

VOICES IN EXILE: SANDRA LORENZANO'S *SAUDADES* AND MARÍA TERESA
ANDRUETTO'S *LENGUA MADRE*

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ABSTRACT

THOMAS NEWTON PHILLIPS II: Voices in Exile: Sandra Lorenzano's *Saudades* and María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*
(Under the direction of Oswaldo Estrada)

Exile serves as a major theme in two contemporary Argentine novels: Sandra Lorenzano's *Saudades* (2007) and María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* (2010). Both have connections to the Dirty War (Guerra Sucia), and as writing responding to state-sponsored torture, they explore memory, re-creation of the past, and identity. *Saudades* presents victims of violence and uprooting, following Jews in various centuries, immigrants seeking economic opportunity, and Argentines fleeing military abuse of power. *Lengua madre*, through letters, explores the lives of protagonists who suffer exile and *insilio*, the effects of which are mostly visible within linguistic forms of ownership, verbal tenses, and points of view that determine word choice, meaning, and ultimately identity. In both novels, language reveals the effects of exile and calls into question collective response to historical events, and the fractured reality of time and place influences the linguistics of location and identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LAYERED HISTORY AND LANGUAGE IN SANDRA LORENZANO'S <i>SAUDADES</i>	16
III. THE LANGUAGE OF EXILE IN MARÍA TERESA ANDRUETTO'S <i>LENGUA MADRE</i>	35
WORKS CITED.....	70

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Forced exit from a community, whether because of political or economic circumstances, factors into the human psyche and reveals tangible effects that can be analyzed not only sociologically and psychologically but also artistically as portrayed via creative pursuits. A timeless theme in writing, exile figures large in contemporary Argentine works, and two novels in particular highlight the long-term effects of political duress and state-sponsored terrorism that culminate in exile: Sandra Lorenzano's *Saudades* (2007) and María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* (2010). In both cases, the authors tackle personal and collective themes and explore exile through a fractured, fragmented paradigm visible in place, time, and language. Analysis of both novels is germane to Southern Cone studies today, particularly the thematic characteristics that place both novels within the realm of memory studies. Furthermore, *Lengua madre* has only been analyzed regarding memory and *insilio* (Pubill 143). Therefore, exploring the language of exile adds to Argentine literary studies. Both novels merit analysis because of the implications for not only understanding the past but also for interpreting the present and constructing a future. Sandra Lorenzano explains that the use of art to remember Argentine history is often a catalyst and not merely art for art's sake:

En una sociedad como la argentina [...] la memoria es—tiene que ser—un ejercicio de reflexión del presente. La memoria es algo activo que se sitúa en el hoy y a través del cual el pasado es permanentemente resignificado. Estamos hablando de ligar pasado, presente y futuro, no en un ejercicio de nostalgia sino

en un trabajo en el que el dolor se convierte en motor político. (“No aportar” 12-13)

Saudades and *Lengua madre* both offer considerable examples of linguistic manipulation that call into question memory, identity, and collective response to trauma as well as particular insight into contemporary Argentine literature.

Historical, literary, and religious recordings of exile are nearly as old as human history itself, and chronicles of exile are useful for understanding and gauging the effects of departure. Exile appears in some of the first works of Western literature, particularly in classical Greek drama and epic poetry (Homer’s *Odyssey*, for example) and even the Bible. The first pages of Genesis relate the tale of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden, and not much later, Cain is exiled and marked so that none should kill him (Genesis 4). While Cain cites murdering his brother Abel as reason for his exile, victims of exile in the works studied here often are guilty only of being “Other” and, thus, justifiably worthy of exile in the eyes of the community. In the case of *Saudades* and *Lengua madre*, political strife and state-sponsored torture hallmark both works and merit inclusion in a category of literary works responding to the infamous Dirty War (Guerra Sucia). The political climate of the day fits perfectly within the frame of the Paul Tabori’s definition of exile:

An exile is a person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; a person who considers his exile temporary (even though it may last a lifetime), hoping to return to his fatherland when circumstances permit—but unable to do so as long as the factors that made him an exile persist. (27)

Furthermore, Amy Kaminsky purports that exile is “a physical uprooting, an individual’s removal from a familiar place to a new space that has, at least at the beginning, no

recognizable coordinates” (10-11). In shorter terms, Edward Said writes that exile “is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal” (186). Luis Torres has commented on exile, highlighting etymological details that include “disemboweled” among the noteworthy literal roots (55-56). This is particularly insightful regarding both novels as the theme of separation of mother from child and citizen from homeland surface.

Before examining each work in detail, a general understanding of the theoretical components of exile is necessary as well as a broad historical and political context for each novel and author. The impetus for writing about exile is the Dirty War in Argentina (1976-83). The final years of Peronism, ending with the widowed Isabel serving as President of the Republic, brought profound changes to Argentina. The general climate of the early 1970s in Argentina included calculated acts of violence on the part of leftist and extreme right groups with the intent of undermining the military. Multiple bombings resulted in the deaths of police and military officers throughout the nation, and the government of Isabel Perón finally acquiesced to allow military action to reign in the fringe groups. The military was practically given *carte blanche* to effect change, and in fact, they usurped power, using the sudden permission as an excuse to remove the government (Simpson and Bennett 25-6).

Many Argentines were not critical of the coup, citing the general unrest and constant fear of bombings—albeit with numbers of victims dwarfed by future statistics on the other side—that had plagued recent decades of the Southern Cone republic, and in fact, many welcomed military intervention. Diana Taylor proposes that the military junta was “male, measured, mature, and responsible, as opposed to Isabelita, who was female, hysterical, unqualified, and out of control” (66). While internal Argentine politics could

account for the coup, more was at play, and in a wider context, political struggles in Argentina were parallels to ideological battles worldwide.

Jean Franco writes that the Cold War turned into the Dirty War in the Southern Cone, as a de facto war against the left or anything that looked like communism (11). Furthermore, Franco highlights that the anti-communist crusade did much more than just prune an economic and political system:

Insofar as military governments represented their regimes as essential to the crusade against communism, they were certainly participants in the Cold War; what makes the Latin American situation so distinct is that those same military governments left older structures, both cultural and political, in fragments. Terms such as “identity,” “responsibility,” “nation,” “the future,” “history”—even “Latin American”—had to be rethought. (12)

The military took control of Argentina in 1976, and while it was never named a war, a full-on attack began in what would be called the process for national reorganization. The Dirty War was not simply a government’s attempt to regain control over fringe groups; it was “a battle waged by the armed forces of the country, on the orders of the military government, to wipe out not simply terrorism but the propensity to opposition” (Simpson and Bennett 25). The original effort to reign in leftist groups waging guerilla warfare was generally applauded by the population; however, it soon became clear that “the public did not realize...just how wide the meaning of ‘subversive’ had become” (Simpson and Bennett 81). Not long after the start of the Dirty War, with their clear objective of eliminating the opposition, the military began to think that simply locking people in jail would not prevent subversion; their solution was complete elimination and, thus, the beginnings of *desaparecidos* (Simpson and Bennett 91). CONADEP (la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas) issued a report in 1984 entitled *Nunca más*, and there they chronicle the modus operandi of the military

throughout the Dirty War. One of the most blatant violations of human rights was the abuse of women, particularly through rape. Well documented in testimony as well as other historical writings, torture often involved sexual assault, and sometimes even age was ignored (Águila 144). During these sessions of sexual torture, perhaps the most egregious example of violation was the use of the *picana* not only to shock victims electronically but also as a substitute for the phallus in an utterly contemptible form of psychosexual torture (Graziano 157). Following interrogation, many were in such a poor state of injury that execution was rendered the only solution by the military. Some were dropped from flights post-mortem into the Río de la Plata or Atlantic Ocean, while others were under sedation and still alive (Simpson and Bennett 89-92).

While some victims were tortured or executed for explicit involvement with groups intent on causing harm to the Argentine government or military, most victims of the Dirty War neither participated nor condoned violence but were used as leverage by the state. Furthermore, some were unfortunate victims who happened to share the same last name or drive the same car as a wanted suspect (Simpson and Bennett 15). The military acknowledged that beyond the first wave of the *Proceso*, guilty victims quickly were replaced with innocent victims (25). Edurne Portela posits that the state-sponsored climate of detention, torture, and even death realized a repression capable of silencing the public, making them submissive to regime decrees; the silence was further exacerbated by the presence of clandestine officials and their paradoxically overt kidnappings of people, events with the purpose of not being hidden in order to instill more fear and control (14).

The fall-out from the Dirty War is not measured solely by the controversial number of victims. The primary difficulty in addressing the Dirty War from both a standpoint of justice and from closure is the lack of evidence, that is, the lack of bodies. The military dictatorship never recognized its culpability since no body meant a crime could not be prosecuted (Graziano 16). Moving beyond the immediate disappearances of people (and their assumed deaths), typical psychological measurements such as the cycle of grief could not be completed due to the absence of funeral ceremonies, cultural rites, and cathartic closure that “normal” circumstances permit in dealing with the deceased. Fernando Reati underlines the difficulty Argentina faced in the immediate aftermath of the Dirty War:

El impacto de las desapariciones en la sociedad trasciende el simple hecho de la muerte y la tortura. El terror colectivo producido por las desapariciones, así como las profundas heridas psicológicas causadas a nivel social, sólo se explican a partir de una determinada concepción de la muerte que se acepta colectivamente como “natural,” relacionada con el significado del morir, de los ritos funerarios y del castigo del cuerpo en nuestra cultura. (*Nombrar* 26)

Reati eloquently encapsulates the problematic state of terror in that “la ausencia de ritos funerarios y la desacralización del cuerpo al no respetarse la muerte individualizable y memorializada, conducen a una sensación de profunda violación” (*Nombrar* 28). The immediate response to state-sponsored terrorism and disappearances highlight the extreme nature of life in and around the Dirty War, and Judith Herman notes that “traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (33).

In response to the violence of the Dirty War and the utter fear under which many lived, some victims had no choice but to leave. The sudden disappearance of neighbors, friends, loved ones, and even strangers instilled a culture of fear that led many to abandon their homeland. Neighboring countries were not an option as prior military coups (Chile and Uruguay in 1973, for example) provided no place for escape, and the Plan Condor infamously targeted political figures internationally, even to the extent of the bombing that killed Orlando Letelier in Washington, DC (Kaminsky 9).

While historians may write from a macro viewpoint, a literary view of exile and loss is important on a micro level as it offers a glimpse into private lives, personal struggle, and also permits a collective response when the personal is impossible. As a response to trauma, some prefer writing as catharsis, but the issue lies with attempting to write the unprintable, to speak the unspeakable. In *Nombrar lo innombrable*, Reati chronicles this difficult undertaking: “La coexistencia del horror junto a los actos cotidianos, la continuación de la vida normal mientras se ven los síntomas de la violencia, causa una percepción esquizofrénica de la realidad” (110). For many, moving along with everyday life is simply not an option. In *Displaced Memories: the Poetics of Trauma in Argentine Women’s Writing*, Edurne Portela studies three Argentine authors whose lives present a case of forced or chosen exile in order to combat the dangers of the Dirty War. Exile became a way of survival for many, either by choice (those at the onset before things were clearly slipping into military rule) or by force (for those who survived torture and camps). All three authors are characterized by their commonalities, mainly being victims of torture and different prison camps, forced into exile, finding a place in North America in university faculty, then returning to their homeland during the democratic

revival of the 1990s, yet none have remained there (16-18). The lag between events and written accounts is noted: “This delayed written response to the events may be related to the idea that the first stage of exile is imprinted by the trauma of the experience and the difficulty of adjustment” (17). The similarities here with Lorenzano and Andruetto are striking, particularly that they are female authors writing about events from the late 1970s and early 80s following a delay. Lorenzano has described herself as “Argenmex,” testifying to her identity as an exile (“Palabras” 462).

Saudades and *Lengua madre* are not ground-breaking in their thematic presentation. Reati claims that exile has served as a theme throughout much of Argentine literature since the end of the Dirty War:

...el tema del exilio, que como es de esperarse abunda en el corpus. El transterramiento motiva personajes que al no poder olvidar sus raíces viven simultáneamente en dos mundos y por lo tanto experimentan un quiebre de su realidad...El alejamiento al extranjero refuerza la percepción de un país fragmentado, toda vez que la fractura geográfica del exilio se convierte en cifra de la fractura ontológica del personaje... (*Nombrar* 118)

Reati also recalls the famous rebuttal Liliana Heker gave to Julio Cortázar’s premise that only in exile could an Argentine writer truly approach the heart of the matter. This debate brought to light a new concept in Latin American literary analysis, *el insilio*. Reati defines *insilio* as “la experiencia de exilio interior experimentada por aquellos que, si bien no habían sufrido la cárcel o el destierro, habían pasado los años del terror de Estado y las dictaduras militares viviendo como parias dentro de sus propios países, en una especie de aislamiento e incomunicación que protegía sus vidas pero los alienaba de su entorno” (“Exilio” 185). For Reati, *insilio* is a hallmark of the traits of the end of the millennium, particularly in writers who are publishing and who “en el presente neoliberal y desideologizado a partir de los noventa se sienten como fantasmas errantes de un

tiempo para siempre perdido” (“Exilio” 185). Many have chronicled the Scylla and Charybdis choice of writing during political turmoil: staying in the country remains a risk, and censorship—not to mention possible imprisonment, torture, or even death—often prevents authors from publishing. Freedom in exile, however, does not necessarily present the possibility of publishing, as the author is separated from the primary audience. Hans-Bernhard Moeller calls this a “double exile” since the author is kept from his or her homeland as well as target readers (13). The lack of voice regarding publication and exterior forces on the novel in real life complement the fictionalized chronicles of the search for identity, particularly pertaining to language. Fractured voices are quintessential characteristics of both novels studied here, resonating within the frame of exile or *insilio*.

