textit{Crónica}, was produced at one of these events: the visit of Terence Todman, Secretary of Inter-American Affairs for the United States.\textsuperscript{271} The government’s policy was to negate their existence and their claim. When their presence was more and more impossible to hide, the military accused them of being crazy.\textsuperscript{272}

The inclusion of a photograph featuring the Mothers was of paramount importance as the regime denied the existence of this group of women. The exhibition marks a break, a before


\textsuperscript{271} In his official capacity, Todman was accompanied by international journalists and the Mothers took advantage of this opportunity. With that initial success, they repeated the tactic as much as they could to draw attention to their cause and efforts. Ulises Gorini, \textit{La Rebelion de Las Madres: Historia de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2006), 97.

\textsuperscript{272} It is interesting to note, that the adjective “crazy” was also used to describe former president María Estela Martinez de Perón, as I noted in chapter 1. Without defending Martinez’s abilities as president, I found it interesting, and a clear marker of Argentinian machismo, that women participating in politics were automatically disqualified as crazy.
and an after, in the history of the Mothers and in the history of Argentina. After seeing them, it was no longer possible to deny the desaparecidos. Their mothers were suffering their absence and searching for them. The photographs became the convincing evidence needed to verify what had only been rumored, but not addressed by the media.

According to Taylor, “seeing … goes beyond us/them boundaries; it establishes a connection, an identification, and at times even a responsibility that one may not want to assume.” The exhibition of the pictures featuring the Mothers achieved this. During the Grupo’s exhibit in 1981, photographs of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were exhibited and had to be accompanied by a caption explaining that the women belonged to the human rights group Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo; a year later an image of a middle-aged woman with a white handkerchief on her head became an easily recognizable icon of resistance.

It is important to see this first Grupo’s exhibition as an instance when photographers challenged the regime and its imposed censorship. It was a brave endeavour especially considering that one of the initial mentors, Jauretche, was forced into exile. The actual act of opening this space had political implications. Daniel Dor explains in analyzing speech in repressive contexts that it is not actually the content, but rather the mere act of talking that

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273 The Mothers used photographs of the disappeared from early on. First, they carried their pictures—family photographs from their home—attached by a pin to their breasts. It was a way of keeping them close, of proving their existence, of claiming their identity, for others to recognize the missing individual and a plea for support in their search. Then, given that the pictures tended to deteriorate quickly, they mounted the photographs to cardboard backs and hung them around their necks as exaggerated neckpieces. It was only later, in April 1983, that the group created big banners with the pictures. According to Ana Longoni, with this change in how the photographs were displayed, they became even more moving and their increased visibility “spoke” to a greater number of passersby Longoni, “Fotos y Siluetas: Políticas Visuales En El Movimiento de Derechos Humanos En Argentina,” 4.

274 Taylor, Disappearing Acts, 19.

275 This change in the “reading” of images over time, and images that became icons will be further explored in chapter 3.

becomes the manifestation of dissent. It is possible to draw the connection between the act of speaking and the act of showing images. This exhibition was a manifestation of dissent, and the public interpreted it as such. Fearing reprisal, as a cautionary measure the show included a sign with the names of all the companies to which the participating photographers provided images, even though the companies had not given any official or unofficial support. The photojournalists wanted to emphasize their associations to discourage further repression. The government also saw the exhibition as a menace to its stronghold, and although there were no incidents of actual repression, there was constant intimidation. Though they did not present proper identification, members of the military, recognized by their emblematic haircuts and moustaches, were seen visiting the exhibition and taking notes on numerous occasions. In addition, a green Ford Falcon, a car that became infamous during those years as it was used repeatedly for kidnappings and other repressive activities, often without license plates, was at the entrance for the entire duration of the presentation. While the exhibition is viewed as a successful event for photojournalism, it did not come without costs. After the exhibition Carlos Pesce was fired from his job at El Descamisado and decided to migrate to Spain; while Aldo

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277 Daniel Dor, "Is There Anything We Might Call Dissent in Israel? (and, If There Is, Why Isn’t There?)", *Critical Inquiry* (Winter 2006): 280.
278 Lasansky, interview.
279 Calviño, interview.
280 “Buenos Aires became a city roamed by unmarked cars, usually Ford Falcons, supplied on fleet order to police, but preferred by all for reliability at high speed and relatively low running cost. The cars were parked outside the Government House, without a license number to mark the bumper. They speed through the city ignoring lights; they were feared by the public and the only man to campaign against their presence was the editor of the Buenos Aires Herald.” See Andrew Graham-Yooll, *A State of Fear: Memories of Argentina’s Nightmare* (London: Eland Books, 2009), 73.
Amura recounts that the military paid intimidating “visits” to his studio on numerous occasions.\footnote{Tarruela, “La Mirada Indiscreta: Los Fotógrafos Que Sufrieron La Represión Y Se Rebelaron,” n.p.}

Unfortunately, no exhaustive studies about photojournalism in Argentina have been carried out. The only scholar who has done research on this topic, Cora Gamarnik, believes that the coup actually severed photojournalists’ creativity.\footnote{Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 15.} In fact, the necessity to navigate the unclear delimited area of censorship increased the creativity of the group who put together the exhibition. One of the photojournalists recounts a telling anecdote that confirms this view: while looking at the images exhibited he stated, “we were born today!”\footnote{According to Daniel Garcia, the photojournalist Pichi Martínez said: “Daniel, hoy nacimos.” Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 15.} At the same time this newly gained self-awareness as professionals translated into a search for professional training even if it was no more than learning from specialized international magazines.\footnote{Many of the photojournalists interviewed told me that they started to travel during this period and brought back publications that circulated among their group of peers.} This change in mentality also resulted in better shots that had more balanced compositions and were more refined in form and had a richer level of symbolism. The show galvanized the new characteristics of the profession: a renewed political commitment, self-awareness as a trade separate from journalism, and technical dexterity.

5. Coming to Age: Second and Third Exhibition of Photojournalism

Encouraged by the success of the first exhibition, the following year, the Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos organized a second presentation, which featured the work of eighty-eight artists, who showed three to five images each. Given the repercussions of the first exhibition

\footnote{Tarruela, “La Mirada Indiscreta: Los Fotógrafos Que Sufrieron La Represión Y Se Rebelaron,” n.p.}
and the prestige it acquired, the show was held at the Organization of American States (OAS) building in the city of Buenos Aires, signaling not only its importance but also the combative spirit of the endeavor. (The OAS was one of the few international organizations to question and call attention to the human rights violations during the regime). The show was again a success and more than 10,000 people attended.\footnote{Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos de la República Argentina, \textit{El Periodismo Gráfico Argentino} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: OAS - Organization of American States and ARGRA-Asociación de Reporteros Gráficos de la República Argentina, 1983).} In addition, the Grupo had greater resources, which enabled them to publish a small catalogue, sponsored by the OAS and Kodak (Fig. 2.9).

It is important to keep in mind that the year 1982 was especially difficult for the regime. Increased unrest started with the new decade, only to continue to grow in the first couple of years. For example, in March 1981 the de facto President, Jorge Rafael Videla left office, marking the regime’s first change of authority since coming into power; he was replaced by Roberto Eduardo Viola, who lasted only nine months, further revealing the conflicted atmosphere inside the military.\footnote{Many authors also attributed the ferocity of the repression to internal power struggles inside the military. Novaro and Palermo, \textit{La Dictadura Militar, 1976-1983}, 189.} By the end of 1981, Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri was named president and in a desperate attempt to reinforce the regime’s power, launched a suicidal war against Great Britain over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (known as the Malvinas in Argentina) in April 1982. Initially, the war was successful in terms of mobilizing the population in support of the country, which translated into a backing of the regime.\footnote{The spurious information that the regime distributed during the war will be properly analyzed in Chapter 4.} But soon the calamitous defeat, corruption scandals and shady deals detrimental to the soldiers increased the turmoil. As a result, the number of street demonstrations against the regime augmented. The armed forces lashed out against the new and growing defiant spirit, resulting in more frequent violent incidents in plain sight.
Thus, violent repression and public demonstrations were the subject matter of many images in the Grupo’s second exposition. Photographs that later became iconic were presented there for the first time. In line with an increasingly defiant spirit some photographs once again presented the military authorities with irony (a master of this treatment was Guillermo Loiácano). Artistic activities and non-conventional behavior, such as the consumption of pornography, were brought into plain sight by defiantly cracking the rigid control imposed over society (Figs. 2.10 and 2.11). The first photograph by Silvio Zuccheri is a close up of two actors with heavy make up and black leotards typical of the underground theater scene, which in general had a low budget to recreate costumes. As previously mentioned in regard to the Teatro Abierto, civil society started to show its resistance and disapproval of the military regime. Their performances were a defiant political stance against the regime regardless of the specific content of the plays. To exhibit a photograph of those activities was not only to promote the activity, but also to endorse their political stance. Another example was a photograph by Sergio Vijande, which used irony in its title Cazador, Cazado (Hunter, Hunted). It featured a middle-aged man with formal business attire looking into the schedule of an adults only cinema. The poster promoting the film shows a naked woman. She is not completely exposed because the title of the film: “Inga, a Sexy Adolescent” is printed over her breast while the show’s times are on top of her pubic area. As a result, the man leans forward to look into the schedule/pubic area. The scene is ridiculous but also shows how the traditionalist discourse imposed by the military regime that emphasized Catholic family values had its fissures. As the military officials carried on hidden activities, the traditional man also had hidden pleasures that imply false morals.

Unlike the first exhibition, the catalogue of the second exhibition reproduced the majority of

288 In chapter 4 “The Official Campaign” I dedicated an entire section to the images from the Falklands war where theses examples will be scrutinized. While, in chapter 3 “Making Icons,” the iconic pictures will receive exclusive attention, as well as Loiácono’s work.
images. It had a short introduction written by Alejandro Orfila, the general secretary of the OAS, and by a prestigious journalist José María Jaunarena, who recognized the participating photojournalists as true artists. The catalogue reproduces 86 photographs, plus three by the editor and photographer, Paco Francisco Vera, who was featured as an inspirational figure (Figs. 2.12 A, B and C). The three images illustrate Vera’s open references to the history of art, in particular in the image that uses reflections and humor to show a man dressed in a suit walking by a store window with a white brassiere superimposed on him. Another example uses irony to comment on the recent Falkland Islands War by showing three penguins, which can be seen as the three members of the junta. The criticism becomes obvious when the viewer realizes that the animals are colloquially called “pájaros bobos” (dumb birds) in Argentina.

The first image appearing in the catalogue belongs to Jorge Aguirre (Fig. 2.13). It is worth describing because it sums up both the regime’s improvisation and how photojournalists managed to avoid censorship. It features a toilet surrounded by film cartridges in bags. From the title we learn that it represents the organization that rates films. At the bottom on the same page is the first image to illustrate actual repression taken by Alejandro Amdan. (Fig. 2.14) It shows a young man being taken at gunpoint by two men in civilian clothes. It was a well-known fact that many members of the military did not wear their uniforms when on active duty. This allowed them to blend in with civilians, and made it harder for detainees’s family members to reclaim their freedom. In Amdan’s picture one of the abductors looks boldly directly into the camera while walking, acknowledging the photographer’s presence, as well as ours, as spectators. In the foreground, there is an old man holding hands with a young girl—probably his

289 Francisco Vera, as explained before, was an important figure in Argentina’s graphic media, especially for photographers. He held the influential position of Editor in Chief in the two main publishing houses Atlántida and Abril. The first exhibition also included the work of an older photographer who was well regarded by the Grupo, Juan Di Sandro. They honored him by exhibiting two pioneering national photojournalistic images from 1926 and 1934.
granddaughter—fleeing the scene. While the two groups of people (the abductors and the
detainee, and the girl with the grandfather) are separate and seem unaware of each other,
visually they give the impression of holding hands in a circle, producing a cynical juxtaposition.

In another photograph by Roberto Del Percio, the irony occurs in the disagreement between
what the image portrays and its title. It shows two military men forcing a young man to his feet,
who presumably fell to his knees as he resisted being taken, but the accompanying title is “Do
not worry, we are going to help you” (Fig. 2.15).290 At this point the audience was at least in
part aware that to be taken into custody was dangerous. In spite of the propaganda campaigns
and slogans repeatedly featured in TV and radio commercials, the military forces were not
protecting civil society.291

There is no information indicating who oversaw the catalogue’s layout. But looking at
the page setting of the images (there are usually two images on each side of the page) the
placement is not random. It seems to follow an alphabetical order by author but with many
exceptions to accommodate the placement together of images that somehow relate to each other.
Clearly the person responsible for the catalogue’s publication understood that the sequence of
images is also relevant to the meaning conveyed.292 The organizers were probably familiar with
or intuited what had been called the “principle of the third effect,” which refers to how pictures
influence each other when brought together, creating a different meaning that is also altered by
the viewer’s interpretation.293 The photographs are in dialogue with each other, in some cases
formally and in other cases though content. For example, two images with extreme shadows are
printed together. In some cases the photographs interact thematically, but not in terms of the

290 “No tengas miedo pibe, te vamos a dar una mano.”
291 For a complete analysis of the propaganda campaigns see chapter 4.
292 Hicks, Words and Pictures. Literature of Photography, 17.
293 Ibid., 34.
closeness of subject matter, but rather as a social commentary embedded in irony. For example, the aforementioned Del Percio image that shows a young man being carried away by two officers is preceded by a picture by Gabino Gómez, which also shows a pyramidal composition, but with a mother holding the hands of her two young children (Fig. 2.16).²⁹⁴

The third example of actual violence is not one, but three images by Eduardo Frías (Fig. 2.17).²⁹⁵ It is one of two examples from the catalogue in which consecutive frames from one film are printed in a strip. They are from June 15, 1982, exactly one day after Argentina surrendered in the Falklands War. They show a man being dragged by his clothes by two other men in civilian clothes. However, a policeman in uniform is between that incident and the viewer passively observing the scene without interceding, leaving no room for misinterpretation. It is another scene of government repression. In the following frame, the detainee is still on the floor, held by only one man; the other approaches the scene while removing something from his jacket. Given the angle this picture was taken from, we see more of the architecture and recognize the wide stairs and the base of an imposing column. This is clearly a government building. In the final frame, we, along with the other three people standing in the background, see that the person approaching is carrying a gun and pointing to the detainee, who is still lying on the sidewalk. The three individual images are violent and unsettling, and their presentation as a strip strengthens that disturbing power. We witness the unfolding of the action in the sequence of images. Only one image from this series could have been ambiguous, but with the three images presented together, there is no room for guesses.

²⁹⁴ The regime, through discourses and propaganda, put forward the idea that its intervention was justified in the same way as a father guides his family. Since 1976, the military dictatorship had declared a curfew, and controlled the most basic civil rights (expression, reunion, etc.) as well as civil responsibilities. Civilians were treated like children, who not knowing what is right for them, need to be taken care of.

²⁹⁵ As previously mentioned, he was detained and tortured for a few years before.
Other images highlighted the violence against photographers, proving the increased tension between the photographers and the military (Figs. 2.18 and 2.19). In the first one by Lucio Solari, there are two police officers, one of which who has lost his emblematic hat in the fight, trying to take the camera from the hands of a photographer, who extending his arm attempts to hold the apparatus as far from his body as possible. As a result the camera is clearly defined against the background, in an otherwise busy and confusing image. The viewfinder remains towards us, thus the viewer is faced with the photographer’s actual vantage point. It is a fortuitous occurrence, but seems to ask the spectator to record this image, just as the camera recorded it.

The next case is an image by Horacio Mucci. Here we only see the upper torsos and faces of the people involved. In this close-up shot it is easy to see the fear and struggle in their facial gestures. Again, a photographer surrounded by officers strives to save his camera putting his own body between it and the police stick in an attempt to protect his equipment. It is important to notice that, at least from the pictures, titles, and oral accounts, the target of the repression was the film, and many times the camera, not the photographer. At this point the regime was debilitated and rarely taking prisoners, in spite of the fact that it beat up some photojournalists, as previously mentioned.

Even if the military regime was in obvious decline especially after the Falklands defeat, it lasted another year until December 1983. The photographers had organized the third exhibition to open in November 1983 also at the OAS office. But the OAS rented the office and gallery spaces from the government who owned the building. The Department of the Interior, which had jurisdiction over the building, threatened to revoke the lease to impede the opening.

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296 Lucio Solari had been the controversial president of ARGRA before, but clearly had made amends with the group, and taking this picture showed his political stance.
The photographers were able to contact Antonio Tróccoli, a member of the democratically-elected party at the end of October who was ready to become the new Minister of the Interior. Through his help, they secured the permit to open, a few days before the new democratically-elected government took office.\textsuperscript{297} The third exhibition thus, took place mostly during the return to democracy, but the pictures were taken under the dictatorship. In the middle of the exhibition, which was open from December 3 to December 23, the first democratically-elected president, Ricardo Raúl Alfonsín, was sworn in to office on December 10. The fact that the group had the power to pressure the incoming Minister of the Interior and open the exhibit in that space even before the change of government power was official, heralds the change of status for photojournalists from the first to the third show.

In the third exhibition, the number of photographers grew to 106, with more than 200 images displayed. A committee was organized to select the images and sort them into thematic sections for the first time. These included “elections,” “human rights,” “public figures,” “politics,” and even a residual one called “miscellaneous.” All the categories had a strong political component, even “miscellaneous,” which showcased Eduardo Longoni’s well known picture of policemen, which could have been included in “politics” (or in “human rights” with a touch of sarcasm), but which was included under “miscellaneous” maybe because it is a part of a negative, like a close up (Fig. 2.20). The rest of the frame was damaged.\textsuperscript{298}

A new subject appeared in this show that had not been present in the two previous ones: the political militant. Many pictures depicted proselytizing acts, showing the energized masses,

\textsuperscript{297} Lasansky, interview.
\textsuperscript{298} During my research I was not able to find many publications of this specific image. However, according to the author, during the commemorative act for the coup’s 30\textsuperscript{th} anniversary three branches of the worker’s unions used it for their banners, proving that the image was part of the collective memory as representative of the coup. Eduardo Longoni, interview by author, Tape recording. Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 25, 2007. It also is included in key books about the period such as in Acosta, \textit{Democracia Vigilada}. 

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leaders addressing the crowds, the aftermath of demonstrations and protests, and street propaganda. All these photographs spoke to the resurgence of democratic life. Some show changes in social life, featuring figures previously condemned by the junta, such as homosexuals, while others reveal the reemergence of social problems, mostly the product of poor economic policies.

The catalogue makes it possible to understand the exhibition’s strides in terms of professionalism. (Fig. 2.21) The catalogue was printed on high-quality paper and each photograph was a full plate image. It is a big improvement when compared to the second exhibition catalogue that featured two photographs per page, and even more when compared to the first exhibition catalogue that was a photocopy with the image numbers and in some cases a title. On the opening page there is again a short text by Alejandro Orfila. In it he categorizes Argentine photojournalists as a bulwark of democracy. A text describing the Grupo’s authorship follows Orfila’s introduction. Titled Historia del Periodismo Gráfico Argentino, the narration starts in September 1980, with the accidental death of the three photojournalists from Crónica. It then continues on to review and condemn the actions of the military dictatorship.

The text confirms a premise argued in this dissertation that the photojournalists experienced the period as a break in their profession, a foundational moment or a new beginning. In addition, the short piece acknowledges the existence of the two previous exhibitions and their importance as political acts. The Grupo used the text to introduce the concept of professional responsibility meaning that it is a photojournalist’s obligation to be close to current events despite the risks. They also recognized that through their work, they expressed their opinions. The two aforementioned images depicting photographers as victims of repression accompany the text (Figs. 2.18 and 2.19). A closing section entitled “authors”
includes the names of the participants and a short paragraph describing each one’s career path. The fact that they chose to name this section “authors” shows the highest regard with which they viewed their own work. These facts exemplify the maturation of the group as such, and also the construction of a self-narrative, highlighting their desired role in society with a look toward the past as well as the future.

Although the Grupo was the exclusive organizer of the third exhibition, the ARGRA logo was featured for the first time in the catalogue. The Grupo’s symbol—the owl—was still featured on the cover, but smaller, and for the first time, photographs were printed on the cover. The cover images belonged to Adriana Lestido, Jorge Rilo and Daniel Merle (Figs. 2.22, 2.23 and 2.24). The first featured a mother and a small girl protesting on behalf of the disappeared wearing white headscarves, a symbol that had become a clearly identifiable marker of identity and needed no further explanation by that third exhibition, compared to just two years earlier. The second one showed three men using a crush barrier to break into the presidential palace during a public demonstration. The last one is a view of Congress from a monument across the street. Compositionally, it is a perfectly balanced and symmetrical picture, in which the cupola of the Congress rises from in between the extended wings of a stone carving of a condor, the national bird of Argentina. It works as a metaphor: the bird embraces the building protecting the newly regained, yet still fragile, democratic process. Photographers extend their gaze, as a bird extends its wings, to protect democracy.

299 From this point on the exhibitions would be carried on by ARGRA.
300 This image will receive full attention in chapter 3.
“The more I thought about what photographs are, the more complex and suggestive they became.”
–Susan Sontag

Chapter 3

Making Icons

After reviewing the history of photography in the country and studying photojournalism’s developments during the dictatorship, this chapter focuses on the images from the period that have been kept in circulation. Photojournalists—not artists working with photography—were the ones who created the images that would be used again and again referencing the dictatorship. Although photojournalism was marginalized by artistic photography and was not included in the theoretical debates of the time, the images reutilized from that period in the first decades of democracy in periodicals, mass publications, and museums to commemorate those dark times were shot as news photographs. In this chapter, I will examine photojournalistic images produced during the dictatorship that had been repeatedly republished asking if they can be considered iconic images, offering possible interpretations and explanations in order to understand their relevance.

The analysis of photographs in this chapter is influenced by Charles Peirce’s theories. For Peirce, an icon is analogous to the referent. In other words, there is a formal correspondence between the icon and the object or concept that it represents. When an analogy is conceptual, it

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is difficult to separate icon from symbol, which signifies meaning mostly through convention. Mieke Bal argues that “iconicity is in the first place a mode of reading, based on hypothetical similarity between sign and object.”\textsuperscript{302} It is important to keep in mind that this way of seeing/reading has an element of speculation. This dynamic process of signification is in Peirce’s words *semiosis*. It is the *interpretant*, or mental image, that summarizes the complexity of what is seen in order to understand its essence. In line with Peirce’s terminology, icons share a similarity with their object, while symbols do not. In Peirce’s theory, the visual is also taken into consideration, since the icon is analogous to its object. Photographs are analogical representations and thus one may wrongly assume that their meaning lies literally within the frame. However, photographs symbolize the unstable combination of the subject, how it is depicted, and what is outside the frame. Art historian Ernst H. Gombrich argues that there is a symbolic power in any representation, which forces the mind “to rise above the image.”\textsuperscript{303} Photographs, besides their intrinsic mechanical nature—or in Peirce’s words, indexical nature—are still representations, symbols and icons, and as such, subjects of interpretation. The most powerful signs are icon, index and symbol in conjunction.\textsuperscript{304} While working with photographs, this separation becomes even more blurred since it could be argued that the photograph always maintains an analogical relation to its referent.

Images as signs are not universally intelligible. Signs work for a specific audience. Bal and Norman Bryson, among others, popularized the use of semiotics in art history investigating how works of art are intelligible to those who view them. They state “the image becomes what


\textsuperscript{304} Bal, “Seeing Signs: The Use of Semiotics for the Understanding of Visual Art,” 80.
it is by being … part of a general circulation of signs and codes within the social formation as a whole.\textsuperscript{305} The key word here is “within.” Signs do not always operate in the same way. They vary depending on the viewer and the context. In other words, the history of consumption of a work of art, or a photograph in the case of this dissertation, is relevant to the meaning of the work. It is not only important to reconstruct a historical context for the images, but also to make them readable for viewers today.\textsuperscript{306}

It is impossible to know what the public’s reaction was to any of these photojournalistic images at the time of their publication, as there are no records or studies. But it is possible to generate a plausible interpretation based on circulation, the ideology of the media and the history of appropriation. It is possible to hear their “voices.”\textsuperscript{307} In all the examples analyzed, I have attempted to understand how the images lent themselves to new interpretations and sustained relevance over time based on appropriation, asking why they remained in circulation. Returning to the question of what and how a photographic image and its components work to make their content significant, philosopher Mariana Ortega explains: “[the] punctum is of me but beyond me.”\textsuperscript{308} Regardless of whether this corresponds to the Barthesian punctum, or if Ortega is referring to a much more poignant detail, what the viewer brings to the photograph is not neutral. The punctum is both an objective and subjective reality at the same time. There is a detail in the photograph that the viewer has to be able to identify and share with others. However, what it means may vary from one viewer to another. In a way, the viewer sees what she can see (based on previous knowledge) and what she wants to see (based on ideology and

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\textsuperscript{307} Barbie Zelizer, \textit{About to Die}, 14.
\end{flushleft}
system of beliefs). Each individual’s life experience informs and conditions what she is able to see in an image, and what the picture signifies. These points should be considered for viewship in general as well as for the critic making the analysis and selection of photographs. Ortega continues: “Indeed, there is much that the photographer can plan and intend in the photograph, but the punctum is that which comes out in my own reading and experiencing of the image. It is a consequence of my looking at the photograph, not of what the photographer wanted me to see … this detail expands my reading and understanding of the image.” This aspect of the viewer’s contribution to an image’s interpretation is important in the reading and in the use of iconic images. There is no complete neutrality, and the critic has to acknowledge this shortcoming.

1. Photographs as Icons

In colloquial language the word icon is used in the general sense of sign and in equivalence with symbol. According to this vernacular use, iconic refers to any “name, face, picture, edifice or even a person readily recognized as having some well-known significance or embodying certain qualities: a thing, an image or depiction that represents something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning.” For this analysis, the idea that an icon is something that embodies an elemental quality of what it stands for is an important concept. And this “what it stands for” acquires a “greater significance” than the actual

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309 Ibid., 4.
310 Finnegans, Making Photography Matter: A Viewer’s History from the Civil War to the Great Depression, 116.
A picture is iconic when it is “something regarded as embodying the essential characteristic of an era or group” and one that achieves this through, and because of, abbreviated means. The composition, specifically the presence and placement of people and objects in the image, plays a fundamental role in the meaning the image will be granted and, as a result, in the importance that the photographed event will achieve. Iconic pictures are easily remembered and generate an emotional response and these factors impact circulation directly: iconic photojournalistic images must have been republished.

The most republished photographs, I argue, are the ones that become icons, share many characteristics with works of art, and indeed, emulate them. Like traditional art icons, the photographs that live on in posterity are usually pictures shot with simple formal structures and clear compositions capturing only a few figures with noticeable hand gestures and/or facial expressions. The position of the body also helps to convey meaning. Through the reading of body language there is an emotional connection made between the viewer and the subject in the photograph. The spectator can empathize with the image. The type of emotion, however, is not determined by the images and it is rather a private experience, in contrast to the act of viewership, which for photojournalistic images is shared. Although recently theorized for the study of photojournalistic images, these ideas have a long history in art. The word “icon” comes from the Greek word for image, representation and portrait: eikōn. Over the history of pictorial representation the word has been used with greater specificity. During the middle ages, it was

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312 I think that icons became so popular, in part, thanks to the use that computers make of the term. On the screen of personal computers there are some images that work as keyboards called icons. When “clicking” on them they open new functions, almost as doors, or windows that summarizes the content behind them.
313 Webster Dictionary, 707.
314 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 10-12.
315 Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 375.
reserved for religious images believed to transcend their materiality. Icons referred to a specific kind of image, which allegedly acted as a gateway to the sacred.

In contemporary art history the term icon refers mostly to a painting depicting a religious figure commonly associated with Eastern Christian and Byzantine art. These works have specific formal characteristics: figures are always depicted against flat golden backgrounds, facial gestures are exaggerated and emphasis is placed on the figures’ eyes and hand gesticulations as a vehicle for conveying a message to the viewer. These characteristics act as a backdrop in contemporary images defined also as iconic. Formal analysis is thus still key to the study of how images work. Stylistic or formal elements always influence the reading of images, and as a result, they also impact the information that the picture conveys about the incident portrayed. They shape the strategies that we use to interpret images. It has been argued that photojournalistic icons are “like any religious icon, they work in several registers of ritual and response. They are easily recognized by many people of varied backgrounds [because] … they come to represent large swaths of historical experience.”

Not every picture can be iconic. Iconic images are not necessarily narratives, but they have to be eye catching with uncomplicated compositions and it must be possible to describe them in just one sentence. There is usually a predominant element that strikes the viewer, such as a hand, a building, or a look. This one element tends to dominate the frame. However, this should not be mistaken with what Roland Barthes identifies as the punctum, referring to that which pierces the viewer. For Barthes, the punctum lies in the subtle details of an image and can be different for each viewer. In contrast, the principal element in an iconic photograph is

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316 Hariman and Luaites, No Caption Needed, 1.
obvious and there is a general consensus in regard to what that element is, even if what it means may be open to discussion. This economy of details gives the picture its power as a sign, is still susceptible to different interpretations. Despite the aforementioned predominant element that will be present in the photograph, it is the photograph that becomes the icon, not the isolated element. The multiplicity of elements inside the frame conforms to an iconic entity. Even though in analyzing how the icon works the photograph can be dismembered and each part studied separately, its power lies in the combination of all the elements. Susan Langer already explained this in 1940, “Visual forms—line, colors, proportions, etc—are just as capable of articulation, i.e., of complex combination, as words.” These factors have an impact increasing the circulation that catapults the image into the icon category.