Silence, aforementioned as a result of the fear and panic that state-sponsored terrorism had induced, also was an official position of the military government, announced on April 22, 1976, when all future references to disappearances and bodies could not be printed in newspapers unless in a formal press release from the government (Simpson and Bennett 236). Only two newspapers continued to publish accounts that were widely censored or ignored, *La Opinión* and the *Buenos Aires Herald*, the latter in English, an obvious reflection of its foreign connection and the exile/*insilio* nature of its audience (237). The truth, even if published, had its detractors, as the *Herald* received angry letters from readers who did not want to be reminded of the travesties happening around them (Simpson and Bennett 243). Writing, in this case, was a champion of the truth and knowledge, and it provided an outlet for voices, not as an outlet that let voices ring loudly, but merely as a conduit through which names were named, for “by printing the name, the *Herald* helped the parents and relatives of such people to break out of the

sense of utter helplessness and silence” (Simpson and Bennett 244). In *Lengua madre*, Julieta’s own reluctance to consider the past with grace matches the hesitance newspaper readers had toward horrific details of the Dirty War. Glimpses of the truth are present, but they must be read.

Questions of voice and silence are often linked to identity, and both *Saudades* and *Lengua madre* offer ample examples of identity regarding national homeland, a problem which Amy Kaminsky notes would often arise for the first time in the mind of someone whose nation had suddenly undergone a drastic change, often resulting in a crisis of identity on both a personal and a national level (28). Reati further states that the Argentine case is special, in that writing has not only the goal of remembering the past but also of ensuring that what really happened is chronicled and not written incorrectly by others (*Nombrar* 164). This loss of the truth traces its roots directly to the history of Argentina, which has been a continuous story of repression and disappearance; it did not start with the *desaparecidos* from 1976-83 (Lorenzano “Angels” 251).

The culture of fear due to state-sponsored terrorism created an empty space in Argentina, not only in families, neighborhoods, and lives but also in the press, the culture at large, and the collective mind. The silence created by this vacuum was overwhelming; sometimes blind eyes and deaf ears were turned toward terror. In an interview with Emily Hicks, widely recognized journalist and writer Luisa Valenzuela describes her short story “Cambio de armas” as “metáfora de lo que fue la Argentina en un momento. La Argentina como país sufrió una amnesia. Se le provocó amnesia, la gente no quería reconocer lo que estaba pasando. Los argentinos decían, bueno, no sabíamos que estaban torturando en la casa de al lado” (6-7). These sentiments are clearly echoed in various

episodes of *Saudades* and *Lengua madre* where silence, or the lack of words, serves to fill in the empty space created by a vacuum-like memory.

Another important connection to Argentina in the novels studied here is the Plaza de Mayo, site of weekly protests demanding knowledge of the whereabouts of *desaparecidos*. Debra Castillo says that the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo use the emotionally charged word “madres” to protest their grievances of the Dirty War (17-18). When it initially appeared, this spontaneous burst of resistance was not crushed by the military regime as some had feared. Part of the initial survival and staying power of the protests is owed to the use of the emotionally charged word “madres” to air their grievances of the Dirty War (Castillo 17-18). The seemingly small event grew into weekly protests regarding *desaparecidos*, still held every Thursday in Buenos Aires. Concerning Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, Lorenzano states that “[t]he memory of victims and incessant calls for justice intertwine with the conflicts and struggles of the present. [...] For what good is memory if it is stagnant, static? Memory allows us to think about the present, to know who we are and what we seek” (“Angel” 256).

Further criticism regarding voice becomes visible when one contemplates language, both linguistically and socio-culturally. *Saudades* and *Lengua madre* exhibit key passages that call into question the use of language and communication, identity through words, and hallmarks of transnational existence. The fractured reality of time and place come together to offer particular insight into linguistic questions about location and identity, and Lorenzano and Andruetto’s novels hinge upon their own experiences with exile. Critical to establishment of identity and paramount to understanding the pain of exile, Amy Kaminsky posits that “language provides the means to establish as well as to

recover a sense of place” (58). She also analyzes linguistic aspects of exile life and literary work, highlighting the immediate contrast between Spanish and non-familiar tongues spoken in Scandinavia, and even the instantaneous identity given away by Latin American accents in Spain (68). The need to recover the voice—whether through writing, visual or performing arts—is a strong undercurrent throughout *Saudades* and brings the reader constantly back to the cultural hybridity created through the layered inter-textual and inter-historical stories. The need to speak is universal, and in this novel, it links together centuries of trauma and exile on various continents. *Lengua madre* also explores creation of memory and voice through epistolary scenes in which the reader is responsible for navigating the intrinsically limited text.

Further motives for writing about the Dirty War, beyond questions of historical reliability and fidelity, include remembering the victims themselves, remembering the crimes against humanity, and provoking readers. Lorenzano posits that writing about memories is cathartic in that it provides for more possibilities than the present holds: “An uncomfortable memory (mutable, mobile, fragmented) is the only kind that allows a society to grow in tolerance, solidarity, and brotherhood, opening up spaces for pleasure and escape, leaving no room for absolutes or imposed homogeneities” (“Angel” 250). Motivation for writing does not always have to be justice, and even CONADEP confirms in the prologue of *Nunca más* that their commission “no fue instituida para juzgar, pues para eso están los jueces constitucionales” (7). On the other hand, silence is no option following investigation, as the commission continues, “Y, si bien debemos esperar de la justicia la palabra definitiva, no podemos callar ante lo que hemos oído, leído y registrado” (7). Furthermore, on an individual level, characters in *Saudades* and *Lengua*

madre face the arduous task of fashioning identity in light of the unknown, that is, the legacy of exile and lack of a concrete, tangible history which solidifies memory and identity. Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman have documented the psychological effects of the Dirty War in multiple generations, and anecdotal as well as quantitative examples abound in the novels studied here which parallel Kordon and Edelman's findings, particularly regarding the construction of memory surrounding disappeared parents (64).

While Jean Franco states that "agents of change, at least in the Southern Cone, were the military governments for whom information came by way of torture and repression" (12-13), Michael J. Lazzara and Vicky Unruh claim in their book, *Telling Ruins in Latin America* (2009), that, like the phoenix from the ashes, literature in Latin America rises from ruins with particular cultural implications:

Recent scholarship on Latin America addresses issues germane to the critical discussion of ruins: the collapse of utopian artistic, political, and ideological projects; the workings of memory, healing, and reconstruction in postauthoritarian art and testimony; dystopian representations of urban locales; the search for models of change; and artistic inquiries into the ethics of art and intellectual work. Yet the focused study of ruins as sites of competing cultural stories about Latin America's past and contested future offers a rich new vein of inquiry into these overlapping problems, one that reveals more sharply a stirring creative drive toward ethical reflection and change in the midst of ruinous devastation. (3-4)

Some historians and critics have likened the Dirty War to Nazism in the Americas, and Reati affirms that similar to after WWII in Europe, there are questions of collective responsibility visible in Argentina (*Nombrar* 77). As he has chronicled Argentine literature from the Dirty War toward the new millennium, Reati holds that through the 70s, questions about the roots of authoritarianism surfaced in the Argentine novel, yet as the 90s approached, the historical novel was supplanted by a lighter version with everyday themes (*Postales* 14).

The importance of studying exile and *insilio* in *Saudades* and *Lengua madre* can be considered through the paradigm of the visible hallmarks of each, that is, through the noticeable paramount characteristics of each subset. First and foremost, the historical context places both novels within the frame of memory-oriented works which attempt to understand the past and its impact on the present. The fragmented results are visible in language, a theme which has been studied widely in other canonical works, particularly Juan Goytisolo's *La reivindicación del conde don Julián* (1970). Sonya Gupta notes the importance of voice and language in Goytisolo, a preeminent author whose work and life center on exile:

The anonymous narrator/traitor who has taken to exile and lost all his marks of identity cannot, however, shed one aspect of it that continues to link him to his country—and that is his language. Goytisolo himself says for the exiled, language is the only possession that remains, and seizing upon Castilian as it exists in its written texts as the only authentic fatherland, he can embark on the mythical destruction of the one which figures on the map. (188)

The questions of identity that resound regarding exile arise in three prominent posts: voice, time, and place. The written response in both of these novels is not unlike Pampa Arán's characterization of Ricardo Piglia's work, in that "[l]a lengua literaria es una lengua de resistencia [...] de los locos, las mujeres, los desterrados, los suicidas, los inventores" (120-21).

A strong parallel to the voices of outrage and protest—voices of resistance—in Argentina appears in *Saudades* in the fragmented story as well as the multi-layered time. Sephardic Jews on the Iberian Peninsula, economic immigrants from Eastern Europe, Jews attempting to flee Nazi concentration camps, and political refugees escaping state-terrorism in Argentina all come together in a fractured setting that explores the nature of exile as well as the inevitable fall-out. Andruetto's novel depicts three generations of

women and their correspondence; young Julieta attempts to come to terms with the missing parts of her past, mainly her mother, a victim of the Dirty War, who embodies both exile and *insilio*. The reflections of both novels, from both sides of the Atlantic, underscore the universal nature of exile and exile literature as well as the inherent problems of memory and reconstruction of the past that surface in Argentine literature today.

CHAPTER 2

LAYERED HISTORY AND LANGUAGE IN SANDRA LORENZANO'S *SAUDADES*

Exile, loss, language, and memory all appear in Sandra Lorenzano's novel *Saudades* (2007). The intricately layered text, with multiple trans-Atlantic storylines, showcases the universality of exile and the ever difficult task of speaking the unspeakable through memory. The cultural hybridity found in *Saudades* underscores the timeless nature of exile, and the subsequent questions of language and representation allow insight into memory and testimony as well as manifestations thereof. Beginning with the title of the novel, the reader becomes aware of the cultural hybridity and disconnect between the knowable and unknowable, that is, the title itself defies translation. *Saudades* is a perfectly succinct word that captures the essence of Sandra Lorenzano's eponymous tome; the title and many of the book's literary references are in Portuguese just as much of the text centers on exile from Spanish-speaking lands to Portugal. While elements of nostalgia are present, *saudade* is more than merely a melancholy view of the past as it was; throughout the novel, *saudade* is characterized as a longing for what was not, what could have been, or what never could be, particularly in the quoted line "Ah, não há saudades mais dolorosas do que as das coisas que nunca foram!" (28).¹ While *saudade* is not always associated with exile, it is completely pertinent in Lorenzano's work. The

¹ For a fine study of the definition and roots of *saudade*, see Chapter 1 of Alfredo Antunes's *Saudade e profetismo em Fernando Pessoa: elementos para uma antropologia filosófica* (1983).

intertwining stories of this novel all revolve around exile, and as a starting point, Paul Tabori's definition, cited earlier, serves well (27). Various facets of exile are visible in the novel, particularly beginning with Jews throughout different centuries.

Among the groups who encounter exile in *Saudades*, Jews loom large in three particular accounts in the work: the expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the same that followed in 1496 from Portugal, the grandfather's emigration from the Ukraine in 1908, and finally the Holocaust. Each period offers insight into the inter-textual and inter-historical nature of *Saudades*, particularly highlighting exile in a community long familiar with the struggle. The Jewish destination of the Promised Land continues as a circuitous route through lands varying in their acceptance and enmity, from the beginning with the Exodus from Egypt and lasting until today. For centuries, Jews found a hospitable home on the Iberian Peninsula in various regions of what now is called Spain. In 1492, however, they were expelled. Dolores Sloan writes that "[m]ost shocking was the finality of the expulsion, telling observant Jews that they would never be able to return, and giving them very little time to prepare: three months to wrap up almost two millennia on the soil of Sefarad" (37). As many as 120,000 Jews sought refuge in the neighboring kingdom of Portugal (39). Joseph Telushkin affirms that the Jews who left for Portugal were unfortunate considering that four years later in 1496, Manuel I decreed that they should leave Portugal or convert as part of a marriage arrangement with the throne of Castile that required an agreement to uphold Spain's already enforced expulsion (Jewish Virtual Library). Many Sephardic Jews maintained a code stipulating that they would not return to Spain since it had been a happy home for them for centuries while the expulsion felt like a betrayal. Although only eight Portuguese Jews were exiled, the rest

forcibly converted to Christianity, giving up their culture and maintaining a cultural exile within their own homeland (Telushkin).² The theme of exile within *Saudades* clearly is relative to the Jewish struggle that continued again during the fifteenth century: “Destino de nómades con la llave a cuestras y el recuerdo de los arrullos en la lejanía. Pueblo de migrantes, una pura nostalgia. No pueden nada los sonidos contra la fuerza de las olas. Náufragos en mares ajenos, sin nadie que los tome de la mano” (25). As the emigrant theme is paralleled with a voyage (either on foot, via train, or by ship), one family member asks, “¿Y el shofar del abuelo?” The response is a clear recapitulation of the past: “1496: abandonar la fe o abandonar la patria” (157). With little doubt, these lines clearly could have been uttered in 1976, replacing “la fe” with “la causa,” and the struggle of Argentines during the Dirty War is not unlike the Jewish experience of both the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, further testimony to universality of exile. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that chronicles of the victims of the Dirty War in Argentina resemble the Jewish diaspora, but for the sake of brevity, the connection to diasporic studies will not be scrutinized here.

Abandoning the homeland, from time immemorial, is often the result of economic exile, when people have to choose to leave for the possibility of a better life. Continuing the theme of voyage on a ship throughout the novel, the grandfather who arrives in 1908 from the Ukraine paints a clear picture of Jews leaving Eastern Europe behind and heading for points farther west: “Una patria donde crecieran magnolios enormes y

² Separation within their own homeland lends an air of *insilio* to the Jewish themes of *Saudades*. The term *insilio*, particularly in line with Fernando Reati’s definition, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, The Language of Exile in María Teresa Andruetto’s *Lengua madre*, as it is a more predominant theme there. While its presence in *Saudades* is noteworthy, it will not factor significantly in this chapter beyond mere mention.

perfumados, y algún día, alguna nieta, mirara con amor una foto tomada en Kiev en 1908” (117). The grandfather would leave behind his cello, recounting an incident with many noteworthy elements, which will be further discussed later.

The Jewish connection to trauma surfaces near the beginning of the novel, connecting it to other horrific world events as well as artistic creations:

En Buchenwald, el humo del crematorio ahuyenta a los pájaros y esos pájaros alejándose de la muerte son los mismos que graznan enloquecidamente frente a la lente de Hitchcock. También ellos son aparecidos en el último graznido de la locura. La imagen de Buchenwald cubre los cuerpos que conozco y me escamotea así el sentido de mis gestos cotidianos. Aunque tampoco yo— lo sé— haya visto nada en Hiroshima. (20)

Buchenwald, one of the first concentration camps to open in Germany, and Hiroshima, sight of the first nuclear bombings used in war, evoke images of death, trauma, loss, and irreparable separation, and the connection to Hitchcock shows the circular nature of fragmented historicity by linking anachronistic times and places artistically. *Saudades* alludes to the terror of the concentration camp: “El silencio en torno a Buchenwald tiene el espesor de lo siniestro. Los pájaros han huido. El humo del crematorio los ha espantado” (147). Buchenwald is not the only element of the Holocaust that makes an appearance in the work: the trains that carry victims to the concentration camps serve as a corollary to the metaphor of a shipwreck throughout the novel.³ The horrors of the journey bring questions to God about the spring of 1943: “¿Dónde estabas tú entonces, Señor? ¿En qué lugar del tren te habían encerrado?, ¿en qué rincón de las barracas?

³ Buchenwald offers an eerie greeting to a new arrival: *Jedem das seine* (“His share to everybody”) and *Recht oder Unrecht, mein Vaterland* (“My country right or wrong”) (Neurath 12). An uncanny resemblance to Buchenwald lies in the linguistic irony encountered at Dachau Concentration Camp in *Lengua madre*, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

¿Moriste también tú de hambre y de frío? ¿Veías también tú el humo sobre el bosque?”

(127). The Jewish journey continues here from a prior passage, not unlike its origins in the desert during the Exodus from Egypt:

Y tú, Señor, ¿dónde estás? ¿Tendré que alejarme del ruido, de las voces, tendré que alejarme de todo y de todos, como lo hizo Moisés, para encontrarte? ¿Tendré que alejarme de las palabras para escuchar tu palabra? El desierto: lugar de memoria, búsqueda del origen, vacío pleno de significaciones, tiempo de todos los tiempos, revelación y orfandad, huella de la errancia.⁴ (125)

Jewish culture celebrates memory, and certainly no greater testament to this is the Passover, the annual festival memorializing the salvation of the people of Israel when the blood of the lamb marked on the doorpost saved their first-born from death while the people of Egypt suffered (Exodus 12). This celebration marks what is quintessentially Jewish, that is, the deliverance of the people from Egypt, through the desert, toward the Promised Land. Even after arrival in Canaan, later during the Babylonian captivity, further through the expulsion from Spain, and still throughout the Holocaust, Jewish people have carried with them, if nothing else, memories.

Exile, a recurring theme in *Saudades*, offers glimpses of the duality and non-linear time which permeate the novel. An interesting episode recounts a family's exit from the Spanish city of Cáceres and the reasoning for choosing nearby Portugal as refuge: “No habían tenido demasiadas opciones; era lo que mamá siempre decía. Los

⁴ The reference to Moses and the wilderness most likely is from the account of Exodus 19-20 in which he receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Moses is warned not to allow anyone to touch the mountain or they surely shall die, and “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently” (Exodus 19:18). In what must be taken as either a brilliantly calculated reference by the author or merely a twisted ironic coincidence, a question asked in the aforementioned passage of *Saudades* inverts the position of God and the Jews from the glorious revelation of God on Mount Sinai to the hellacious horrors of the Holocaust: “¿Veías también tú el humo sobre el bosque?” (127).

Pirineos quedaban demasiado lejos de Cáceres y ya sabemos también cómo les iba a muchos de los que llegaban a Francia... Así que pusieron unas pocas cosas en las maletas, y salieron hacia Portugal” (150). While no particular words or phrases mark the time period of this exodus, one can easily infer two options: the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 or perhaps escape from the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. A few lines later give more credence to the latter, in that the narrative voice claims, “A mí me quedaron algunas fotos, el oso de mi madre y las llaves de una casa a la que nunca volverían” (150). The final statement regarding the keys, however, is perhaps an allusion to Sephardic Jews who would take keys with them as a sign of possible return and also as a sign of protest (Telushkin). Later in the passage, a return to the twentieth century occurs with more details regarding the family: “El abuelo nunca volvió del frente. Dicen que le hicieron juicio sumario y que lo fusilaron poco antes de entrar a Madrid. Pero la abuela no dejó de cantar” (151). Whether by the hands of the Falangists or the Inquisition, suffering has been known on the Iberian Peninsula, and exile, while often an immediate remedy, brings about long-term suffering.

The novel continues the circular treatment of traumatic situations. In one scene, as one person is ready to board a ship and embark toward war, another is ready to board a plane and leave behind another kind of war. The parallel action and duality of the scene underscore the layered nature of the text and its polyphonic storylines. First, a young man is about to board a ship, and his story meshes together with that of a fisherman, his son, and a mother who cannot bear to part with her young son:

Ahora el barco se aleja y ella abraza al pequeño que deja con tres meses un país al que seguramente no regresará nunca. Le va cantando, muy bajito, en portugués, para que él no olvide el lugar donde nació. ... *os desassossegos de todos os tempos*... “Cuídame a la Fátima, madre, que cuando regrese me caso”, y los ojos

negros le brillan bajo la gorra de soldado. Ha vivido siempre junto al mar, ha acompañado a su padre durante días en el barco, con otros pescadores, desde pequeño; pero ahora es distinto, ahora están agitándose los pañuelos para despedirlo a él y a decenas de muchachos con uniforme. Van a cualquier guerra. (104-05)

The curious part is that they are going toward “cualquier guerra,” leaving out specifics. In this manner, a non-linear time is perfectly employed, and the universality of the repetition of life and of war is present. The duality of the novel is clear here in that one episode is symbolic of a universal understanding of war and its consequences.

In another named time and place, someone else is leaving in a similar manner yet under different circumstances:

Se habían abrazado fuerte, muy fuerte, y le habías dicho te quiero, bajito, para no quebrarse, para no llorar allí frente al policía que las miraba y que te pidió el pasaporte y el pasaje—Buenos Aires-Madrid-Buenos Aires, asiento 21-C—antes de dejarte pasar. Era difícil que creyera que te ibas de vacaciones por unas semanas. A pesar de todo, te miró fijo y te deseó buen viaje. Las dos respiraron aliviadas, una a cada lado del vidrio. “Llamá apenas llegues, Nena. Cuidate.” (105)

These two passages perfectly demonstrate the succinct use of parallel structure in the novel that makes trauma and exile a shared or communal experience, thus the universality created by varying sources: the Jewish expulsion, the Holocaust, the Spanish Civil War, and the Dirty War.

The most recent historical trauma ending in exile found in *Saudades* is the Guerra Sucia in Argentina (1976-1983). The varying narrative voices and hushed tones of the novel mimic the manner in which Argentines lived under the military regime. Barely noticeable at first glance, elements of the Dirty War make their way onto the pages of the beginning of the novel through the struggle a mother faces in wondering about her *desaparecidos*:

“Señora, quédese tranquila, seguro que su hijo y esa chica deben estar disfrutando en alguna playa brasilera.” Las respuestas eran siempre parecidas. “¡Por favor, señora! Ya van a volver. Nadie desaparece así como así.” No, así como así no; metidos a la fuerza en algún agujero negro. “Hay que ver las cosas que inventa la gente.” Tu mamá empujando el cochecito de Ana, en el cruel invierno porteño de 1976. (31)

The trans-Atlantic connections in the novel are both clear and cloudy, a circular ambiguity in that exiled peoples’ descendants return to exile in their ancestral homeland.

Three other specific Argentine locations connected to the Dirty War pave the way for questions about memory and testimony: ESMA, the Plaza de Mayo, Tigre. ESMA, Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada, was an infamous detention center in Buenos Aires throughout the Proceso of the Dirty War (*Nunca más* 81). Prominent for being a primary detention center as well as the ultimate center in that many executions were carried out there, ESMA is an iconic example of the torture and state-sponsored terrorism found in Argentina from 1976-1983. It also is a figure in artwork on display in *Saudades*, serving as thought-provoking testimony. The narrative voice is torn by the work: “Todos hacíamos comentarios, charlábamos, pero sabíamos que lo que cada uno verdaderamente hubiera querido hacer era llorar en medio de ese homenaje a la memoria que habías creado” (121). The narrative voice considers the art shocking, a low blow, that the artist (the narrative voice’s lover) wants to “regodearse con la imagen de un niño desaparecido, por ejemplo, o con un poema escrito en la ESMA” (122). It should come as no surprise that the narrative voice struggles for words that will help in coming to terms with the art. ESMA and similar torture centers, practically concentration camps, were, according to Edurne Portela, “highly functional for the military project of creating a silent society and paving the road for the impunity and oblivion that would characterize the transition to democracy in the 1990s” (15). In her book *Displaced Memories: the Poetics of Trauma*

in *Argentine Women's Writing*, Portela explains that the impact of the state-sponsored climate of detention, torture, and even death realized a silence that permeated nearly the entire country (14-15). The effects were far-reaching and completely worthy of being labeled state-sponsored terrorism considering the goals of the regime. The Dirty War was traumatic, and many turned to silence in order not only to avoid the danger of being accused of treason and insurgent behavior, but also to evade making value judgments about the atrocities. As was already mentioned, in an interview with Emily Hicks, Luisa Valenzuela describes her short story "Cambio de armas" as an Argentine "metaphor" for "amnesia" with respect to the Dirty War (6-7). These sentiments are clearly echoed in the aforementioned passage of the mother and her ignored concerns for her disappeared family members. Silence also mandated criticism of the Catholic Church, specifically for the lack of public condemnation of human rights violations during the Dirty War as well as the Holocaust. *Saudades* addresses these questions, visible in the passage cited earlier that asks, "¿Dónde estabas tú entonces, Señor? ¿En qué lugar del tren te habían encerrado?, ¿en qué rincón de las barracas? ¿Moriste también tú de hambre y de frío? ¿Veías también tú el humo sobre el bosque?" (127).

Another concrete link to Argentina in *Saudades* is the Plaza de Mayo, site of protests demanding the whereabouts of desaparecidos. While multiple sections of *Saudades* identify or allude to the weekly manifestations of frustration and loss, one particular passage links together the different facets of the book through loss, exile, and memory, culminating with the end of the Dirty War:

Como en aquel septiembre de 1983 que cuentas siempre con brillo en los ojos. Esa invasión a la plaza junto con otros cientos de sobrevivientes—de aparecidos—para hacer que los ausentes, vueltos amorosas siluetas, cubrieran cada pared, cada columna, cada rincón. La memoria toda saliendo a las calles,

diciendo los nombres queridos, recuperando gestos y miradas. Y por supuesto tú haciendo las siluetas de Paula y de Andrés y pegándolas muy juntas. (174)

The difference between this act and the artist's rendering of the ESMA is location; the protests both before and after the fall of the military regime finally give voice to the *aparecidos* and to the *desaparecidos* within Argentina, referring specifically to 1983, the year in which democracy returned. The artist's work, on the other hand, is seen from exile. The juxtaposition of place calls into question the difference between exile and *insilio*, as well as the debate between Julio Cortázar and Liliana Heker regarding the power of the artist to understand and document the Dirty War (Reati "Exilio" 185).

The third Argentine location that brings memories into question is Tigre. The artist expresses, "Hay pocas cosas que me gusten más que esos ríos chiquitos del Tigre donde lo único que se escucha es el sonido de los remos al pasar y las chicharras. Decime si hay algún árbol más entrañable que el sauce llorón de esas orillas" (123). Tigre, in the Paraná delta to the northwest of Buenos Aires, is a respite from the chaos and unforgiving energy of the metropolis on the Río de la Plata. The image of its calm canals with weeping willows and rowers could not be further or farther from ESMA or other centers of torture, de facto concentration camps in the austral hemisphere. The narrative voice responds with a passage that offers many insights into memory, time, and distance:

Quería aprenderme tus paisajes, tus historias, los rostros que te acompañan desde siempre; conocer de memoria tus ciudades, mostrarte los secretos de la mía. "Llévame al lugar que más te guste." El bosque frío estaba cubierto de niebla; tú y yo mirando el convento intentábamos calentarnos las manos con el jarrito del café. "Como le enseñan a hacer al ángel cuando decide cambiar la eternidad por un rato de amor. ¿Te acordás?" El sol empezaba apenas a acariciar las piedras de las paredes. El silencio tal vez te hiciera pensar en el del Tigre. Nos sonreímos al brindar a la distancia y supimos que estaba empezando esta historia. (123)

The non-linear time essential to memory allows for simultaneous trans-Atlantic locations, further reflections of the multi-layered nature of the novel.

The inter-historicity and layered writing can be seen through the constant paradigm of protective mother under duress. This motif is noticeable with Inés de Castro, based on the Portuguese tradition in which she is killed by three men under royal decree, in front of her window, beheaded in front of her child. In a similar vein, Leo and Julia are startled in the middle of the night: “Los gritos nos despertaron en la madrugada. La pequeña María comenzó a llorar. Entraron dando órdenes. Vi el terror en los ojos de Leo mientras intentaba cubrir a la bebé. Nada era más importante en ese momento que protegerla a ella” (177). Their neighbor Sophie follows them secretly to the train station, and she extends her arms to take the child to safety. The victim’s memory will live on through the kind neighbor: “Sophie le contará la historia” (178). It is through this retelling that the victims will be remembered and will be able to tell their stories, for during the ordeal, Julia wants to scream, but silence is all that she can manage: “Hubiera querido gritar hasta desgarrarme la garganta, hubiera querido rasguñarme hasta quedar en carne viva, pero me paralicé. Era aún de noche. Hacía mucho frío. Estoy muerta” (178). Sophie, although not the primary victim, will give testimony, and in spite of being second-hand, that testimony is significant:

The moral imperative to tell the individual and collective story is associated with the idea that the one who survives is the closest to the truth of what happened to the ones who did not. To answer the call of memory is then a way of paying tribute to those who did not survive. Therefore the testimony of a survivor is also a political imperative against those who deny the obvious and want to relegate the history of repression to oblivion. (Portela 47)

Years later, María wonders about the past, always returning to “[u]n tren que parte. Unos brazos que se extienden” (206). She also understands her role as the witness to trauma:

“Para que yo los mencione a todos ha sobrevivido la lengua. Para que no sean borrados una vez más” (206). She reiterates her responsibility: “Una y otra vez olvidaré la historia—Un tren que parte. Unos brazos que se extienden—para celebrarla. Una y otra vez seremos cómplices la memoria y yo” (206). The forgetting and remembering, coupled with questions of survivor’s guilt, are hallmarks of trauma, whether felt first-hand or second-hand. Again, the woven history is present, as she will celebrate her deliverance through the hands of another, not unlike the Jews celebrating Passover.