The significance of a historical event is independent of its photographic reproduction, but the existence of the mechanical images, in modern times, has become a necessary requirement for the event to be part of a historical account. The visual record has gained so much relevance that its absence jeopardizes the transcendence of the event. In this strongly visual-oriented era, the lack of images limits the importance an event could acquire in the news and later in the historical discourse. Given information overload, images acquire more importance as a static instance that stops the flow of information, conveying it immediately. Susan Langer already signaled this: “Visual forms are not discursive. They do not present their constituents successively, but simultaneously, so the relations determining visual structure are grasped in one act of vision.” An icon is the photojournalist image that “condenses a moment

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of visual eloquence.” An icon is an image that marks time punctuating history “as a special selection of reality that acquires greater intensity than the flow of experience before and after it.” Photojournalism’s icons influence how the depiction of historical events are narrated and remembered. Without a doubt photojournalism is anchored in the present, but the photojournalistic icon “assumes special significance in respect to the past … [they] rise above many other images … to shape understanding of specific events and periods, both at the time of their original publication and subsequently.” Photojournalistic images are the necessary summary of the event that makes it unique from an indistinguishable flow of information.

Iconic images have to be easily and univocally described. Their means of communicating through abbreviated forms, which I call “the power of summary,” or condensation, plays an important role in another aspect in the iconicity of an image: circulation. As mentioned, iconic photographs “are the images that you see again and again.” In order to become an icon, a specific image has to be easily remembered, and this cannot be achieved without some degree of repetition. Icons have to be shown repeatedly in order to become part of visual culture. The re-publication of the image plays a vital role in this process. The more a photojournalistic image is reproduced, the more it can be seen. In addition, the chances of it being appropriated and reutilized in other publications increases exponentially, and with this repetition, in its own turn, the cycle starts again, adding to the image’s value as an icon. In regards to circulation, news images have an advantage over artistic images. This can be

321 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 19.
322 Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 375.
323 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 11.
324 Although the authors do not focus on the iconic images’ ability to summarize content, they do mention this characteristic while analyzing the meaning of the iconic image of Iwo Jima. Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 375.
325 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 5.
attributed to the fact that as soon as they are published, they reach a broader audience than those exhibited in galleries and museums.\textsuperscript{326} At the same time, photojournalistic images remain in press archives and are available for republication. This increases their circulation exponentially, easing their entry into the collective memory. Photojournalistic icons are reused by other media “[or] displayed in museums, [and/or] analyzed in scholarly studies.”\textsuperscript{327} This augmented circulation also influences the meanings and interpretations that these images acquire over time.

In considering iconic photographs from the last dictatorship in Argentina my aim is to uncover the reasons why images become icons without forcing interpretations and without imposing a narrative. I concur with Diana Taylor when she states: “My goal is to make visible again, not the invisible or imagined, but that which is clearly there but not allowed to be seen.”\textsuperscript{328} Scholars attempt to uncover different historical interpretations, but usually advance only one, always subjective, reading. Taylor talks about what cannot be seen because pictures have to be in agreement with the dominant interpretation of the event at the time of publication. This is especially important in pictures with a strong political component. It is easy to understand this trend in clear conflicts such as wars, when the two enemies have disputing views. The images that thus circulate on each side confirm the prevailing ideology, helping to make these ideas even more dominant.\textsuperscript{329} Images that confirm dominant ideologies become icons.\textsuperscript{330} However, the prevailing interpretation of the episode could change. Endure Despite the

\textsuperscript{326} It can be argued that the attention that the reader of a newspaper pays is not significant compared to the more attentive look of a museumgoer. But still, in terms of circulation, news images have an advantage. However, as we will see, the consecration in a museum and/or in specialized publication is also an important facet in the process an image undergoes to become iconic.

\textsuperscript{327} Hariman and Lucaites, \textit{No Caption Needed}, 5.


\textsuperscript{329} Andersen, “Images of War Photojournalism, Ideology, and Central America,” 112.

\textsuperscript{330} Hariman and Lucaites, \textit{No Caption Needed}, 9.
fact that the reading is subjective and each viewer has the potential to “see” a unique interpretation, there are some predominant readings that are usually in connection with the social climate. As Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites argue, “Photographs are most useful [as icons] when they symbolize socially shared concepts or beliefs rather than present new or unfamiliar information.”

The images chosen could still be the same, although they can have different readings— as will be shown later—because images are multivalent signifiers that acquire meaning through context and use. But in line with Barthes, “The code of connotation is neither artificial … nor natural, but historical.” Photojournalism creates, and assumes, a common experience of viewership that can be both iconic as well as historically situated.

Coming back to the iconic images from the dictatorship, the photographs analyzed in this chapter have been selected as a result of a three-part process. First, these images appear to be the ones that were most influential over other photographers. During interviews with photographers I asked which images were among the most emblematic of the period. Every interviewee mentioned at least three of the selected ones. They suggested these photographs had a long history of circulation. I attempted to reconstruct their circulation by paying attention to elements outside the frame of the picture, and by obtaining the information about where, how and why specific images were published. In other words, in photojournalism, it is instrumental that the viewer looks at the captions, the actual space on the page and general text to grasp the

Zelizer, About to Die, 5.
Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites made informal polls asking which photojournalistic images are the most remembered. This method is informal and thus flawed because the people selected to answer the polls already have an interest in photographs and communications. Still, it serves as a good starting point to identify the most reproduced images. See Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 6.
full meaning of a picture.\textsuperscript{334} I looked at photojournalistic images to understand why they are repeatedly selected. In doing so I engaged art history’s attention to composition and content, keeping in mind that the icon “does not fix meaning but rather it organizes a field of interpretations.”\textsuperscript{335}

These images were used in different contexts and in various and different publications such as ones commemorating the coup, in anniversaries of the return to democracy, in special publications about the famous trial against the military leaders for their responsibility in human right violations, and in reference to the period in general. Scholars have also looked to written public responses to specific photojournalistic images to access the voice of iconic images.\textsuperscript{336} When these written responses are not available, but the news photograph keeps being selected, published and viewed, does it mean that there is no voice? When a “close readings of close readings” is not possible because of a lack of written responses, is it possible to critically engage with the reverberation of the images?\textsuperscript{337} Or on the contrary, is there an implicit meaning, which needs some critical account to make that voice audible? I study these photographs to uncover possible readings since it is in part “the potential for different readings that makes [iconic photographs] suitable to being republished.”\textsuperscript{338} In their republication not all interpretations can have the same opportunity to become influential. Iconic photojournalistic


\textsuperscript{335} Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 367.

\textsuperscript{336} Finnegans, \textit{Making Photography Matter: A Viewer’s History from the Civil War to the Great Depression}, 252-253.

\textsuperscript{337} Ibid.

images “artistically coordinate available structures of identification.” The available readings have to be already present at least in part in the public sphere since the iconic image is kept in circulation because it “reinforces already established beliefs.” As a result, I present these images as icons of the period, with plausible interpretations.

When asked about icons of the dictatorship, many of the photographers I interviewed mentioned the faces of the leaders. This response is not surprising since it is customary to associate a regime with its leader, personalizing the system and transforming it from an ideological abstraction into a concrete entity. Indeed, the military dictatorship relied heavily on the public images of three commanders: Rafael Videla, Emilio Massera, and Orlando Agosti (Fig. 3.1). However, not all were equally important. The president and commander-in-chief of the Argentine Army, Rafael Videla, was the most frequently photographed of the military commanders; the commander-in-chief of the Navy, Emilio Massera, gave the most virulent speeches and was the second most frequently photographed figure; and finally, the commander-in-chief of the Air Force, Orlando Agosti, played a less important role in the Proceso. The main newspapers showed on an almost daily basis the members of the junta posing in different official acts. The images that generally illustrated the front pages of the newspapers Clarín and La Nación showed static figures during inaugurations or commemorations. From the more than

340 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 8.
341 The official use of images will be specifically analyzed in chapter 4 “The Official Campaign.”
342 In 1985, the former military members of the junta, plus other minor officers were all found guilty of having ordered crimes committed by the armed forces, ranging from robbery and torture, to rape and murder, and their military titles were removed. Even if they benefited from amnesty later, their titles were not reinstalled. During the trials, Agosti was found guilty of only eight specific counts of torture. He was the only one to complete his sentence of four and a half years in prison. He was released from prison on 1989 and received a presidential pardon the following year.
2500 covers reviewed no picture became memorable. But repetition contributed to making their faces well-remembered images. It is the repetition of the subject in different media that forms a mosaic portrait.\(^\text{343}\) This phenomenon is common in news stories, as the famous editor of *Life Magazine* Wilson Hicks was well aware. He explains that “The cumulative effect of all the pictures which miss being the picture enables readers to synthesize it in their minds; putting the misses together they mentally formulate the ‘perfect’ picture.”\(^\text{344}\) The repeated publication of the faces of the leaders in the case of the Argentine dictatorship corresponds to the logic of the daily media and the coverage of daily news stories. But as time passes, and one returns to these images to study this material; the repetition creates a cumulative portrait.\(^\text{345}\)

Nevertheless, there are some images that had been selected for republication in the few studies about newspapers of the period.\(^\text{346}\) Although they have been reprinted without any explanation or justification of motives, I believe that they had been selected because they help to summarize some ideas about the period. Thanks to the information that became available after the end of the regime in 1983 these specific images add to the criticism of that era. For example, there are numerous instances where Videla is featured giving a speech broadcasted on national television (Figs. 3.2 A, B, C, and D). It is significant that on one occasion *Clarín* used a shot of a TV screen taken during the speech to illustrate the news. It shows the publication’s disregard for the quality of the image and at the same time, it reminded viewers that they had encountered this image on their screens before.\(^\text{347}\) One of these images is accompanied by the

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\(^{343}\) The face of some military leaders, such as Videla and Massera, have become symbols of repression. Claudia Feld, *Del Estrado a La Pantalla: Las Imágenes Del Juicio a Los Ex Comandantes En Argentina* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España editores, 2002), 129.

\(^{344}\) Hicks, *Words and Pictures: Literature of Photography*, 138.


\(^{346}\) See the aforementioned Blaustein, *Decíamos Ayer*.

\(^{347}\) I thank professor Jordana Mendelson for suggesting this relation.
telling headline: “Videla declares stage for dialogue open.”\textsuperscript{348} Despite the fact that the images are from different years, this title provides an interpretative key for reading all of the military portraits reprinted. During the dictatorship there was a conscious intention to depict Videla as a dialogist, a man in charge of constructing consensus from early on. Still, these images show him by himself, so “communicating” appears to mean imparting orders without the possibility of response. The superimposition of the image together with the text results in irony. Perhaps the publication of such a photograph was a way for the picture editor to subtly express criticism.

2. “Very Short Poems”\textsuperscript{349}

The photojournalistic images that I discuss in the following section were produced during the dictatorship and the first years after the transition to democracy. When observed from the present, they all evoke the past while accommodating different readings conditioned by new information available regarding the political period they portray. For organizational purposes, I first analyze an undated image, followed by the analysis of other photographs in chronological order, each corresponding to different moments of the military regime. As mentioned, iconic photojournalistic images punctuate history. So while I am situating them chronologically, they all circulated beyond their initial date of publication.

With the return to democracy, the photographic representation of the former leaders changed. Instead of Rafael Videla’s face being depicted alone, it became more common to show the three members of the junta in a triple portrait. The most frequently published image is a

\textsuperscript{348} \textit{Clarín}, March 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1980.

\textsuperscript{349} This sentence is how John Szarkowski defines journalists’ photographs in John Szarkowski, \textit{From the Picture Press} (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 5.
portrait that shows them all in three-quarter profile in their uniforms and matching hats looking to the right with a slight upward glance. The image became even more popular through urban graffiti, which used a stencil created with a simplified version of the photograph with the added words Nunca Más (Spanish for “Never Again”) to condemn the military regime (Fig. 3.3). The identification of the regime with the three members of the junta gained more strength in part because of the Juicio a las Juntas, the historical civil trial against the commanders, in which they were accused together. Guillermo Loiácono created the most interesting picture of this kind, a photograph that mocked the repression and sobriety of the period by articulating a degree of criticism behind the formal poses and false admiration of the leaders (Fig. 3.4 A). The image was used on more than one occasion; one of the memorable instances was the 2010 cover of newspaper Página 12, which appeared two years after Loiacono’s death without a credit line (Fig. 3.4 B). Loiácono was one of the most admired photojournalists among his peers because he was a master of subtle sarcasm. This image, for example, could have passed as another example of the three leaders in an official act. However, on closer scrutiny its criticism is masked under a patina of respect. This reading is encouraged by its appropriation by Página 12, a newspaper founded after the fall of the dictatorship in 1987, with a clear progressive agenda. Loiácono’s ability to encode his disapproval of the regime in his photographs is what makes this image unforgettable.

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350 The author of this photograph is unknown. It is present in so many major and minor publications that to date, I have not been able to establish the first use of this shot.
351 The trial was against the nine members of the first three juntas, but not the fourth, and started in 1985.
352 Unfortunately, Loiácono committed suicide and the family in charge of his estate and archive is not interested in collaborating with this project. As a result, the information regarding his oeuvre is sparse and scattered.
353 This political agenda was visible, not only in its text but also in giving free samples of books written by disappeared authors such as Haroldo Conti and Rodolfo Walsh, and publishing free
Loiácono managed to capture the faces at a moment when the leaders did not transmit security and conviction, but rather uncertainty and a hint of hesitation. In Loiácono’s image, the three members of the junta are at a 45-degree angle, looking towards the left of the camera viewfinder, their gazes neither active nor confrontational. Generally, politicians or other public figures in official portraits look slightly towards their right, a pose associated with a look into the future, which conveys the idea of a thinker, or a planner. In her analysis of such photographs, Susan Sontag explains that “for politicians the three-quarter gaze is more common: a gaze that soars rather than confronts, suggesting instead of the relation to the viewer, to the present, the more ennobling abstract relation to the future.” The reverse positioning communicates the idea of one looking into the past. In Loiácono’s photograph of the three commanders, their gaze indicates that they are no longer looking toward the future; the image shows them looking back, to the past and reflecting over their actions. These leaders are no longer solemn. All three are pressing their lips together, firmly closed in a gesture that seems to express not regret, but at least concern. Videla is making a strange grin that can be seen as expressing some preoccupation for the future. The photographer’s intention was to capture a truth not easily visible through a detail. Loiácono said: “At official ceremonies I’d be the first to arrive and the last to leave … I was waiting for the gestures they made when they thought nobody was looking; for the social groupings that revealed dangerous political alliances. I was particularly...
interested in politicians from earlier governments—civilians and military—to show the continuity, the wide spectrum of interest that had combined to produce the repression.”

The photograph does not hold any markers of time or space. As a result, it is more flexible and less specific, making it possible to accommodate prior knowledge and interpretations brought to the image by the viewer. During the dictatorship, this shot probably did not resonate as particularly critical, but its subtle criticism can be seen now. The newspaper decided to republish the image because it helps to articulate the condemnation that society at large felt towards the military leaders. It provides a voice for the public climate in democratic times of disapproval of the dictatorship. Unfortunately, Loiácono’s heirs have prohibited access to the photographer’s archive and there is no available information pertaining to the circumstances surrounding the shot. Efforts to locate the first and original publication were unsuccessful. However, given the scarcity of oppositional images, this photograph acquired more importance during democratic times. With the influx of democracy there was a strong movement to revisit and uncover what had happen during the dictatorship. The most emblematic of those efforts was the trial to process the military leaders. This revisionist spirit is what led to the uncovering of a hidden meaning in this picture. Loiácono was able to render his moral judgment visible, but with sufficient subtlety to avoid being censored. He was a master of photographing the exact moment when an unusual gesture occurred. This sensibility for

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356 According to author Marguerite Feitlowitz, who interviewed Loiácono, he took more pictures of the repression than any other photographer and was an obsessive collector; his archive of images from those years may be the largest in Argentina. Ibid.
capturing a discrediting pose became part of the language of resistance to the dictatorship of the new photojournalism.\textsuperscript{357}

2.1 Helicopter: the Beginning of an End

In addition to the iconic power of the portraits there are other specific images that have also become icons. The earliest iconic photograph selected from the period shows a military helicopter taking off from the roof of a building at night, while a crowd cheers from below (Fig. 3.5 A).\textsuperscript{358} Horacio Villalobos, one of the most qualified photojournalists of the time, took this photograph. With over ten years of experience, he had developed strong technical skills as well as philosophical concerns about the medium. An Inter American Press Association scholarship in 1974-1975 allowed him to complete his graduate journalism studies at the University of Missouri, a rarity among his peers.\textsuperscript{359}

This photograph depicts the moment when President Isabel Martínez de Perón was taken into custody on March 24, 1976 in the early hours of the morning, which is why it was still dark when the shot was taken. The picture was published in several international publications, including \textit{Newsweek} (Fig. 3.5 B). Villalobos was working for United Press Agency.\textsuperscript{360} International agencies working in Buenos Aires were prohibited from distributing information

\textsuperscript{357} Gamarnik, “Reconstrucción de La Primera Muestra de Periodismo Gráfico Argentino Durante La Dictadura,” 15.
\textsuperscript{358} It is important to note that, according to Barthes, the description (the first level of signification in a photograph, or analogic level) is already ideologically charged, merging it with the second level of signification or iconic message. Barthes, Rhetoric of the Image,” in \textit{Image-Music-Text}, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 37, note 1.
\textsuperscript{359} He also was awarded by the IAPA in 1973 as he had been working for international media since 1972. Horacio Villalobos, interview by author, Telephone. New York, November 30, 2007.
gathered locally by their employees to local media, but they were still allowed to distribute it outside the country. For this reason, Villalobo’s picture did not appear on the front page of any local newspapers immediately. Nevertheless, that day the front pages of *La Nación* and *Clarín* included a shot of the helicopter, but it was severely cropped. (Figs. 3.5 C and D) The shot was probably taken by one of the photographers featured in Villalobos’s image. Still, both examples reinforced the mental image of a helicopter fleeing the presidential palace. That week, Villalobos’s photograph was published in the Argentine magazine *Gente*, making it available to the local audience in blatant defiance of the government’s restrictions. Given the strong recollection that this picture still enjoys today, it is reasonable to think that it was shown on TV, and that it circulated extensively in minor publications.

The photograph is organized vertically, presenting a side view of the main façade of the presidential building *Casa Rosada* with its characteristic ornate style, in which the building’s main balcony, the stage of many memorable discourses in the past, is extremely foreshortened and hardly recognizable. The extreme angle is necessary to capture a little strip of dark sky

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361 It is possible to conclude that the images are from different negatives given the position of the helicopter in regard to the architectural details of the cornice.
362 I was not able to locate the magazine with this photograph, but Villalobos affirms that it was published in the magazine without authorization.
363 Even today the copyright of images is grossly ignored in Argentina. See Fig. 3.5 F and G for more examples on the repetition and fixation of the helicopter as the significant element. It is still a common practice today for the Argentinian press to reproduce international media coverage regarding its own country. This may be due to Argentina’s minor role in the global scene, which has reinforced a national preoccupation with the “external” viewpoint of the country’s current affairs. Even today, with Internet access to the international press, the local media continues to publish articles about what the “world is saying” about Argentina.
364 The famous balcony became even more symbolic during the Perón period, and the popular mobilizations that the government encouraged. General Perón gave famous public speeches from there. It became even more famous internationally when Madonna, acting as Evita Perón, used the balcony to reenact one of the most moving discourses when Evita due to health issues had to resign her nomination. However, that is a historical inaccuracy of the movie. That speech took place in the *Edificio de Obras Públicas* located at 9 de Julio Ave.
crowning the image. There, in the compressed space, the main element is visible: the military helicopter taking the overthrown president away from the Casa Rosada. It is a difficult shot given the conditions of light and scale. As a result, the picture is highly saturated in hues, with a strong light at the front, overexposing the closer objects cast in a white light, and pushing the more distant elements into the black background of the night. Although the helicopter’s specific characteristics are hardly visible, it is possible to read “Fuerza Aérea Argentina” close to the tail rotor indisputably tying the vehicle to the military. In the lower portion of the composition, there is a row of people seen from the back, three of them with their right arm raised in an ambiguous gesture. They may have been celebrating or protesting. In the lower right corner, a photographer captures the scene while being photographed by Villalobos. This detail, the presence of another photographer, speaks to the importance of the event. This was somehow an anticipated moment, since the main newspapers had been publishing rumors of an imminent coup during the preceding days.

This is an iconic picture that registers a historical moment, one that defines a “before” and an “after.” The image essentially influences the narration of the story in the official history. It establishes “the most pregnant [moment], the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow.” Its existence creates a watershed in the country’s political history. It is the existence of said image that transformed the significance of the moment;

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365 The photograph made from the original negative in a good quality reproduction has better definition, proving that it was well made and clearer. Still, most of my analysis is based on the poorer newspaper reproduction that was the example available to a wider audience.

366 The media’s role in the coup is still a controversial point today and has been mentioned in the first chapter. According to some scholars, the newspapers were implicitly asking for and offering their support for military intervention. For a deeper analysis of the role of the written media see Juan José Sebreli, “Claroscuros de Una Época Al Borde Del Abismo,” La Nación, March 19, 2006, sec. Enfoques.


368 Zelizer, About to Die, 2.
without it, the moment would have been an incident forgotten among others that occurred on the first day of the coup. Its formal composition makes the photograph suitable for such a condensed meaning, while the economy of detail leaves some flexibility for its interpretation.

It is a tripartite structure that can be easily summarized: the helicopter, the executive government palace and the crowd. Each object is one specific element in this composition inventory. When brought together in an image, they become more than the visible content. Each object is loaded with its own associations, in Barthes’s words “The objects are accepted inducers of association of ideas.” For example, the dark sky is usually associated with the night, and as such with the end. Clarín, the newspaper with the largest readership, put this version forward, which drove its repeated use. It signals the end of a violent period. However, to a historical viewer this darkness would speak to the dark era the country entered that day. The entire period under this dictatorship would often be recalled as a long night. The ornate building reminds us of institutionalized power, which is based on coercion, especially if the viewer recognizes the Argentine presidential building and probably knows about the country’s violent history.

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370 La Razón, a minor newspaper of the time, published immediately before the coup as a main title on the front page: “The end is imminent. It is all already said.” (Es inminente el final. Está todo dicho.) See Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 42. My translation.
371 See, for example, “Una Noche Que Duró 2.818 Días,” Clarín, March 24, 2001, sec. Política. Even in the 3rd exhibition by the Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos there is a reference to the dictatorship as a long night. Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos de la República Argentina, El Periodismo Gráfico Argentino.
372 All political authority rests on the threat of physical violence, which is the essence of power. For more information on this topic Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Fourth edition (University of California Press, 1978).
Analyzing the image in semiotic terms, the helicopter becomes the main signifier. It is the element that opens up more associations. The helicopter, in Robert Andersen’s words, had a politically loaded association after the Vietnam War as “the symbol par excellence for counterinsurgency war.”\(^\text{373}\) The stronger association here is war, violence and ideological confrontation. Furthermore, the combination of the elements forms a more specific symbolic photograph. The army helicopter signifies military power, conflict and violence, and its take off from the top of a building, which is a symbol of civilian political power is also meaningful. The photograph transmits the idea of the military forces defeating the democratically elected authorities. The image is able to transmit a message because it benefits from the meanings and associations created in the entire visual culture. The individual elements work as words in a sentence, what Barthes calls a historical grammar.\(^\text{374}\) He includes the adjective historical to emphasize how the meaning fluctuates over time and depends on the individual in charge of the “reading.”\(^\text{375}\) The meaning in 1976 could have been hopeful: the night as a metaphor for the end of a cycle, the “crazy” president, portrayed in César Cichero’s photograph, removed.\(^\text{376}\) With the helicopter fleeing in the darkness, the scene could have been associated with the end of a chaotic period in Argentine history, and with the promise of a new day, a more stable future, a

\(^{\text{373}}\) Andersen, “Images of War Photojournalism, Ideology, and Central America,” 98. Interestingly, the author acknowledges the scene of the famous film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) as a main contributor to this association.

\(^{\text{374}}\) “The photograph clearly only signifies because of the existence of a store of stereotyped attitudes which form ready-made elements of signification … a ‘historical grammar’ of iconographic connotation ought to look for its material in painting, theater … in culture.” Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 22.

\(^{\text{375}}\) Although pictures are a silent record of a frozen instant, in some cases we can still imagine the noise. In this case, we can almost hear the deafening helicopter, and the vociferous crowd; and at the same time, the pictorial space occupied by the building acts as a silent contrast, perhaps a metaphor for the forced quietness of the future years.

\(^{\text{376}}\) See chapter 2.
new order. This interpretation would have been in tune with the official rhetoric published in the main newspapers as indicated above.

*Clarín* re-published the photograph a year later in commemoration of the coup, illustrating the photograph’s early establishment as an icon (Fig. 3.5 E). It was clear that the photograph had the power to condense passed time and to bring back memories of that beginning. It is difficult to trace all the publications where the image appeared over so many years, but it was selected again to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the coup in 2001.377 By the end of that year, Villalobos’s image proved itself as an icon engraved in the national memory. On December 20, 2001 civilian President Fernando de la Rúa fled the presidential house by helicopter as the country collapsed, immersed in an unprecedented economic crisis. The situations shared similar circumstances, in particular economic instability, but there were differences as well. For example, in 2001 there was no the widespread political violence as there had been in 1976. In both scenarios a civilian president was forced out of office, but in the second case the crisis did not lead to a military coup. In both cases, the helicopter taking off from the *Casa Rosada’s* rooftop had an impact on public opinion and how history was written. In 2001, two *Clarín* journalists, Atilio Bleta and Mariano Thieberger made a reference to Villalobos’s photograph without reprinting it: “The image that we all had in our head was the one of President Isabel Martínez de Perón, leaving in her helicopter.”378 It would be impossible

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377 At this time in 2001, Villalobos sued the newspaper and won copyright trial. The ruling created jurisprudence in an area where photojournalists are still to this day openly disrespected and ignored in their rights over their photographic productions. For example, the most infamous case took place in 2009 when the newspaper *Crítica* published a highly manipulated historical image (one figure had been completely erased) without the proper permission or credit to the author, the presidential photographer, Víctor Bugge. See *Clarín*, 10 de abril, 2009.

378 “Pero la imagen que todos teníamos en la cabeza era la de la presidenta Isabel Perón, el 24 de marzo de 1976, yéndose engañada en su helicóptero.” Atilio Bleta and Mariano Thieberger,
to prove how the second image of a helicopter taking off from the presidential building influenced interpretations of historical events.\textsuperscript{379} I agree with Hariman and Lucaites that “Claims regarding influence are notoriously difficult to prove. Nonetheless, the contrary claim that salient public practices have no effect, is even less credible.”\textsuperscript{380} Still, it is safe to assume that the relationship was strong and that the image taken in 2001 helped to link the crisis to the previous one, inflating the winds of destitution of the time. Villalobos’s image reached the highest peak in the process of its coronation as an icon: to recall the image publicly without even showing it represents confirmation that the photograph’s status as an icon is very much present in collective memory.

\textbf{2.2 World Cup: Sinister Celebration}

The second example of an iconic photograph is a shot taken by Higinio González, the official presidential photographer on June 25, 1978 of the military leaders during the World Cup (Fig. 3.6 A). In June 1978 Argentina celebrated the international soccer tournament. The country was selected as the host while still under democratic rule and the military dictatorship inherited the obligation to organize the tournament. In spite of international criticism and calls for a boycott, the military carried out the event as a celebration of their national project, denying accusations and rumors regarding widespread torture and murders that were taking place in clandestine centers. President Jorge Rafael Videla stands at the center of Gonzalez’s


\textsuperscript{380} More than a decade after the fall of President Fernando De LaRua, the image of the helicopter is still chosen by different sources to commemorate those events. This image’s power relies heavily on the mental connection that viewers can make to Villalobos’ original picture.

Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 7.
photograph. From the presidential box, Videla celebrates the triumphal goal in the cup’s final match, Argentina-Holland; he is exultant, jumping from his seat with his arms raised. The picture captures his dark mouth open in a celebratory shout in such a way that it is indistinguishable from his characteristic moustache. The other two members of the military junta, Emilio Eduardo Massera and Orlando Ramon Agosti, are standing beside Videla, also celebrating the victory. As the cover of the magazine Somos, it was circulated as an ad for the magazine in newspapers and was exhibited on magazine kiosks and posters on the street, earning the photograph instant fame and recognition. However, what is worth mentioning is that this image was republished after the end of the dictatorship with a completely different meaning.

This photograph was selected because it is an easily remembered simple composition, in which the main figures’ facial and hand gestures express great emotion. It is an icon because “the image proves to be aesthetically powerful yet politically elastic.” And while at first it summarized a sense of triumphal happiness, it later came to represent the junta’s terror. It is an easily understood photograph, and since there were no images of the crimes committed in clandestine centers, this image was used to make visible and repudiate the regime’s cynicism.

In spite of the widespread human right violations, the tournament was promoted under the ironic title of “a party for everyone.” Civilians euphorically followed the festivities, at a time when even gathering on the street was forbidden. Although some of the participants attempted to disengage the game from the nationalistic rhetoric, the official discourse emphasized a sense of “communion,” of people under the Argentine flag. The regime enjoyed

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381 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 20.
382 In addition a movie was edited with this same title. The morbidity of torturers was such that they even took some prisoners out of the clandestine centers to celebrate in bars and restaurants. Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero, Historia de La Vida Privada En La Argentina (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Aguilar, 1999), 95.
one of the highest popularity ratings at the time of the World Cup and did not tolerate any level of criticism. For example, a sports journalist was forced to leave the country after commenting on a suspiciously fraudulent activity involving the national soccer team’s coach.\footnote{383} A Manichean discourse was promoted: Argentina versus the world, and Argentina’s victory was trumpeted against a supposed foreign-led anti-Argentina campaign.\footnote{384}

The tournament was marked by unprecedented and spectacular photographic coverage, which included double-page spreads of images in daily newspapers, among other publications, which would not be seen again.\footnote{385} New publications were created to cover the event and special compilations of photographic material such as the \textit{Book of the World Cup} were rapidly sold out. The main subjects of the images published included new infrastructure, the teams and shots from the games. Here too the military leaders were included as participants, in an attempt to encourage their validation through identification with the general population since they wore their civilian clothes during the games. Photographs, like all types of cultural production, helped to create a social image with a particular meaning for the producer, in this case the military junta, and also for the receiver, the general public.\footnote{386}

As explained above, Videla’s face was well known in the local press. His public image was the product of an elaborate campaign implemented over some time. At least a year before the coup, a conscious effort was made to show him as an approachable character, friendlier and...