The parallels in the novel resound on both sides of the Atlantic, forty years apart, with the disappearance of Paula and Andrés and their decision to save their baby during the Dirty War, not unlike what happens to Leo and Julia in giving María to Sophie:

Corriste tú con la bebé en brazos a esconderte en tu cuarto. Los cinco tipos que entraron sabían bien lo que querían; se llevaron a Paula ante los gritos desesperados de tu mamá y el silencio de los vecinos. Después supieron que Andrés había caído en la mañana. La noche anterior los dos habían decidido que la bebé tendría que pasar un tiempo con ustedes, era el único modo de protegerla. Y se quedaron las tres—tu mamá, Ana y tú—muy juntas, muy abrazadas, como las veo en la plaza mientras levantan las fotos. (202-03)

Past, present, and future all come together as one grand *saudade*, with reverberations felt across both sides of the Atlantic. Fernando Reati links the questions of collective responsibility following the Holocaust and World War II in Europe to similar questions following the Dirty War in Argentina: “En el caso argentino, esto tiene su equivalente en las voces que hacen consciente lo que a un nivel colectivo se mantiene reprimido: el papel cumplido por quienes no participaron pero tampoco pudieron ser ajenos a lo que ocurría en el país bajo la apariencia de normalidad” (*Nombrar* 77).

Furthermore, the novel resembles León Felipe’s work, particularly *Español del éxodo y del llanto* (1939), as a parallel for the Spanish Civil War with the Jews, yet their

Exodus from Egypt is a triumph (Pagán 84). The poet is a pilgrim lost in the desert, and for the poet Latin America is that desert; the Promised Land, however, is not to be found (85-86). León Felipe's words contrast with the Jewish Exodus:

En nuestro éxodo no hay orgullo como en el hebreo. Aquí no viene el hombre elegido, sino el hombre. El hombre solo, sin tribu, sin obispo y sin espada. En nuestro éxodo no hay saudade tampoco, como en la celta. No dejamos a la espalda ni la casa ni el archivo ni el campanario. Ni el mito de un rey que ha de volver. Detrás y delante de nosotros se abre el mundo. Hostil, pero se abre. Y en medio de este mundo, como en el centro de un círculo, el español solo, perfilado en el viento. Solo. (124)

While the Jews triumphantly exited Egypt, they have suffered since. Whereas the Promised Land was found following the Exodus, it was lost through Babylonian captivity, through the expulsions from the Iberian Peninsula, and through the Holocaust. All in the novel who suffer exile are a wandering tribe.

A resonant tool that connects the different historical periods together is language. Multiple times, the language of immigrant groups must evolve, whether learning *castellano* and replying in it instead of in Russian (117-18), or retaining their songs such as the mother saying goodbye to her son (105) or the grandmother to the children in 1937 (151). Questions arise in the novel about language and how it develops for refugees: “¿En qué idioma le contestaría Pessoa a su madre en una Sudáfrica lejana? ¿Con qué palabras aman los migrantes, los exiliados, los expulsados de su propia tierra? ¿En qué lengua sueñan?” (118). Immediately follows a poem “que un poeta nacido en Portugal escribió en inglés, para llorar junto con Adriano la muerte del, desde entonces, joven dios. ¿En qué lengua aman los desterrados? ¿En qué lengua sueñan?” (118).

Like victims of trauma and terror, exiled refugees have their language—and thus, their voices—taken from them. Manuel told the Jews to abandon the faith or abandon the

homeland; others, like María, wonder how they are supposed to remember the past in exile: “¿Cuál es la lengua que ha sobrevivido? ¿En qué lengua he sobrevivido? ¿En el francés de mi infancia, o en los sonidos antiguos en que debí haber crecido? ¿Cómo puedo yo hablar de la memoria? Perder una lengua es también perder el rostro; las huellas de una historia que se nos escapa” (206). A similar line repeated throughout the novel brings into question whether what has been learned is really language or merely babbling: “Aprendimos no a hablar sino a balbucear” (17). This combination of broken language is most notable with the tour guide of the synagogue, who explains the four columns of great women from the Old Testament while the narrative voice puts forth the notion of fragmented identity detectable through speech:

Seguía contándonos en un castellano con un dejo de otras lenguas, no era sólo portugués lo que se alcanzaba a escuchar en el ritmo y la pronunciación de sus frases. No era sólo que algunos sonidos hebreos se colaran en su relato. Era como si ese arcón de la memoria que eran sus palabras hubiera estado formado por todas las memorias del mundo, por todos los idiomas de la historia. Una torre de Babel acogedora. (54)

An example of another lost voice in the novel is the cello of the Jewish grandfather from the Ukraine. While he had to leave the cello behind, the voice remained inside him, quick to recall yet compartmentalized as a part of memory: “La voz del cello que guardaba en su interior fue el único equipaje de mi abuelo; nunca dejó de escucharlo. Kiev, 1908. Era demasiado complicado llevar el violoncello en el barco y tuvo que abandonarlo para siempre en algún puerto lejano. No quiso uno nuevo, prefirió soñar con el suyo el resto de su vida, con el que sus dedos aprendieron a acariciar cuando era pequeño” (163). This passage encapsulates the combination of exile, lost voice, and memory, all resounding in a lifelong moment of *saudade*. Following his trauma of leaving, the grandfather has refused to take another cello—another voice—although the

voice remains within him. Some struggle to reclaim this voice, but the grandfather is content with nothing more than memory.

Molding memories is a major theme running throughout the novel, and a conduit for this struggle is the arts. Music serves as one outlet, visible with the lullabies and the grandfather's cello. Another is the function of the body as a work of art: the notebook with drawings, the ballet dance, and even the undercurrent of remembering the body with the "lengua." The body comes into play with drawing, and drawing—not unlike writing in that a pen meets the page—is a cathartic activity that allows room for loss and silence: "Dibujo el contorno de cada letra lenta, amorosamente. Letras que balbucean un relato desarmado, que no saben de palabras redondas y turgentes, que hablan con esquirlas, con fragmentos. Dibujo en cada letra el quebrado perfil de la memoria" (99). The body is also drawn by students in the art classroom, and later the narrative voice becomes that of the model being drawn (47-50). The parallel here is to the voice of those silenced in exile as well as in trauma, for example, in the Dirty War. Drawing—and writing—is what gives voice both to victim and to artist, and questions of motivation arise in the novel, from the viewpoint of the artist as well as from the audience. At the art exhibit, when the narrative voice mentions wanting to cry, questions of motive abound:

¿En qué momento un cuadro se volvía un panfleto?, ¿en qué instante el horror se convertía en un artículo de consumo más? La pintura era tu pelo verde—hacía ya mucho tiempo, María te había ayudado a darte cuenta de eso—; querías así "nombrarlos a todos," como decía el poema que ella misma te había enseñado, para no olvidarlos, para no condenarlos a esa segunda muerte que los borraría para siempre. (122)

Thoughts about survivor's guilt—long associated with victims of the Holocaust and certainly applicable to nearly any trauma—are visible in the artist's reply: "¿Por qué tú seguías viva? ¿Con qué derecho respirabas, dibujabas, mirabas los reflejos del sol sobre

el río? ‘Descubrí—te había dicho alguna vez María al salir de clase—que tenía la obligación de contárselo al mundo, aunque el mundo no quisiera oírlo’” (122).

The cultural hybridity created through the layered inter-historical episodes of the novel reveals the need to recover the voice through writing, visual or performing arts. The universal desire to speak in the novel links together multiple centuries of trauma and exile on various continents: “El silencio era una posibilidad pero quizás fuera también una derrota; había entonces que hablar, que decir, que nombrar, había que hacer que el lenguaje hablara, dijera, nombrara. Había que rodear el vértigo del espanto; volver a las palabras” (147). Even in the face of extreme duress, poetry appears as a catharsis: “Aún pueden escribirse todos los poemas; aún se puede crear incluso *en el lenguaje de tus asesinos, Madre*. Todavía es posible la poesía, a pesar del horror, a pesar del dolor y la muerte” (147). This passage continues with a curious indication of time, “escritas muchos años después” (147). A tenet of trauma and exile is the non-linear timeframe of the aftermath. Edurne Portela writes that a “delayed written response to the events may be related to the idea that the first stage of exile is imprinted by the trauma of the experience and the difficulty of adjustment” (17).

Portela also contends that trauma is an event so out of the ordinary that it wounds the psyche and cannot be remembered using normal functions of memory; debate stems from how these experiences can be described and represented, as a method of therapy and coming to terms with the event (37-38). Clearly in *Saudades*, multiple story-lines exhibit characters in search of understanding that which cannot be fathomed, particularly the case of the notebook of sketches with its polemical first line:

“Sobre mí y sobre muchos de mis contemporáneos pesa el tartamudeo desde el nacimiento. Aprendimos no a hablar, sino a balbucear...” ¿Por qué elegiste esa

frase para inaugurar el primer cuaderno que llenarías de dibujos en Portugal? Decenas de rostros apenas esbozados, más sombras que líneas, cubren una página tras otra. ¿Balbuceos quizás? Sanguine es el color de tu memoria, es el color de tus tartamudeos. Con menos de veinte años, sola frente a una lengua que apenas hablabas, te refugiaste en el silencio de tus cuadernos. Cuadernos tartamudos porque el miedo quebró todas las palabras, porque ausencias rompieron la sintaxis. Cómo volver a hablar después del horror. (171)

While spoken words are absent, she expresses herself by drawing in the notebook.

The use of different expressive media returns here, and destruction in various places is linked by the universal suffering of loss with the only remainder being memories or perhaps a token souvenir: “La palabra ‘adiós’ y una llave en el bolsillo del pantalón, como los sefardíes expulsados hace más de cinco siglos. Como la anciana palestina que llora frente a su casa destruida y que sigue conservando la llave como la única huella de su memoria” (172). The combination of place and time and the universality of struggle are visible also in the fight to separate oneself from the rest, a trait that questions the veracity of testimony until its function is understood as collective: “¿Se confundió tu exilio con todos los exilios portugueses?, ¿tus ausencias con todas las ausencias? *O mar sem fin...*” (133). Furthermore, the artistic response to questions of identity is acknowledged as a shared experience in the novel: “La poesía fue mi pelo verde. La forma de contar una historia que era y no era la mía; que era y no era la de mi gente” (156).

The non-linear time of exile and loss presents itself in the passage about the cello from the perspective of the grandfather, who remembers his life from long ago as if it were yesterday: “Todavía hoy, cada noche al acostarme, me llega desde lejos la voz del cello. Todavía hoy, más de setenta años después” (192). He continues to describe his nostalgia for home, for evenings playing the cello while others played the piano and

violin. Visible in this snippet of *saudade*, the voice of the cello is the same as the voice of his mother, the voice that comforts, later almost as if it were a lover: “Todavía hoy recuerdo la primera caricia a ese cuerpo de madera, apenas con las yemas de los dedos, suavecito. Empezaba así nuestra complicidad” (193). The image of the cello as a lover provides an image of the instrument as a body, particularly a woman’s body, similar to the characterization of the body as a work of art, a catharsis for those seeking to recover their lost voices due to exile.

The stacked strata of *Saudades* can be contemplated in the form of an onion, in which layers of exile and loss touch each other, sharing components yet remaining in distinct places and times. Beyond the historical and political contexts, literary references—Fernando Pessoa and his various heteronyms⁵, Marianna Alcoforado, and other literary figures whose names are not mentioned until after the novel’s end—serve as a reminder of the fragmented state of language that results from trauma and subsequent exile. Sophia McClennen says that some authors (Juan Goytisolo, Ariel Dorfman, and Cristina Peri Rossi) “display great distrust in their ability to convey through words the intensity of the exile experience” (34). They “attempt to narrate aspects of their national history that are being silenced and censored by dictatorial regimes. The need to imagine and represent through language what one cannot experience through physical presence creates conflict in exile literature” (34). Edurne Portela has already highlighted these comments from McClennen in *Displaced Memories* concerning three Argentine prison narratives stemming from the Dirty War, and they are completely germane to

⁵ Particularly interesting are the parallels between the life of Pessoa and those of characters in *Saudades*, especially the loss Pessoa suffered early in life with the death of family members and friends (Kotowicz 12).

Lorenzano's *Saudades*, especially regarding faithfulness and reliability of testimony. The specific works and references, particularly pertaining to testimony and the act of writing, shed light on the intricate, detailed web woven by the author as if she were Penelope herself, waiting for Odysseus to return.

CHAPTER 3

THE LANGUAGE OF EXILE IN MARÍA TERESA ANDRUETTO'S *LENGUA MADRE*

María Teresa Andruetto's novel *Lengua madre* (2010) begins with a flashback of dying Julia's wish for her daughter Julieta to read a box of old letters in order to understand the past, particularly the Dirty War in Argentina. Julieta is still coming to terms with her mother's death and life, for Julieta is, "a poco de morir su madre, una hija que la está buscando. Una hija que hace nacer a la madre de entre unos papeles, unas cartas" (15). The letters allow insight into one of the novel's major players, the varying forms of exile: forced exile within one's own country, exile of one's own volition, and the process of returning. Multiple characters fit perfectly within the frame of the Paul Tabori's definition of exile, cited earlier (27).

Exile is not always external, and Corinne Pubill highlights the occurrence of interior exile in the novel, also known as *insilio* (144). The elements of both exile and *insilio* are underscored by the fragmented, epistolary nature of Andruetto's novel, and the most striking manifestations of exile appear in place and language. Place—in essence, being—is a prerequisite to understanding exile, in that a separation occurs, with or without definitive names or locations; while the setting of exile may be unknown, the place of origin is definitely not it, and Amy Kaminsky purports that exile is "a physical uprooting, an individual's removal from a familiar place to a new space that has, at least at the beginning, no recognizable coordinates" (10-11). The geographical and physical

descriptions of exile allow for a demarcation in character that clearly manifests distinct language. Written and spoken communication in the novel function with a delay, and exile is most visible within linguistic forms of ownership, verbal tenses, and points of view that determine word choice, meaning, and ultimately identity.

In order to arrive at understanding the linguistic fall-out from exile and its impact on identity, it is first necessary to set the context of exile within the novel, that is, how it is manifested in terms of place. The parallels between Julia and Julieta are striking throughout the novel, particularly regarding location. The reader learns that Julia has had to hide in a basement in Patagonia in order to avoid disappearance, specifically in the city of Trelew in Chubut province. Trelew, under an hour from the sea, is a fitting place for exile with its isolation from the rest of the country and its micro-climate, which makes it an island of green in a windy sea of brown. The valley provides relief from the nothingness of the steppes of Patagonia, but a short walk leads to the meseta. Julieta finds it a good place for thinking: “Después se alejó un par de kilómetros hacia la meseta, hacia la nada, y volvió caminando despacio hasta la casa” (91). Furthermore, the name Trelew, as well as that of the nearby village Gaiman, reflects its Welsh heritage and the association with immigrants who, generally, came to Argentina for political or economic reasons in a chosen exile. The cool, wind-swept steppe could not be further culturally from the Córdoba area where Julia had lived before going into hiding. Distance stands out even more as the story comes full-circle when Julieta returns from abroad. She reads a crumpled letter and wonders “como su madre hubiera podido decir Patagonia. O como ella misma quisiera decir ahora Argentina” (18). She also feels that her mother “está más lejos que aquellos que están lejos, más lejos que los que no estuvieron nunca, no la puede

alcanzar” (49-50). The distance between Julieta and her mother Julia is even greater than the distance between Julieta and her father, who has never been present, as he goes into exile before Julieta’s birth.

The place of exile is on display as Julieta reads the letters: “Aquí, donde lee estas cartas, no es su casa ni es su pueblo. Su pueblo está allá. Aquí es la casa y el pueblo de su madre, el que su madre eligió, como ella ha elegido Munich, para construir su vida: un pueblo en Patagonia” (176). The juxtaposition could not offer a sharper contrast; Munich and Patagonia are two distinct foci that serve as the points of an elliptical life, not as concentric circles that happen to overlap in certain Trans-Atlantic doldrums, but rather as one giant zone of identity wrapped up in another. Homi Bhabha notes the no-(wo)man’s-land, citing the periphery or the borderland as “the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experience of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (2). The places of exile in the novel, like Julia and Julieta’s relationship as mother and daughter, cannot be categorized separately, for they have a relationship that does not operate in a vacuum but, rather, in a mutually affected setting. In an interesting twist, Andruetto chooses Patagonia for Julia’s escape, a region which ironically served as a haven for some Nazi leaders to evade justice, and Munich offers Julieta an escape from her situation in Argentina.

The place of exile in the novel results in a somewhat circular history, that is, history does not repeat itself, but it does spiral back near certain points. Julieta’s story of exile can be considered a return to the continent from which her grandfather came: “Alguna vez, cuando ella era muy pequeña, su abuelo le contó episodios de su vida allá:

la despedida de su madre, el camino a pie hacia la casa de un amigo, la partida desde el puerto de Génova, el baúl de madera rústica que perdió en el naufragio, pintado de verde, que tenía escrito *Stefano Pronello / Puerto de Buenos Aires*” (138). In a circular fashion, similar to that of Sandra Lorenzano’s *Saudades*, the children and grandchildren of European emigrants, who perhaps left for political, economic, or religious reasons, leave their homeland behind to return to Europe.⁶ Julieta embodies Gloria da Cunha-Giabbai’s definition of exile, in that exile “implica padecimiento físico y espiritual, frustración, nostalgia, pérdida, alienación, resentimiento, vida paralela, retroceso. El exilio es aprender a vivir otra vez” (24). Having to come to terms with new surroundings—both in the case of Julia’s *insilio* in Patagonia and Julieta’s chosen exile in Germany—fits within Homi K. Bhabha’s notions on culture:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (2)

Geography and place –the location of exile– factor into the negotiation of identity for Julieta, an issue to which this study will return shortly.

Intricately woven with place, time provides multiple implications for exile within the novel. While exile removes someone in the present, the past is not removed from the person. Like victims of trauma, Julieta feels that returning to the village where she was raised will serve as a trigger that will flood her mind with memories, grave images that may require special attention or even possibly arrest her:

⁶ See Chapter 2: Layered History and Language in Sandra Lorenzano’s *Saudades*.

Si volviera a su pueblo en la llanura y viera otra vez los silos, la sede del Club Atlético...si pasara por la ruta y viera, una vez más, hacia la izquierda el cementerio donde están los restos de sus abuelos y después, a la derecha, una vez más la portada del Asilo, la invadirían los recuerdos más remotos, la vida de cuando era chica, la vida de una chica que espera a su madre. (53-4)

In this case, the characteristics of place, the everyday items of a particular location, bring with them clear associations, even years after last having seen them. These qualities are similar to what Gloria da Cunha-Giabbai notes about Mario Benedetti's *Primavera con una esquina rota*, that the novel reveals that "la vida cotidiana actual de los exiliados se halla invadida por el pasado porque éste continúa siendo presente" (31). For Julieta, it is this notion of place, a non-descript time and place, that becomes markedly fathomable due to separation from her family and her homeland during exile. In other words, what was once simple and quotidian is now profound, and while the body may be in another land in the present, the mind has the ability to return instantly to the homeland and to the past.

The place of exile determines the language used for communication, and distance often holds implications for preferences of media. Julia's mother expresses her partiality to letters over phone calls multiple times, perhaps with the reason that phone calls are short and often sudden due to alarm or problems: "Ayer recibimos noticias sobre vos ¡por teléfono! No lo podíamos creer, pero fue tan cortito que no pudimos preguntarle casi nada al señor Guerrero. A mí, te digo la verdad, creo que me gustan más las cartas, aunque demoren o tengas que dárselas a ese señor del camión, que para nosotros es como un ángel" (186). The nature of the means of communication is called into question here. Writing serves as a more permanent, more pensive task in which thoughts are hashed out. Response from the receptor, however, is not immediate, and this communication, in a

way, is one-sided. It also requires an intermediary, in this case the driver who delivers the letters – certainly not through regular post as the possibility of incrimination looms large.

Further representations of exile within the realm of place are related to the act of traveling. Julieta’s journey to Germany, a voyage toward understanding others and, perhaps unbeknownst to her, toward understanding herself, happens in what Mary Louise Pratt terms “contact zones,” which are “social places where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (4). While Pratt’s use of the term centers on (post)colonial discourse, it is entirely applicable to Julieta’s situation, especially since Pratt views the “contact zone” as “an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresences of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (7). This space for analysis, on a professional level dealing with literature and later on a personal level dealing with the letters, appears as a direct result of the exile Julieta undergoes. Julieta views travel —the elected kind and not a sudden forced exile— as an introspective undertaking:

Pequeñas peregrinaciones: vidas reales o posibles que evoca. Abandono de su tierra, memoria desoladora de la infancia. Un viaje es con frecuencia una excusa para regresar, para verificar un recuerdo, para completar una experiencia; para entregarse a revelaciones que devastan. Ella busca y evita al mismo tiempo los residuos del pasado para saber quién es, para confirmar lo que es, para repudiar lo que es, para corregirse si fuera necesario. (188-89)

Julieta personifies questions of identity in an age of globalization: “Pero no sabe qué preguntas busca responder viviendo en Alemania para estudiar la obra de una inglesa que vivió, más que en Inglaterra, en Persia y en Rhodesia” (107). The attraction to Doris Lessing’s work for Julieta lies in the fragmented nature of her identity and where she has lived, something which Julieta understands first-hand.

Personal psyche and understanding of place in the novel allow a glimpse, in a broad scope, of Argentina in terms of national identity. Ricardo Piglia, responding to a question regarding Benedict Anderson's premise in *Imagined Communities* that a relationship lies between the modern museum and national identity, offers the distinct case of Argentina:

En la Argentina hay un museo histórico, el Museo de Luján: no hay nada en ese museo, no hay nada, digamos, porque es una historia construida sobre el vacío. Es muy difícil encontrar una densidad en la construcción de la identidad en el museo en un país como la Argentina, donde todo es nuevo o al menos donde todo está marcado, desde el principio, con la noción de novedad y de abandono del pasado. (235)

Exile and *insilio* allow an interpretation of Julia and Julieta as metaphor for national identity because of distance, separation, and nothingness. As Julieta returns to Chubut, she acknowledges her limited familiarity with Argentina. Beyond visiting her mother in Trelew a few times, the village where she was raised, Córdoba where she studied, and Buenos Aires, Julieta practically does not know her own home country. In this way, she, too, has suffered a sort of *insilio* from the rest: “a excepción de Trelew y sus alrededores, al resto del país sólo lo conoce —como si se tratara de China o de Japón— por los libros” (65). The curious thing is that Trelew sits in an isolated pocket along the Atlantic Ocean, and Patagonia conjures images of lonely landscapes, wind-swept steppes that harbor isolation and nothingness. In this way, the only area she knows is intrinsically cut off from the rest of the country, a reflection of her status as victim of exile and *insilio*, separated from her mother and her motherland, not unlike other victims of the Dirty War.

Like others who suffered due to state-sponsored terrorism, Julieta is aware that the present and future cannot be understood without first reclaiming the past. The physical description of place underscores the elements of exile and connections to the

Dirty War. Homi K. Bhabha explores the issues related to past and present within a grand cultural realm:

The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. (35)

Bhabha's comments are entirely germane when considering the case of Julieta: she attempts to sift through letters left behind by her mother, juxtaposing her (re)creation of the past with the stories her grandparents have told her since birth. Julieta's trip from Trelew through Rawson to the sea allows a glimpse into her thought patterns about the present, the past, and the future: "Tal vez sea por eso que trata de mirar hacia delante, pero también sabe que es necesario mirar hacia atrás... Es lo que ha intentado hacer en estos días: ir hacia delante, sin dejar de mirar hacia atrás. Cree que puede hacerlo. Está aprendiendo. Aunque a veces —lo reconoce— tiene miedo de desbarrancar" (123). The forward and backward glances toward her future within terms of her past mimic the ocean she visits, with the constant ebb and flow of the tides as well as the advance and immediate retreat of the waves. She also, as Corrine Pubill notes, is a metaphor for a generation of Argentines attempting to come to terms with the past in response to the Dirty War:

Julieta se presenta como recipiente de la memoria del pasado, no sólo a través de la narrativa que relata la experiencia de su madre y de los personajes que la rodean, sino también como hija que recupera los recuerdos de su infancia al juntar pedazos de su propia vida. En este sentido, la historia de Julieta, junto a los pedazos de la memoria colectiva de toda una generación de jóvenes desconectados de su pasado, busca conectarse con una generación futura que aún está por construirse. (145-46)

The connection as metaphor for a generation not only pertains to the search for identity but also to the physical locations in which characters are found. The location of exile and *insilio* in the case of her mother Julia relates to the imprisonment of many throughout the Dirty War. Lina's description of the humid basement reveals the horror suffered by her sister Julia as she responds to Julieta's questions about why her mother did not return after the dictatorship's end:

Hizo muchos intentos, pero no se pudo [...] Primero pidió que te buscáramos para que, si llegaba a pasar algo, por lo menos vos te salvaras. Sabía que podían encontrarla en cualquier momento, hubiera bastado una denuncia, un comentario en la calle, un allanamiento de rutina, era una situación tan precaria... y vos recién nacida, en ese sótano, yo no lo conocí pero, cuando fueron a buscarte, tu abuelo volvió horrorizado, era húmedo, oscuro, hasta ratones había..., hace poco me dijo que ya conocía la muerte porque aquellos años había vivido en una tumba de un metro por dos... (85-6)

The tight quarters where her mother has suffered offer an interesting literary parallel for Julieta as she thinks about Doris Lessing's father, a WWI veteran: "ya no pudo quedarse en Inglaterra, porque la isla se le volvió demasiado estrecha" (86). The opposite, however, could be said about Julia and the immense distance between Julieta in Aldao and Julia in Trelew. Further metaphorical connections to other victims of the Dirty War are noticeable via Julieta's birth, which occurred in the basement. The encounter with José Guerrero, who helps to hide Julia, offers a glimpse into the past, an unexpected connection to the birth of Julieta. José confirms that he was more than just a presence during Julia's time in the basement: "En efecto señorita..., dijo José Guerrero, fui yo quien la trajo a usted al mundo" (132). As further proof that he was there, he presents Julieta with some written data, a perplexing collection of numbers and abbreviations that he explains is nothing more than the record of Julieta's weight and dimensions at birth (153). José offers more than anecdotal associations for Julieta's past: he has a tangible

written account of the first moments of her life. Fidelity and credibility certainly can be questioned, but for Julieta, José represents a direct connection to events of the past, a connection longed for and sought by many victims of the Dirty War. Later, Lina relates that Julia, while dying with cancer, confesses to the doctor that she already knows death: “yo sé lo que es morir, doctor, cuando me la llevaron a Julieta, en ese sótano, detrás del armario, estuve muerta durante cuatro años...” (192). The post-partum depression following birth lasts longer for Julia because the joy of delivery is removed. As if her baby has been taken from her, Julia embodies the pain of imprisoned mothers during the Dirty War whose children were taken from them upon birth and subsequently given to elite families, also the subject of the Academy Award-winning film *La historia oficial* (1985). Within the frame of exile, Julia seems to be a literal and metaphorical example of what Luis Torres has noted, that “disemboweled” appears among the noteworthy etymological roots of the word exile (55-6). Julieta, on the other hand, represents the generation that questions its identity, wondering whether separation from family occurred at birth.