\footnotetext{383}{Tarruella, “Los Fotógrafos Que Sufrieron La Represión y Se Rebelaron,”.}
\footnotetext{384}{Eduardo Archetti, ““Fútbol” Imágenes Y Estereotipos,” in \textit{Historia de La Vida Privada En Argentina}, ed. Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Taurus, 1999), 246.}
\footnotetext{385}{Blaustein, \textit{Decíamos Ayer}, 32.}
less solemn than a traditional military man. In her analysis of the public discourse of the dictatorship, Marguerite Feitlowitz confirms the manipulation of Videla’s image through press coverage of him: “according to the press, Videla was at once elite and everyman; modest and successful; a man of the missal; and the sword.”³⁸⁷ Videla even hired the public relations agency, Burson-Masteller to help handle the regime’s public image.³⁸⁸ They signed a one-million-dollar contract to improve Argentina’s international image.³⁸⁹ In addition to the country’s image abroad, the agency worked to improve Videla’s as well, demonstrating that there was no improvisation in the handling of his public image. This PR campaign reached its climax during the World Cup when the commanding generals—Videla, Massera and Agosti—attended all the games together or individually, and declared publicly their good wishes for the national team.³⁹⁰

Gonzalez’s photograph was published on the front cover of the popular magazine, Somos (We Are), both as a close up of Videla’s figure, and also as a two-page spread inside the magazine. The superimposition of text and image creates a macabre effect for a knowledgeable reader.³⁹¹ (Fig. 3.6 B) Somos had a pro-regime orientation. Although the government exercised control over all the media, a few media outlets maintained a least a façade of independence. On the contrary, Somos was especially aggressive in promoting the official discourse. It featured general information for the middle class. It was heavily illustrated with pictures, and a special edition was published to cover the World Cup in 1978. The photograph was accepted and widely distributed because it was interpreted at the time as conveying a convenient message, but

³⁸⁷ Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 23.
³⁸⁹ Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 42.
³⁹⁰ Blaustein, Decíamos Ayer, 31.
there is never full control over the reception of an image. The title of the magazine, together with the image of the military leader in civilian clothes (not the military uniform usually seen in his public appearances) was an attempt to encourage viewer identification with the image, under a nationalistic rhetoric: “We are all Argentines and we all celebrated our triumph.” As art historian Amy Schlegel explains, the superimposition of text reveals the ideology of the picture.³⁹² “We Are” is a direct call to transform the viewer or reader into a participant, in this case, an accomplice. The magazine carefully articulated the position of the title to preserve the integrity of Videla’s face and to clearly reveal his open palm. Against the picture’s dark background, his open hand draws the viewer’s attention. As a symbol of honesty, his open hand indicates he has nothing to hide. His pose is a gesture that is widely understood as representing victory. Through his ovation Videla liberates the tension of his struggle, revealing a sense of personal satisfaction with his success, as he had just recently been appointed for a second mandate.³⁹³

At the time Gonzaléz took the shot, he was working as the official presidential photographer, but unfortunately he left no records behind. As was customary for soccer games, photographers were on the field behind the goalkeeper. Gonzaléz shot the image of the official box reversing his camera, pointing it away from the soccer field toward the tribune. As a result, viewers identify with the players’ point of view. Taken from a lower angle—the playing field—the shot places the viewer at the same level as the players, effectively positioning the viewer as if she is paying respect to the leader commanding from above, like a father figure. The idea of the leader as a father figure acquires greater force when one considers that the military

³⁹³ Videla was selected for his second presidential term, which started on August 1st, 1978, on May 3rd, 1978.
government infantilized civilians through speeches and actions, treating them as if they did not
know what was harmful to them.\footnote{For example, since 1976 the military dictatorship had declared a curfew, and controlled citizens’ most basic civil rights (expression, reunion, etc.), as well as civil responsibilities, for “their own good.”} This discourse became even stronger with the World Cup and the ensuing celebrations. Testimonies from this period recall a sense of being happy children again.\footnote{And as minors, not responsible.} María Elena Walsh, an important cultural figure in the country, denounced this treatment, writing that the country was being treated like kindergarten students in a courageous article defending cultural life and freedom.\footnote{María Elena Walsh, “Desventuras En El País Jardín-de-Infantes,” \textit{Clarin}, August 16, 1979, sec. Cultura.}

By the time the military dictatorship had fallen, democracy had returned, and the military leaders had been prosecuted and sentenced for their violent crimes and their role in the disappearances, the picture of the celebration of the World Cup victory, published as a \textit{Somos} cover, was a well-known image. From the beginning, it was inscribed in public discourse. Photojournalistic images, especially ones featured on the front cover of popular magazines, circulate in the societies that produce and consume them. This fact can be seen as giving shape to a vague concept of public discourse. At first, during the dictatorship, the image was a reminder of the celebration. Later, during democratic times, when the atrocities committed were being exposed, the same image acquired a new and darker meaning. This image does not portray any of the atrocities that the military regime committed against its compatriots, but rather, as a celebratory image shot during a time of great repression, it alludes to the regime’s total disregard for its tactics of violence and terror against its own people. It served to articulate the discourse about the leaders’ macabre spirits, marking their ability to celebrate while
ordering kidnappings and torture. In this context, this photograph of Videla became a representation of the “unknown” atrocities committed by the junta and was used by human rights advocates as proof of the sinister character of the dictatorship’s leaders.

Videla’s raised hands, which extend up to the sans serif block letters of the magazine’s logo *Somos* (We Are), imply that *we are* an unscrupulous military chief celebrating a horrendous violent situation. We (the viewers) are the implicit “we” of the title. Barthes already explained the impact of text accompanying photographs: “The text produces (invents) an entirely new signified which is retroactively projected into the image.” With this interpretation, the image becomes highly disturbing and provokes a sense of distress. However, the viewer is not an accomplice to Videla’s crimes. The implicit “we” is no longer celebrating with him. The “we” represents a misled population who were subject to the dictatorship’s oppression and terror. The dark background of the image echoes the darkest years in Argentine history. This photograph was published on various occasions following this first one without the title, clearly in an attempt to exculpate viewers’ passivity and complicity.

Gonzalez’s image was appropriated by television and was circulated on different occasions just as the leaders of the dictatorship went to trial, in an attempt to satisfy the audience’s demand for the truth. In the absence of any image of what had been done to the *desaparecidos*, or of any other photograph that could have incriminated any military personnel on the atrocities committed, this image was shown again and again, superimposing the happy

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397 Devoto and Madero, *Historia de La Vida Privada En La Argentina*, 95.
expression of the military leader with the increasing anger and frustration of civil society. Literature professor Marianne Hirsch, in her analysis of photographs taken during periods of repression and atrocity recognizes that “the viewer fills in what the picture leaves out: the horror of looking is not necessarily in the image but in the story the viewer provides to fill in what has been omitted.”  

This is what happens in this instance. González’s photograph “talks” (by omission) about the hidden violence at the time the photograph was taken. A closer look at the picture reveals an extended arm with a closed hand that emerges from the darkness of the background. This was obviously an arm from a celebrating fan sitting in the back of the tribune. It is a fortuitous coincidence. Today, the small detail becomes something else. With the change in the political scenario, the clenched fist could be seen as embodying the cry of the desaparecidos. The full legibility of an image becomes available at different moments in time.

Now, a raised clenched fist is visible as punctum, embodying, perhaps, political resistance. In line with John Tagg’s analysis, there is a reciprocal correlation between political power and meaning. While during the dictatorship that hand was subdued into darkness, as the survivors define their captivity in “a dark hole,” it is the viewer’s responsibility to acknowledge it in democratic times. Today this photograph conveys the sadness of so many deaths and reflects back at us the irony of the celebration.

Examples of the photograph’s reprinting come from contexts condemning the coup and commemorating it as an atrocious act. In one example, the article accompanying the image emphasizes the economic cost of hosting the tournament. In the other two instances, it was

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403 Devoto and Madero, *Historia de La Vida Privada En La Argentina*, 102.
published in magazines that condemned the coup (Fig. 3.6 C). However, no text accompanied the picture on these two occasions. The lack of explanatory texts is telling. Only the most well remembered and iconic images can be published without captions, because they are part of public discourse. They work on the assumed and shared social knowledge necessary for their reading. It is only when images are already well known that the audience does not need captions. Such images have an iconic status. In such cases, the interpretation was so widespread that the publishers did not consider it necessary to add any more informational text. In the most telling example the picture was manipulated from black and white, to black and red, making its association with violence, blood and crime even more explicit (Fig. 3.6 D). Although it is difficult to pin down social moods or perceptions, they materialize in these small details. This image was also used as the cover of a book that critically analyzed the role of sports journalists during the dictatorship (Fig. 3.6 E). Interestingly, the photograph was never republished in the context of sports or information about the World Cup. This is probably because the International Football Federation (FIFA for its acronym in Italian) and the local soccer association AFA, which shared the responsibility for the organization of the 1978 World Cup, preferred not to call attention to their relationship with the military regime in Argentina, nor in the rest of Latin America where the sport is so popular. In 1978, during the height of military rule, this photograph was an icon for the support of the regime, and galvanized the country’s adherence to the military’s project. After 1983, it became an icon of condemnation of the

404 Agreeing with this point, Robert Hariman and John Lucaites so entitled their seminal book on iconic photojournalistic images. See Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed.
406 Note that Dr. João Havelange from Brazil was elected FIFA’s president in 1974 and held the position until 1998. Julio Grondona, AFA’s president until his death in 2014, assumed the position in 1979, still well under the regime, and succeeding a military intervention. For more information on the obscure relationship of AFA and the Argentinian government see Daniel Giacaman Zaror, “Julio Grondona: El Padrino del fútbol argentino,” La Nación, 30 agosto 2009.
regime. It showed the aberration of such celebrations, as well as the hidden nature of the repression. Again, the icon allowed Argentines to unite in the celebration of both soccer and democracy.  

2.3 Wishful Thinking

The third example of an iconic picture is an image taken during the aftermath of a demonstration on March 30, 1982, the final year of the dictatorship. It shows the military repression of civilians in the middle of the day (Fig. 3.7 A). In the foreground a soldier in combat attire forces a civilian to his knees at gunpoint. In the background of the picture, a similar scene is also captured. This iconic photograph is a shot by Pablo Lasansky, a photographer from the “new generation.” Lasansky started his career at Noticias Argentinas, one of the first publications to give photography a prominent role. Interestingly, he was not a full-time employee when this image was produced. Rather, he had a part-time contract to provide technical support for the photography department. For this reason, he owns the negative and has more control over its reproduction. After working in different agencies since he started his career in the early 1980s, today he is back at Noticias Argentinas, where he is the editor-in-chief of the photography section. This photograph corresponds to what I identified as “new” photojournalism in Argentina. In a famous textbook, Hubertus von Amelunxen defined superior photographs as being “[the] depiction of that which cannot be represented.” As explained before, photojournalism underwent important changes during the dictatorship: it became more professional. There were photographers dedicated exclusively to the trade and who had some

\[407\] The image is still in use, adding to its circulation. See Figs. 3.6 F and G.

kind of technical training, in general. Concentrating on improving their careers, they purchased international publications to follow photographers’ work around the world. Finally, as a direct response to the dictatorship, photojournalists executed their profession as a political act. Through their photographs, they gave materiality to an incipient social climate of dissent. Lasansky’s image became an icon, I argue, because it stands for all these changes.

Lasansky’s picture was taken from a short distance. Still, the formal composition is not compromised. The viewer feels like part of the scene, and as a result, empathizes with the photographer whose fear of being seen as he takes the picture and of being arrested for photographing something that should not be revealed is felt by the viewer. The taking of this shot speaks to the photographer’s political view. The image becomes a gesture of resistance and evidence of the photojournalist’s bravado and political commitment, as well as of improvements in technique. In spite of the fact that the photographer was also on the run, and afraid of being arrested or having his equipment destroyed or confiscated, as seen in previous examples, the composition is surprisingly balanced. The soldier occupies the entire height of the frame and coincides almost perfectly with the central axis of the pictorial space. His military boot stands exactly at the lower limit of the bottom frame. The focus is on the two main characters: the soldier and the civilian being forced to his knees. Given the angle from which the photograph has been shot, the bodies acquire sculptural qualities. Lasansky chose to portray the main scene slightly toward the left half in order to be able to include the second scene, happening farther up the street, which functions as a visual echo since there is more repression being carried out.

The light comes from behind the soldier. As a result, his standing body projects a long and dense shadow that darkens the face of the kneeling man, rendering his figure even more daunting. The shadow is taller than the civilian and seems to emerge from his kneeling body
onto the wall. The soldier’s face is not completely visible, only his profile. Still, it is clear that his mouth is open and he is screaming, in a clearly intimidating gesture. A military official screaming orders is a common image that recalls many similar images. It is so common that it is usually used to represent soldiers in cartoons (Fig 3.7 B). The helmeted head and screaming mouth form a unit of signification: together they work as an emblem of military rule. This meaning, among others, is present in examining Lasansky’s image.

Continuing with the formal analysis of the picture, the civilian is kneeling with his torso hunched forward, but his hands are not on the ground. His face is in front of the gun’s long barrel, with only a few centimeters of separation. Given the angle the picture was taken from, the geometric pattern formed by the grooved sidewalk tiles forms an ascending diagonal that guides the viewer’s gaze toward the background. There, a second scene of repression is taking place: two soldiers are holding two civilians lying face down at gunpoint. The frame is interrupted and the viewer cannot see what is happening beyond that point. But the idea established is that these repressive acts are repeated infinitely just as the lines of the sidewalk continue beyond the frame.

In the case of Lasansky’s photograph, it was its circulation that pushed it to the level of icon, not the facial gestures and simplified structure, as discussed previously. 409 Still, in spite of having a multi-part composition, the image can be described in one short sentence, emphasizing a version of history that the public wants to remember. As the photographer and scholar, Julio Menajovsky said: “The soldier points his gun at the man who is bent forward but not

409 The photographer provided me with newspaper clippings showing some of the republications of the picture. See Fig. 3.7 C
defeated.” He described the photograph in those terms without looking at it, an important fact because many times what “opens” the reading of photographs, appears when there is visual distance. The most important detail appears when recalling the visual stimulus and translating it into words. The description: “bent but not defeated” works as an implicit motto. It is helpful to think of the iconic photojournalistic image as a modern emblem. In the past, emblems were a communicative unity between written and graphic components. Emblems are an efficient unity of communication that employ metaphor as well as “the power of pictorial condensation.”

The vernacular features of the photograph facilitate identification. Looking at the man kneeling with his upper torso still upright and facing the gun with a defiant gaze, the viewer feels hopeful and understands that the end of this military impunity is close. Thus, there are two antagonistic forces at play in the image. On the one hand, there is the feeling of continuity and strength of the military regime through the repetition of the repressive episode. On the other hand, there is the feeling of change that lies within the defiant man’s attitude. In contrast to the previous iconic images studied here, there are no conflicting interpretations surrounding this picture, only these two forces. The image was repeatedly used to show the brutality of the regime and to encourage its condemnation in keeping with Lasansky’s own view (Fig. 3.7 E,

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410 Julio Menajovsky, interview by author, Tape recording. Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 19, 2007. Note that Menajovsky includes the saying “Doblado pero no vencido” that is colloquially used to express resistance.
412 Motto: a short sentence or phrase chosen as encapsulating the beliefs or ideals of an individual, family, or institution.
413 Gombrich, *Symbolic Images*, 137.
and F). Yet, I argue that this image was selected because it accommodates a narrative that is functional. It represents what the majority of society wants to communicate and as such becomes an “artificial” icon.

This is an “artificial” icon, in the sense that its intrinsic characteristics do not correspond exactly with the definition of an icon used before. It is more complex, and not so easily remembered in its richness of details. The facial gestures are not completely visible, so there is not an automatic identification between the viewer and the photographed. However, it has been selected on many occasions to engage with the dictatorship, therefore it has become an icon of the period because it is always present. In the analysis of photographs, it is tempting to see them as the direct reflection of reality, but they are still representations. As Taylor comments in reference to the period of the Argentine dictatorship: “Representations are not innocent, transparent, or true. They do not simply ‘reflect’ reality: they help constitute it.”

This is a fundamental observation that has to be taken into account. This is the power of the icon. In repeating one image and attaching a certain perspective to it, it contributes to the formation of historical discourse. The photographer is the physical agent, but what survives in time is the narration that the image provokes. This narrative becomes the ideology of the picture.

Besides being selected for numerous commemorative publications, Lasansky’s photograph also received international awards, making it the subject of news stories and endowing it with additional prestige for its reprinting (Fig. 3.7 G). This proves that the technical quality of photojournalistic images produced during the dictatorship improved and that photographers took their profession seriously, to the point of participating in international shows and contests. Secondly, it shows that the idea of photojournalism as a political tool was

welcomed and encouraged in the international community as well as among the national press. It is in this role—the photojournalist as a representative of a political position—that photojournalists played a part in strengthening the fictional discourse of a more active and resistant civil society.

Lasansky’s photograph is used repeatedly because it is a unique image that makes it possible to articulate a narration of resistance. It embodies a more heroic role for civil society, unlike other images, such as the photograph of the armed repression on the street, while the old man continues along carrying his walking stick as if nothing unusual has occurred (Fig. 2.4) or the image of the repression in which a man is taken without possibility of resistance (Fig. 2.14) both reviewed in chapter 2. In reading photographs, Marianne Hirsch has argued that “we project a particular mask, particular ideological frames, onto the images.”416 The viewer projects what he/she wants the real story to be. Viewers see the version of history that is most beneficial to their beliefs. In Lasansky’s image there is the possibility of seeing a more active and noble role in the look of the kneeling man. This is an example of what Claudia Feld, a scholar analyzing the media in the early times of democracy, calls a “tension between the historical truth and the truth built by the media.”417 This photograph helps immortalize a different version of those times because, with the exception of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo group, the level of civil resistance was uneven. It manifests what a viewer today would like to believe was the widespread attitude: resistance and defiance in face of the brutal regime. It is thus an artificial icon.

2.4 Empathy and Gender

The last iconic image is a photograph taken by Adriana Lestido in the early period of her career. It is a close up of a woman holding her young daughter in one arm in a public demonstration in 1982 (Fig. 2.22). They unequivocally belong to the civil group Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo because both are wearing the characteristic white headscarf. Both mother and daughter hold their fists raised to the sky in reclamation for their disappeared loved ones. It is impossible to know exactly for whom they are manifesting. Still, perhaps influenced by the “familial gaze,” which acts as a powerful constricting social pressure that imposes ideal family bonds in one’s mind, the viewer looks for the missing father to complete the triadic family.⁴¹⁸ A closer look reveals the lack of a wedding ring on the presumed mother’s left hand.⁴¹⁹

The image was first published the day after the demonstration in November 1982 on the front page of a minor newspaper called La Voz. As mentioned, the photograph was also included in the second ARGRA exhibition. It had a prominent place in that show, as well as in the catalogue where it opened the section on human rights, as I outlined in the previous chapter. According to the author, it was regularly published in minor publications with and without permission. However, its greatest surge in popularity was in 1984 when it won the award of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH for its acronym in Spanish) and the majority of the local media reproduced it. Later, in 1988, it made the cover of one of the most important Argentine books of photography: Democracia Vigilada (Fig. 3.8).⁴²⁰ It was also featured in

⁴¹⁸ Hirsch, Family Frames, 85.
⁴¹⁹ According to Lestido, the protagonists are a mother and her daughter claiming for her father, and as such, she titled the image. However, to my knowledge, the photograph is never published under that title, but rather the generic “Marcha por la Vida.” As a consequence, I believe that the analysis following Hirsch is pertinent.
⁴²⁰ Acosta, Democracia Vigilada.
publications related to international human rights, including initiatives by UNESCO and the British Council. For the thirtieth anniversary of the coup it was republished in official commemorative literature, as well as in popular newspapers, such as Clarín, La Nación and Página 12, and in magazines such as Rolling Stone. In the following year, 2007, during a retrospective of Lestido’s work, the most famous photographer included in this study, the image was published many times again. The final piece of evidence in support of its iconicity came in 2010, when, as part of the celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of Argentina’s national independence, the photograph was selected to be included in the permanent collection of the recently created museum of history Casa Nacional del Bicentenario. Lestido also received a national medal for her whole career on this occasion.

Lestido achieved a very moving image by photographing a mother holding her young daughter in her arms. It communicates directly with the emotional core of the spectator. The viewer comprehends the extreme emotions in play just by looking at their faces: their pain and anger. Both have furrowed eyebrows, flared nostrils and open mouths. They are frozen in the act of expressing their grief. Their cry is almost audible, even overcoming the powerful marker of the white headscarf. Aesthetically, this image builds upon and reinforces what can be called the iconography of the mother. In observing the first image of the group published in the


[422] Casa Nacional del bicentenario. In addition, Lestido’s image is prominently displayed in a different section of the webpage. www.casadelbicentenario.gov.ar

[423] “Por El Bicentenario, La Ciudad Entregó Medallas a Mujeres Que Se Destacan,” Clarín, March 9, 2010, sec. Sociedad. It has been exhibited innumerable times, even outside Argentina, See for example the recent ICP show, Urbes Mutantes: Latin American Photography 1944–2013. (on view May 16–September 7, 2014)
international press in 1977, it is apparent that both share certain elements: the white headscarf, the intense emotion expressed in the facial gestures, and the extreme gestures of the all-female group of figures (Fig. 3.9). In her analysis of photographs, Hirsch explains that this kind of picture can be as painful as any literal atrocious one, based on the horrendous information that the viewer brings to the picture. Given the information that became available later about the disappeared, their torture and tragedy, this picture not only reminds us of the disappeared, but also of those left behind. It is different from previous examples because it shows how many lives were affected by this calamity. The killings generated intergenerational pain, affecting many generations of Argentines. The trauma vertically damaged the entire social body: older generations, contemporaries and descendants.

This is the picture that viewers can relate to the most. The image operates on an intimate level. Hirsch correctly signals that the photograph in question, just like any other photograph that somehow can be categorized as an image of family, has the power of imposing what she terms an “affiliative look,” which reinforces identification. Photographs featuring families activate feelings from personal memory, which are inserted into the larger context of history. While looking at Lestido’s picture, the viewer feels that he/she could take the place of either figure: the mother or the daughter. They are neither in royal regalia, nor in any kind of uniform, but rather in the typical attire of middle-class civilians: a simple dress and a wristwatch. As previously mentioned, everyday attire also facilitates identification. Hirsch continues:

424 Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 5.
426 Hirsch, Family Frames, 40.
427 In addition, there are aesthetic similarities to the main characters of a famous Oscar winning movie from the period: The Official Story. Although the story in the movie differs form the story of the child in Lestido’s image, they both share gender and age, and the mothers look
“Family photography can operate at this junction between personal memory and social history, between public myth and personal unconscious. Our memory is never fully ‘ours.’”

Viewers understand the photograph in light of their own familial experiences. The situation portrayed is one that almost everyone had lived: being held in a mother’s arms. It reveals the commonalities and the differences with one’s own experience: one’s own picture, whether mental or real. Thus, viewers feel their pain as their own. They empathize and imagine their own family suffering.

At the same time, given that the woman featured is a mother, it conveys the qualities associated with motherhood in general. There is the “standard typification of gender.” Besides affective reactions, the figure of the mother evokes religious connotations, which are also reinforced by the parallel between the white headscarf and the Virgin Mary’s cloak, especially strong in Argentina, a Catholic country. Although in this case the child is a girl, the association remains strong. Understanding the picture in these terms initiates a multipart process that revolves from the actual figure to the ideal; from the real person featured to the religious personification; and then back to the viewer’s own real mother and personal identification. All the elements, from reality, the real person, the social and political context and the viewer’s own reality are combined with the ideal elements brought forward through the picture qua

surprisingly alike thanks to age and hairstyle. It could be possible that the actress’ characterization was inspired from this picture, or perhaps, more probably the similarity is because the picture portrays a typical Argentinian woman of that age and social position. Luis Puenzo, La Historia Oficial, 1985.

Hirsch, Family Frames, 14.


Gombrich, Symbolic Images, 141.

Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 373.

The association is strong for the majority of Western Catholics, who constitute a majority in Argentina’s population.
representation in the constant movement of semiosis. The image works as an icon of motherhood.

The background of Lestido’s image is filled with signs with blurred letters. It is a demonstration called *marcha por la vida* (Spanish for walk for life), for which the specific demand was the liberation of prisoners captured by the junta who were still presumed to be alive.\(^{433}\) The mother and daughter do not hold any signs. The visible banners obstruct a view of the distant background. It is not clear from the photograph how many people were protesting at the time; there were probably thousands of demonstrators. Due to the effect of the photograph, the space becomes flatter and compressed, and the signs are pushed to the foreground. A few words are legible if an effort is made to read them. The clearest is a common last name: “Sánchez” in the top left-hand corner. In the visible signs there are no photographs of the missing individuals. Knowledge of the history of Argentina’s civil rights movement serves to date the photograph: at this point in history, the Mothers had not yet begun to use photographs; it was later that the display of photographs of the desaparecidos became one of their trademarks. The Mothers used photographs of the disappeared from early on. First, they carried their pictures—family photographs from their home—attached by a pin to their breasts.\(^{434}\) It was a way of keeping them close, of proving their existence, of claiming their identity, a way for others to recognize the missing individual and a plea for support of their search. Then, given that the pictures tended to deteriorate quickly, they mounted the photographs onto cardboard backs and hung them around their necks as exaggerated neckpieces. It was only later, in April 1983, that the group created big banners with the pictures. According to Ana Longoni with this

\(^{433}\) Over time this request was proven impossible. Other forms of retribution have been established, such as monetary repair.

change in how the photographs were displayed, they became even more moving and their increased visibility “spoke” to a greater number of passersby.\textsuperscript{435}

A sign with a big question mark is visible next to the child’s face. Given the flattened photographic space, it looks as if the question mark illustrates the girl’s thoughts as if in a cartoon’s balloon. That simple coincidence materializes the question behind the Mothers’ fight, since in the beginning, there was a real quest to find the disappeared alive. It was believed that they were being held captive somewhere. Later in light of evidence revealing the atrocious crimes, the focus of the fight changed to a claim for justice. Still, questions remained as to what had happened, who had killed them, how they were murdered, and where the bodies were, among many others. The question mark in the picture is a detail that is mostly overlooked. The power of the picture lays in the expressive faces and poses of the figures of the mother and daughter. However, the question mark completes the meaning. Without it, the photograph would still be a powerful symbol of determination and struggle, but with the question mark, the photograph becomes representative of the quest of this civil group.

Finally, like the Lasansky photograph, Lestido’s photograph creates a narrative that is closer to what society as a whole wants to remember from those years. According to sociologist Stanley Cohen, when a dark period in the life of a society ends, “a process of ‘social amnesia’ occurs by which the whole society separates itself from the discredited past record.”\textsuperscript{436} This is not always a conscious state policy but rather there is a “process of slippage in which uncomfortable knowledge is repressed” and, I would add, replaced with a more favorable or

\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., 4.
comfortable version.\textsuperscript{437} The photograph portrays the Mothers, bringing to mind their courageous fight. As such, it allows the rest of society, in large part indifferent to their plight during the dictatorship, to identify with their struggle and appropriate their prestige. On the other hand, the daughter, who embodies the innocent victims, unifies the discourse even among less sympathetic viewers. This is due to the fact that the picture showing the girl’s pain cannot have as many detractors as the Mothers as a group generated. The Mothers were many times attacked and their parenthood skills questioned. They were accused of being responsible for the fate of the disappeared, for not taking care of their sons and daughters who disappeared.\textsuperscript{438} There is no possibility of questioning the girl’s pain portrayed in the picture.

While all of the selected images contain sufficient characteristics to be considered iconic images, Lestido’s image is the most iconic of the examples analyzed because of its composition. It complies with every aspect of what has been defined as decisive in making an image iconic: exaggerated facial gestures, simple structure, and an easily summarized composition plus extensive circulation and high levels of recollection. The Mothers won a great victory in the battle they waged to establish certain themes in the public’s memory, and Lestido’s image commemorates that victory. It is a key image in the history of Argentine photography and in the history of the Mothers, and is an important achievement in Lestido’s career.\textsuperscript{439}

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{438} We will come back to this point with more details in chapter 4 “The Official Campaign.”
\textsuperscript{439} Interestingly, Lestido moved away from photojournalism in 1995. Nowadays, she makes the clarification that she is a photographer who works mostly following assignments for her agency \textit{VU} (France) or creating her own. In her mature years, she has often chosen to portray the broken family, especially the absence of the father perhaps as a reflection on her own story. Her father was in prison for some time. See for example, “Hospital Infanto–Juvenil” (1986-1988); “Madres adolescentes” (1988-90); “Mujeres presas” (1991-92); “Madres e hijas” (1995-98). See Amado Becquer Casaballe, “Adriana Lestido, Lo Que Se Ve,” \textit{Foto Mundo Digital}, 2008. I did not ask about this point when I interviewed her, but it seems as a reasonable motivation.
2.5 Closure

With the return of democracy, photojournalists had a better understanding of the political stance of their profession and continued exhibiting their works in annual shows. During those first years there were no official memorials yet. What abounded in the first decade of democracy were “ceremonies of public shaming and denunciation” demanding acknowledgement of what had happened.\textsuperscript{440} The most important practices, given the repercussions that they had, were the \textit{Siluetazos} and the so-called \textit{Escraches}.\textsuperscript{441} In that context the Conadep report, the aforementioned \textit{Nunca Más} document was created. Margarita Feitlowitz explains that the temporal distance was a requisite to revisit the dark period, she affirms, “It took the better part of a generation [to articulate how to memorialize the dictatorship]. Given the extent of the trauma, this is hardly surprising.”\textsuperscript{442}

In those first years, the democratic government of Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín (1983-89) focused its efforts on bringing some kind of justice to the families affected. In world-famous trials, civil courts of law judged most of the military members involved in the illegal repression.\textsuperscript{443} The trials were an important moment in the history of the country and created model jurisprudence that would be used in other contexts such as South Africa.\textsuperscript{444} Photojournalism also made the experience of the trials unforgettable and they were embodied by

\textsuperscript{440} Cohen, “State Crimes of Previous Regimes,” 31.\
\textsuperscript{441} Ana Longoni and Gustavo Bruzzone, eds., \textit{El Siluetazo} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2008).\
\textsuperscript{442} Feitlowitz, \textit{A Lexicon of Terror}, 192.\
\textsuperscript{443} These processes were not free of controversy. Under some military pressure the Alfonsin government passed two controversial laws known as “Ley de Punto Final #23492” and “Ley de Obediencia debida #23521”\
\textsuperscript{444} Cohen, “State Crimes of Previous Regimes,” 23.
one iconic image. Daniel Muzio’s photograph from March 22, 1985 came to symbolize the closure of the dark period (Fig. 3.10 A). It became the icon of the trials and the search for justice. Although photojournalists, like the rest of the press, had restricted access to the court, Loiácono and Munzio were granted access and created pools of images so that the few images produced were distributed to all the media equally. Thus, Munzio’s photograph has circulated extensively since it was taken.

The photograph captures the moment Clyde Snow testified regarding his work in identifying human remains recuperated from mass graves. It is an interior, curiously illuminated shot in which we see Snow’s back in the center of the image. In the background, to the right, a projected slide of a human skull unequivocally appears. On the other side of the central figure are three men seated on a carved and ornate stand, all looking attentively at the projected skull. The carving on the stands represents justice through a set of scales, perfectly visible since they are carved on the chair closest to the viewer. It is a scene from the Supreme Court, with judge Leon Arslanián closest to the viewer. The body language of the three judges shows that the three are paying special attention to the projected image while listening. Snow faces them slightly, while still in front of the slide. He is interpolating the image for the judges, explaining to them what they see. Snow was an American forensic anthropologist whose expertise became fundamental in the trials. Many members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science were called to help during the trials, since most of the local experts were either poorly trained, or had been implicated in tampering with evidence during the dictatorship. Snow was the most famous of the international figures that helped by testifying and then teaching young Argentinean

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446 Ibid.
anthropology students his techniques to form the *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense* (EAAF).\(^{448}\) Snow conducted many exhumations of unidentified graves. He identified victims and causes of death, and brought some comfort to loved ones who were finally able to learn details about the fate of their family members.\(^{449}\) He was able to establish whether a body was subjected to torture or if a woman had given birth. All key facts during the trials. His testimony was fundamental in achieving the convictions.

Munzio’s photograph is a well-composed image, with the figure of Snow at the center visible but shadowed, and the light punctuating the judges on the left and the white skull projected against the dark cropped background. The “picture in the picture” shows the importance of photography as evidence. The image of the perforated skull is simultaneously individual and general. It shows the existence of a human life, a specific person that has been killed by gunshots. At the same time, it is general enough to allow for the greatest identification possible among viewers. We all recognize the humanity in the skull. The photograph summarizes the then recently found communal tombs with many unidentified cadavers, concretizing the criminal charges related to the disappeared. According to Gamarnik, the image was reproduced extensively because it makes the crimes visible but avoids a sensationalist treatment or the transformation of horror into spectacle.\(^{450}\)

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\(^{448}\) Even to this day photography is an essential part of EAAF’s work methodology. Silvana Turner, Equipo de Antropología Forense, interview by author, Tape recording. Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 15, 2007.


The photograph was reproduced on the cover of the ARGRA’s annual exhibition in 1985 as well as on the back cover of *En Negro y Blanco* catalogue, reinforcing its iconicity and the idea of closure (Fig 3.10B and 3.10C). In addition, Munzio’s image has been circulated extensively because of its condensed symbolism. It can be summarized as “the perforated skull projected at the trials.” Yet, it has also been circulated because it tells a story that Argentines could embrace willingly and easily. As previously explained, photojournalistic icons base their communicative power on a shared public climate. Against the horror of the dictatorship and society’s mortification for what had happened, there was an opportunity to be proud again because of the trials. Iconic photojournalistic images create this sense of connection: “[Icons] allow anyone to have a sense of personal affiliation with large scale events.” Their continued circulation is a consequence of the political agenda, but at the same time, the reproduced images promotes the political agenda by making it general. The circulation is a consequence and also a cause. As with the two previous examples by Lasasnsky and Lestido, it is this aspect of the iconic photojournalistic image that cannot be disregarded: “such images provide a more or less idealized sense of who we are and what we ought to be.” In other words, the iconic image might advance “performative models of citizenship.”

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451 It was also reproduced and studied by Claudia Feld and Cora Gamarnik. See Claudia Feld, *El Pasado Que Miramos. Memoria E Imagen Ante La Historia Reciente* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Paidos, 2009); Claudia Feld, *Del Estrado a La Pantalla: Las Imagenes Del Juicio a Los Ex Comandantes En Argentina* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España editores, 2002); Gamarnik, “Imágenes de La Postdictadura En Argentina.”


453 Ibid., 2.

454 Ibid., 12.
3. Photographers on Photography

There were other noteworthy photographs created during the dictatorship, but their circulation was not well established. These images also communicate strongly with the viewer. They have striking compositions and have been cited by other scholars. Although their circulation in printed sources was less than the previously discussed photographs, they can also be considered icons and have been incorporated recently into museums, or have been reappropriated by artists. All three examples feature the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and mark two different moments in their fight.

3.1 Geometry of Demand

The first photojournalistic image is by Carlos Villoldo. It features the Mothers from a distant point of view (Fig. 3.11). It does not use facial expressions to provoke an emotional impact. As a consequence, it could be argued that since it includes neither exaggerated facial expressions nor hand gestures, it cannot be considered an icon. But it does comply with the other two criteria: abbreviated means and some repetition. Villoldo’s photograph has been included in the recently opened Museo Malvinas in Buenos Aires, which was created with the purpose of visually and didactically articulating Argentina’s claim over the possession of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.455 The photograph is featured in a special section dedicated to the

455 See more information about this issue in Chapter 4.
**Plaza de Mayo** and its occupation as a politically charged space before the declaration of war in 1982 and after.\(^{456}\)

It is a poignant image with an abstract composition. It is an aerial view of the Plaza de Mayo square on a Thursday in 1981. Thursday was the day of the week when the Mothers did their weekly walk demanding information about the fate of their loved ones. The photograph has a striking geometric composition. As a result, it seems more current.\(^{457}\) The obelisk, the biggest element in white, dominates the scene due to its central position and color. It works as the image’s light source. Numerous people walk clockwise around it. The photograph is an aerial view so the people look slightly smaller compared to the architectural elements featured. Closer scrutiny reveals that many of them wear white headscarves. A palm tree in the foreground disturbs the almost perfectly symmetrical composition, but Villoldo manages to render it in dark shades making its presence less obtrusive. The white obelisk echoes the color from the white headscarves, accentuating them. The decorative lines of the sidewalk that project from the grass bed surrounding the base of the obelisk toward the circle of walkers reinforce the circular force of the image. As Cora Gamarnik explains: “the perfect circle gives the idea of

\(^{456}\) As I have shown in previous chapters this plaza has been the scenario and backdrop of many historically important events immortalized in photographs.

\(^{457}\) Although there is no proof that this picture was published outside Argentina, given its geometric composition, with clear lines of force, it looks suitable for the current *New York Times* front page. This leading newspaper always publishes a photograph where the lines of force are clearly visible, with strong geometric feeling, rendering the focus more unmistakable. In an “off the record” conversation, a photography editor confessed that on numerous occasions the picture is manipulated to make the background less obtrusive, accentuating the geometric lines of the image. The most famous example of this kind of treatment was the iconic picture by Eddie Adams of a Vietnam War execution. See Amy Schlegel, “My Lai: ‘We Lie, They Die’ Or, a Small History of an ‘Atrocious’ Photograph.” *Third Text*, vol 9, 31, (July 15, 1995): 47-66.
continuous movement, without beginning or end." The impression is that they would remain there walking and demanding, even if it led them nowhere literally and metaphorically. On the street behind them, the motionless traffic dates the scene. The car models place the action in the early 1980s. A closer look reveals the presence of at least two Ford Falcons in the closest line to the square. Even though their presence could have been only a coincidence, their reputation makes their presence menacing.

The photographer’s intention was to shoot from a distance to record not only the circle of marchers and the obelisk, but also the indifference of the other citizens. This lack of sympathy is embodied by the two male figures in business attire crossing through the empty space between the obelisk and the walkers. They show their backs to the photographer, making the metaphor of indifference more concrete. From the angle of the shot, the personification of Liberty that crowns the obelisk seems to look down on these two men. The irony of marching around a figure of Liberty to demand the freedom of their loved ones was probably strong for the civil group. Many years later, during democratic times, this circular esplanade around the obelisk was imprinted with a simplified version of the characteristic white shawls. As a civil group, the Mothers succeeded in symbolically appropriating the space. Although the square with the obelisk as its marker was the site of many important historical events, as illustrated in

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458 Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 11.
461 Law 1.653, passed by the legislature of the city of Buenos Aires on March 10, 2005, conferred the status of a historical site to the area surrounding the so-called Pyramid. In 2005 the ashes of Azucena Villaflor of the main organization's leaders, were buried at the base of the obelisk, where she had organized her first protest.
aforementioned pictures, with the addition of the headscarf, what predominates is the recent history of the civil group and its claim. This place, which had so many associations, was won over by a single one. This image helps to enforce the appropriation of that space.

Villoldo narrated how the image was produced on several occasions.\textsuperscript{462} In order to capture the entire scene, he needed an elevated vantage point. However, gaining admittance to one of the buildings surrounding the square was hard since most of them were government offices with restricted access. After several weeks Villoldo managed to access a high floor from which he had a view of the square. To his surprise, he was not alone. There were other people taking photographs of the Mothers with powerful lenses. They were not photojournalists nor did they have any identification cards. Most likely, they belonged to the secret service, which recorded the faces of the participants for their secret files in order to undertake more kidnappings and repression later on.\textsuperscript{463} Many mothers were kidnapped and killed after the formation of the civil group.\textsuperscript{464} The most renowned case was their first organizer, Azucena Villaflor.\textsuperscript{465} Today it is a known fact that some military men infiltrated the civil organization

\textsuperscript{463} Proving that this unscrupulous practice continued well into democratic times, there is a telling picture from 1988 in which we see a “false” photojournalist, carrying a camera in one hand while a revolver in the other one. See photograph by Daniel Merle in Paola Cortés Rocca and Mabel López, \textit{Fotografía}, Cuadernos de Lectura (Buenos Aires, Argentina: ARS, 1995), 110. More on this subject in chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{464} Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 8.
\textsuperscript{465} Azucena Villaflor was taken to the Naval Mechanics School ESMA and tortured there. A few days later, some corpses appeared on the coast of the Rio de la Plata, and although the cause of death was established as violent, there was no investigation and the corpses were buried as John/Jane Does. After the return of democracy, the Equipo de Antropología Forense identified one of those bodies as Azucena Villaflor. Her remains were cremated, and her ashes were buried under the Plaza de Mayo’s Pyramid in Dec. 2005. For a complete biography see Enrique Arrosagaray, \textit{Los Villaflor de Avellaneda} (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1993).
with a false identification and story. The most infamous case was Alfredo Astiz.\textsuperscript{466} Knowing Villoldo’s account of the other people taking pictures and the subsequent kidnapings of the Mothers, the buildings in the photograph’s background first seen as an elegant backdrop for city life are transformed for the viewer into treacherous recesses, where latent danger lurks.

### 3.2 Crying Sky

The second example is also a picture featuring the Mothers shot in the Plaza de Mayo square by Daniel García in 1983 (Fig. 3.12 A). García began working as a photojournalist in 1975, when he was only twenty-two years old. Before becoming a photojournalist he was a law student, an indicator of his social interest and understanding of photojournalism as a form of social commitment, despite the fact that he does not consider himself to have been a political militant.\textsuperscript{467} Today, he is director of the Argentine branch of Agence France Presse (AFP) and the author of other iconic pictures in recent national history.

García’s image is a horizontal composition with two clear sections. In the upper part, people hold banners half their bodies’ height with printed faces. Then, the lower part of the photograph is void, filled with grey water. It was a rainy day and the square was flooded. The adverse conditions did not discourage the Mothers, who still congregated and marched with the

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\textsuperscript{466} Alfredo Ignacio Astiz (born 8 November 1951) was an intelligence officer for the Navy in Buenos Aires. He was based at the ESMA. He infiltrated the civil organization of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and carried out the disappearance and assassination of Azucena Villaflor. He was convicted in France in absentia to a life sentence in 1990 for the cases of the French Nuns that I will review later on in chapter 4. After being pardoned by president Carlos Menem in 1990, Astiz was judged again, and given a life sentence by the Supreme Court in Argentina on 26 October 2011. For more information see and “ESMA: Prisión Perpetua Para Astiz, Acosta, Pernías Y Cavallo,” \textit{La Nación}, October 27, 2011.

\textsuperscript{467} García, interview.
water up to their ankles. It is likely that the policemen in charge of security on the square had clogged the rain drainage on purpose to dissuade the marchers. As a consequence, water occupies a little more than the entire lower half of the frame, compressing the remaining pictorial space to the higher sector. There, like a human wall, the row of Mothers hold up their signs with the faces of their loved ones photographically reproduced. The group was not marching around the obelisk as usual, but rather facing the government house. This is why the obelisk does not appear in the background (as is usual in photographs of the Mothers). Instead the viewer sees Manuel Belgrano’s equestrian statue in the background. The modification in composition shows two main things: first, that by the time the photograph was taken, the balance of power between the Mothers and the police or repressive forces had changed: they were no longer forced to constantly march. Second, the Mothers had a more coherent strategy and decided to pose frontally for a photographer as a group. The overall feeling of the picture is different from previous examples. While in Villalobo’s photograph, the circle transmitted the idea of a resigned and futile fight, here, the change in positions evokes determination and persistence. The picture seems to shout: “we are not going to move until we get the answers that we are looking for,” denoting their spirit of persistence which lasted for three decades.

This shot also marks a change in the tactics of the civil group’s movement. The most visible elements are not the mother’s faces, but rather the photographed faces printed on big banners that the demonstrators carry. The scale of these banners increases the emotional

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468 This is what the photographer concludes since he had never seen the square so flooded. Quoted in Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 10.
469 Given the dangers to which the mothers were exposed, it is probably a safety measure to photograph them as a group and not as individuals, or rather it was important at this point in their fight to emphasize the number rather than their identities. These were all of the photographers’ personal decisions.
impact of the picture. They realized that photographs reproduced on such a large scale were even more moving than the marchers alone.\textsuperscript{470} Scholars have pointed out that this change in visual strategy affects the viewer on different levels. Nelly Richard, one of the most important Latin American art theoreticians, makes clear that there is a latent tension between the unconcerned expressions portrayed and the viewer’s expression of sadness when confronted with these images given their knowledge of the fate of those faces.\textsuperscript{471} Paralleling Marianne Hirsch, Richard also “sees” the punctum as external to the image. It is the information that acts as a punctum and changes the viewer’s reception of the photograph. Richard is right to indicate that the difference is also temporal: from the moment of the picture being taken to the present, the viewer understands the subjects as victims. As Barthes observed, the temporal gap altering meaning is always present in photographs, the famous “being there,” in contrast to the now of the act of looking. In this case, there is also an intermediate moment, the historical present of García’s production: when the picture was made, the transformation of the countenance mutates into a signifier of disappearances. In other words, there is also the time of the photographs in the picture.

The printed faces on banners constitute the most memorable element of García’s image. Among these photographs selected to prove and commemorate the life of the disappeared, there are two kinds of images: the official ones and the families’ images. Those that have received more critical attention belong to the first group. Nelly Richard and Ana Longoni, who have written more extensively about the images of the disappeared, both raised central issues. It is important to clarify that unlike the U.S. and other countries, where citizens receive an

\textsuperscript{470} Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 7.

identification number upon birth, in Argentina citizens are issued documentation upon birth that includes their digital fingerprint and a standardized photograph, similar to the format of a U.S. passport.\(^{472}\)

Richard sees the government-produced photograph as the concretization of state violence.\(^{473}\) The state, in order to control its citizens, photographs, numbers and records them in a system. Richard points out that this control is not specific to dictatorships, but rather it is the government’s intrinsic power, which regulates the lives of individuals from birth to death. She sees a similarity in this process and the systematic disappearances. In both situations, individuality is reduced to only another number on file. However, given how the Mothers used these kinds of pictures, Longoni disagrees and points out that the control factor is reversed. The pictures that had been an element of control became an element of interpellation. The capacity of the photographs to work as evidence from the beginning of life, serving as testimony of the individual’s life, remains intact.\(^{474}\) Given that such photographs exist, the individual must exist. Based on this detailed classification of citizens, it is easier to ask the state: “Who is responsible for documenting their existence? Where are these citizens?”\(^{475}\) On the other hand, the use of personal pictures to demand the whereabouts of loved ones facilitates a higher degree of empathy. An antagonistic viewer may think that the faces of the official photographs belong to violent political activists. However, the fact that the disappeared subjects are also portrayed in familial poses, smiling for example, emphasizes their humanity and shared customs. As Pierre

\(^{472}\) The agency that regulates documentation in Argentina, is the “Registro Nacional de las Personas” National Registry of People, but there was also another registry carried out directly from the police, who also issued, until recently, the Argentina passport.

\(^{473}\) Nelly Richard, “Imagen-Recuerdo Y Borradoras,” in Políticas Y Estéticas de La Memoria (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2006).


\(^{475}\) Ibid., 5.
Bourdieu concluded, the kinds of photographs that the middle class produces in the domestic sphere are usually quite similar. Everyone creates almost the same shot, trying to immortalize the “happy moments” or middle-class rituals in the same poses. In the case of the Mothers, these images of private celebration are transformed into a vehicle for public protest. In García’s image, the two types of photographs are presented to the viewer. On the left, there is a picture of a smiling young man; the next visible face, coming from the left to the center, is of a woman, also smiling and clearly belonging to the private sphere. On the other hand, the photograph that portrays an unsmiling person in a three quarter profile pose belongs to the official records.

Longoni argues that given the repetition of these specific portraits of young men and women, usually in their mid twenties, in black and white, sometimes with a hair style or another detail that situates the image in that era, they had become an unmistakable sign. I would add that this is true only for the right audience. They require so much context and knowledge from the viewer in order for them to be understood that I am not convinced that on their own—as standalone pieces—they could achieve the emotional impact or the opening of meaning that the other examples analyzed achieve. However, if we look beyond this one photograph we see that in pictures archives an image of a person with a gloomy expression carrying a photographic portrait has become a sign of some sort of crime, or injustice. A quick search on the Magnum image database, for example, shows at least fifty photographs in which a person holds an image of a loved one, who was missing or killed under violent circumstances. This visual strategy is global; there are examples from the West, as well as from the East and the Arab world. I believe

476 Ibid.
477 Also, given the individuality of a specific face, they do not encourage a more generalized reading that articulates the entire era. Actually, the strong individuality that these kinds of images carried has been at the core of the Mother’s separation in two groups. Many resisted this use, convinced that the movement would benefit if the fight were made more global and not based on specific individuals. This idea was summed up by the slogan “all are our children” (“todos son nuestros hijos”). Gorini, La Rebelion de Las Madres, 54.
the Mothers adopting this visual strategy were precursors. The oldest example I found dates from 1971. It is a shot by Eugene Smith of Toyoko Mizocuchi’s funeral, who was the first recognized victim of Minamata Disease caused by mercury poisoning. However, in Smith’s image the use of this visual strategy is rather private. Then, there is the funeral of John Lennon in 1980, in which fans carried pictures of the musician, but again it was a funeral. Thus, it is possible that the Mothers inaugurated the tradition of holding a photograph as a substitute for a body for purposes of mourning in the early 1980s, which has since become standard practice when an injustice, kidnapping or a violent death is denounced. 478 They were the first to understand the power of private images for public protest, in addition to being the first ones to keep vigil over a photograph in the absence of a body.

García’s image is the most visually articulated photograph to show the fight of the Mothers. The image “appears beautiful because it represents a traditional sense of virtue” in relation to unconditional and unstoppable maternal love. 479 Even though it is a real scene, the visual elements such as the vertically and horizontally symmetrical composition and the faces “emerging” from the water, create a fantastical, almost surrealist feel. The water creates a silvery surface that disorients the viewer. Are they floating? The silver surface is interrupted by the commotion caused by the falling raindrops. It is almost poetic: the sky is crying. It is the perfect metaphor of grief: an empty space onto which the viewer can project his/her own sadness and despair. The inclusion of such an important volume of water results in a dreamy scene, disconcerting the viewer who is confronted, not so much with the Mothers’ gaze, but

478 For examples see the Magnum web page. Interestingly, when one searches this web site, more results are obtained when entering “woman holding a photograph” even though some examples are couples. Fewer results are found when searching “man holding a photograph.” http://www.magnumphotos.com.
479 Hariman and Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” 373.
rather with the faces printed on the banners. These faces look back at us, reenacting what Lacan termed the external gaze.\textsuperscript{480} They look at us, and ask us to take responsibility. The artistic quality of García’s photograph was reinforced recently when local artist Ximena Torres re-appropriated the picture and digitally superimposed the national flag and a black band across it vertically, representing mourning (Fig. 3.12 B). She published the picture on her website where many people copied it for their own sites increasing its circulation and popularity in commemorating the anniversary of the coup. Recently it has been repeatedly used in promoting cultural activities endorsed by the associations of civil rights (Fig. 3.12 C).

3.3 A Fallen Icon

Finally, there is another important image in the history of Argentine photography that deserves consideration within this context. It is a controversial shot taken by Marcelo Ranea (Fig. 3.13 A). It features a policeman holding a Mother of Plaza de Mayo against his chest; her white headscarf, which has fallen and rests on her shoulders, identifies her as one of the group’s members. The woman’s face is turned away from the photographer. The viewer can only see her

\textsuperscript{480} The formation of the identity of the self is a scopic process, where there is a split between the ego and the self, manifested in an exterior image. According to Lacan, in the Imaginary level the self recognizes him/herself in an exterior image, in what is known as the mirror stage. The self incorporates the sensation of being constantly looked at, even when such a condition is not present. The constitution of the self depends on this exterior image. In this sense, there is a split, imaginary but experienced as real, of the ego between the Eye (What I’m looking at), and the Gaze (What is looking at me). It is also possible to observe the split of the ego when looking at our own image in a photograph. We, as subjects, look at the photographs qua objects, and since the photographs have our own images on them, they look back at us. If the photographs are not our own images, but those of other individuals we see them responding to our look. They enact the Gaze, as it is experienced by the self, as the Other’s Gaze. See Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as a Formative Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in \textit{Écrits. A Selection} (London: Norton & Co, 1977), 1–7.
grey hair, but can imagine her tears. There is a clear view of the policeman; he looks sad and, on some level, apologetic. A first glance indicates that it is an image of a grieving mother looking for consolation in the man’s arms. It was taken October 5, 1982, at one of the marches for life.

Ranea’s photograph is an unusual case. It complies with the criteria for iconicity that this dissertation attempts to put forward. It generates empathy through the expressive faces and hand gestures. It can be summarized in one sentence: “a policeman consoling a Mother of the Plaza de Mayo” and it has been reproduced repeatedly. It has been circulated enough to be considered a well-known image. However, once the conditions of the photograph’s production became well known, the image has been used less and less.

The image became well known in democratic times, particularly in specialized circles of press workers, because it received awards and international praise. Ranea’s photograph won the King of Spain Award in 1983, which is considered the most prestigious prize in journalism in Spain. In addition, it was the first picture that Clarín, the paper with the largest readership at the time, published of the Mothers on its front page.\(^{481}\) The newspaper published the image on two consecutive days. On the first occasion, a caption using the word “consolation” directs the interpretation.\(^{482}\) Then, the next day, the image accompanied the newspaper’s editorial, in which the idea of a necessary reconciliation is explained.\(^{483}\) Clearly, the photograph is the perfect reconciliation picture, since it shows an embrace between members of these two oppositional

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\(^{481}\) According to Cora Gamarnik, it was also published in important international newspapers such as The New York Times, The Excelsior (Mexico) and El País (Spain). Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 13. She does not provide the specific information on this publications.

\(^{482}\) Clarín’s cover, Wednesday October 6, 1982.

\(^{483}\) “Más Allá de Las Palabras,” Clarín, October 7, 1982, sec. editorial.
groups. It illustrates a desired future, in which previous enemies reconcile.\textsuperscript{484} This reading was functionally rooted in the belief that in order to finally create a harmonious society, it was better to forget the social wounds and sins committed. However, through other shots of the same scene and testimonies, it is discovered that the woman was hitting the policeman during a nervous breakdown (Fig 3.13 B, C and D). The shot was taken while the policeman tried to contain and impede the Mother’s march towards the Plaza de Mayo square. She was hitting him in the chest as he tried to arrest her because she recognized him as a repressor.\textsuperscript{485} However, aware of the presence of photographers, he masked his intentions. Later investigation revealed that he was not a compassionate policeman and had participated actively in the clandestine repression, and after being pardoned, had continued with illegal actions.\textsuperscript{486} Curiously, the previous and posterior shots that complete the scene are not so well known. This may be because the copyright belongs to the newspaper that may not want to illuminate its role during the dark times and the democratic transition. I found it even more compelling that the image was included in specialized catalogues such as \textit{En Negro y Blanco}, without any context, thus reinforcing the “official” view, despite the fact that at least one of the previous scenes was also included in the Grupo exhibition of 1983.\textsuperscript{487}

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It is the photograph most hated by the Mothers because of the inaccurate impression it creates of a weak and heartbroken mother looking for consolation in a police officer. Moreover, Nora Cortiñas, one of the most prominent members of the Mothers can be seen in the
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\textsuperscript{484} Cohen, “State Crimes of Previous Regimes,” 14.
\textsuperscript{487} It reads: “A mother of the Plaza de Mayo cries on a police officer’s chest.” Cerolini, \textit{En Negro Y Blanco. Fotografías Del Cordobazo Al Juicio a Las Juntas}, 149.
background with a hostile expression on her face.\footnote{I am not convinced that the face could be read as unequivocally hostile. She could have been just crying. Pérez Fernández, “Fin de La Dictadura, Inicio de Disyuntivas: La Fotografía Argentina Frente a La Recuperación de La Vida Constitucional,” 54.} According to some authors, this detail did not escape the editors at Clarín who wanted to call attention to a (false) conflict inside the Mothers association.\footnote{Ibid., 56.} Still, it was used on numerous occasions especially during the first years of democracy. As explained, in addition to the idea of reconciliation, it is a picture that can accommodate the discourse that began to circulate during those times as an explanation of what had happened during the dictatorship. During the transition into democracy and in the attempt to uncover the information of the atrocious crimes committed by the junta, scholars tried to make sense of the darkest period in the history of Argentina. At that moment, a theory became popular. It was called the theory of the two demons. It argues that the leftist subversive terrorist guerrilla was one demon, and that the armed forces were “the other.” The idea was to distribute responsibilities evenly between the two groups. This picture helps in the sense that it shows that both sides had compassionate people that cared for one another as human beings, and both sides had victims. The theory originated from a false interpretation of the foreword of Nunca Más written by the well-known Argentine writer, Ernesto Sábato. Sábato explicitly said that the violence of the state was “infinitely worse,” still there was a possibility of justifying the state repression as an answer to the provocation of the guerrilla.\footnote{Conadep, Nunca Más. Informe de La Comisión Nacional Sobre La Desaparición de Personas.} Ranea’s photograph is an iconic picture, and as such has been included in photojournalists’ compilations and Cerolini’s exhibition. However, it has not been used in the news media after those first transitional years because the idea of reconciliation lost popularity while the dissatisfaction with the police and its role under the dictatorship increased.
The exhibitions studied in chapter two were an instance of manifesting dissent and articulating a degree of resistance in a repressive and antidemocratic environment. Through them photojournalists attempted to break, at least in part, with the government’s monolithic visual discourse, which relied extensively on photography. The iconic photojournalistic images, analyzed in this chapter are the photographic response to the visual discourse that the military regime put forward, which is studied in the next chapter.

As seen, photographic images are iconic and constantly reproduced if they comply with four criteria: “their availability, their aesthetic quality, the motifs shown as well as in the fact that they permit adaptation to the relevant interpretation of the incident.” Created during those dark times, iconic photojournalistic images articulate meanings beyond their frame that have been functional under the changing political and social circumstances. It is their political elasticity that kept them in circulation even after the return of democracy. But it is important to keep in mind that as Brothers states, “my reading of certain photographs may differ from that of another historian; I can only argue that this is true of all historical documents, and that what is important is to offer as sensitive a reading as possible given the imperfect conditions within which the writing of history takes place.”

492 Brothers, War and Photography, 940.
Chapter 4
The Official Campaign

Since its invention photography has been associated with political power, either to legitimize the figures occupying positions of power or, on the contrary, to undermine and denounce those in power. Photography in Argentina was also used for these means. For example, since 1853 the Argentine government has commissioned photographs of its members to be distributed to governmental offices in the entire country and in state sponsored publications. While the focus of the previous chapters has been to show how photography worked mainly as a tool of dissent during the military dictatorship, photography during this period was also used to reinforce the military government’s power. This chapter focuses on how the government used photography for propagandistic purposes. More specifically, it analyzes how the military government used photography to benefit from its indexical power and status as evidence to reinforce its ideological positions. I argue that the dictatorship’s use of photography combined with the censorship of visual imagery at the time had the unintended consequence of increasing the prestige of visual means of communications in general and of photojournalism in particular.

This chapter briefly overviews Peronism (1943-1955, and 1973-76) as the first Argentine government to make systematic use of images. Peronism was the main predecessor of the political propagandistic use the military junta made of photography and visual media.

493 Cuarterolo and Adelman, Los Años Del Daguerrotipo, 15.
494 Some examples, such as government commissioned photographs related to La Campaña al Desierto have already been mentioned. See chapter 1.
Perón was not the first leader to commission and employ official images. Still, Perón was the first political leader in the country to systematically use modern propaganda techniques to transmit a political ideology, in this case regarding Peronism and its political message. It is only in this aspect that Peronism paved the way for how the military junta later came to use photography and visual media. Although of different natures, both regimes attempted to create a monolithic discourse using visual elements. They both employed photography as a means of creating and reinforcing a national “way of seeing” in accordance with their political agendas.