The politics of place and the epistolary nature of the text affect not only the reader but also Julieta. She acknowledges that the letters, while written accounts of the past, offer little more to her than the stories her grandparents had already told her. While Julieta has chosen exile of her own volition in comparison with some victims of the Dirty War who had no choice but to leave, Julieta’s hometown can also hold blame as it offers few opportunities to her, and thus she has chosen exile out of necessity, too. The holes left with exile, in Julieta’s mind, stem from the holes of her childhood: “Se crió con esa ausencia, sabiendo de ella apenas lo que decían unas cartas, poco más que lo que le

contaban sus abuelos” (56). Similar to the status as exile many have when living in another place, Julieta acknowledges the lack of desire to integrate herself into her new community. Although she lives in an apartment in the city and knows German, opening her mouth immediately reveals her identity as an outsider, and she knows this is not her home: “Necesitó estar lejos, extrañarlo todo, para sentirse como en su casa y al mismo tiempo no puede decir que Munich sea su casa, ni que Baviera sea su patria. Así es como ella se convirtió en una mujer ambulante, sin territorio, sin patria, sin padre. / Sin padres” (60).

Julieta is a third-culture adult; she does not belong in her homeland, as clearly she has left it. She also does not truly belong in her new land, but rather, she resides in a liminal space in the “interstices” (Bhabha 2). Like Jews leaving Egypt, she wanders through a desert alone. She does not completely fit in her new land, and upon returning to Argentina, she is self-conscious of the gaps within herself and her past. She embodies *desexilio*, and the return from exile does not signify its end. As Amy Kaminsky notes, “The *desexiliados* must reconcile the different lives they lived elsewhere to the life that went on at home — reconcile not in the sense of making peace between the two but in bringing them together and making sense of them as necessary parts of a whole” (37).

For her future profession, Julieta has chosen to live in Germany to study female writers, and although she has learned German well, her native language bears markings of her identity that have not faded with time and distance: “Le han quedado en la boca, en las palabras, muchos rastros de la tierra donde se crió, donde están unidas las tres para siempre. / Abuela, madre, hija. / Las tres” (61). Furthermore, Julieta has a love-hate relationship with Argentina now that she lives in another country, communicates in a

second language, and works in a third (on her research about Doris Lessing's literature). Julieta is powerless to deny the effects of exile: "Ella no puede decir: la guerra, el exilio, la muerte, no tienen nada que ver conmigo" (63). Dinner with other Argentine expatriates allows insight into their thoughts on what it means to live in exile. Children are absent from their lives. Also, there is a profoundly noticeable sense of "Otherness," particularly as Julieta is told that "una no se puede enamorar de gente de otro lado, son extranjeros" (71). While there is a semblance of community within exile, it is still separate, and their identity has to do with the past, where they have come from, and their current location only labels them as "Other." The irony here, however, is that the exile lived by those who fled the Dirty War, their pending "Otherness," is simply another side of the same coin, as their "Otherness" and differing political or social identity marked them as targets in the Dirty War. The connections to the homeland only serve to remind the exiled of his or her status as "Other," both in the homeland and in the current location.

Julieta reflects a cultural reality that by not coming to terms with her past, she fits within the same frame as victims of the Dirty War, particularly children of *desaparecidos*, whose tragic circumstances have taken on a collective significance greater than the sum of their individual losses (Reati *Nombrar* 26). As Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman note, within Argentine society, it is better to be the child of a *desaparecido* than someone whose parent has died: "Por decirlo en términos sencillos: se prefiere ser hijo de desaparecido. / Ser hijo de desaparecido da un marco de pertenencia. Se es miembro de un determinado grupo. Se vive la pertenencia a ese grupo, aunque sea virtual, como un factor de apuntalamiento" (83). Thus, Julieta allows for self-victimization by ignoring her own past in order to focus on that of literary figures, and

she becomes like a child of *desaparecidos*, not willing to concede hope of return, therefore delaying closure and an understanding of the past.

Place and exile allow Julieta to realize a love for the written word, giving her a connection to identity, particularly to her mother. It comes as no surprise, then, that she pursues graduate studies in literature, focusing on women's voices:

prefirió hablar de escritoras injustamente olvidadas o no reconocidas en su real valor, desde Rosa Chacel o Armonía Summers o María Luisa Bombal, a María Messina o Gina Lagorio o Anna Kavan...ella tiene una lista extensa en la cabeza. No habló de Flannery O'Connor, ni de Mansfield, ni de Welty ni de Ginzburg. Tampoco de Blixen, ni de Duras. Mucho menos de Yourcenar, porque todas ellas—mal que bien—han encontrado su espacio. Habló de otras, más oscuras, tanto más ocultas. (42)

Julieta is reflected in these authors: she does not have her own place, she has been forgotten (by her father, by her mother, by her *patria*, perhaps even by her God), and she is a woman. She wants to find balance and selects Doris Lessing, an obvious choice with parallels for Julieta, particularly as her mother's story relates to Lessing's work (Pubill 151-52). Contrary to this desire to find balance, however, Julieta's mother wants her to come back to Argentina, presumably to read the letters together. Julieta says no, that she has to focus on her studies (14). By choosing her career abroad, Julieta neglects part of herself in the process. In this way, she is a reflection of an Argentine society split about the Dirty War, like the angry letter-writers who complained that the *Buenos Aires Herald* reminded them of atrocities they would rather forget (Simpson and Bennett 236-37).

While Julieta sees parallels between her own life and literary texts, the reader of *Lengua madre* will also notice literary intertextuality as a conduit through which characters are revealed. Obvious connections to Greek tragedy are established with the chinchilla named Agamennone (25). Clearly, Julieta resembles the daughter of

Agamemnon (Pubill 147). Whereas in some versions of the myth, the king sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia for a cause, in *Lengua madre* the ill-fated mother Julia also ends up with a lost daughter; their relationship is sacrificed for their protection. More links to antiquity are visible in the meeting with Lidia Guerrero in Gaiman. Lidia, sister-in-law of José Guerrero, who helps Julia give birth and serves as an intermediary with the family, tells her about the knitting Julia would do, as if she were Penelope waiting for Odysseus's return (162). Corinne Pubill highlights the difficulties Julia faces in Trelew with respect to time, not unlike patient Penelope: "Las enfermedades, la insalubridad, el hambre, la falta de dinero, los cambios de lugares, el lento transcurso del tiempo, son parte de este estado insílico. El pasar del tiempo corresponde a los largos años de cautiverio donde se detiene la noción de tiempo ya que se llega a un punto y se regresa sin jamás poder avanzar" (147). Julieta, however, is akin to the young Telemachus who awaits the return of a father he has never known. Julieta surprisingly learns from Lidia that her father was instrumental in her mother's safe hiding place: "Fue tu papá el que le pidió a Roque que le buscara un lugar" (162). Lidia represents catharsis for Julieta as she learns more about her past and cries inconsolably.

Julieta details the quintessential standing of someone returning from exile as she flies back to Argentina upon the death of her mother:

Algo de lo que uno es, permanece en los lugares que se dejaron, pero ella no se crió en esa casa del sur adonde va. Muertos sus abuelos y su madre, ya no tiene adónde regresar. Sabe que el exilio es eso: no saber adónde regresar. Así, sin esperanza y ya sin centro, vuelve a lo que fue. En busca de lo olvidado, al encuentro de lo oscuro, de lo ciego. (45)

The difficulty of exile is that there often is not a place to call home, somewhere to return. Many critics of Southern Cone literature have chronicled the almost intrinsic

quality of exile connected to the return, *el desexilio*. Annegret Thiem cites the possible return as a root of exile: “El motivo del retorno implica, en este caso, tanto la confrontación con el pasado como la confrontación con el propio Yo” (197). Furthermore, Thiem states that returning from exile is not a magic switch that transports everything back to how it was before exile: “El retorno entonces no significa la reanudación de un estado anterior, pasado, sino una dislocación y un planteamiento inesperado de preguntas existenciales que conducen, a su vez, a un nuevo retiro, esta vez a un exilio interior” (203). The difficulties Julia and Julieta face in responding to the past reveal the impossibility of return to Eden. Along these same lines, it is noteworthy that Julieta frequently cleans a replica of Lucas Cranach the Elder’s *Adam and Eve* (121). The significance of the painting is quite clear: Eve, the garden, the mother of all, and Julieta’s search for her own mother parallel a return to the past, to the garden, before all became corrupt. Furthermore, the image of the mother as earth is clearly connected to the act of giving birth in the basement as Julia was hiding in Trelew. As Adam and Eve were told that they would return to dust, Julieta returns to the dust of the ground where her mother gave birth to her by visiting Trelew and attempting to sift through the letters. Lina later reveals to Julieta why reuniting mother and daughter was not practical:

Vos tampoco ayudabas, claro, porque cada vez que ella hablaba de llevarte, te agarraba fiebre, te desesperabas, te prendías a las piernas de tu abuela... ¿Cómo sacarte de la casa en esas condiciones?...creo que no le dio el corazón para verte sufrir de ese modo, le daba una culpa tremenda llevarte, y dio por perdida la batalla. Cada tanto arremetía otra vez, me llamaba por teléfono, me preguntaba cómo podía hacer. Pensemos en alguna estrategia, me decía, pero yo ya no encontraba la forma, vos te habías acostumbrado tanto a estar con ellos... (95)

The place that existed before exile no longer exists. In sum, they can never go home again.

Now that the place of exile in the novel has been explored, the implications deal mainly with effects on communication, on the written word and the spoken word, primarily due to point of view. Amy Kaminsky details a curiously pithy comment from Russian poet Joseph Brodsky: “Addressing a conference on writers, like himself, in exile, Brodsky linked space and language as key elements of exile, saying ‘[I]n our profession, the condition we call exile is, first of all, a linguistic event’” (68). Questions of identity are often manifested in voice, or lack thereof in silence, and *Lengua madre* offers ample examples of identity regarding national homeland, which Kaminsky notes:

Consciousness of self as a national entity may be triggered by separation from the place and from others whose language and behavior are familiar. Someone who has never much thought of herself as Argentine might begin to do so when the country is threatened by military takeover, and she may have that sense of nationality consolidated when expelled from the country and confronted with a perhaps hostile, and certainly unfamiliar, place. (28)

The importance Fernando Reati places on the truth within Argentine literature and culture, particularly that written accounts should be scrutinized in order to ensure that the truth is told, also should be taken into consideration since much of the novel appears in epistolary form (*Nombrar* 164). The format of letters offers the reader glimpses into the thoughts of characters, and one caveat is that often the everyday aspects expected in a narrative will appear only as a blurb in a letter. The purpose of the letters is marked as a communication between the letter writer and the reader, that is, the person whose name appears on the envelope. Julieta and the reader of the novel are not the intended audience, and from time to time, certain incidents which would appear grave are hardly mentioned, perhaps due to the nature of background information with which the recipient would be familiar. For example, in a letter from her mother, Julia is told of her cousins, how they are living their lives, how their children are. One particular passage, however, is striking

to the reader but commonplace to those surviving during the Dirty War: “De Pedro no saben nada, hace ya más de un año que lo llevaron detenido y no saben dónde está” (84). Another more plausible cause, however, is fear of speaking openly of that which should be unmentioned. The hushed tones of the discourse certainly offer the mother’s fear that the letter could fall into the wrong hands and implicate her family as having knowledge about a supposed enemy of the state. She clearly expresses concerns in other letters that she has heard things that worry her and that would have an impact on Julia’s safety. On the other hand, the nonchalant attitude while dealing with such tragic circumstances reveals the response to trauma in Argentina, that the unbelievable became recurring and had to be pushed aside or compartmentalized in such a way that those who were left behind could cope through the struggle. Judith Herman notes that “traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (33). The lack of explicit reference to trauma and terror, usually visible as veiled references only, indicates the impact of the climate of fear and how arresting it is to Julia’s family, as well as a “schizophrenic perception of reality” (Reati *Nombrar* 110). The letters allow a view of exile and *insilio* that makes the profound ordinary. While writing to Julia, her mother relates the horrors of the day in casual conversation, immediately followed by more everyday concerns:

Parece que no es un secuestro para cobrar rescate, sino por el otro tema que ya sabés. Aquí en Córdoba hay secuestro tras secuestro, catorce antes de ayer, caro como no sé qué todo lo que comprás, un par de zapatos para Pippo 200.000 pesos, no hay azúcar, no hay yerba, no hay aceite, el café prohibitivo, es espantoso. ¿Salario real de los trabajadores? Es una frase que no tiene sentido. (126-27)

The lack of emotion involved in describing kidnappings does not necessarily equate lack of concern; the more pressing needs are economic. Like the Argentine public at large, Julia's mother seemingly ignores the atrocities around her while more immediate needs are unmet. The public was not allowed to respond openly to trauma, and news of kidnappings and disappearances was limited if available at all (Simpson and Bennett 236). Julia's mother in the novel represents the confined, suppressed discourse of the people; language about the Dirty War, if present at all, is coded.