The military junta, as previously mentioned, was well aware of the legitimizing power of images and made a conscious effort to use propaganda in a way that would benefit the regime. It is sometimes believed that dictatorships, in contrast to authoritarian regimes like Peronism, do not need to be creative to impose their worldview, since they rely on violence. However, no regime can subsist only through the use of force. Power needs to be, at least to some degree, perceived as legitimate. There is a political need to consolidate authority under imposed power. The Argentine dictatorship was no exception. While most of the repressive activities were illegal and conducted behind closed doors, and there was an effort to hide information, there was also an active open campaign to influence public opinion by creating favorable, sometimes false, news to fill the void left by censorship. After a short review of Peronism and photography as a predecessor, this chapter reviews the propaganda campaigns

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495 This tradition started much earlier. The first records that survive indicate that as early as 1853 General José Justo de Urquiza commissioned daguerreotypes featuring the members of his government, which were reproduced as lithographs and widely distributed. Cuarterolo and Adelman, *Los Años Del Daguerrotipo*, 10.


498 Dictatorships relied heavily on propaganda for such ends. Studies of Nazi propaganda, as well as Italian Fascist propaganda, for example, set the bases to the study of this phenomenon. The literature is vast, for art historical purposes see Dawn Ades et al., eds., *Art and Power. Europe Under the Dictators 1930-45* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995).
that the military implemented to influence public opinion. Then, it reviews other uses of photography that show how the government used the medium. The last section focuses on the most scandalous cases of the manipulation of information: the assassination of two French nuns and the Falklands War.

1. Peronism and Propaganda. The Beginning of Modern Political Communication in Argentina

Since its inception in 1946, Peronism was a regime with authoritarian tendencies. Although influenced by Italian fascism, it is best described as an example of Latin American populism, based on charismatic leadership and the mobilization of the masses through redistributive policies. Perón’s regime was the first in Argentina to incorporate the masses into the political arena. One of the main objectives was to “nationalize the masses” and create an autochthonous political alternative to socialism and communism, which were popular among urban workers at the time.

The Peronist government benefited from technical innovations in the graphic arts and employed modern propaganda techniques. Perón understood that the masses were attracted to paternalistic policies that distributed tangible benefits, as well as to propaganda. Perón created the Subsecretaría de Informaciones de la Presidencia de la Nación (SI) to centralize the

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500 General Perón expanded rights and granted benefits to workers while making the unions a relevant political actor. There was also the extension of the mandatory vote to women. See Juan Carlos Torre, “Introducción a Los Años Peronistas,” in Nueva Historia Argentina, vol. 8 (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Sudamericana, 2000), 11–77.
government’s propaganda efforts and campaigns. It was a special office in charge of the creation and dissemination of information centered around images of him and his wife, Eva Perón. The agency, under the directorship of Raúl Apold, did not circumscribe its activities to the communication of the official agenda. It also created pamphlets, posters, books and paraphernalia featuring Perón and his wife. From within the walls of the Subsecretaría, the propaganda machine ensured the widespread dissemination of Peronist mythology. Within the agency, there was a subsection responsible for photography led by Emilo Abras, an ARGRA member who acted as a link between the official agency and the association of photojournalists.503 Photography became a quintessential tool in this process of inundating the public sphere with easily recognized, memorable images of their leaders.

In addition, Peronism benefited from the technological improvements that made it possible for print media to publish larger numbers of images. Peronism also provided photogenic subjects to be featured. The regime created its own liturgy that would last for many decades, and would be severely censored by the junta later. In the beginning, most of the photographs featured Perón, but over time Eva Perón was given increasing prominence. Her transition into the limelight was natural given her prior career as an actress-model. She liked the cameras and knew how to pose. She combined the glamour of celebrity with the fervor of political leadership, provoking complete devotion among her followers.

Peronist images focused on another photographic subject: the masses. The regime encouraged its followers to demonstrate on the streets and to congregate in front of the presidential palace in the Plaza de Mayo. Images of multitudinous rallies became common, reinforcing the idea of the regime’s connection with the people and its massive support. 

Photographs in which the entire pictorial space was filled with people identified only through the visible flags and banners that crowned interminable rows of anonymous heads were repeatedly published in the press. In addition, photographs from this period show how the official box was surrounded by large images of Perón and Evita, and these were echoed in poster or postcard-sized images carried by participants (Figs. 4.1 A, B). The reproduction of these kinds of photographs—the multitude carrying proselytizing pictures—acted again as an echo of the leader’s image (Fig. 4.2). Stylistic references to Soviet Social Realism are evident (Figs. 4.3 A and B). 504

Given the importance that Perón and Evita gave to photography, their personal and official photographers—Pinélides Fusco and Antonio Pérez—acquired unprecedented recognition. The few images that explicitly mention the photographer in the credits from this period belong to the photographers who acted as presidential photographers, covering not only official appearances but also more intimate moments of the powerful couple’s lives. 505

What is more important for this dissertation is the close relationship Perón had with ARGRA. There is an image that illustrates this connection (Fig. 4.4). It shows a smiling Perón with a camera and a pin identifying himself as a photojournalist. 506 It was probably taken on December 20, 1951, the day he awarded the profession union status, according to ARGRA’s records. Recognizing Perón’s role in the advancement of their rights, the organization of photojournalists gave Perón and Evita a gold credential as honorary members of the

504 Peronism also created other original forms of propaganda. One of the most important examples was La Razón de mi Vida, a book distributed in elementary schools, which was mandatory reading. It was illustrated with photographs about Evita’s life and activities. It was the zenith of Peronist propaganda at a time when economic conditions were eroding support for Perón. Amaral and Botalla, Imágenes del peronismo, 124.

505 I already explained that it is a common practice to publish photographs without credits even today. See chapter 2.

506 Amaral and Botalla, Imágenes del peronismo, 153.
Perón issued a decree that guaranteed association members unrestricted access to any location they considered relevant to their work. The third honorary membership went to Raúl Apold who was the director of the *Subsecretaría* at the time. This public recognition marked a historical milestone for photojournalists. However, this close bond to those in power was detrimental to the political independence that makes their work socially significant.

This short account of Peronist political communication is useful for understanding that the political propaganda machine had already been operating, and had been proven successful for some time, when the coup occurred in 1976. The *Subsecretaría* founded by Perón changed its name and modified the focus of its functions, dissolving into different government agencies according to the political regimes in power, but it was never closed down. When the junta acquired power in 1976, the idea of creating a monopolizing discourse was not a novelty. The military administration was well aware of the power of propaganda thanks to the historical precedent, and they used it.

2. Presidential Photographers

Higinio González was the presidential photographer in 1976 when the military junta took power. Gonzalez created the famous image showing the members of the junta celebrating Argentina's World Cup victory, which was analyzed in a previous chapter. As explained, there is no information about this person and there are no other memorable photographs attributed to him. He seems to have had a rather conventional approach to photography, understanding the images only as illustrations of official acts. The images the presidential photographer provided to the media were under strict military control and functioned as propaganda in print venues such as *Somos*. The particular image of the World Cup victory appears to be more of a

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507 Comisión Directiva, *Asambleas Ordinarias de La ARGRA*, 1951, 263.
fortuitous shot rather than a piece of critically articulated discourse. Although the official credential could have conferred him some prestige, he was not included in the ARGRA hall of fame. However, this story would change when Victor Bugge replaced González.

Victor Bugge joined the photography department of the office of the president in 1978, a position he holds to this day, reflecting an incredible story of more than thirty years of career continuity in a country where replacements within the governmental bureaucracy with each new mandate is the norm. His trajectory positions him as an important figure in the world of Argentine photography. His father, who taught him the trade, worked as a photojournalist for La Nación and Bugge entered the position with close ties to photojournalism. Bugge represents a special case. Though Bugge belongs to the official cultural apparatus, when talking about his job, he makes an effort to clarify that though his images are the official pictures of the presidency, they were not taken to favor a specific president or party line (“oficial pero no oficialistas” in Spanish). He did not produce any iconic images during the period in this study, but he did create iconic images after the return of democracy in 1983. He has recently gained more prestige given the increased attention that photography has attained in the country.

The military junta did not employ Bugge’s photographs in their propaganda campaigns. The military officials may have been aware that he was not sympathetic to the regime, or it simply may have been because at the time he did not have the necessary experience (he was only 20 years old when he assumed his post). More likely, they chose to bestow the “honor” and responsibility onto someone else because it was not believed that the presidential photographer had any specific talent and the position did not carry any prestige. Pedro Luis Raota, a

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photographer with awards and previous experience in advertising became the main creator of official images during the dictatorship.  

Pedro Luis Raota, born in 1934 in Chaco, one of the poorest provinces of Argentina, became the master of the romanticized view of poverty. He had an extraordinary career cut short when he died at the age of 52. He was self-taught and started from humble origins making passport pictures in rural areas. He won an award when he was twenty-four years old and from that moment on he presented his photographs in national and international salons with great success.

Raota’s images are always dramatic, with an exaggerated use of chiaroscuro to create contrasts (Fig 4.5 and 4.6). His backgrounds are dark, making it difficult to distinguish details. Raota’s photographs require the viewer to focus his attention. The light only punctuates the focal points, objects, or protagonists in the foreground, while the background disappears in shades. The images, which immediately impact the viewer, reflect carefully arranged compositions. Raota was criticized because he not only manipulated the scene to create the compositions that he had in mind, but also the negatives. In this way, his images capture the exact moment of emotion. He viewed this practice as completely legitimate and compared his activity to a film director creating a movie from his imagination. Most of his production features the underprivileged inhabitants of rural areas in the countries he visited (Fig. 4.7). In Argentina, he did a series on gaucho descendants, their visible wrinkles marking their hard lives exposed to inclement weather conditions. Two other common subjects chosen by the photographer were animals, especially horses in the expansive Pampa Húmeda, and children.

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509 Facio, La Fotografía En La Argentina, 55.
511 He won the Pavda 74 grant and was able to travel to the ex USSR and Europe. José Luis Raota, “Pedro Luis Raota,” http://www.raota.com/, Raota/Fotografía, n.d.
with dirty faces and watery eyes, as the incarnations of the endemic Latin American poverty (Figs. 4.8 and 4.9).

According to Sara Facio, Raota was the photographer chosen to illustrate the official propaganda campaigns during the military regime.\textsuperscript{512} Photographer and publicist Oscar Pintor corroborates Facio’s affirmation, but implies that it was a rumor.\textsuperscript{513} Pintor says that Raota’s commissions from the military were “known” in photographic circles, but there is no surviving proof.\textsuperscript{514} Yet, it sounds plausible given that, according to photographer Amado Becquer Casabelle, Raota’s photographic books were distributed in many countries though embassies in an effort to improve Argentina’s public image.\textsuperscript{515} With the return of democracy, the social condemnation of the military government and its collaborators grew. As a result, people negated even the most marginal relationship with the regime and erased any connection from their personal accounts. In addition, the military archives are classified or were destroyed, further complicating any investigation into the matter. Still, from the study of images based on stylistic coincidences, my conclusion is that at least on one occasion Raota provided the image for a propaganda campaign by the military.

3. Propaganda Campaigns

The military junta actively used advertising to rally popular support and increase its legitimacy. Official propaganda ads were numerous and permeated TV, radio and graphic

\textsuperscript{512} Facio, \textit{La Fotografia En La Argentina}, 55.
\textsuperscript{514} The national oil company’s (YPF) calendars and other promotional materials during the military regime used Raota’s images. See Silvia Pérez Fernández, “Fin de Dictadura, Inicio de Disyuntivas: La Fotografía Argentina Frente a La Recuperación de La Vida Constitucional,” \textit{Ojos Crueles. Temas de Fotografía Y Sociedad} 3 (Otoño 2006): 50.
media. The military understood well that propaganda was necessary to consolidate power. The advertising campaigns were articulated from the general discourse that the military put forward at the time. The discourse was in line with what authoritarian regimes from the extreme right to the extreme left of the political spectrum typically invoke: the difference between an inclusive “us” in opposition to a negatively-defined “them.”

In Argentina, it is possible to distinguish two different moments in the development of this political discourse. First, there was the “other,” where guerrilla groups represented enemies of the capitalist, nationalist, Christian and Western “us,” which was personified by the military government. However, by 1978 this discourse began to change. This change can be attributed to two main reasons. First, by 1978, the majority of guerrilla activities had come to an end. Second, international scrutiny over human rights violations became a source of concern for the government. As previously explained, this coincided with the international media attention that the country was receiving for the soccer World Cup. The “other” thus became the international community. According to official discourse, the international community had been misinformed by the guerrilla exiles about what was really happening in Argentina. It thus became of paramount importance to have a propaganda campaign to minimize the impact of this negative public image. During two key moments, the military government increased the use of advertisements to communicate its version of events.


517 According to some sources, the guerrilla activity was actually stopped before the coup. For a succinct review of the numbers see Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 6. And Marcos Novaro and Alejandro Avenburg, “La CIDH En Argentina: Entre La Democratización Y Los Derechos Humanos,” *Desarrollo Económico* 49, no. 193 (2009): 61.

The military leadership also had a fairly sophisticated channel to achieve its communication goals. The local advertising industry was undergoing a golden age when the dictatorship started. In 1969, a locally produced campaign for Pepsi achieved the most important international prize in its category, while in 1973, a TV ad for Ford won several international awards. In addition, Buenos Aires was the first city in Latin America to host the industry’s global conference in 1976. Yet, advertising agencies were facing financial difficulties as a result of a change in taxation rules in 1971. This probably helped foster the collaboration between the industry and the new military regime.

It was not only financial interests, however, that help to explain the collaboration between the government and advertising agencies. Facing a violent authoritarian regime with real threats of physical violence also shaped their relationship. Nineteen workers from the advertising industry were killed or disappeared during the dictatorship, though the reasons behind these disappearances are not clear. Musician and publicist, Jorge Schussheim, for example, recalls an encounter with Emilio Massera. One evening they ran into each other in a night club, where Massera told Schussheim that he was still alive thanks to work he was doing for the regime.

As explained in previous chapters, the press collaborated with the regime. There were only rare occasions when the press was able to escape the military’s repetitive discourse. Through the repetition of communiqués and the coverage of official acts, the media contributed to the monolithic account of information. Several studies of the mass media’s responsibilities

520 Ibid.
521 Ibid.
during the dictatorship and its collaboration with hegemonic discourse establish that the press uncritically repeated what the military expressed openly.522

Two main ideas, put forward by the military administration shaped the public’s perception of what was happening. The first one was that the military coup and government were necessary to end the chaos that fighting among different Peronist factions had generated. The second was that the military was engaged in a war against a dangerous internal enemy. This enemy was referred to as “the subversives” or “subversion.” The definition was always vague.523 The different factions inside the oppositional groups were rarely identified. And as mentioned before, images of them were negated.524 I consider these acts of repetition and amplification of the military speeches that the media performed as the passive aspects of an organized propaganda campaign. But the campaign had a more obvious and active component in advertising. Scholars have focused their attention on the role of the press in supporting the military regime, but only a few have analyzed the advertising campaigns supporting the government and the campaign’s visual elements have never been studied.525 This section will review advertisements that used photography as their main element of communication.

523 José Pablo Feinmann quoted in Yago Di Nella, Psicología de La Dictadura (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Koyatun Editorial, 2007), 69.
524 See chapter 3.
The propaganda campaign’s rhetoric can be broken down by its targeted audience. It has been established that in 1978 Rafael Videla hired the famous publicity and public relations agency Burson Marsteller to work on the international front.\(^{526}\) The idea was to improve Videla’s image in international forums, as well as to neutralize the bad publicity produced by international human rights organizations. The focus of this study is on the campaign designed to influence the Argentine public and, more specifically, the graphic campaigns that employed photographs created to influence civil society.

The military regime commissioned posters, stickers and other items to influence public opinion. In many cases the campaigns were signed by civil society organizations. Catch phrases and easy-to-remember slogans circulated throughout different media. The slogans were repeated in radio, TV and graphic media, amplifying their impact and the public’s memory retention.\(^{527}\) In some cases, these campaigns utilized graphic elements such as photographs. Photographs were not the element that carried the most significance however, because none of the images are memorable per se. Their significance is understood through the texts that accompanied them, and their meanings are only made clear with words. Still, it was the visual side of the campaign that deserves a short analysis in order to complete this study of photography during the period.

The first memorable campaign was launched toward the end of 1977. It was a poster published in newspapers and magazines (Fig. 4.10). It featured a close up of a young soldier’s face. It was a vertical composition divided in two. The upper part, which occupies almost two-thirds of the picture frame, features the face. The helmet, which in this picture works as the main attribute of the character, is partially hidden. The frame cuts out more than three-quarters


\(^{527}\) Mirta Varela points out that the TV spots were where the best carriers and more explicit ads circulated to propagate the pro-regime ideology. See Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura,” 50.
of the rounded shape of the helmet. Still, it is easily identifiable. The strong chiaroscuro renders half of the face in shadows, while the background is completely obscure. The style suggests this is Raota’s work, though there is no conclusive evidence that it is. The young man looks out of the picture frame toward the right of the spectator with an attentive look, mouth slightly open, in expectation. The lower part is dark and the light comes from the bold white letters. We read: “Proteger es querer. Felices Fiestas” (To protect is to love. Happy holidays). There was also a short text in a much smaller font explaining that the population was able to celebrate the holiday season in peace thanks to the army. 528 This was meant to reinforce the message that the armed forces were the guarantee of internal peace.

Although this image was repeated in several graphic media and circulated extensively, it is not an iconic picture like the ones studied in previous chapters. 529 It is not memorable as an image. The soldier’s face remains too indistinct and expressionless, and thus does not engage the viewer emotionally. It aims to actually reinforce the difference between the protagonist as a soldier and the rest of civil society, rather than create empathy. It was never reutilized but the slogan survived. 530

It was used again during the Falklands War, accompanied once again by a close-up image of a young soldier (Fig 4.11). At that point “Proteger es querer” (to protect is to love) had become an established slogan, almost a trademark of the dictatorship. Therefore it is printed in a medium-sized font and as a corollary of the short paragraph. The main text of this poster

528 Original text reads: “Para que usted y su familia puedan celebrar en paz, en el ejército hay argentinos que están haciendo guardia.”

529 According to recently uncovered secret archives, Colonel Alberto Schollaert, chief of communications of the commander in chief’s office commissioned 500 posters to be distributed widely. “Los Archivos Secretos de La Dictadura,” Clarín, March 24, 1996, sec. Segunda Sección.

530 It is beyond the scope of this research to establish how written messages survive time and change connotation.
addresses a control policy in which military posts put up roadblocks to check motorists and their passengers’ identity papers without any specific motive. The more visible text reads: “Documentos, por favor” (Documents, please). The photograph is taken from the inside of a car. The frame of the window is visible, although obscure. The superimposed text plays with the angle from which the picture has been taken: the first sentence of the paragraphs reads “Estamos de su lado” (we’re on your side). The correlation of the text with the visual is the most remarkable element of the picture. Although the face is the most important element of the composition, it competes with the written text for the viewer’s attention. Again the text mentions peace and reminds every citizen of his/her obligation to collaborate with the regime in order to “make violence disappear.”

The face, however, is different. This soldier is younger. The helmet is again partially out of the frame, but still visible. We see the soldier’s shoulders with the uniform and its characteristic epaulette. The background is completely unintelligible, but illuminated. It is daytime. There were roadblocks day and night. It is hard to tell if Raota was the author of this picture. There are no specific stylistic traits to trace it back to him. The picture is a mediocre shot and not easily remembered, but the repetition of the slogan served to make it even more memorable. Even today the slogan can be used with different levels of irony and criticism. These two ads illustrate the idea of the military as the guarantors of internal peace that was a central pillar of the military ideology.

Nationalistic sentiment was exploited to a maximum during the 1978 World Cup. As mentioned before, the military regime simply inherited the obligation from the previous

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531 The original text reads: “Estamos de su lado. La violencia todavía existe en nuestro país y el objetivo suyo y nuestro es que desaparezca de una vez. Si usted es gente de paz participe comprendiendo: Proteger es querer.”

government, but they fully benefited from it. The World Cup became the center of the regime’s propaganda campaign. While the idea of the military as protectors of civil society against the internal enemy of subversion was already installed in the public sphere, with the proximity of the international championship, the emphasis switched to the antinomy between Argentines and the world. Because soccer is the country’s most popular sport, the administration used the event to call for national unity. The rhetoric preached that every game was a battle for all Argentines and winning the championship was a victory for the entire country. The goal was to neutralize any ideological divisions under the general umbrella of the celebration. According to the military discourse, the internal conflict already had been brought to an end, and thus in a rhetorical operation, the conflict moved to the external enemy. This was a logical response given that, as explained before, international criticism of the regime was growing.

Regarding photography, the event did not produce many significant images besides the ones already analyzed in chapter 3. Sports images are highly dispensable. The only ones that have a chance to transcend are those that somehow “embody the ‘higher values’ of sports in general.” The World Cup produced some images that are embedded in the national history because they illustrate a sense of national pride.

Neither the tournament’s mascot nor the logo created for the event used photography (Fig. 4.13). It could be argued that the newspapers publishing sports photographs stole important space away from other kinds of news. But this was not a particularity of the period.

533 Despite the fact that in 1982, when the protests to end the dictatorship became stronger, the military regime re-agitated that possibility of internal violence, as seen in the previously analyzed poster.
535 Ibid., 115.
536 El Abrazo del Alma is the most obvious example. It is a well-remembered image in which a handicapped person with mutilated arms runs into a soccer field at the end of the final game and tries to “hug” two Argentinian players that were hugging while kneeling (Fig. 4.12).
Before, during and after the military dictatorship, there was always space reserved on the front page of the major newspapers for soccer teams. What the World Cup brought as a novelty was wider photographic coverage with better equipment.\(^{537}\)

The campaign that employed photography as the main conveyor of meaning was actually launched through a women’s magazine called *Para Tí* (Figs. 4.14 and 4.15). The campaign was entitled “Argentina toda la verdad” (Argentina, the whole truth). In two consecutive issues, from August 14 to September 4, 1979, the magazine distributed a pair of postcards to be sent to different personalities in foreign countries.\(^ {538}\) These included the U.S. Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs from 1977 to 1981 Patricia Derian, U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, and French President Valéry Giscard D’Estaing, as well as organizations such as Amnesty International, and the Organization of American States. It also included international newspapers, especially from France, Italy and Spain. The idea was to undermine what the junta called the discrediting campaign against Argentina. As previously mentioned, this was designed to challenge the efforts of human rights advocates, especially those acting from exile.

The postcards were not an isolated attempt to influence public opinion. Some popular magazines had an active role in supporting the regime and in creating a favorable view of reality.\(^ {539}\) They published biased and often false information to influence public opinion. One of the most memorable cases was a series of three letters published by *Gente* magazine. They had a colloquial vocabulary, addressed different people and had no signature. The first one

\(^{537}\) As Anne-Marie Willies explains, technical advances in press photography have centered on sports worldwide. Willies, “The Limit of Press Photography,” 115.

\(^{538}\) According to some accounts there was another pair distributed. However, I was not able to locate those two extra images.

\(^{539}\) Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura.” On other campaigns carried out by *Para Tí*, see Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 38-40.
published in December 1976 was for parents, the second one for exiles, and the third one for politicians. All of them had the clear intention of imposing a new paradigm. The letters translated military discourse into an everyday experience by trying to normalize the use of violence, demonizing the enemy and increasing mistrust in the population to undermine social solidarity.

The idea behind “Argentina: The Whole Truth” was to show the official version to the international community through the real life of its citizens. It was not an innocent choice to use photography in this campaign. It was actually a key factor, given that there were two contrasting versions of reality disputing what was the absolute truth. Photography was chosen because of its halo as a transparent medium and evidentiary power.

The name of the campaign served as the slogan and accompanied every image as a title. The postcards featured a vertical composition with the colors of the Argentine tripartite flag on top: two horizontal stripes of light blue with one white stripe in the middle. The text was printed on the white band with an asterisk at the end. While it is true that photographs are open to a polysemy of readings, when employed in postcards, the density of connotation is restricted through text. On the reverse side of the image, there were blank spaces to add the recipient’s address and title in addition to a short paragraph. Through this composition the magazine controlled the content of the postcard completely. There was no room for any kind of modification. There was no physical space for people to add some personal comment about

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their own experiences in their daily lives. They had to be sent as they were printed, or overwritten.

The slogan was repeated in large, bold letters with a short sentence describing the photographs in Spanish, English and French. The use of the three languages clearly emphasized the idea that it was for an international audience. However, the paragraph that described the content of the image was only in Spanish. Although the explicit intention was to influence the international community, this shows that main purpose was to shape domestic self-perception.

In the four images the paragraph starts with the same phrase: “The war is over in Argentina.”

The idea that Argentina was fighting a war was not new to this campaign. On the contrary, it was one of the main arguments employed by the military regime. It was repeated not only to justify their actions, but also to gain support from civil society.

The four images address different aspects of urban life. None of them show rural life or images of gauchos, which had been the stereotypical image of Argentina for many years. The images lack architectural markers or any other kind of objects that the viewer may connect to Argentina except for the flag. The idea was probably to show a civilized country, part of modern Western society, and repress associations to any image that could be read as more savage, such as the lawless gauchos. The selection also mirrors the Para Tí audience, mostly women from the middle and upper urban classes. With the excuse of convincing foreigners, the propaganda campaign actually influenced Argentines’ self-perception.

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Another famous campaign was carried out during the visit of the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights in September 1979. It was called “Los Argentinos somos derechos y humanos” (Argentinians are straight and human). In Spanish the phrase makes a clever relation between derechos as legal rights and straight as body position and as honest people. Humans referred directly to the controversy regarding violations of human rights. This campaign did not utilize images, but the government commissioned thousands of stickers and postcards with the national flag with this slogan printed in the white section.
Postcards with images of people inevitably generate particular kinds of knowledge about and sensibilities toward those depicted.\footnote{Moors, “Presenting People: The Cultural Politics of Picture Postcards of Palestine/Israel,” 93.} The first one focuses on a girl on her father’s shoulders. Next to it, there is a view of a grocery store and the face of a boy in the foreground. The other pair features more distant shots, one of the stands of a soccer stadium, in which the faces are hardly visible, and finally an aerial shot of a downtown street at night where pedestrians are indistinguishable.

The first image shows a three-year-old girl holding the national flag in one hand while she eats an alfajor, a typical Argentinean sweet. She is at the center of the composition, but does not look back at the viewer. She looks down. In the lower section there are some adult faces only partially visible since they overlap with each other. Given the proximity of the heads and that they all face one direction, it seems that they are walking as part of a street demonstration. However, demonstrations were forbidden during the dictatorship. As a result, the image is probably from an archive, and it was not commissioned for this specific campaign. In addition, the text on the reverse does not describe the scene. It talks about a past when bombs exploded in schools, even though the few terrorist activities that had occurred in schools left no victims and happened during the previous Peronist government. In an obscure sentence it mentions the “innocent blood” needed to achieve the peace. Then, without mentioning children, but rather the entire population of 26 million people, the text talks about the promising future.

The second image features a shot of the checkout at a supermarket. Again a child, an older boy, is featured in the foreground. His face is visible, but he is not looking at the camera. There are no faces engaging with the viewer. The people featured in the image, mostly women, are engaged in their activities completely unaware of the photographer’s presence. The text on
the reverse side talks about the economic crisis during the Peronist government from 1973 to 1976. It mentions exorbitant inflation and shortages of basic products and adds “as in any war time,” implying that the war was during the Peronist government. This also helped to reinforce the conservative social role of the housewife in charge of the domestic economy in harmony with the values defended by the military government. The faces on the four postcards are not particularly happy or celebratory (an exception would be the people in the stands at the soccer stadium, although their faces are hardly legible). The expressions are rather somber and serious, but the text instructs the viewer to read the faces as peaceful, because what is seen changes according to what has been seen (or read) before.\footnote{Berger, \textit{Ways of Seeing}, 29.}

The second pair of images features a partial view of spectators during a soccer match at the 1978 World Cup. There are dozens of Argentine flags that blow in different directions almost covering the entire picture frame. In the spaces between the flags it is possible to see people in the stands. Although the faces are not recognizable, it is easy to identify them as men. Again the images play with stereotypical social roles, since in Argentina women are not expected to play or enjoy soccer. The quality of the image is poor and the composition is unappealing, but it strives to show the flag in a popular context. Although the paragraph on the back talks about the celebration and the festive spirit, this is not so evident in the image. The tone of the text is denunciatory, accusing the international public of making room for the “subversive voices” and false criticism. The text condemns those who do not believe the official version of discourse and who support the accusations of human right violations. Again the World Cup is presented as an achievement of the regime and the cheerfulness that the competition generated is appropriated and manipulated as support for the government.
The last image shows a pedestrian street in Buenos Aires’s theater district. It is a nighttime shot with the neon signs for the movie theaters and hotels lit up. The street is inundated with indistinguishable bodies. The image is poor in quality and composition. It was also probably from an archive rather than commissioned for the occasion. However, it is successful as a way to address two issues that were controversial during the dictatorship. With this photograph the regime negates two of its unpopular policies. The first one regarded the prohibition of assembling on the street. As explained before in regard to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, the dictatorship forbade public assembly, which is the main reason the Mothers were forced to constantly walk. So, the depiction of such a conglomeration of people was an uncommon sight for those times. The people featured in the shot surely were not assembled, but rather exiting a movie at the theater. The government wanted to shift the narrative of public gatherings away from the political demonstrations that were central to Peronism and so often celebrated though aerial photography.

The picture also marginally addressed the issue of censorship. As explained, the dictatorship controlled television and film content. Many films were not released in the country for political reasons. Miguel Paulino Tato, head of the Ente de Regulación Cinematográfica, imparted the rules to the film industry. His own beliefs aligned with the nationalistic and

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545 The analysis of the films of this period exceeds the aims of this dissertation. For an analysis see Sergio Wolf and Abel Posadas, Cine Argentino: La Otra Historia (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Letra Buena, 1994); and Fernando Varea, El Cine Argentino Durante La Dictadura Militar 1976/1983 (Rosario, Argentina: Editorial Municipal de Rosario, 2006).

546 Although Miguel Paulino Tato took this position in 1973 during the Peronist regime, he stayed in it until the end of the 1980s. He was completely functional to the military regime. According to some journalists, for example Andrés Avellaneda, the censorship apparatus had been functioning for some time before the coup. See Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza Y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura,” 51. And Elena Ciganda and Roberto Persano, Estamos Ganando, Periodismo Y Censura En La Guerra de Malvinas, Documentary, (2005).
traditionalist agenda of the regime,\textsuperscript{547} which can be summarized through three pillars based on social organization: \textit{Dios, Patria y Familia} (God, Nation and Family), a motto originally used by the Falange during the Spanish Civil War, and adopted by the right wing faction of the Peronist party.\textsuperscript{548} National film productions, often directly dependent on government funding, had to obey the exaltation of nationalism and Catholic morals. They were not directly part of the propaganda campaign since they were not specifically commissioned with that purpose in mind.\textsuperscript{549} However, they were not independent either. Specific rules guided the creation of optimistic movies that had simplistic plots in which obvious enemies had to be fought by forces of good. In spite of the debatable quality of the films exhibited, people continued to go to the movies, although in smaller numbers.\textsuperscript{550} The image on this postcard aims to show that everyday life was not affected and that people even had fun and enjoyed themselves. The postcard celebrates the idea that social happiness had been recuperated by the military regime.

4. The Dark Side of Photography

The photographs selected in this section show the military’s private use of the medium. These were hidden and forbidden images that only years later acquired their complete meaning. Although the audience for the following photographs was limited, these images helped construct the military discourse of the time. The three bodies of photographs to be studied show different aspects of the internal military world. They became evidence of the military’s modus


\textsuperscript{549} An exception would be the movie by Sergio Renán. See Sergio Renán, \textit{La fiesta de todos}, Documentary/ Comedy (Ente Autártico Mundial 1978-EAM ‘78, 1979).

\textsuperscript{550} Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza Y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura.,” 59.
operandi. In democratic times these photographs were reprinted in newspaper articles, magazines, and books or became parts of photographic art exhibitions. They do not, however, comply with the conditions described in the previous chapter to qualify as icons of the period. They do not meet the formal requirements described in chapter 3, nor were they circulated enough to be remembered by the general public, despite their status as well-known images among scholars dealing with memory and human rights advocacy groups. They are however valuable pieces for scholarly research attempting to understand the role of photography under the dictatorship.

4.1 Preaching to the Choir: Museum of Subversion

The first image shows the inside of a military center at one of the so-called Museums of Subversion (Fig. 4.16). Photojournalist Rafael Calviño produced the photograph in 1979 in Córdoba. The picture features Videla looking attentively at photographs being exhibited against a white MDF background on top of heavy curtains. The exhibition thus looks mobile, rather than a permanent fixture on the wall. Some of the texts that accompany the pictures in Calviño’s image are legible, making it clear that the photographs record subversive actions under the titles “Targeted Killings,” “Terrorist Acts,” and in the further receding background of the pictorial space, “Criminal Actions.” A closer look at the photographs being exhibited reveals that several of them are close-ups of corpses and violent scenes. A brief text, unfortunately illegible, accompanies each photograph.

In the foreground of the image in the section closest to the viewer the words General Cardozo are visible. A bomb killed General Cesáreo Cardozo on June 18, 1976, a few months after the coup d'etat. The eight photographs in the first section of the display illustrate this
infamous case. Ana María González, a teenager who befriended Cardozo’s daughter in high school, planted a bomb under his bed. Cardozo had a long military career, and after the coup, worked as chief of the federal police. He played a key role as one of the masterminds behind the illegal repression of subversive forces, ranked number three in importance in the state apparatus. His murder was widely covered in the press. Even *The Buenos Aires Herald*, which held a heroic editorial position and openly denounced repression as mentioned in previous chapters, condemned the attack. In an editorial published on June 19, the newspaper criticized the cowardly act, saying that these actions gave the military an excuse for indiscriminate repression.\(^{551}\) The case became even more memorable when the perpetrators—González accompanied by the chief commander of the *Montoneros*, Horacio Mendizábal—gave an interview to the Spanish magazine *Cambio 16* in August of that same year, during which they bragged about the cold blood the act required and the logistics employed.\(^{552}\) A few months later Gónzalez died in a shooting at a road checkpoint.\(^{553}\)

Rafael Calviño took the photograph while covering Videla’s official visit to the province of Córdoba. According to his account, he was following the president through the military buildings when they arrived at a room refurbished as the Museum of Subversion. There were no attempts by the military to hide this room or to forbid the journalist’s entry, although a closer look reveals the hesitation in the eyes of the military man wearing a white hat, who makes eye contact with the camera from the background of the picture. The photographer was asked to leave the premises after touring this room.\(^{554}\) Fortunately, Calviño took the image with his personal camera and did not show the image to anyone outside of his inner circle of trusted

\(^{553}\) Ibid., 489.
\(^{554}\) Calviño, interview.
friends until the end of the dictatorship. It was not published until 2006, which is probably the reason that the image survived.\footnote{This image remained in Calviño’s personal archive until published for the first time in Pablo Cerolini, 
\textit{En Negro Y Blanco. Fotografías Del Cordobazo Al Juicio a Las Juntas} (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos del Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos de la Nación, 2006), 127.} Calviño understood the incriminating power of the image. While the exhibited images featured actions that occurred in the public sphere had received public coverage, the setting in a museum is disturbing and was mostly hidden from civil society at the time.\footnote{Although some images featured in these military museums had reached the public sphere, most had not, being published in the civil press. The number of images of destruction or gruesome crimes published in the press had been diminishing since the coup. In this sense, I disagree with Cora Gamarnick who does not see a rupture with the coverage of information regarding subversives and terrorist acts before and after the coup. Gamarnik, “Imágenes de La Dictadura Militar. La Fotografía de Prensa Antes, Durante Y Después Del Golpe de Estado de 1976 En Argentina,” 60.} According to personal accounts, this kind of exhibition existed in different military branches and served to boost morale and internally justify the repression. It also shows that the military saw the terrorists as a “foreign” culture, something to be isolated and open to contemplative scrutiny, a culture of its own, rather than the result of radical political dynamics.\footnote{Eduardo Blaustein and Martin Zubieta also noted this phenomenon of representing the subversive groups as foreign in their study of the written press. They call attention to the use of the adjective “Argentino” exclusively for the official forces, implying that the contrarian combatants were something else, different. See Blaustein, \textit{Decíamos Ayer}, 41.} The figure of the subversive, as mentioned previously, represented the “other,” completely separated from Argentinean life. Argentinean life. The violence of the terrorist acts carried out by the subversive groups is made to look completely alien from society in order to make the response, which was completely outside ordinary channels of justice, the only option.

Furthermore, museums are generally conceived to preserve objects of historical significance pertaining to a bygone era. As such, the decision to put subversion on display as a historical object is also a way of proclaiming that it belongs to the past, promulgating its extinction from the present.
These museum settings were ambiguous and did not survive the end of the regime. However, there are some accounts that refer to visits made by school groups to such museums and exhibits during the dictatorship.\textsuperscript{558} On at least one occasion the international press was invited to the most infamous of these places, the \textit{Museo Histórico del Ejército de Lucha contra la Subversión Mayor Don Juan Carlos} at the \textit{Campo de Mayo} military base in the suburbs of Buenos Aires.\textsuperscript{559} According to some accounts, this was the destination of the corpse of Mario Santucho, head of the \textit{Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo} (ERP).\textsuperscript{560} Witnesses described the exhibitions in that museum as more elaborate than those visible in Calviño’s image (Figs. 4.17 A, B and C). According to testimonies, Campo de Mayo exhibited photographs, in addition to mannequins in display cabinets reenacting scenes of the fights against subversion with confiscated paraphernalia. The mannequins wore the clothes of their captives stained with traces of blood. In one incredibly macabre instance, the actual embalmed corpse of Santucho was exhibited instead of a mannequin.\textsuperscript{561}

The military knew that this kind of treatment of the terrorist actions was at least questionable. They thus opened these museums to the public on only a few occasions.\textsuperscript{562} The exhibits were entirely destroyed at the end of the period, and later their existence was denied. This picture thus acquires importance as proof of their disputed existence. It became the visual translation of the verbal testimonies. Marginally it also revealed the systematizing efforts

\textsuperscript{558} According to journalist Victoria Ginzberg, there was an article in \textit{Revista Gente} from October 26, 1978 describing a school visit to the “Juan Carlos Leonetti” Museum of Subversion. My effort to locate this source to corroborate this information has been unsuccessful. Eduardo Blaustein, \textit{Decíamos Ayer: La Prensa Argentina Bajo El Proceso} (Buenos Aires Argentina: Ediciones Colihue, 1998), 41.


\textsuperscript{560} Ginzberg, “La Represión No Se Acabó Con La Democracia.”


\textsuperscript{562} Ginzberg, “La Represión No Se Acabó Con La Democracia,” n.p.
behind the military apparatus, which was denied during the trials held during democracy. Calviño’s image did not circulate widely, but it was in the exhibition of photojournalism published for the 30-year anniversary of the coup in a full-page display.\textsuperscript{563} It is well known in the circles of human rights activists and scholars but not among the general public.

The same kind of gruesome images featured in the museum were also published in two books that were distributed freely among military officials: \textit{El Terrorismo en la Argentina} and \textit{La Argentina y sus Derechos Humanos}.\textsuperscript{564} The first one was published under the direct auspices of the presidency in October 1980. It explicitly says that it is a free copy and cannot be sold. The second one is signed by the \textit{Asociación Patriótica Argentina} and has no date. These books had restricted distribution and have been overlooked by studies of the dictatorship. However, they were part of the visual discourse put forward by the regime and have a strong rhetorical power.

Both are of low quality and provide similar information (Figs. 4.18 and 4.19). The first begins with a compilation of terrorist activities as reported by the graphic media in Argentina with the majority of events described having taken place before the military coup. These are mostly low quality collages of newspaper articles where only the titles are easy to read. Besides the newspaper clippings and the gruesome pictures the book reproduces pamphlets and some minor publications signed by terrorist groups such as \textit{Montoneros} and \textit{ERP}. Surprisingly, there is a section describing the killing attributed to the Argentinean Anticommunist Alliance—\textit{Triple A}—a paramilitary extreme right group believed to be sponsored by the government. There are only two terrorist acts featured that happened during the dictatorship. The first one is the killing of General Cardozo. The second one is the attack on one of the sub-sections of the Ministry of

\textsuperscript{563} Cerolini, \textit{En Negro Y Blanco. Fotografías Del Cordobazo Al Juicio a Las Juntas}, 127.  
\textsuperscript{564} These two books do not have the usual editorial information.
Defense on December 15, 1976. These events are followed by a list of 687 victims of terrorist groups organized by profession but without dates or information on who claimed authorship for the killings.

The second book is part of the campaign to improve Argentina’s image outside the country. Written in Spanish, English and French, it is present in at least 16 libraries worldwide, proof that there had been some level of international circulation. Still, this book also had some circulation inside the country mostly among supporters of the military regime. It is again a black and white book with poor quality image reproductions. But in this case gruesome pictures abound. The graphic nature of the images selected is shocking and surprising even to a specialized reader. After a short historical prologue it continues with a list of the victims of terrorism listing names, ages and professions, but omitting the dates, something of paramount importance since most of the killings occurred before the coup. Then the book publishes the pictures of the main terrorist leaders still at large, and calls their crimes genocide. This section with pictures and the corresponding biographies is followed by a section that enumerates terrorist activities around the world equating those activities with the ones in Argentina. The last section lists terrorist activities in Argentina and is profusely illustrated with gruesome images probably provided by the forensic services.

566 For example, under the diplomats list Helena Holmberg is cited even though it was later established that a branch of the military forces killed her. See Jorge Camarasa, “Por Qué Asesinaron a Elena Holmberg En 1978,” La Nación, January 22, 2001.
567 I have to thank Dr. Facundo Bargalló who made me aware of the existence of these publications, and shared his experience as a child of a civilian working for the military government.
4.2 Stolen Photographs

Another kind of photograph resurfaced during democratic times that corroborated the suspicion that the repressive forces did have archives with information about the disappeared, a fact that was emphatically negated during the dictatorship and later during the trials. The fact that the kidnappings left a paper trail was of paramount importance since it is harder to prove a crime without evidence. When questioned about the many disappeared victims, the military insisted that they were never in custody. The military argued complete ignorance about their whereabouts. The archival material proved their testimony to be false.

The archives with information about detainees were neither new nor unique to the junta dictatorship. For example, the bigger archive belonged to the office of intelligence in the province of Buenos Aires, DIPBA for its acronym in Spanish. It was founded in 1956 and functioned until 1998. Its archival materials illustrate the subtle evolution of its role. While in the beginning this kind of office was created to assist the police in their work, it quickly transformed into an intelligence agency with its characteristic secrecy. These changes were exacerbated during the Cold War and the switch of focus from the external enemy to the internal front, and from the ordinary delinquent to the politically persecuted subject, labeled a “subversive” or a “terrorist.”

The photographs of detainees tell their own history. Scholars such as Alan Sekula and John Tagg have written extensively about this subject. However, the declassification of the

568 Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires
archives in Argentina brought some surprises. In addition to the more typical files with information and photos taken while in custody, many other kinds of photographs were found. Although these archives functioned inside the military administration and their activities were completely illegal, they still followed conventional procedure. Each detainee had a file and most were photographed when taken into custody (even when it was a kidnapping), their testimonies or confessions were written down, even though they were obtained by torture and would have been inadmissible as evidence in a court of law. Even suspects never brought into custody had a file that included photographs. The ones that are the most interesting and striking are another kind of image: stolen photographs.

Stolen photographs can be divided into two categories. The first was the practice described in chapter 3 of hidden photographers equipped with cameras and powerful lenses taking pictures at public demonstrations of workers or students, and more specifically of the weekly walks of the Mothers of the disappeared. These photographs are stolen because the protagonists are unaware that they are being photographed. They were taken in secret from a distance. The archives show that these photographs were used for identification purposes, to prove associations and as a justification in many kidnappings.

On the other hand, there were also stolen photographs brought back as a bounty during the raids to take prisoners. Often, family photo albums were among the many personal items

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571 This is still an issue and after more than 30 years, there still are archival materials resurfacing. See Tiempo Argentino, “Nuevo Hallazgo de Documentación Sobre Detenidos En La Dictadura,” Tiempo Argentino, March 14, 2008, sec. Argentina.
military officials confiscated during the illegal kidnappings. While the valuables were sold on the black market for their personal benefit, the private photographs, portraying social events in the life of the detainees were used to identify the protagonist and to prove social ties among them. Given the irregularities and arbitrariness of the repression, to be identified in one image was enough to be taken, kidnapped and even killed.\textsuperscript{574} A casual encounter at a party could cost a person her freedom.

In recent years, this kind of photograph has acquired a more notorious status thanks to Helen Zout, an Argentinean photographer and human rights activist. Zout created an itinerant exhibition called \textit{Stolen Images, Recovered Images} with photographs found in the archives. Like many other contemporary artists who work as curators to make their own artistic statement, Zout selected 26 images to compose a traveling exhibition. The original images were blown up or directly mounted in portable frames to travel to different venues easily. It is also available online as part of the outreach programs organized by the Memory Commission (\textit{Organización por la Memoria}). A national government office in charge of the preservation of archives, paraphernalia and testimonies from the dictatorship period as material for the museum was recently created at the former ESMA, the clandestine detention center that functioned on the premises of the Argentine Naval Academy. As explained in previous chapters, the building itself is full of connotations due to its use during the dictatorship as one of the clandestine detention centers. The images featured in this exhibition help to illustrate the dictatorship’s uses of photography.

In the first image it is evident that the subjects are unaware of the photographer, who is probably taking the pictures from a window overlooking the street down below (Fig. 4.20). It

\textsuperscript{574} In a personal interview, Frías told me that more that 25 years later he found out that he was taken into custody because his name was in the personal agenda of another detainee. It was not for his work as a photojournalist. Frías, interview.
shows four young men walking surrounded by journalists with TV cameras. A high-ranking police officer with his characteristic hat walks next to them. None of the subjects make eye contact with the camera but their faces are clearly visible. The JP badge on the lapel of the sport jacket one of the men is wearing at the center of the picture is also visible. It seems as though the photographer has focused the image on these two letters, which appear slightly to the left of the center probably because the men were walking rapidly. These two letters were the markers of the Jotapé or Juventud Peronista, the political group of the younger members of the Peronist party that was the group with a more radical view of politics and leftist ideologies, representing the political partner of the armed group Montoneros.575

The detail that renders the image meaningful is the writing on top of the image. Each of the four individuals have been circled and numbered in marker on the printed photograph, which is attached to a paper with punch holes indicating it was kept in a file folder. Under the photograph, there is a typewritten caption with the occasion and the names of the four youth leaders going to visit President General Perón in the early seventies: Norberto Ahumada, Juan Carlos Dante Gullo, Juan Carlos Añón, and Miguel Lizaso.576 The actual image was taken before the coup. These four men had been involved in the killing of one of the union leaders, José Ignacio Rucci in 1973. So, the presence of this photograph in the archive shows that the use of photography was not new to the dictatorship, in particular images of people with high political profiles, or suspected of subversive activities. What was new to the dictatorship was the extent of civilian vigilance as shown in the next example.

575 The Peronist party can be understood as a political continuum that not only supported Perón’s leadership, but had groups ranging from the extreme right to the extreme left, and that variety was in part the cause of the political turmoil that came later. See Altamirano, “Ideologías Políticas Y Debate Cívico,” 237-40.
One of the most striking images from Zout’s selections shows a group of people willingly posing for the photographer (Fig. 4.21). It is a group portrait, and someone has written a number for each person photographed. Some numbers are directly written on top of the image, others are in the margins with an arrow matching the number and the face. It is an interior shot, probably taken in some kind of office space, possibly a government office or a union building. They are dressed in businesslike attire, probably middle-class blue-collar workers. They are most likely coworkers but not friends, posing together but carefully avoiding any physical contact. They do not embrace one another or show any other kind of physical camaraderie. There are twelve people—nine young women and three men—posing around a desk with a folder with some kind of stamps on it. Only ten faces are clearly visible, and two partially hidden, though the numbers indicate that they were also probably identified. It is an occasion of some kind, possibly a special one, and the group wanted to immortalize the moment with a group portrait even if none of them are smiling. From their well-composed body language, careful not to touch any of the others, and their timid smiles, we can guess that it was an important occasion related to their jobs. Little did they know that this photograph could have been their death sentence. Their relaxed faces contrast with the viewer’s concerned gaze because we, as spectators, suspect their tragic fate.

Within this same category of stolen photographs, there are other shots in which the protagonist even smiles at the camera (Fig. 4.22). One such image shows two young women playing like they are young girls again enjoying a carrousel ride. Once again, the protagonists are completely unaware of the dangers they will face. The present-day viewer, unable to break the spatiotemporal distance to warn them, suffers in silence.
In Zout’s selection there is also an image that does not fit in either of the above-mentioned examples of stolen photographs (Fig. 4.23). In it, we see two middle-aged women, immediately identifiable as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, both wearing the distinct white headscarf. It is a close-up image of the two faces; they are aware of the photographer but not willingly posing, representing a variation of the use of photography by the repressive forces. It is the use of the camera as the vehicle of the threat. By this point in history, it was a well-known secret that the military employed photography during public demonstrations to identify participants as targets for repression. Although, as previously explained, the Mothers’ weekly walks were photographed from afar, these images show that at least on some occasions the military thought that they could use photography as an intimidation tool. The Mothers in this picture are clearly aware of the photographer but do not pose for him. On the contrary, they react to the camera with surprise and resentment. It is a stolen photograph made with the protagonists’ awareness but without their consent. The photograph immortalizes the moment of this theft.

The rest of the exhibition shows images taken during union activities, others from the Mothers’ weekly walk and a map of the province of Buenos Aires with superimposed photographs of the prisoners taken into custody, with arrows identifying the location of their capture (Fig. 4.24). Its original title was “Map of Anti Subversive Situation” and, perhaps, was at some point included in one of the aforementioned museums of subversion.

4.3 Photography in Hell: Víctor Basterra

In August 1979, Víctor Basterra, a graphic worker, was kidnapped by the military. His involvement with the union caused his kidnapping while his trade experience saved him from
death. He was taken to the ESMA and tortured, as was the standard treatment for all prisoners. But after that initial situation, the military officials forced him to use his skills to create false identification cards, passports and other documents. These false IDs facilitated spurious property acquisitions and inheritance transfers, trips outside the country that did not leave traces, and the opening of bank accounts to deposit illegitimately confiscated money, among other illegal practices.

Basterra was involved throughout the entire process of creating these fake documents. He also took the ID photographs, developed the negatives and printed the copies in a photographic lab built at the torture center. Early on he realized that this was important material to be kept. So, for each image that he was forced to take, he made an extra paper copy and hid it with the photo sensitive paper that was the only place the military did not search in their daily checks. He was not able to save the negatives since those were requested as well. Towards the end of the dictatorship Basterra was allowed to leave the military premises and visit his family. This was not an unusual practice, which shows not only the regime’s sense of impunity, but also the fear embedded in prisoners’ minds. The military hoped that the allowed visits would act as a threat to the family, keeping them from filing any complaints especially outside the country. Basterra slowly sneaked the extra images to his home, an act that was brave and demonstrated a degree of resistance despite the terrible conditions he experienced. At the end of the dictatorship, Basterra presented these photographs as evidence in the trials against the armed forces. The military officials had been using these false identities created by Basterra to

travel and for illegal operations.\footnote{Pablo González Langarica, “No Vas a Poner Más Bombas, Terrorista”, Le Dijo Weber a Langarica Al Secuestrarlo” (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos, 2013).} With the end of the regime, many fled the country with these false documents, but Basterra’s contribution helped to identify them. The most famous case was of Ricardo Miguel Cavallo, who escaped to Mexico and lived there for many years. After a long and complicated legal process, he was finally convicted in 2011.\footnote{Ana Longoni, “Fotos y Siluetas: Políticas Visuales En El Movimiento de Derechos Humanos En Argentina,” Afterall Journal 25 (Autumn/Winter 2010): 5.} Basterra’s photograph played a key role in his condemnation.\footnote{Oscar Ranzani, “‘Hubo Algo de Suerte Y También Un Poco de Temeridad,’” Página 12, October 26, 2007, sec. Cultura & Espectáculos.}

Basterra was also a key person related to the images of that dark period of Argentina’s history because, while in captivity, he found a bag full of negatives ready to be incinerated. He was able to salvage the bag. After recognizing his own face on one of the strips, he understood that those negatives represented other prisoners like himself. Following the same strategy, he was able to save those negatives, and at the end of the dictatorship, he printed and distributed the resulting photographs. They became well known images because, years later, some images were printed and included in a book about the ESMA and also included in an exhibition.\footnote{Marcelo Brodsky, ed., Memoria En Construcción. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Marca Editora, 2005).} The exhibition entitled Rostros, fotos sacadas de la ESMA (Faces, photographs taken at ESMA) features the pictures of many military officials photographed by Basterra while he was in captivity, along with the prints of the negatives he found. Both instances, the book and the itinerant exhibition, are articulations of historical memory, and as such, they require an extensive analysis that exceeds the scope of this dissertation. However, I provide a short description of the images because they are examples of how the military used photography during the dictatorship.

\footnote{Pablo González Langarica, “No Vas a Poner Más Bombas, Terrorista”, Le Dijo Weber a Langarica Al Secuestrarlo” (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos, 2013).}
There are 12 photographs made from the negatives found, half male and half female subjects. They are examples of the cataloging procedures that the prisoners underwent when taken into custody. Their ages range from early twenties to more than 60 years of age, proving that although the repression targeted mostly young people, some middle aged and old people also suffered a horrible fate. Most of the faces correspond to people who remain disappeared to this day. Only two of the women were later freed. Those are the only images that are identified by their first name.

The photographs are low quality, interior shots taken with poor illumination; visibly strong shadows show the inexperience and lack of talent of the photographer (Fig. 4.25). In one case, even the photographer’s shadow is included in the shot (Fig. 4.26). The plain background, casual cloths, and unkempt hair make the subjects appear even more humble. Their vulnerability is made concrete through the photograph. Some images were clearly taken after a welcoming session of torture that in the military jargon had the specific purpose of psychologically “breaking” the prisoner. Some traces of physical torture are visible on the photographed bodies. The subjects are aware of being portrayed and look directly into the camera. Perhaps, as an act of defiance, one young lady closed her eyes at the exact moment the picture was taken, and as such her identity is partially preserved. They are standing against a clear wall or door. There is one image in which a young woman seems to be seated. The image is a close up over her upper torso, her face still beautiful in spite of her black right eye, the result of the brutality of her captivity or a torture session.

582 The old lady has been identified as Ida Adad and was a member of the FAP (Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas). The middle-aged man has been identified as Juan Carlos José Chiarevalle.
583 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 124.
584 Fig. 4.26. This woman was later liberated, so her last name is not included to protect her identity.
These images not only became proof of the kidnappings, but they also provided some closure for the families of the disappeared that were still left to wonder what had happened to them. The most famous image became the one featuring Fernando Brodsky because his brother, Marcelo, became a visual artist and included the image in his artistic installations (Figs. 4.27 A, B and C).\textsuperscript{585} Marcelo Brodsky exhibited on numerous occasions an installation called \textit{Buena Memoria}. It comprises 57 photographs accompanied by two videos. The core of the installation is a photograph of the artist’s classmates in the first year of high school (that in the American education system equals the last year of middle school.) The school is the National Buenos Aires School, which as explained before, is the most prestigious public high school in the country. On top of the blown up image, Brodsky annotated what he knows regarding the fate of each of his classmates. Many had been killed or kidnapped during the dictatorship. The result is an image that formally resembles the ones found in the archives and described before. Other photographs exhibited show contemporary students at the same high school looking at the blown up historical image. There is also a section about the River Plate, which was the final destiny for several kidnapped people, among them Brodsky’s own brother. Basterra’s rescued image of Fernando is exhibited among these images. In addition, Brodsky became active in the humans rights movement in the country and edited a book with essays about the ESMA as a site of historical memory.\textsuperscript{586} As a prologue to the book, the photographs rescued by Basterra are printed in between several completely black pages. They help to make the debate about the future of the building concrete.

\textsuperscript{585} There are interesting articles that deal with Brodsky’s work. See Vikky Bell, “On Fernando’s Photograph,” \textit{Theory, Culture & Society}, July 2010, 69–89.
\textsuperscript{586} Brodsky, \textit{Memoria En Construcción}.
5. Lying with Pictures: French Nuns

On December 1977, Alice Domon and Léonie Duquet were illegally detained and brought to the infamous ESMA.\(^{587}\) They were French nuns working in Argentina at the time. The nuns were taken because of their solidarity with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. The man responsible for their capture was Alfredo Astiz, who falsely assumed the identity of a sibling of a disappeared person and infiltrated the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. They were kidnapped just when *La Nación* had finally agreed to publish an advertisement signed and paid for by the Mothers and family members with the names of the disappeared. Clearly, the Mothers had acquired a relevance that made them a threat in the eyes of the military.

Evelyn Lamartine, a colleague of the nuns in their religious order, immediately denounced the kidnappings to the Argentine government, but more importantly to the French embassy. The international repercussions of the case were so strong that the kidnappers attempted to cover up the case by creating a completely false story. According to some scholars, this was the event that started the international condemnation of the regime. In actuality, it only gave more impetus to international disapproval of the regime,\(^{588}\) especially in France and Europe, since the questioning and criticism had already begun before this specific incident, and would reach a climax in 1978, coinciding with the boycott of the World Cup.\(^{589}\)

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\(^{587}\) Domon was taken on December 8, 1977. Duquet was taken two days later, the same day that Azucena Villaflor, leader of the Mothers at that time was kidnapped. Estela Schindel, “Desaparición y Sociedad. Una Lectura de La Prensa Gráfica Argentina (1975-1978)” (Doctoral Dissertation, Freien Universitat Berlin, 2004), 200.


\(^{589}\) President James Carter had met with Videla in September to express his concerns about human rights violations. Carter sent Patricia Deran, from his administration, three times to the country to inquire about this problem, while the U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, visited
In a desperate attempt to hide the truth, the officials of the clandestine center where the nuns were taken and tortured, sent the Argentine Foreign Office and the French Press Agency false information affirming that the Montoneros had claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of the nuns. They attached a photograph and a letter from Alice Domon, written in French, supposedly supporting the alleged claim that the Montoneros were responsible (Fig. 4.28).

The macabre nature of the whole episode aside, what is more interesting for this study is the staged photograph. In the image, the nuns are posing in front of a flag or a piece of cloth hanging on the wall behind them with the word Montoneros spray painted on it. A stamp with the Montoneros emblem crowns the composition. The photograph is a vertical arrangement where the upper half is dominated by the word written by hand in a disturbingly childish style. The nuns occupy a small portion of the pictorial space, situated toward the left of the image, close to the edge of the frame, uncentered. They are sitting and we can only see their heads and upper torso. The dark shadows of their heads projecting on both sides of their bodies make their pale countenances even more phantasmagoric. Testimonies from relatives and friends describe the image as exhibiting traces of torture visible on the nuns’ bodies. People who knew the nuns describe them as missing their glasses, with their hair messy, too thin, but these details remain elusive to the general spectator. It is clearly an unhappy image. It is obvious that the image was taken, that they did not willingly pose. The act of photographing the nuns under such conditions was part of the violence imposed upon them. But visible proof of torture remains hard to pin down. Their hands are hidden under what appears to be a table in the foreground.