While the Dirty War is generally an off-limits topic in the letters since fear of censorship normally leads to self-censorship, one rushed letter to Julia from her mother, written shortly before the driver passes by to pick it up, does detail the horrors of the Dirty War with a frightening scene of kidnapping:

[A]yer fuimos con la tía Catalina a Córdoba, la acompañé porque tenía que hacer unas compras para la tapicería. Resulta que bajamos en la terminal y fuimos caminando por el boulevard hacia el centro y en eso vemos que unos tipos arrastraban a una chica hacia un auto y la chica gritaba ¡me secuestran!, ¡me secuestran!, gritaba desesperada pobrecita, no te imaginás cómo gritaba, hija, pero los tipos nada, la metieron en un Falcon y arrancaron que se las pelaban para el otro lado del río. Te lo juro que quedé temblando, y la tía también. Tuve que decirle que nos sentáramos en un bar y tomáramos algo, después no pude sacarme en todo el día la cara de esa chica, creo que si la viera entre un millón la reconocería, con esa cara de desesperación gritando que la llevaban. (170-71)

A general tone of hope, however, fills the remainder of the letter as she, not unlike countless other families of *desaparecidos* or those who have gone into exile or hiding, has the hope that Julia will return: “(¿te acordás de ese dicho de tu abuela?: ‘Esto también pasó’, bueno, así es, cuando menos uno se da cuenta mira para atrás y dice: ‘Esto también pasó’), ya vas a ver que es así como te digo y que nos vamos a sentar un día todos acá en la concina a recordar las cosas difíciles que ahora nos están sucediendo” (127). Julieta,

however, has the luxury of hindsight while reading the letters, realizing that the family would never all sit around the kitchen as they did before.

A letter written to Julia from a contact hashes out the realities and fallout of exile and *insilio* in Argentina, explaining the difference between the two and coming to terms with the consequences of both. Tito clearly identifies the polemical nature of the issue:

En líneas generales, te diría que estoy en desacuerdo con el planteo de fondo del asunto, porque no se reconoce la realidad del exilio interior, la realidad no sólo de los que nos quedamos, vos entre otros y también yo, sino la de todos los argentinos que, de una u otra manera, sufrimos las consecuencias de esa tormenta... (203)

The questions of understanding the loss suffered by some first-hand and by others in a secondary nature underscore the differences between exile and *insilio*, between those who remained and those who left. Furthermore, the letter continues with questions of responsibility:

¿Quién les paga a ellos...? ¿Quién les paga a los que perdieron trabajo, familia, casa, etc. y etc... a los que se volvieron locos, a los que se suicidaron, los que perdieron la mujer y los hijos, a los que ni saben cómo tienen que presentar un reclamo? ... ¿y a nosotros?, ¿quién nos paga, Julia, por los años de miedo escondidos acá adentro, sin salir a la noche y a veces encerrados también durante el día, desaparecidos para que no nos desaparecieran? (203-04)

The most striking feature of this letter is how it captures essentially the struggles of the years post-Dirty War, specifically how those who chose *insilio* hid themselves in order to avoid becoming *desaparecidos*. Ironically, however, with the example of Julia, by choosing hiding and fleeing danger in order to avoid loss, she loses her baby, loses her connections to the family and her past, and in total loses her identity. The reality of their plight is that they have suffered more than others:

[E]n ese sentido, también nosotros hemos sido “desaparecidos”, tal vez más que los que se exiliaron y pudieron mostrarse en otra parte... Nos desaparecimos de todas partes— ¿nunca has pensado en eso?— y desde entonces hasta ahora la vida

ha sido una sucesión de salidas a la luz y de nuevos ocultamientos, tratando de vernos y de que nos vean... (204)

This problem of responsibility brings into question amnesty for perpetrators of the violence and torture, which Amy Kaminsky notes is related to forgetting. Also problematic in amnesty is the whitewashing of history, not in the sense that it is forgotten, but rather that those who remained behind choose not to relive what they already survived; those who chose exile, on the other hand, were and still need to be identified by the past (36-37).

Critical to identity and paramount to understanding the pain of exile, Amy Kaminsky says that “language provides the means to establish as well as to recover a sense of place” (58). *Lengua madre* also explores creation of memory and voice through epistolary scenes in which Julieta is responsible for navigating the intrinsically limited text. Lack of voice, on the other hand, also appears in *Lengua madre*, and Pubill notes that, “la ausencia de información sobre su experiencia personal y psicológica en estos años de cautiverio deja como un vacío en el texto. Al no tener voz propia, la autora enfatiza la inexistencia de la protagonista” (149). Along those same lines, ignoring an atrocity, in some ways, makes it disappear, much like Luisa Valenzuela’s aforementioned view that Argentina suffered “amnesia” throughout the Dirty War (Hicks 6-7). These sentiments are clearly echoed in various episodes of *Lengua madre* where silence, or the lack of words, serves to fill in the empty space created by a vacuum-like memory. Turning a blind eye or a deaf ear to the world around, just like neighbors in Argentina which Valenzuela criticizes, Julieta’s defense mechanism is to go numb, to remove herself from the pain, to exile herself from the hurt and loss. While the death of her grandmother helps Julieta to desire a stronger relationship with her mother, once Julia

becomes ill, however, Julieta withdraws and rejects the prior attempts at reconciliation: “Pero lo que parecía un plan de recuperación amorosa duró muy poco, porque enseguida llegó la enfermedad y con la enfermedad, otra vez el deseo de alejarse” (73). She allows herself to be a victim again in order to avoid coming to terms with victimization.

Silence, according to Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman, served a dual purpose during the Dirty War: “El silencio abarca dos aspectos diferenciables: por un lado el silenciamiento social impuesto por el Estado, que inducía a una identificación alienada con ese mandato y por el otro la necesidad personal de mantener silencio posterior a una situación traumática” (91). These sentiments are clearly echoed in various episodes of *Lengua madre* where silence and the lack of words reveal both a communication gap and a rift in memory. The silence that affected all in Argentina is visible in a letter that, Julieta notes, curiously appears never to have been sent to her grandmother. In it, Julia pleads with her family not to share knowledge of her whereabouts. Julieta is also struck by a line from this letter in which Julia says she called and was unable to speak, simply hearing on the other end “hola? holaaa...” (21). There is a communication gap in which one party can speak and hear but the other can only hear, not unlike the parameters of reading letters written to someone else. Amy Kaminsky captures this sentiment well: “With no one on the other end of communication, language itself begins to disintegrate” (67). The epistolary nature of *Lengua madre* is summed up in this one-way conversation in which both parties do not have the same rights and privileges.

A phone call from Julia to her daughter reveals her worsening illness and also an arresting sensation in which both parties are frozen. When the nurse comes to attend to the ailing mother, there is a silence on the phone until Julia tells Julieta to hang up. Julieta

instructs her mother to hang up instead (82). Neither does, and the suspension reflects both of their lives in terms of the other: a mother and a daughter who need each other in order to establish identity. The illness and pending death, however, prevent them from coming to terms with their relationship, not unlike Dirty War victims who wait for closure but never find it. With Julieta in Germany and her mother in Argentina, the act of communicating requires a delay in the delivery of the letters. Also, the writing of letters carries with it certain characteristics that do not accompany a telephone call or more instantaneous forms of communication. Julia's mother says that it took five days for Julia's letter to reach them via truck (77). For Julieta, it will take a lifetime for her mother's story to reach her through a pile of letters.

As Julieta begins to sift through the box, she realizes that the past is being presented in a fractured way, with comments here from an aunt, most of the letters from her grandmother, and other information coming in clips and snippets (16). The abrupt shifts in voice and information reflect Argentina of that day. One letter, presumably from Julieta's father to Julia, testifies to the clandestine existence of former (or current) politically active individuals, and risk was all around: "Bueno, como te imaginarás, en estos días aquí, buscando lo que ya no existe en ninguna parte, estuve pensando mucho hasta tomar esta decisión. Perdoná lo confuso de la carta, sólo que no quería desaparecer de tu vida sin una explicación y tampoco sabía cómo decírtelo, pero alguna vez debía decirlo y me parece mejor así, por escrito" (17). The terribly ironic similarity to real life is the use of the word *desaparecer*, for countless victims of the Dirty War did disappear without warning, not just metaphorically. Julieta returns often to that line from her father. Just as a *desaparecido*, her father has disappeared from her life even before he knew her.

The letter clearly demonstrates that announcing departure could not happen in a spoken manner but rather through the written word. Much like former torture victims, spoken words often cannot be uttered, but written words sometimes suffice. Edurne Portela contends that “[t]o narrate imprisonment and torture constitutes an exercise of memory through which a representation of those traumatic experiences imprinted on the body is brought into language. The narrative act intertwines pain and the reconstitution of the subject through the labors of memory” (32).

Language plays a role in the way Julieta compartmentalizes the story of her mother’s escape to Trelew in Patagonia via hiding in the basement: “Tierra suelta. / Madre tierra. / Lengua madre” (210). Julieta’s birth in the basement only underlines the eternity of humanity, evoking the punishment of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, when they are told that they will return to the dust of the ground. The earth is Julieta’s mother, and her mother tongue offers the only remaining tangible connection to her past: the letters.

By reading the letters, Julieta begins to question the past, and the fidelity of memories is examined regarding one story her mother told her: “Ahora no puede precisar si ese relato—el de una huida, la búsqueda de un escondite, la solidaridad de una familia—corresponde a un episodio vivido por su madre o por una amiga suya o si se trata de un recuerdo literario, de algo que su madre ha leído y le contó” (129). This incident also allows the reader to think of the collective nature of testimony and how Julia possibly could have taken on stories and sufferings of others as her own. Julieta, too, has taken on her mother’s suffering in *insilio* and the effects linger.

A hallmark of *desaparecidos* as well as victims of exile is the hope of return. For families dealing with exile or *insilio*, communication offers hope, and Julia’s mother even

compares her letters to luxury: “Ayer cuando recibimos la carta, papá me pidió que termináramos de comer antes de abrirla, fue realmente el postre” (141-42). Julia’s mother, like many Argentines at the beginning of the Dirty War, expected things to return to “normal” not long after the campaign was initiated. She writes to Julia that when she decides to return, she should notify them in advance so as not to surprise her father as it may harm him physically. The undetermined nature of exile, however, is reflected linguistically in the subjunctive form of the verb, suggesting that while there is hope that Julia will return, there is not absolute certainty: “que cuando decidas volver avises con tiempo” (19). Further linguistic intricacies of Spanish are noted by Julieta, whose curiosity is piqued by handwriting on the chalkboard in a photograph: “Esperemos con fuerza el nuevo año. / Diciembre de 1976. / Paula, Tina, Luis” (43). The motive for using subjunctive is scrutinized, and the most telling feature is the intrinsic nature of the subjunctive: “El subjuntivo es el tiempo del deseo y del ruego, piensa, prestando atención a la fecha: diciembre de 1976” (44). *Esperemos* reveals a double meaning of hoping and waiting, perhaps the two most common activities during the first year of the Dirty War.

Like Lorenzano’s *Saudades*, Andruetto’s *Lengua madre* presents cases of *saudade*, not so much for what was but for what never was, what might have been. The characterization of Julieta’s father does not manifest itself in how he treated his daughter, but rather, in how he did not: “Cuando era una recién nacida, su padre pudo haberla tenido en brazos en los ratos que le dejaba libre el trabajo en una escuela, en una casa de comercio o en un banco. Pudo haberla tenido en brazos, pero no la tuvo” (21). The function of language in this case is not to call attention to what has or had occurred but rather to what could have happened. Furthermore, the gaps are not filled in consciously

by the primary “victim” in this situation; Julieta, like many children of *desaparecidos*, lives with her grandparents and the past is interpreted through their words: “Sabe que eso no sucedió, que no pudo haber pasado, que su padre—¡se lo dijeron tantas veces sus abuelos!—se fue del país cuando ella tenía un mes, antes incluso—mucho antes—de que la anotaran, de que tuviera un nombre, una identidad” (21). The narrative voice clearly demonstrates the lack of identity for Julieta, that she was without a name when her father left. Like so many others in Argentina, a crisis of identity has occurred before the past is even understood, as Amy Kaminsky posits (28).

Loss associated with exile does not necessarily stem from loss of things in the past: like in Lorenzano’s novel, “*não há saudades mais dolorosas do que as das coisas que nunca foram*” (28). Julieta understands that the most damaging facet of her lack of relationship with her father is what might have been:

Ella hubiera podido tener un hermano, su padre hubiera podido tenerla en brazos, hubiera podido quedarse en el país, hubiera podido llevarlas a su madre y a ella consigo, hubiera podido regresar con la democracia..., pero sabe que eso no sucedió, que su padre se fue del país cuando ella tenía un mes, que se fue sin su madre y sin ella, que nunca jamás volvió, ni siquiera a conocerla, que construyó su vida en otro sitio, que construyó su vida al margen de ella... (76)

Like other victims of the Dirty War, loss is not always measured by a subsequent mathematical subtraction but also by a retroactive elimination. The sting of loss, of what could have been her family’s life, therefore, is doubled with every repetition of the word *hubiera*.

More linguistic questions regarding Julieta arise, particularly comparing *conocer* and *nacer*: “Conocer se conjuga como nacer. Desde que nace el niño ejercita la facultad de conocer. Sin embargo ella no conocía a su madre” (208). Further play with language on the part of the author is visible around Julia’s funeral. Julieta’s thoughts reflect the

linguistic battle of exile, in which the present, the past, and the future come together.

“Ahora están todos los que son—Pippo y Marta, Lina, Rubén y sus primos—en la casa de su madre. En la que era la casa de su madre. La que era, la que es, los que son, lo que fue” (49). This tripartite linguistic comparison of preterit, imperfect, and present represents Julieta’s struggle in the novel to understand the past in order to live in the present and to create a future.

The written word as well as the spoken word holds an attraction for Julieta, especially the connection to her childhood and memories that she does have, and certain images seem to reflect her own self-identity: “Por las noches, se acostaban las dos en la cama grande y su abuela le leía cuentos que ella escuchaba como encantada. Cuentos que terminaban siempre con una princesita que se encuentra con su madre” (52). Julieta writes in another letter to her mother about what she wants to be when she grows up. She reveals that the written word is cathartic for her, which is parlayed later as she does decide to study literature: “Te voy a responder a tus preguntas: cuando sea grande me gustaría ser profe de lengua o estudiar medicina, pero lo que más me gustaría es trabajar en la tele. Te cuento que estoy inventando un montón de poemas para cuando estoy triste, enamorada, enojada, contenta, feliz, etc.” (103). Julieta sees literary parallels for her situation, one in particular in which death and living are juxtaposed, and the living without relationships might as well be dead: “*Los muertos son fríos, los vivos son otra cosa*, dice un poema de Vivian Lamarque, con un padre *vivo* ella hubiera podido tirarse al suelo, caminar orgullosa por las calles del pueblo, salir de paseo un domingo, pero su padre no estuvo vivo para ella, su padre fue más frío que un muerto” (80).