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the country in November 1977, as we already saw in regards to the first public photograph featuring the Mothers. Gamarnik, “La Construcción de La Imagen de Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a Través de La Fotografía de Prensa,” 4.

upon which an issue of the newspaper *La Nación* is spread out, covering part of Alice’s torso. The newspaper provides the date: December 14, 1977 (Fig. 4.29).

Argentine newspapers did not publish the photograph at the time.\(^{591}\) Although the kidnapping was reported in the press, clippings only reproduced the official communiqués by the Argentine government plus the French denunciation and condemnation. Only the *Buenos Aires Herald* in its editorial questioned how a group of people could be kidnapped in broad daylight in a city with such a strong police presence without any help from local police.\(^{592}\) The piece is also important because it highlights that the disappeared included other individuals, not just the two nuns. Still, the immediate emphasis and attention was regarding the fate of the nuns, which overshadowed the fact that several founding members and leaders of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo were also kidnapped at the same time.

It is furthermore curious that local newspapers did not publish the photograph given that, as Anne-Marie Willies argues, “pictures help to sell papers.”\(^{593}\) Did they not have access to the photograph? It seems unlikely that they would not. More plausibly the picture was different from previous images made public by the guerrillas, which could lead an attentive viewer to see the image as a false one, combined with the fact that the Montoneros immediately refuted the charges. For example, many viewers could have noticed that the real Montoneros logo was slightly oval, different from the perfect circle printed on the photograph (Figs. 4.30 A and B).\(^{594}\) Alternatively, perhaps there was a deliberate effort to keep the information, and the attention it generated, to a minimum.

\(^{591}\) Ibid., 321.
\(^{594}\) In my research I found two versions of the Montoneros’ logo, One with an M and one with a P, but both are oval, rather than circle.
Following the dictatorship, this photograph gained symbolic value in illustrating the regime’s atrocities. After the transition to democracy and during Astiz’s trial, when more and more information regarding the methods of torture and killings employed by the dictatorship reached the mass media, the image was reprinted numerous times, usually cropped to focus on the nuns’ faces. The fact that it was cropped, but still identifiable assumes the spectator’s familiarity with the original version. However, since it does not comply with the iconic criteria explained in the previous chapter, I do not consider it to be an icon strictly speaking. Still, it is a powerful and symbolic image. The power that this picture acquired resembles Pierre Bourdieu’s idea that pictures have a proclaimed meaning (the explicit intentions of the photographer) as well as a surplus meaning, what the picture betrays.\(^{595}\) The photograph crystallizes a fact that the military strongly denied: the disappeared.

Claudia Feld has made the most compelling study of this image.\(^{596}\) She correctly points out that the photographic image, with its indexical nature, carries evidentiary power. However, in this case the evidence was “fabricated,” it exists to give credibility to a lie. The image is trapped between competing criteria of truth. Geoffrey Batchen, explaining Alan Sekula, argues that “the photograph always finds itself attached to a discourse (or more accurately, a cacophony of competing discourses) that gives any individual photograph its meaning and social values.”\(^{597}\) It was created as a proof of life, but actually sustained a lie when the nuns’ murder was inevitable. It was distributed, and people saw the image when the nuns were already dead. The photograph thus presents several paradoxes. It is true that they were victims of a

\(^{595}\) “Adequately understanding a photograph ..., means not only recovering the meaning that it proclaims, that is, to a certain extent, the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means deciphering the surplus of meaning that it betrays” Pierre et al Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, Reissue (Stanford University Press, 1996), 6–7.


kidnapping, but it is false that Montoneros took them. It is true that the image is a proof of life, but it is false that they were alive when the photograph was developed. Even when it was created as to support a fake claim, it shows the truth in the claim for the disappeared. It is false that they belong to the guerrilla organizations, but it is true that they were taken and killed outside the judiciary system.

In Feld’s analysis, the nuns became the symbol for all of the disappeared, but this particular image does not have the power of synecdoche.598 The images that became the standard images for the disappeared, as previously argued, show young people in 1970s fashions at home with happy expressions, or with serious ones in three-quarter profile, depending on which photograph was used, family portraits or official identity documents.599 On the other hand, although the nuns’ faces show distress and unhappiness, they do not comply with the criteria of showing strong, unmistakable emotions. It is not an easy picture to read. So, given the analysis explained in the previous chapter, although I do not consider this image an icon of the dictatorship, it shows the importance that the military regime conferred to photojournalism. The military officials believed so strongly in the power of influence of photojournalism that they believed it necessary to create a photograph to validate their lie. They hoped to sway public opinion of the maliciousness of the subversive forces kidnapping two nuns, who are traditionally seen as the embodiment of solidarity and self-abnegation.

6. Picture Perfect Lies: The Falklands War

In 1982, when the regime felt the first real threats to its control, it responded by invading the Falkland Islands, which were—and continue to be—under the United Kingdom’s control.

598 Ibid., 330.
599 Chapter 3.
With this act, the regime initiated a war against the UK. In an attempt to neutralize protests, the junta announced the repossession of the Falkland Islands, known as the Malvinas in Argentina, on April 2, 1982, just three days after a massive mobilization organized by the unions on March 30. However, Argentina’s defeat marked the beginning of the end for the military government and though it gave the regime a boost in popularity, it proved to be a suicidal decision. After its capitulation, it was forced to replace leaders in the higher ranks and a year later to call for open democratic elections.

A full study of the coverage of the war by the media exceeds the scope of this dissertation, nor do I intend to review all the photographs published at the time. My aim in this section is to explain the conditions of production of the most republished photographs from the war and to explain why they have been selected. I will highlight what can be learned from these visual examples and what their means of production says about the practice of photojournalism during the war. Again, as demonstrated in previous chapters, photojournalism as a profession benefited because it gained relevance during Argentina’s tragic times. But the war did not have as large an impact on the profession as one would have expected, given the

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Social discontent and pressure to have open elections had been increasing for at least two years. For example, in March 1980, Videla acting as a president opened what he called the time of dialogue, referring to the beginning of talks with representatives of political parties to begin a transition towards democracy. However, a few days later, Galtieri (who would become the president of the third junta in December 1981) expressed, in what had become an infamous phrase, that in spite of those declarations the ballot boxes were securely stored. See “Videla Declaró Abierta La Etapa Del Diálogo,” Clarín, March 7, 1980. “Estamos Dialogando, Pero Las Urnas Están Guardadas,” Clarín, March 28, 1980.

The war was launched by Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri, Basilio Arturo Ignacio Lami Dozo and Jorge Isaac Anaya as the members of the ruling junta. Cristino Nicolaides, Augusto Jorge Hughes and Rubén Oscar Franco replaced them after the capitulation of the war.

The most interesting work on this subject is actually a documentary film featuring interviews with many of the journalists working at the time. See Ciganda and Persano, Estamos Ganando, Periodismo Y Censura En La Guerra de Malvinas. There is also a Master’s thesis that has solid research on the photographs of the war. However, it lacks in depth visual analysis. María Esperanza Sánchez, “Tras Un Manto de Nebulos. El Circuito de Las Fotos de Malvinas Y Su Lugar En Los Medios” (Ciencias de la Comunicación. University of Buenos Aires, 2011).
photographable nature of war and the capacity of photojournalism to convey information while appealing to emotions. War is always a spectacular event and as such it would have been a great opportunity for photojournalists to create iconic pictures. However, that was not the case.\textsuperscript{603}

The dispute regarding the islands has long history.\textsuperscript{604} The first mention of the islands in history is attributed to English captain John Strong in 1690, when he was travelling to Chile and Peru, at which point the islands were uninhabited. The first settlement was by the French, under Louis Antoine de Bougainville, who founded Port Louis on East Falkland in 1764. Two years later, the British established Port Egmont on Saunders Island under the command of John MacBride. That same year France surrendered its settlement to Spain, and the name changed to Puerto Soledad. In 1770-71, Spain and England went to war over these settlements; England signed an international treaty renouncing its claim in 1771, and later abandoned the island in 1774. The Spanish settlement lasted only until 1811. Between that year and 1826 the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata claimed the islands, but without establishing a permanent settlement. The United Provinces would become later the Argentinean Republic with an expanded territory. In 1820, the Argentine flag was raised for first time before the islands’ few inhabitants. However, in 1831 the British reclaimed the islands and established a colony in the archipelago, chasing out the few unorganized Argentine inhabitants. Argentina has protested this occupation ever since.

Argentina officially protested England’s occupation many times: in 1841, 1849, 1884, 1888, 1908, 1927 and 1933. Since the creation of the United Nations in 1946, Argentina has

\textsuperscript{603} The British media also had restricted access to the conflict, and as a result they received few images from the conflict. See Brothers, \textit{War and Photography}, 4454.

\textsuperscript{604} For a complete history of the controversy see Lowell Gustafson, \textit{The Sovereignty Dispute Over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands}. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
been using that forum to claim the territories. The demands over the islands became stronger during Perón’s government, and again in the 1960s when the United Nations General Assembly announced Resolution 1514 on decolonization. 605 In 1966, a group of radical right-wing Peronist activists hijacked an Argentine commercial flight and landed it on the islands to raise the flag. 606

Thus, at the time of the military junta’s invasion, the subject was a painful and present topic for Argentineans, who had been learning since elementary school that the Falkland Islands were part of their national territory unfairly taken by the English government. 607 As such, when the military junta announced the reoccupation of the islands, they knew that it would help raise their popularity and would serve to make the regime’s implicit support explicit. The nationalistic pride that the war aroused did not escape the military, which already faced a situation of tense relations with the neighboring country of Chile over a frontier dispute regarding a common border. 608 Therefore, the bellicose conflict over the Falklands can be understood as a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign. Mirta Varela correctly points out that the war was one of the two occasions when the diffusion of the regime’s ideology by the media reached its peak. The other was the World Cup, as previously explained. 609

607 It is hard to find an Argentinian author who disputes the fact that Argentina might not have rights over the islands. The most recent work that analyzes this phenomenon and questions what the Malvinas mean for Argentinians is Vicente Palermo, Sal En Las Heridas. Las Malvinas En La Cultura Argentina Contemporánea (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Sudamericana, 2007).
608 This dispute was the so-called “Conflicto del Beagle,” stated in 1977 and was solved years later on 1984 with Vatican mediation. See Jon Marco Church, “La Crisis Del Canal de Beagle,” Estudios Internacionales 161 (2008): 7–33.
609 Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura.,” 51.
The military junta used the war as an excuse to maintain and increase social control and manipulate public opinion. The battle was thus fought on two fronts: in the Falkland Islands and in the country, but as a propaganda war.\textsuperscript{610} Newspapers, radios and TV switched the focus to an almost exclusive account of developments in the islands, as well as to an account of efforts to support the endeavor in the rest of the country. The spectacular nature of combat was not exploited to the maximum by newspapers. Although newspapers constantly reported on the conflict, fewer images than expected circulated. This was mainly for two reasons: first, the war was mostly nocturnal and photojournalists in Argentina did not have the technology at the time to capture many of these scenes. Secondly, but more importantly, censorship was at its highest level ever, which materialized in only a handful of authorizations granted to journalists to travel to the island, and also meant the confiscation of much of the photographic material produced at the time, as well as the destruction of archival material after the war.\textsuperscript{611} More than ever before, the military controlled the information that circulated, especially images, citing national security reasons.\textsuperscript{612} According to Daniel García, Argentinean journalists and photojournalists had learned to work under the dictatorship’s rule. Hence, rather than facing direct censorship, they carried out their work exercising self-control given implicit threats. However, with the war,

\textsuperscript{610} Diego Pérez Andrade in Ciganda and Persano, \textit{Estamos Ganando, Periodismo Y Censura En La Guerra de Malvinas}.

\textsuperscript{611} According to the testimonies in the documentary \textit{Estamos Ganando, Periodismo Y Censura En La Guerra de Malvinas}, censorship was really strong the first two or three days. Then, it was more a matter of self-censorship. Ibid. However, there are several accounts that tell that the material was intercepted during transportation from the islands to Argentina’s capital even after the war ended. See Diego Pérez Andrade quoted in Sánchez, “Tras Un Manto de Neblinas. El Circuito de Las Fotos de Malvinas Y Su Lugar En Los Medios,” 175; and Eduardo Farré, “El Fotoperiodista Eduardo Farré Cuenta Cómo Realizó La Cobertura de La Guerra de Malvinas,” in \textit{Las Grandes Fotografías Del Periodismo Argentino}, ed. José Alemán, vol. 3 (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Arte Gráfico Editorial Argentino, 2010), 40.

\textsuperscript{612} Official document sent to all the media detailing the special measures for the publication of information during the armed conflict. Reproduced in Blaustein, \textit{Decíamos Ayer}, 470.
there was real censorship and materials were confiscated.\textsuperscript{613} According to Diego Pérez Andrade, a journalist working on the islands during the war, even the soldiers were checked to see if they were taking photographic film with them when they left.\textsuperscript{614} There was also an overall lack of organization and some images were lost because they “fell into the cracks” of distribution.\textsuperscript{615}

In reviewing the newspapers of the period there are almost no images of the actual conflict.\textsuperscript{616} This also happened on the British side. Few photographs were published because the government did not allow many photojournalists or television crews to travel. Only two photographers were allowed to accompany the troops, and not even the most talented of British photojournalists were there.\textsuperscript{617} According to Zelizer these prohibitions are explained in part because of the belief that the proliferation of visual accounts during the Vietnam War had damaging effects on public opinion.\textsuperscript{618}

Still, in Argentina reporting on the war was easily distinguished from everyday matters by a simple glance at the front page of local newspapers. For example, Clarín, and to a lesser degree, La Nación, increased the size of the type font to report the news from the war (Figs. 4.31 A and B). This change was especially visible during the first days. It was a graphic way to make the triumphal tone used by the military administration visible. Interestingly, in the few photographs that made the front page of newspapers, the masses returned as the protagonist of the published images. As explained previously, while the images with people during manifestations were the core of Peronist visual language, during the dictatorship they were completely absent mainly because such gatherings were forbidden. However, even when they

\textsuperscript{613} García, interview.
\textsuperscript{615} See Román Von eckstein testimony in ibid., 374.
\textsuperscript{616} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{617} Brothers, War and Photography, 4457.
\textsuperscript{618} Zelizer, Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime, 17.
did occur, as with the manifestation of the *Multipartidaria* on March 30, newspapers focused on other kinds of images. The massive demonstration was not photographed, with photographers choosing to show repression instead.\(^{619}\)

To illustrate the front page of the edition that announced the “recuperation” of the islands, *Clarín* chose an image that shows the back of Leopoldo Galtieri, who was the president of the junta at the time (Fig. 4.32 A).\(^ {620}\) The leader and other people are on the balcony of the government house that faces the main square in Buenos Aires.\(^ {621}\) Galtieri is easily identified thanks to his position in the front row, where he looks taller than the rest of the standing individuals in the group. His right arm is raised in greeting of the multitude gathered at the Plaza de Mayo. The crowd occupies the entire top half of the picture space. Although this selection could pass as an innocent choice, it seems to be in agreement with the military’s political agenda. In the foreground, there is the large group of leaders; in the background, thousands of supporters. No empty space is visible. The overall feeling that the image transmits is that there is massive public support for the policy implemented, in agreement with how the military wanted the war to be perceived. The media chose to replicate and amplify this reading.\(^ {622}\)

*La Nación*’s cover tells a similar story (Fig. 4.32 B). In this case, the formal composition reverses the arrangements of the previous image. The photographer was among the celebrating multitude. The photographer, instead of being in a high position, pointing the camera down as in

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\(^{619}\) These events and the images were already analyzed in chapter 2.

\(^{620}\) Here I translate “recuperación” literally because it is the word that the newspaper used. I already explained the controversy around the claims to the islands.

\(^{621}\) Given the privileged position of the photographer at the balcony of the government house, it is plausible that Victor Bugge acting as the official photographer took it. However, to the date I was not able to locate the physical evidence to support this affirmation.

the previous image, pointed the camera up from a lower point of view. As a result, in the foreground closer to the picture plane, the viewer is looking at the back of the heads of numerous individuals, which cover the lower portion of the image. The government house occupies the majority of the background and top of the image. The photograph conveys the same view that any person participating in the demonstration would have had. Through this formal arrangement the viewer becomes a participant too. The crowded balcony is featured at the center, although the figure of Galtieri is hardly recognizable given the distance and scale of the shot. Again, the message that the image conveys is one of ample popular support for the leader. Both headlines focused on the population’s joy.\textsuperscript{623} In these two cases, the photographs supported the discourse put forward by the media without any dissonance. This would be the case for the first weeks of the conflict.

The few images that made the conflict visible for the Argentinen people, and are still remembered, were not published in newspapers but rather in illustrated magazines. Newspapers had to inform their readers about developments on a daily basis and had a different, more immediate rhythm of publication; as such they often repeated the official communiqués without images and using archival photographs.\textsuperscript{624} In some instances, the coverage of the war by the media was borderline fictitious, but curiously it did not damage photojournalism’s credibility. Daniel Alonso, a journalist working in the Patagonia region during the war, confirms that at least 80% of the images published during the armed conflict were actually shots made at

\textsuperscript{623} The contrast with the cover of the \textit{Buenos Aires Herald} from the same date is telling (Fig 4.32 C). The newspaper printed the Argentinen flag flapping presumably in the Falklands, but used the more restrained tone. It simply announced that Argentina had recovered the Falklands, but it included “by force.” In such a controlled context just that difference in the way of presenting the same information becomes significant. The distribution of \textit{The Herald} was boycotted during the conflict. Readers had to go to the office of the newspaper to buy it. Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura,” 54.

\textsuperscript{624} Sánchez, “Tras Un Manto de Neblinas. El Circuito de Las Fotos de Malvinas y Su Lugar En Los Medios,” n. 6.
military bases on the continent, not on the islands. Toward the end of the war, Sara Facio published an editorial piece denouncing this practice.

The illustrated magazines were the channels that transmitted a more complex visual discourse. They were more instrumental in propagating the fictitious triumphal tone that the military attempted to keep even when defeat was imminent. As mentioned, a systematic review of all the images published about the war exceeds the scope of this dissertation. It is however relevant and interesting to see which images lived beyond their immediate meaning as news. I have selected four photographs that marked different moments in terms of the narration of the war. The first one is of the Argentinean army’s arrival on the islands; the second, the sinking of Argentina’s main ship. Those two photographic images summarize different aspects of the war through visual language, formal composition and content. Next, I analyze a photographic image that based on its composition and content could have been the iconic photograph of the war, but was not circulated enough at the time, and was only recently included in a museum. Finally, I review an image that summarizes the sense of defeat and can be seen as the moment of capitulation, although it cannot be considered a milestone in Argentina’s photojournalism because it was taken by an English photojournalist and not published extensively.

Daniel Alonso quoted in extenso in ibid., 77.
Lucrecia Escudero, Malvinas: El Gran Relato: Fuentes Y Rumores En La Información de Guerra (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Gedisa editorial, 1997), 70.
Caroline Brothers explains that the Falklands War is one of “absences.” Meaning that there were few images that reached the British public and there were some key moments, usually immortalized through photography that in this war were missing such as the surrender. “[Photography is absent from] one of its historical wartime roles, recording the symbolic moment of surrender, an event deemed important enough in previous conflicts to warrant recording in painting or film. Military history will have to make do with a static shot of General Sir Jeremy Moore posing alone with the signed document of surrender.” Brothers, War and Photography, 4553.
On March 24, 1982 Rafael Wollmann, a young photojournalist, flew to the archipelago to do a photographic report about life on the islands. En route, during his flight, he found out that the Argentine army had raised the Argentinean flag in the port of Georgia, a minor island of the archipelago. This is an overlooked fact but it was actually the beginning of the conflict. A few days later, Wollmann sent the photographs that he produced of the Falkland Islands and its inhabitants to Buenos Aires, but those images were never published. The military forces intercepted the material. Instead of returning to Argentina on March 30 as planned, he decided to stay another week. His extended stay allowed him to take photographs immediately following the arrival of the Argentine forces. Wollmann’s images captured the moment the outnumbered English soldiers surrendered (Fig. 4.33 A). The images were not planned or authorized; he was simply at the right place at the right time, taking the photographs without requesting formal permission. As a result one of the most famous photographs of the conflict was actually the result of a fortuitous coincidence. Given that the images were favorable to the military administration’s agenda, the photographs were immediately printed in full color in a national magazine with the largest circulation and later reprinted numerous times.

The photograph is a two-part composition. On the right side of the image, there is a small group of soldiers walking in line with their arms held high over their heads, holding their long guns with one arm, but with the other hand open in a universal gesture of surrender. On the

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631 Up until that point there were weekly flights between the Falklands and Argentina.
other side of the image, a lone soldier in control of the situation directs their path. It is clear that they represent two countries since they wear different uniforms. The background gives no visual clue as to the location.

This well-remembered image in Argentina was published in full color on the cover of a special edition of the magazine *Gente*, on April 6, 1982 (Fig. 4.33 B). On the upper part of the magazine cover printed in bold letters the headlines announce the contents of this special issue. Superimposed on the images, in the space in between the group of soldiers and the prisoners, the magazine printed its exclusive rights to the images. Still, this image was reprinted in international media, and probably even circulated on television at the time.\textsuperscript{634} The simple composition, together with the easily recognizable hand gestures, could have put this photograph in the icon category explained in the previous chapter. However, its meaning is too vague. It shows a conflict between two military groups, and is clearly an image of war, but without much information and context, the viewer cannot know who is winning. It appeals to the viewer’s emotional core and sentiments about armed confrontation, but it does not produce empathy through identification. It is not clear which soldiers are “us.”

The armed conflict started with the arrival of the British troops to the islands on April 30, but there are almost no images of the fighting. Although Argentina won some battles, it quickly became clear that Argentina would lose the war. One of the key moments of the war was the sinking of the main Argentinean cruiser, the *Belgrano*, on May 2, resulting in the highest number of fatalities for the Argentines: 323.\textsuperscript{635} According to some testimonies, this attack made it apparent that the war was inevitable. In spite of some battles, up until that point, the Argentinean troops believed that the conflict would be solved through diplomatic

\textsuperscript{634} This image was published as a cover on *L’Espresso*, (Italy), and *VSD* (France) on April 14, 1982.

\textsuperscript{635} The death toll for the Argentinian side was over six hundred.
channels. When the actual armed fight started, almost a month after Argentina’s “repossession” of the islands, the local media actively participated in a campaign to transmit the idea that the war was favorable for the country in spite of the facts, what Varela calls a campaign of misinformation. Because of the heightened censorship at the time, the limited information that reached the newspapers, magazines and publishing houses, was published in a way that was most favorable to the government without raising any concern or suspicion among readers, forcing the facts to coincide with the political agenda.

Reporting on the sinking of the Belgrano is one of the clearest examples of the exaggerated manipulation of the available information with an overuse of nationalistic rhetoric. There was controversy regarding whether the ship was in conflicted waters. The idea that this attack was a war crime, not an act of war was promoted by the military administration immediately after the attack. La Nación reported the news but illustrated it with an archival photograph of the ship and a map of the location of the attack. The magazine Gente amplified this accusation publishing the images with the title “The First English Crime.” In many publications, there was an attempt to present the British navy as pirates who only knew how to steal and take possession of property illegally.

636 These testimonies find support in the selection of words by newspapers for titles and editorials. For example, on April 23, La Nación published an article titled “Civil society gets ready for possible armed conflict.” See Sánchez, “Tras Un Manto de Neblinas. El Circuito de Las Fotos de Malvinas Y Su Lugar En Los Medios,” 201.
637 Varela was referring to television content, but it can be extended to graphic media. See Varela, “Silencio, Mordaza Y Optimismo. Los Medios de Comunicación Durante La Dictadura.”
The series of images depicting the sinking of the *Belgrano* is perhaps the only one that persists in Argentine memory that actually depicts violence and destruction (Fig. 4.34).\footnote{The other violent image that was published extensively was the sinking of the British frigate *Sheffield* on May 4\textsuperscript{th} (See Fig. 4.35). The most published image of this incident is an aerial shot, attributed only to the Associated Press. I was not able to identify the actual photographer, but I believe it was one of the few international photographers that were on the islands on those first days of combat. Later, they were evacuated at least from the territories under Argentinian control.} It is also the product of a fortuitous coincidence.\footnote{Hector D’Amico, “La Foto Robada Que Hizo Historia,” *La Nación*, April 2, 2012, sec. Enfoques.} One of the military men on board the ship, Lieutenant Martín Sgut, took the pictures with his amateur camera. Upon impact from the first torpedo, he jumped into the water as ordered and a few moments later realized that he had a compact point-and-shoot camera in his pocket. He took the photographs from a lifeboat while waiting to be rescued. After being rescued, he handed the camera over to his superior officer Commander Héctor Bonzo, who ordered that the negatives be developed under strict confidentiality. However, six days later the images arrived at the *New York Times* office in Manhattan. The military administration attempted to delay their publication to no avail.\footnote{Ibid.} The next day, the photographs were published on the front page of the *New York Times* and other major newspapers around the world. *Gente* reprinted them on May 13 for local readers with an impressive layout with five full-color photographs printed across a two-page spread (Fig. 4.34).

Two torpedoes fired by the HMS *Conqueror*, a nuclear-powered Royal Navy submarine, impacted the vessel.\footnote{Sherwell, “Thirty Years On, Argentine Survivors of the Belgrano Sinking Recall the Moment Falklands War Erupted around Them.”} The ship sunk at an extraordinary speed, and was fully submerged in an hour. *Gente* published the five images, which were taken at 10-minute intervals, in sequence with the time stamp printed on each one. They recorded the action of the ship sinking deeper into the ocean, and a look at how many minutes passed from the first shot to the next reinforced...
the magnitude of the tragedy for the viewer. The five images have a similar composition: a strip of the lifeboat in bright orange in the foreground, with the war ship outlined more or less in the center against the pale sky in the background. The tallest part of the vessel, the communications tower, leans closer and closer toward the sea in each frame of the sequence. In the pictorial space, the round orange lifeboats colorfully contrast the dark gray of the ship and ocean. The photographs are low quality and blurred. The constant movement of the waves made it impossible to focus using a simple point-and-shoot camera. These formal features successfully transmit the feeling of despair and vulnerability that the photographer surely felt at that moment.

The first photograph of the sequence became famous and was featured on the cover of the *Best of Photojournalism* in 1983. At the end of the war, Lieutenant Sgut hired his own team to determine what happened to the images. A judge in New York City awarded him credit while in Argentina, a military officer was found guilty of duplicating the negatives and selling them without authorization. He was sanctioned and dishonorably discharged from the navy. According to Silvio Zuccheri, photographer and owner of the ILA agency, in 1982, after the sinking of the *Belgrano*, he was invited to a small town in Patagonia called Comodoro Rivadavia and given the opportunity to photograph the pictures featuring the vessel that had already been printed with his own camera. He had to pay $1000 for each one. He travelled to Buenos Aires with the material, where the head of the Gamma agency took the four pictures and

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645 Caroline Brothers seems to refer to one of these pictures when she talks about the lack of images in this conflict: “the only photograph of Britain’s sinking of the General Belgrano is an anonymous, grainy, black and white image that seems to hail like the vessel itself from the Second World War.” Brothers, *War and Photography*, 4531. However, she is not aware that the image was part of a series and that they were published in color and widely circulated. It was featured in the Best of Photojournalism in 1983 a compilation published by the National Press Photographers Association

646 Sánchez, “Tras Un Manto de Neblinas. El Circuito de Las Fotos de Malvinas Y Su Lugar En Los Medios.”
sold them to television channels. But once shown on TV the monetary value of any image decreases so the Argentines did not obtain big monetary benefits for the photographs. Despite the loss of some of the details about how the photographs became public, the information that is known proves the corruption and arbitrariness that lead to the images’ publication, i.e. which events became memorable and which were forgotten.

The military limited the access to the territories under conflict and allowed only two photojournalists from the official news agency TELAM to travel there: Eduardo Farré and Román Von Eckstein.\textsuperscript{647} Upon reviewing their published images, it could be argued that the quality of their vision was uneven. Both of them were young photographers with limited job experience.\textsuperscript{648} It is also true that they were limited in terms of what they could achieve. They mention that they asked the soldiers to pose, reenacting combat formations, for example.\textsuperscript{649} Furthermore, as mentioned, many images were intercepted and destroyed by military officials. There were many photographs that saturated the public memory, but at the same time, they were not memorable pictures. As a result, not many photographs have survived the test of time, nor have they been republished, except the one mentioned before and the two described below.

Daniel García was allowed to visit the islands for a few hours on April 13, 1982, and he produced the most iconic image of the conflict (Fig. 4.36). García took the photograph from inside a vehicle, probably an army Jeep. The Jeep was taking him and other journalists around

\textsuperscript{648} Eduardo Farré had only one year of experience as a photojournalist, while Román Von Eckstein stayed for a shorter time in the islands, and had more experience but mostly in sports photography. See Farré, “El Fotoperiodista Eduardo Farré Cuenta Cómo Realizó La Cobertura de La Guerra de Malvinas,” and Román Von Eckstein, “El Reportero Gráfico Román VonEckstein Cuenta Cuál Fue Su Experiencia Cuando Cubrió La Guerra de Malvinas,” \textit{Las Grandes Fotografías Del Periodismo Argentino}, 2010, 40.
the main island. Next to the vehicle there was a group of young soldiers walking in line toward their camp. We can assume, from the opening of the window that the Jeep was slowly moving in the same direction as the soldiers. The windowpane acts as a natural frame for the image and divides the composition in two. García was able to portray a soldier on the left side of the picture frame. He is walking slowly carrying his heavy backpack. His gun is visible, hanging from his shoulder, and his arms wrapped around a heavy burlap sack. The soldier looks at the photographer out of the corner of his eye, while pressing his lips against his teeth in a clear gesture of preoccupation mixed with resignation. His lips disappear and his mouth is just a straight line.

On the right side of the image, the view is interrupted because the glass of the Jeep’s window is broken and there is a spider web-like composition across the glass, probably the result of the impact of a rock or a bullet. Behind these radiating lines of broken glass, the silhouette of another soldier is visible. The figure is dark in the shadows, although from the contour we can guess that he is also carrying a heavy burlap sack, which he has swung over his shoulder.

The combination of these three elements—the concern in the soldier’s expression, the broken glass, and the bent over silhouette—acts as a visual translation of what many Argentineans felt at the time of the war. Fear and concern mixed with a growing sense of vulnerability for these badly equipped, poorly trained soldiers, sent to fight against one of the most powerful armed forces in the world. The partial landscape visible in García’s photograph is rocky, without much vegetation, while the sky is a pale gray. Even the terrain transmits the idea of the difficulty of the endeavor. The sense that the entire war was a mistake, that every triumphal report was a fiasco is hinted at in this image. As with Loiácono in the example

650 García, interview.
discussed in previous chapters, García was able to articulate his disapproving feelings with the entire endeavor in one image. The criticism is visible to the viewer willing to doubt the official discourse.\textsuperscript{651} It was a premonitory image and it has become the iconic photograph of the conflict with its recent inclusion in the new Malvinas Museum in Buenos Aires in 2014.

Once the conflict was almost over, it was impossible to maintain the level of manipulation of reality that predominated during the war. By the beginning of June, it was clear in the islands that the war was a complete loss. By June 10, the information that circulated shifted away from and abandoned the triumphal tone. This change was also evident in the kind of images published. The image that captures how the events had reversed for the Argentine troops is a photograph by Martin Cleaver (Fig. 4.37). Although taken by an English photojournalist of the Associated Press agency working with the British army, his image was published in \textit{Gente} on June 10 and reprinted several times.

Cleaver’s photograph shows the defeated Argentinean troops seated while an English officer with a long gun, stands guarding. It is a vertical composition. In the foreground a group of ten soldiers are seated cross-legged in the dirt. In the background, out of focus, but filling the entire upper portion of the pictorial space, is a soldier, wearing a different uniform, standing legs apart with a rifle in his arms, commanding the scene. The soldiers sitting on the ground are Argentine troops taken prisoner by the British army. One of the prisoners looks out from the corner of his eye toward the camera. A closer look reveals that he is not making eye contact with the camera, but only looking in that direction. His features are typical for the inhabitants

\textsuperscript{651} The efforts to locate the original publication of this image failed. The author does not remember this either. Although the photograph complies with the criteria to be considered an iconic photograph as explained in chapter 3, I was hesitant to name it as one, because its circulation and reproduction was not well documented. However, the incorporation of García's image in a museum provides the necessary massive viewership and consecration as an icon of the period.
from the northern part of the country, a mix of native people and European immigrants. This is a telling detail for the Argentinean public given that one of the most criticized issues during the conflict was that the armed forces drafted troops from the country’s poorest provinces, which also had tropical climates, a stark contrast with the Falkland Islands. Therefore, for these young people, the cold, windy and inhospitable archipelago was already brutal enough. This photograph acted as a visual response to Wollmann’s previously described photograph. It is almost a visual reverse, and it made the imminent capitulation concrete for the national public. The sadness and concern of the soldier’s face was a shared sentiment with the audience of the time, and even to this day.
“What is the point of exhibiting these pictures? To awaken indignation? To make us feel ‘bad’; that is, to appall and sadden? To help us mourn? … Do they actually teach us anything? Don’t they rather just confirm what we already know (or want to know)?”

–Susan Sontag

**Conclusion: Icons Today**

In the preceding chapters I reviewed the development of photojournalism in Argentina, focusing on the period under the last dictatorship. In the first chapter, I reconsidered the beginning of photography in Argentina, and *sui generis* photojournalistic ventures. I indicated how quickly the field was divided between artistic photography and photographs for the news media. Photography and photojournalism evolved along parallel paths, but with only a few points of intersection. I highlighted the informality of photojournalism in spite of the high level of expertise of independent photographers such as Coppola, Stern, Heinrich, Saderman, Makarius, and Rivas. I ended by referencing the contradiction expressed by the famous photographers Facio and D’Amico who publicly praised the work of socially engaged photography in international colloquia while, at the same time, disregarding the work of young photojournalists during those years. Central to the second chapter of this dissertation was the generation of photojournalists working in the 1980s whose political stance was materialized in photojournalistic exhibitions. Still, the few history of photography books concerning the field in Argentina overlooked their efforts. I argued for the historical importance of the photojournalists’ exhibitions as points of resistance from the official discourse. In the third

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chapter, I analyzed iconic images from the last dictatorship engaging with semiotic terms and approaches, as well as with methodologies from communication studies. Icons are photographs that break their temporal specificity to remain in circulation. In this dissertation I identified news images that continued to be utilized after their original publication during the dictatorship to articulate new meanings based on available social knowledge. Reconstructing the instances of reuse I have shown how few images remain pertinent in our time. I offered tentative interpretations to explain the repeated selection of particular images in spite of, or because of, changing social circumstances. In the fourth chapter, I analyzed the official visual discourse of those years. The military regime’s use of images is unexplored territory. Although some studies have focused on the communication strategies employed by the military junta, none have focused on the visual elements. I attempted to fill in that research gap because the relevance given to the visual during those years, although indirectly, benefited photojournalism.

The iconic photojournalistic images analyzed in the preceding chapters were part of the exhibition that started this project in the first place: En Negro y Blanco. To conclude, I would like to come back to the exhibition because it was a milestone for photojournalism in Argentina. I also signal paths for future research regarding the current state of memory institutions describing photographic works that dominated the gallery spaces in recent years and hint at the future for photojournalistic icons.

Pablo Cerolini dreamed of publishing a book that would compile images from the period under the dictatorship that supposedly had never been created. Cerolini and Alejandro Reynoso searched media and private archives, which made up the main body of research. They reviewed more than 1500 images to select a total of 149 images.653 Daniel García, Pablo Lasansky, Dani

653 There are 65 images from the period before the coup, 62 from the dictatorship, and 22 from the firsts years of democracy. See Cerolini, En Negro Y Blanco. Fotografías Del Cordobazo Al
Yako, and Jorge Durán were members of the selection committee. Although the research and compilation was a private effort, the venture gained official support early on. The photographers’ original plan was to publish a book, but it quickly became an exhibition. Its first venue was the *Palais de Glace* in Buenos Aires. It was an immediate success, with 28,000 visitors. The ministry of culture sponsored the exhibition and facilitated its circulation through the main cities of Argentina as well as around Argentinean embassies worldwide. A high-quality catalogue was published and sold to benefit the association of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. In it all the photographs exhibited were reproduced, preceded by short introductory texts by José Nun, secretary of culture at the time, and Estela de Carlotto, president of the non governmental organization *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, among others. The introductory texts provided historical context, while a short text by Cerolini and Reynoso expressed their goal, emphasizing the idea of uncovering the “latent” significance of the images. Although they did not engage in theoretical debates with possible multivalent interpretations, they did hint at the images’ ability to unlock meaning depending on their use and circulation. As a concluding section, featured photojournalists described their own experience working under the dictatorship and narrated details regarding the actual production of the chosen images.

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654 It is one of the most important exhibition spaces at Buenos Aires. The ARGRA annual exhibition has been celebrated in it several times. It is owned by the city, and it has a free entrance, encouraging its popularity.


656 Journalist María Seoane, Historian Carlos Altamirano, and photojournalist Eduardo Longoni also participated with introductory texts.

En Blanco y Negro coincided with a moment when there was enough temporal distance to look back in time, and society was ready to engage in the process of memory. Young artists created visual works engaging the memory of those dark years. After more than 20 years there was “a new ability to look toward the past without being scared stiff or petrified by the pain.” The state finally created memory institutions. Claudia Feld, an Argentinean scholar, paraphrasing Paul Ricoeur, concurs that in order for memory to occur it is necessary to have a temporal distance from the event. The moment of acknowledgement had finally arrived. As Stanley Cohen has observed: “Acknowledgment is what happens to knowledge when it becomes officially sanctioned and enters the public realm.” Many museums, archives and memory institutions popped up in the country, accompanying an international trend of booming memory studies in academia. However, the discourse about memory is still under construction in the country and it has not acquired a definitive voice, and maybe it never will. With traumatic past situations there is a fight to make sense of what happened. The memory of what happened is a space for confrontation, and the fight is not only against forgetting. There is also a fight against

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659 Feld, *Del Estrado a La Pantalla*, 49.
662 One of the books published about the Ex Esma plays with the notion of memory as a construction form its title. See Brodsky, *Memoria En Construcción*. 
different versions of memory, each one having its own definition of forgetting. The fight against forgetting is thus a fight of rivals’ memories. What kind of material is thus chosen to be exhibited is a political decision, at the mercy of who is in power.

In Argentina, in 2007 the *En Blanco y Negro* compilation participated in the exhibition *Memoria* that travelled through the country and internationally, ending in Madrid. In this collective show the photojournalists’ images shared a space with new drawings and paintings created for the occasion by well-known Argentinean artists like Miguel Rep, Clorindo Testa, Luis Felipe Noé, Carlos Alonso and Luis Wells inspired by León Gieco’s song *La Memoria*. Fotos Tuyas by Inés Ulansoki was also featured. Argentina’s Ministry of Culture sponsored the show. It seemed that the limits between photojournalism and art had been blurred giving photojournalism well deserved praised. Then it was exhibited in Argentina at the main memory center *Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos* (Space for Remembrance and Human Rights) on the premises of the former navy school of mechanics (Ex-ESMA). The Ex ESMA was re-appropriated by the government in 2004 and repurposed by the Secretariat for Memory under the Ministry of Education. *Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos* is located in the buildings where

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664 The institutional funding in Argentina depends exclusively on the state, making political independence even harder.
666 Susana Beibe, Remo Bianchetti, Blas Castagna, Fenando Fazzolari, Jorge González Perrín, Carlos Gorriarena, Eduardo Molinari, Sergio Moscona, Omar Panosetti, Provisorio Permanente, Mariano Sapia, Mariana Schapiro, also participated in these exhibition. See Ibid.
668 There are many more memory institutions and museum in the provinces. Still, because of its location in the country’s capital where half the population lives, I believe that this one is the main venue for the articulation of memory, in terms of space, budget and visibility. The other important memory place recently created in the city of Buenos Aires is the *Parque de la Memoria*, located along the Rio de la Plata. For a full analysis see Marisa Lerer, “Competing for Memory: Argentina’s Parque De La Memoria,” *Public Art Dialogue* 3, no. 1 (2013).
the navy’s school of mechanics functioned along with one of the biggest clandestine detention centers during the dictatorship. Artistic works had been commissioned for the enormous spaces, such as multiple glass panels inscribed with Rodolfo Walsh’s famous open letter to the military based on an original project by León Ferrari, while rotating exhibitions were held in the interior galleries at the cultural center (Fig. 5.1). Cerolini’s exhibition En Blanco y Negro was exhibited once at the artistic center, but it does not appear to have become part of the permanent collection or archive. A year after its celebration it had lost momentum. For some time, the voice that the Espacio chose to support, fund and spread was the voice of the “hinge generation.” Young artists were featured on a regular basis at the Espacio’s galleries. The majority of them were direct victims of repression who had a family member disappeared. The Espacio favored the photographs created by the artists who grew up under the dictatorship, those that embodied postmemory. The fate of the photojournalistic icons was uncertain.

The Espacio is actually an enormous estate with more than 42 acres, including many buildings that were originally the school of Navy mechanics, barracks and other military residences and offices. The Ex Esma’s multiple buildings houses the offices and galleries under different associations such as Archivo Nacional de la Memoria, Centro Cultural del la Memoria, Casa de la militancia HIJOS, La garganta poderosa- periodismo villero, Equipo de Antropología Forense, Casa nuestros hijos por la vida y la esperanza (madres línea fundadora), UNESCO, Espacio Patrik Rice popular music school, Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, the recently opened Museo Malvinas which has a brand new constructed building, the web portal Educ.ar, the TV channel Canal encuentro, TV Channel Paka paka, TV channel Deport TV. From 2015 a subsection of the Mercosur will also use the buildings for its branch.

Although in some institutional pictures Cerolini’s exhibitions figure as part of the permanent collection, when I visited the installations on different occasions it was not on display. When I asked about it, nobody seemed to have a definitive answer why it was no longer on display. Eva Hoffman quoted in Marianne Hirsch, The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust, Gender and Culture Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 103.

Postmemory “describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right … It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove.” See Ibid.
Postmemory is the indirect recollection of an experience that affects the subject but that was not lived by the individual. It is formed through representations and requires a creative effort given its fragmentary nature. Postmemory includes experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors that they grew up with. There is an intuitive link between the articulation of postmemory and photography given “photography’s promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power [which] makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable. … It is the technology of photography itself, and the belief in reference it engenders that connects the [affected generation of victims] to the generation after … [Yet,] in the case of the children of survivors, the indexical relationship that defines memory has never existed.”

At Espacio, other photographic works besides the photojournalistic images stepped into the limelight, becoming the official voice of memory.

**Postmemory at Espacio**

Many of these artistic works employ photography, not public well-remembered iconic images, but rather private ones from personal archives. For example, the works that received the most critical attention were taken by young artists involved in the human rights fight: Lucila Quieto, Inés Ulanovsky and Gustavo Germano. All three were directly affected by the

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673 “...postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and a particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through and imaginative investment and creation.” Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 22.


dictatorship as victims of disappearances in their own nuclear families: Quieto lost her father and two uncles to the illegal repression; Ulanovsky lived in exile and has an uncle among the disappeared; and Germano had a disappeared brother.

When Carlos Quieto disappeared in 1976, Lucia had not yet been born. She grew up with the pain of her father never having laid his eyes on her; she only had some pictures of him. After experimenting with collages, she projected a slide and walked into the pictorial space of the image. The photographs covered her skin, larger than a full body tattoo, and for the time that the projection lasted she was “with” her father. She decided to photograph this “impossible photograph” to have the image that she always craved (Figs. 5.2 A and B). Other sons and daughters of the disappeared asked her to take their photograph in the same way. Between 1999 to 2001 she photographed thirteen “stories” as she calls them, and compiled them in *Archeology of the Absence*, a small exhibition that travelled extensively. The resulting images are unique and powerful (Figs. 5.2 C and D). At last the disappeared parents caress their children’s skin photographically.

Ines Ulanovsky’s work also uses cherished family photographs in her photography but in a more conventional way. Her work echoes ideas expressed by Marianne Hirsch in her seminal book *The Familial Gaze*: “In lives shaped by exile, emigration and relocation … where

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676 The book was published with state funds and the profits from sales donated to the *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense*.  
677 *Arqueología de la Ausencia*.  
678 The idea of using the surface of the photograph to inscribe more content by the projection is similar to Brodsky’s strategy of including reflections to create more powerful images.  
679 Quieto’s next project *Filiación* is a selection of images from *Arqueología de la Ausencia* in addition to images taken during the process of bone identification performed by the *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense*, as well as some records of burial ceremonies carried out after the recuperation of the disappeared remains, and photographs from the camps where the disappeared were held captives, tortured and in most cases murdered.
relatives are dispersed and relationships shattered, photographs provide (perhaps even more than usual) some illusion of continuity over time and space.\textsuperscript{680} She selected nine families with a disappeared member in them and photographed them with the few pictures, letters or objects that remained from that person, as the ruins of a life (Fig. 5.3 A). Ulanovsky toys with the conventions of representation; like the negative space in a sculpture, an empty chair signifies a missing person (Fig. 5.3 B). She also incorporates pictures of handwritten text to give the images a context, and in the exhibition, she used recorded voices reading these texts adding another dimension to the pieces. Family members are photographed holding these sentimental objects, treasures, and relics of the absence (Fig. 5.3 C). For each case, she dedicated four to five frames plus the photographs of the handwritten text, which in some cases was a letter addressed to the disappeared person or a concise account of the unstoppable quest.\textsuperscript{681} Thanks to the widespread circulation of photojournalistic images featuring the struggle of the Mothers, the black and white images held by another person are immediately recognized today as a protest of the injustice of a violent death.\textsuperscript{682}

The work of Gustavo Germano is also highly personal. It is called \textit{Ausencias} and comprises fourteen pairs of images: one is an old photograph produced during the dark times of the dictatorship and the second one recreates the past scene today. The idea is to have the new image show that everything is the same except that the disappeared person is no longer in the frame. One of the pairs is Germano’s own picture. It is a photograph of him together with his three brothers as children. It is paired with a current photograph, two of the brothers—now men—posing again in the same positions from 30 years ago, but this time there is an empty

\textsuperscript{680} Hirsch, \textit{The Familial Gaze}, xi.
\textsuperscript{681} Hirsch, \textit{Family Frames}, 22.
\textsuperscript{682} See previous chapters for a longer explanation.
space for the missing brother (Fig. 5.4 A). It is a simple idea but with an unsettling result.\textsuperscript{683}

The time lapse always manifested in photography takes on a stronger presence here. The “then and now” feels strange, as if the violent interruption of a life has left an uncanny void, and an absence that feels different from natural death (Fig. 5.4 B). The three projects follow similar strategies regarding photography that has influenced posterior works. The three incorporate old photographs showing the temporal distance making visible the absence: the physical void as a result of the disappearance. The three artists use photography to reclaim the affective chain that has been broken by the violence of the dictatorship.\textsuperscript{684}

For a few years these kinds of personal and intimate articulations of photography and memory gained so much visibility that they seemed like the only voice. It appeared that the photojournalistic icons, after 30 years of being in circulation, had begun to weaken their influence not having an institutional space from where to be seen. It seemed that the iconic photojournalistic images had found their definitive place on the pages of the book, and the book was treasured on a shelf, bringing the years of circulation to its closing stages. As Hariman and Lucaites affirm, the era of photojournalism as it had been studied has come to an end.\textsuperscript{685} But the wheels of transmission had not yet stopped for photojournalism’s icons from the dictatorship. The \textit{En Negro y Blanco} exhibition as a whole has not been incorporated into any exhibition space, but it recently inspired a new curatorial effort. Through its Haroldo Conti Cultural

\textsuperscript{683} Argentinian journalist and advocate for human rights Horacio Verbinsky declared that in spite of having seen many memorial works, Germano’s photographs impacted him deeply. Quoted in Gustavo Germano, \textit{Ausencias} (Barcelona: Casa América Catalunya, 2007), n.p.

\textsuperscript{684} The photographs act as a witness, assuring that the disappeared family member really existed. The three creators reutilize family images supporting Barthes’s idea that the photographs, due to the nature of the technique, have an emotional link that travels through time: “the umbilical cord of light.” Barthes, \textit{Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography}, 81.

\textsuperscript{685} Hariman and Lucaites, \textit{No Caption Needed}, 23.
Center, the Espacio created in 2014 an itinerant exhibition with photojournalistic images entitled Memory Trails 1955-1990. It comprises forty-one images to engage forty-five years of history (Fig. 5.5). For the years of the dictatorship all the iconic images analyzed in chapter 3 were selected, reaffirming their iconicity and amplifying their circulation.

How will future generations articulate memory? Photography plays an advantaged role in remembering a traumatic period, particularly important in Argentina’s scenario with the disappeared: photography can “produce presence in the face of profound, and often permanent, absence.” However, what kind of photographs are used remains to be seen. Would the future privilege photojournalistic icons or intimate photographs to remember those dark times? The works that use photographs from the private and familiar sphere make viewers identification possible through the familial gaze. Yet, as Hirsch asks, is “this process of identification, imagination, and projection … radically different for those who grew up in survivor families and for those less proximate members of their generation?”

Photojournalism’s iconic images might connect a wider audience since “they allow anyone to have a sense of personal affiliation with large-scale events.” They still are needed. Their voice needs to be heard, their images seen. Coming back to Susan Sontag’s questions that open this conclusion, I argue for the importance of exhibiting and keeping in circulation the icons of photojournalism. They can teach about the past, making it relevant to the present. They can help bring together a grieving

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687 Finnegan, Making Photography Matter: A Viewer’s History from the Civil War to the Great Depression, 140.
689 Hariman and Lucaites, No Caption Needed, 11.
690 Zelizer, About to Die, 13.
society in condemning that past. In the contested territory of the memory of the dictatorship, photojournalistic icons present one strong voice, one that still has something to say.

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691 In spite of the fact that emotional readings still depend on the viewer’s previous knowledge, given the public character of photojournalism, there is a wider interpellation.
Fig 1.1

Benito Panunzi,
*Cacique Casimiro Bigue from the Tehuelches Tribe*,
1865.

Fig. 1.2

Benito Panunzi,
*Victory Square*, 1867.

Fig. 1.3

Christiano Junior,
*Victory Square*, 1876.
Fig. 1.4
Carlos Frederiks and Co, September 11, 1852.

Fig. 1.5
Unidentified photographer, Untitled, 1854.

Fig. 1.6
Antonio Pozzo, Los Indios de Linares - En el Chichinal, No Date.
Fig. 1.7

Antonio Pozzo, *Puán, Coraceros en el Cuartel*, No Date.

Fig. 1.8

Francisco Ayerza, *Scene for Martin Fierro*, 1890.

Fig. 1.9 A

Horacio Coppola, *Calle Paraguay al 2.600*, 1929.

Fig. 1.9 B
Horacio Coppola, *Jaurés (before Bermejo) al 1.000*, 1929.

Fig. 1.10 A


Fig. 1.10 B

Fig. 1.11


Fig. 1.12

Juan DiSandro, *Nocturnal*, No Date.

Fig. 1.13

Anatole Saderman,
Victorica, 1953.

Fig. 1.14

Humberto Rivas,

Fig. 1.15

Saamer Makarius,
Proyecto Grama,
1957.
Fig. 1.16

Fig. 1.17

Fig. 1.18
Fig. 1.19

Sammer Makarius,
_Buenos Aires y su Gente_, 1960.

Fig. 2.1


Fig. 2.2

_La Prensa_, front cover, December 24, 1975.
Fig. 2.3

César Cichero, Untitled, 1975.

Fig. 2.4

Clarin archive, September 17, 1976

Fig. 2.5

Fig. 2.6 A

*Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos* first exhibition brochure, front, 1981.

Fig. 2.6 B

*Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos* first exhibition’s brochure, back, 1981.

Fig. 2.7

Jorge Durán, *Untitled*, No Date.

Fig. 2.8

Fig. 2.9


Fig. 2.10

Silvio Zuccheri, Teatro Abierto, 1981.

Fig. 2.11

Sergio Vijande, Cazador, Cazado, 1981.
Fig. 2.12 A
Francisco Vera, *Pájaro Bobo*, No Date.

Fig. 2.12 B
Francisco Vera, *Reflejos*, No Date.

Fig. 2.12 C
Francisco Vera, *Opera*, No Date.
Fig. 2.13
Jorge Aguirre, *Ente de Calificación Cinematográfica*, No Date.

Fig. 2.14

Fig. 2.15
Rodolfo Del Percio, *No tengas miedo pibe, te vamos a dar una mano*, 1981.
Fig. 2.16

Gabino Gómez, *Mamita*, No Date.

Fig. 2.17

Fig. 2.18


Fig. 2.19

Fig. 2.20

Eduardo Longoni,
Untitled, No Date
Fig. 2.21

*Grupo de Reporteros Gráficos* third exhibition catalogue, front cover, 1983.

Fig. 2.22


Fig. 2.23

Fig. 2.24


Fig. 3.1

Unidentified photographer, Emilio Massera, Jorge Rafael Videla y Orlando Agosti, No Date.

Fig. 3.2 A

Clarin Front Cover, April 1, 1977.
Fig. 3.2 B

_Clárín_, Front Cover, November 16, 1979.

Fig. 3.2 C

_Clárín_, front cover, December 14, 1979.

Fig. 3.2 D

_Clárín_, front cover, March 7, 1980.

Fig. 3.3 A

Military hat as a sign.
Fig. 3.3 B

The members of the Military Junta, Stencil, urban graffiti.

Fig. 3.4 A

Guillermo Loiácono,
Untitled, 1976 or 1978

Fig. 3.4 B

Página 12, front cover,
August 29, 2010.

Fig. 3.5 A

Horacio Villalobos,
Helicopter, 1976.
Fig. 3.5 B

*Newsweek, Exit Isabel, Enter Army, April 5, 1976.*

Fig. 3.5 C

*Clarín, front cover, March 24, 1976.*

Fig. 3.5 D

*La Nación, front cover, March 24, 1976.*

Fig. 3.5 E

*Clarín, March 25, 1977.*
Fig. 3.5 F

*Siete Días Ilustrados,*
del 26 de marzo al 1 de abril 1976, Año IX, #458.

Fig. 3.5 G


Fig. 3.6 A

Higinio González,
Fig. 3.6 B

*Somos*, front cover, 30 de junio del 1978, Año II, #93.

Fig. 3.6 C


Fig. 3.6 D


Fig. 3.6 E

Fig. 3.6 F

*Hechos Pelota*, front cover, 2008.

Fig. 3.6 G

*Página 12*, May 18, 2013.

Fig. 3.6 H

Government website Educación y Memoria, screen capture, 2011.

Fig. 3.7 A

Fig. 3.7 B
Unidentified artist,
Untitled Cartoons, No Date.

Fig. 3.7 C
Newspaper clippings.

Fig. 3.7 D

Fig. 3.7 E
Debate. Revista semanal de opinión, March 23,
Fig 3.8

Democracia Vigilada

Fig. 3.9

Eduardo Di Baia,

Fig. 3.10

Daniel Muzio, Dr. Clyde Snow, March 22, 1985.

Fig. 3.11

Carlos Villoldo,
Untitled, 1981.
Fig 3.12 A

Daniel García, Untitled, 1983.

Fig. 3.12 B

Ximena Torres, Untitled, 2010.

Fig. 3.12 C

Madres de Plaza de Mayo, La Historia, Special TV Documentary Ad, 2011.
Fig. 3.13 A

Marcelo Ranea, Untitled, October 5, 1982.

Fig. 3.13 B and C

Unidentified photographer, Untitled, October 5, 1982.

Fig. 3.13 D

Unidentified photographer, Untitled, October 5, 1982.
Fig. 4.1 A
Unidentified photographer, Untitled, December 1951.

Fig. 4.1 B
Unidentified photographer, Untitled, October 17, 1953.

Fig. 4.2
Unidentified photographer, Untitled,
August 12, 1951.

Fig. 4.3 A
Unidentified photographer, Untitled, October 17, 1947.

Fig. 4.3 B
Unidentified photographer, Untitled, May 1, 1948.

Fig. 4.4
Unidentified photographer, General Perón, circa 1951.
Fig. 4.5
Pedro Luis Raota, Untitled, No Date.

Fig. 4.6
Pedro Luis Raota. Untitled, No date.

Fig. 4.7
Pedro Luis Raota, Untitled, No Date.
Fig. 4.8
Pedro Luis Raota, Untitled, No Date.

Fig. 4.9
Pedro Luis Raota, Untitled, No Date.

Fig. 4.10
Fig. 4.11

Unidentified photographer, *Documentos Por Favor*, May 1982.

Fig. 4.12


Fig. 4.13

FIFA World Cup Mascot and Logo, 1978.
Fig. 4.14 A and B

Para Ti Revista,
Postcard, front and back, 1979.

Fig. 4.15 A and B

Para Ti Revista,
Postcard Front and Back, 1979.

Fig. 4.16

Fig. 4.17 A

Unidentified photographer, *Museo Histórico del Ejército de Lucha Contra la Subversión Mayor Don Juan Carlos at Campo de Mayo*, No Date.

Fig. 4.17 B

Unidentified photographer, *Museo Histórico del Ejército de Lucha Contra la Subversión Mayor Don Juan Carlos at Campo de Mayo*, No Date.

Fig. 4.17 C

Unidentified photographer, *Museo Histórico del Ejército de*
Lucha Contra la Subversión Mayor Don Juan Carlos at Campo de Mayo, No Date.

Fig. 4.18

*El Terrorismo en la Argentina*, front cover, 1980.

Fig. 4.19

*La Argentina y sus Derechos Humanos*, front cover, No Date.

Fig. 4.20

Fig. 4.21

*Imágenes robadas,*
*imágenes recuperadas*


Fig. 4.22

*Imágenes robadas,*
*imágenes recuperadas*


Fig. 4.23

*Imágenes robadas,*
*imágenes recuperadas*

Fig. 4.24

*Imágenes robadas, imágenes recuperadas*


Fig. 4.25

Unidentified photographer, *Juan Carlos José Chiravalle*, No Date.

Fig. 4.26

Unidentified photographer, *Elsa (survivor)*, No Date.

Fig. 4.27 A

Unidentified
photographer, Fernando Rubén Brodsky, ca. 1977
From Buena Memoria
exhibition by Marcelo Brodsky.

Fig. 4.27  B and C

Fig. 4.28
Unidentified photographer, Alice Domon and Léonie Duquet, December 1977.

Fig. 4.29
Detail.

Fig. 4.30 A and B
Two versions of Montoneros’ logo.
Fig. 4.31 A

*Clarín*, front cover,
April 2, 1982.

Fig. 4.31 B

*La Nación*, front cover,
April 2, 1982.

Fig. 4.32 A

*Clarín* Front Cover,
April 3, 1982.

Fig. 4.32 B

*La Nación*, front cover,
April 3, 1982.

Fig. 4.32 C

*Buenos Aires Herald*,
front cover detail, April 3, 1982.
Fig. 4.33 A

Fig. 4.33 B
*Revista Gente*, front cover, May, April 8, 1982, Año 17, #872.

Fig. 4.34 A

Fig. 4.34 B

Fig. 4.35 *Somos* Ad, 1982.
Fig. 4.36
Daniel García, Untitled, April 13, 1982.

Fig. 4.37
Martín Cleaver, Untitled, June 14, 1982.

Fig. 5.1
León Ferrari, *Carta abierta a la Junta Militar* by Rodolfo Walsh, Installation at the Espacio Memoria, Verdad y Justicia, 2013.

Fig. 5.2 A and B Lucila Quieto, *Arqueología de la Ausencia*, detail, 1999-2001.

Fig. 5.2 C and D Lucila Quieto, *Arqueología de la Ausencia*, detail, 1999-2001.

Fig. 5.3 A
Fig. 5.3 B

Fig. 5.3 C

Fig. 5.4 A

Fig. 5.4 B
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