The written words and language of the letters allow Julieta to reconstruct the past, and she is well aware of the task at hand:

Recorrer las cartas es recorrer el pasado, debe comprender eso si quiere seguir adelante: un pasado no sólo suyo, sino también de su familia y de su tierra. Su madre recibió durante años las palabras de los otros y aun en su desorden—en el desorden de su vida, cuestionado por todos—construyó un archivo. Y es por eso que ella puede ahora repasar la tragedia. (64)

In this sense, reconstructing the past is not simply something Julieta does for herself, but it is a parallel to the task the entire country must undertake. Julieta personifies the struggle of identity within the frame of exile and *insilio*, coupled with *desaparecidos* and their family members left behind. Julieta also considers her status as a child abandoned—whether intentionally or not—and considers just how much weight she would give to politics if she ever decided to have children: “Tampoco tiene hijos, ni cree que vaya a tenerlos. No le interesan los hijos; pero si los tuviera, está segura de que serían más importantes que cualquier revolución, que cualquier ideal” (64). Julieta struggles with a common difficulty for writers and literary critics who approach subjects that broach on the personal level:

Frustración de no poder abstenerse de todo sentimiento, para encontrar una manera de vivir en paz con su pasado. Cansancio, dolor, tristeza, tedio, entusiasmo también y también—¿por qué no?—breves relámpagos de felicidad...considera que todas estas emociones por las que va pasando están relacionadas con la lectura de las cartas, que deberá en algún momento separarse de ellas para poder razonar libremente, para lograr cierta distancia. Un punto de equilibrio entre el no sentir y el vivir embargada de emociones. (143)

Julieta, therefore, mirrors the difficulties writers face in documenting trauma and terror.

As a student of literature, Julieta is, perhaps, more qualified to read the letters critically than the average person:

Le llama la atención el ritmo de escritura de su abuela, trata de concentrarse para reconocerlo, para descubrir la pulsión que la animó a escribir y acaso también

para descubrir el deseo oscuro, la opacada intención de su madre que las recibía, que las habrá leído— una vez, muchas— , de su madre que fue capaz de provocar esa escritura, ese llamado. Es como un trabajo que hace, casi podría decir, y lo hace siguiendo reglas de lenguaje, teorías de lectura que ha aprendido de sus profesores. (144)

Julieta's trip to the Dachau concentration camp in Germany brings her face to face with questions of ulterior motives behind words. A sign labeled *Arbeit macht frei*⁷ forces Julieta to think in terms of the meaning of words: "*Arbeit mach frei*, después de eso es imposible leer ya nada con inocencia: detrás de las palabras, bien lo sabe, está la historia y a ella le ha llegado la hora de preguntarse detrás de qué palabras, de qué hechos está su historia" (193). Corinne Pubill asserts that Julieta's desire to understand another culture will serve her well in attempting to understand her own culture's past (152). The ironic linguistic significance of the sign is that Julieta is working on understanding Germany and literature, and the tools she employs in the process—reading and literary analysis from an objective standpoint—will indeed set her free while reading her mother's letters. Throughout this process, however, Julieta will encounter her own subjective feelings, again embodying the gray area of truth and fidelity as the past is expressed in written form.

One thing Julieta reads was written by her mother, mainly in poetic form, and she describes her life in Trelew and the limitations placed on her due to living in the basement. Corinne Pubill highlights Julia's situation as a prime example of *insilio*: "El silencio y la invisibilidad se convierten en sus únicas armas de sobrevivencia. Julia está doblemente anulada porque no tiene voz propia en el texto, y porque está condenada a vivir en estado de ostracismo, incomunicada con el mundo exterior" (148). She cannot

⁷"Work will make you free."

talk to anyone, she cannot walk through the streets. The entire written text begins line by line with “No puedo” (189). The arresting nature of the poem highlights Julia’s arrested status: although she has avoided kidnapping or being detained by secret police, she is a prisoner in the basement. A similar second writing factors in the importance of Julieta. Julia, according to her poem, cannot exist in that her role as a mother remains undefined without her daughter; the separation costs her identity. The constant repetition of “No puedo” evokes images of a patient at a mental hospital, arrested in a state of loss. Furthermore, the body is manifested in the written words and takes on the voice, particularly through images of “No puedo tenerla en los brazos / No puedo darle la teta” (192).

Questions of ownership and responsibility arise in the language of the novel. Fifteen days after Julia asks Julieta about reading the letters together, Julieta’s aunt Lina calls: “la llamó Lina para decirle: Tuvimos que internarla. / La internamos. Tuvimos que internarla. Hemos tenido que internarla. Han tenido que internarla. / Lina tuvo que internarla” (74). Again, the linguistic variation of subject and verb showcases the multiplicity of ownership or a lessening of personal guilt, since it was the family’s decision and not Lina’s alone, as well as the collective nature of language in response to trauma and to dis-ease. Another phone call during Julieta’s first week in Munich reveals her thoughts on memory, most noticeable through language: “la llamó desde Göttingen una amiga de su padre, dijo en alemán *habla una amiga de tu papá o habla la amiga de tu papá*, ella ya no recuerda exactamente, y entonces se preguntó cuál sería el alcance de esa palabra” (74). The variation of the language used calls into question the validity and fidelity of memories themselves, and it also reveals the battle between factual veracity

and perception, particularly regarding the collective nature and ownership of trauma and tragedy. Furthermore, the use of “la amiga” could be interpreted as “querida” or the lover of her father. This raises another level of questions regarding the true identity of people within certain cultural frames. As the phone conversation continues, Julieta again considers the point of view of the provider of information and comments about its significance: “Dijo: *Te contaré cosas sobre tu papá*. Ella agradeció. Recuerda haber pensado: me contará de sus cosas, pero no es mi padre quien las cuenta” (75). As with nearly the entire novel, information about someone flows through a medium and not from the primary source. Whether through phone calls or letters, interpretation of information is influenced by the parameters of the provider, and the provider influences the language of the information.

One possibility arising in the letters is that Julieta views herself as an intermediary within the frame of the letters: “Las cartas son una partitura y ella una intérprete que las vuelve comprensibles” (199). Julieta’s love of literature also marks her as a seeker of understanding, meaning, and representation. In this manner, she is doubly aware of her own standing as the child of a victim of the Dirty War who must read and interpret the written word in terms of her personal identity as she also reads the written words of others and contemplates their identities as female writers (Lessing in particular). Julieta thinks that the worst thing that could happen is to wake up one morning and not remember. She feels that the implications from wondering about memory reveal bias: it does matter who reveals the past; her grandmother’s version will differ from what magazines say because of hate, love, and indifference (199-200). In this manner, Julieta

calls into question the fidelity of the past and how memories have an impact on their understanding.

The linguistic debate of location due to exile appears in a conversation that Julieta perhaps has had with her grandmother and now considers a dream or a memory:

¿Estás ahí?
Sí, estoy aquí.
¡Qué bueno que estás aquí!
¡No, ahí no, hija, estoy aquí!
¿Dónde es aquí?
Aquí, donde al final venimos todos.
¿Quieres que vaya con vos, ahí?
No, sos muy joven, es muy pronto... quedate ahí. Yo te miro desde aquí. (181)

Julieta continues to understand that her status as an orphan—perhaps a double orphan now that the grandparents who raised her have passed away—leads to questions of comfort and care which masquerade as identity:

Por años le ha gustado extraviarse, cambiar de sitio, dejarse ir de un proyecto a otro, mudar de lengua y de país. Pero, ¿hasta dónde podrá extraviarse y regresar cuando quiere a casa? ¿Hay alguna casa adonde pueda volver? Si se pierde, si se perdiera del todo alguna vez, ¿podrá alguien llevarla hasta un sitio donde ponerla a salvo? Muertos su abuelo, su abuela, su madre, ya nada ni nadie podrá encontrarla, ni hacer que ella se encuentre con la que era, con la que fue alguna vez, alma sobre la que se urdieron todas las Julietas que vinieron más tarde. Ya nada ni nadie tendrá amor suficiente para obligarla a desandar el camino que hizo perdida, para regresarla a su sitio. (181-82)

Julieta is convinced that these letters allow her to see her mother: “Aunque no hayan sido escritas por su madre, aunque en esos papeles no estén sus palabras, las cartas que ahora lee son la madre” (185). Julieta does not see herself explicitly in the letters, but, according to Pubill, she constructs herself via her mother (151). The written word has created a bridge that carries Julieta’s being closer to those who have been missing, spanning the wide gulf within her life.

In the course of the novel, words have more than a representational connection to identity. The death of Julieta's grandmother has given cause for Julieta to consider their circumstances and come to a startling conclusion: "Ella, su madre y sus tíos la enterraron. Ella y su madre, criadas las dos por su abuela, su madre y ella hijas por igual" (102). A woman at her grandmother's wake solidifies Julieta's physical connection to her mother: "¿La hija de Julia?, preguntó una mujer en el velorio de su abuela. / Sí, dijo ella, la hija. / ¡Sos igual a tu madre! Los mismo gestos, la misma voz, un calco..." (172-73). Julieta is more than a spitting image of her mother; she shares her name: "Fue su papá quien quiso que se llamara Julieta. La amada, la que se enfrenta a todos por amor, la que muere por la muerte de su amor; pero Julieta es también una derivación de Julia, una degradación del nombre de su madre" (175). The name Julieta pays homage to her mother but also indicates that her name is a part of her mother, solidifying this mother-daughter relationship. Thus, Julieta's own identity is linked to her mother with each utterance of her name, not unlike her own nationality, *argentina*, which is the same word for her motherland.

The language of exile is featured in a scene Julieta remembers from a film. Questions of here and there, perspectives, and points of view cloud communication between two people, and the scene offers a glimpse of a Cuban mother and daughter facing the difficulties of separation over a great distance:

¡Hija! ¿Dónde estás? ¿Aquí?, pregunta emocionada la madre.
¿Dónde voy a estar, mamá? ¡Estoy aquí!, dice la hija.
¿Aquí? ¡Aquí! ¡Gracias a la Virgen de Copacabana, ya estás aquí! ¡Julio, Nancy, nuestra Mirita está aquí!
¡No, mamá! ¡No Estoy ahí!, ¡estoy aquí, aquí te digo, en España!
¿En España estás?, se escucha casi sobre los créditos la pregunta ya sin respuesta de la madre. (176)

Julieta thinks the words, although quite similar, are on opposite ends of the earth in their meaning: “Acá. Aquí. Allá. Ahí. Pequeñas palabras que separan los cuerpos y las vidas, pequeñas trampas” (176). The nature of exile and *insilio* creates a distance between people, and linguistic evidence of lack of commonality and fractured communities serves to underscore the separation and loss created by trauma and state-sponsored terrorism. The silence of the Dirty War, via kidnappings and a general climate of fear, is complemented by this distancing that enforces another kind of silence, that of delay. The separation creates a boundary of identity in that both parties, while sharing a common past, do not share a common present due to distance and exile. Thus, the words spoken cannot have the same meaning, and a fractured cultural identity is manifested.

An ironic dichotomy of Julieta’s travels to her father’s hometown appears in the linguistic disconnect between the bus company *La Estrella del Sur* and the description that her mother is “un gran agujero negro para ella” (145). These thoughts continue with Julieta’s acknowledgement that she hardly knows her mother. While she does feel that it is possible to learn the details about her life, she does not understand the “intimate reasons” for the things her mother did (145). To this extent, Julieta has an identity crisis:

La estación de tren de su pueblo, la portada del Asilo de Alienados, los enfermos deambulando con su locura a cuestas, esa madre con la que no llegaba a encontrarse nunca, siempre fueron para ella un misterio. Misterio puro. Lo cronológico, lo topográfico, los sencillos datos biográficos dan estructura a una vida y sin embargo la vida, la suya—la vida de cualquiera—, no alcanza jamás a definirse por ninguna circunstancia, siempre se le escapa. (146-47)

Paramount to viewing Julieta through a more macro-aligned cultural paradigm reveals that, like others in her generation, Julieta lacks identity because of the exile in her mother’s past.

The tripartite nature of the novel, the triangle of grandmother, mother, and daughter, makes one final linguistic Venn diagram that echoes other Latin American novels. Readers of Carlos Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) will be reminded of the mixture of past, present, and future within the narrative voice. Similarly, Laura J. Beard notes the fragmented nature of Helena Parente Cunha's autobiography *As doze cores do vermelho* (1988) with its three columns labeled *eu*, *você*, and *ela*, which correspond to first, second, and third person as well as to the past, the present, and the future respectively within the text (34-5). Her analysis of the autobiography has an uncanny resemblance to the final scene of *Lengua madre*:

The columnar format forces the reader visually to confront the multiplicity of the protagonist's identity. We are unable to read the three sections simultaneously. Looking at the open book, it is as though we see the multiple images of the protagonist in the mirror. We look first to the left, then to the middle, then to the right, studying each reflection like a prospective customer trying on clothing in front of a three-way mirror. (35)

The end of *Lengua madre* offers one last linguistic game of family, history, and identity. Julieta juxtaposes two photographs, one of her mother and grandmother together, the other of herself with her mother:

Su madre joven y su abuela en una de las fotos. Ella, diez años atrás, en la otra.
Tan parecidas como diferentes su madre de su abuela, y ella de su madre y de su abuela.
Su madre, su abuela, ella.
Su madre, su abuela.
Su madre, ella.
Ella. (229)

Each part is connected to the whole and is to another part the same as the other: three women, three generations, and the multiple possibilities of rearranging them. All have to do with the rest, but at the end, Julieta is left by herself. Julieta understands that nobody is looking for her any more, but yet, the box of letters has allowed her to reach a place of

understanding about her identity that is solid. After all, at the bottom of Pandora's box, there is hope.

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