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**“You Have to Look at Both Sides”:
Percepticide and Memory in Argentina’s *Parque de la Memoria***

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Honors Capstone

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Introduction

In 1976, the military of Argentina, led by General Jorge Rafael Videla, staged a coup against the country's loosely democratic government, installing a civilian-military dictatorship that would officially last until 1983. The twentieth century in Argentina can generally be understood as a struggle between Argentina's populist majority and its military and elite classes, which reached its climax when, with the assistance of the CIA and transnational corporations, the Argentine military, elite, and Catholic Church formed a regime that worked to reinforce a traditional culture rooted in Western European patriarchal values, most benefitting the upper classes and foreign interests. As part of its political project, the dictatorship persecuted anyone deemed subversive to these values and engaged in the act of disappearing. By arresting or killing Argentines without providing information to their loved ones about what had happened to them, the dictatorship terrorized not only those who were disappeared but also the rest of society.



Figure 1: People are arrested on the street in Buenos Aires as a woman is seen hiding her head in her arms through the window of a cafe. From: Taylor 1996, Fig. 38.

As a response to this terror, Argentines coped by way of a phenomenon called “percepticide,” first coined by Argentine psychoanalyst Juan Carlos Kusnetzoff. Marcelo Suárez-Orozco describes this period as “the epoch when *knowing what not to know* was the major coping response to terror” (Suárez-Orozco 1990, 367). Diana Taylor expands upon Suárez-Orozco’s interpretation of percepticide to argue that Argentines did, in fact, know about the violence around them and their percepticide took form in response to this violence, citing a photo in which a woman in a cafe is seen obscuring her vision as a man is arrested in front of her on the street (Taylor 1997, 123). This percepticide exhibited by Argentines during the dictatorship is largely what gave the regime its power, as demonstrated through its success in terrorizing the public, and also allowed it to continue eradicating anyone considered a threat.



Figure 2: Madres wearing their pañuelos as they march in the Plaza de Mayo. From Nieri n.d. (<https://perio.unlp.edu.ar/2020/04/01/madres-de-la-plaza-el-pueblo-las-abraza/>)

However, one group that sought to fight percepticide was the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, which was founded in 1977 by a group of mothers of the disappeared. They held (and continue to hold) weekly demonstrations demanding the return of their children. Significantly, they demand the return of their children alive (Sion 2015, 42). Wearing white handkerchiefs on their heads to symbolize the diapers of their missing children, the Madres made themselves a spectacle. By maintaining a physical presence in the center of Argentina's capital, the Madres worked to dismantle the percepticide of the people around them, and it became increasingly difficult for people to ignore the fact that the government was disappearing its citizens (Taylor 1997, 125).

The years immediately following the dictatorship have been described as “the horror show,” in which suddenly Argentines felt the urge to “speak about the unspeakable” as a form of healing (Suárez-Orozco 1990, 369). In 1998, the city of Buenos Aires passed a law to create the *Parque de la Memoria* (Memory Park), a project to remember the victims of state terror during the dictatorship (Parque de la Memoria n.d.). The city, in collaboration with human rights organizations and families of the disappeared, worked to build a park as a monument to victims of state terror. However, the park is not without controversy. It has been criticized for the way it depicts the fates of the disappeared, as well as for the role of the government and the destruction of Villa Rosa in its construction.

I first visited the Parque de la Memoria within a few weeks of arriving in Buenos Aires for my study abroad program. Prior to traveling to Argentina, I knew that the country had recently experienced a dictatorship and was curious to see how I would engage with this history while studying there. It was not very long until I began to see the distinct ways Argentines were trying to reconcile. As part of my intensive Spanish course, which was designed to get my peers

and me adjusted to living in Argentina, my professor had planned a visit to the park as a way for us to learn about the dictatorship outside the classroom.

Upon learning that I would be going to the Parque de la Memoria, my host mom had asked me to report back what *they* told me. She did not know about the park but speculated that it was a project started by the neopopulist, left-of-center Kirchner family who first came to power in Argentina in 2003, making it clear to me that the way in which the dictatorship is remembered is indeed very political. She, like many Argentines, was of the belief that it should honor not only the victims of state violence but also those who were victims of the guerrillas, whose violence she and her family had experienced, imploring me to “look at both sides.” I should note that although I went to Argentina to improve my Spanish, she said this to me in English, which, being an English teacher at a school in Buenos Aires, she utilized to ensure that I understood her point. While I, as an outsider, understood there to be a notable difference in power between the military regime and the small subset of guerrillas, my host mom’s memory was clearly distinct from the narrative put forward by the park, demonstrating how the process of remembering the disappeared is complicated by the subjectivities of Argentina’s population.

Drawing from existing literature about the dictatorship and my own experience as a student from the US in Buenos Aires, I reflect on how although it is important to have a nuanced understanding of the dictatorship, there is a danger in denying important power dynamics that contributes to the nation’s percepticide and the perpetuation of the dictatorship today. In the following pages, I interrogate the complex relationship between perspective and percepticide when considering the legacies of dictatorship in Argentina. I use the Parque de la Memoria as a case study, specifically the history of its construction, debates about its objectives and effectiveness, and the visual politics of three of its monuments. I argue that when obscured by

people's subjectivities surrounding the dictatorship, such as in the case of my host mom, perspective can contribute to the perpetuation of a historical percepticide concerning the dictatorship's legacy; however, perspective — like that which the Parque de la Memoria attempts to create — is also necessary to dismantle percepticide and find truth.

To explore this idea, I will first consider the importance of truth through “seeing one side” in Marie Orensanz’s sculpture “Pensar es un hecho revolucionario.” Next, I will examine what has gone into the making of the park’s Monument to the Victims of State Terror (*Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado*), including its contradictions, given the perspectives of its distinct stakeholders. And finally, I will discuss the applications of studying the dictatorship beyond understanding Argentina in the late 20th century as I consider Claudia Fontes’s statue “Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez.” While the focus of this paper is somewhat narrow, the issues that I outline here take place within a larger context of “memory struggles,” or the challenges of constructing collective memory, for countries in Latin America, as well as worldwide, that have experienced dictatorships, wars, and armed conflicts in our world’s more recent history. Through the perspectives offered by each of these pieces in the Parque de la Memoria, we are encouraged to challenge ourselves and question our ideas of Argentina’s dictatorship as we participate in processes of historical memory.



Figure 3: “Pensar es un hecho revolucionario.” From Parque de la Memoria n.d. (<https://parquedelamemoria.org.ar/pensar-es-un-hecho-revolucionario/>)

Looking Through

Although it sits on the edge of the city, the Parque de la Memoria has a powerful location. It was built alongside the Río de la Plata, near the Aeroparque Internacional Jorge Newberry, where during the dictatorship people were put on “death flights” and subsequently thrown into the river. It is also situated next to the Ciudad Universitaria, a collection of schools within the Universidad de Buenos Aires, where students and professors had been subject to ideological repression by the state, many of whom were disappeared. Entering the Parque de la Memoria, you are met with two large steel rectangles in which the words “*pensar es un hecho revolucionario...*” — meaning “to think is a revolutionary act” — have been carved out. This

piece was created by Argentine artist Marie Orensanz in response to the censorship of books and free thinking during the dictatorship and the persecution of intellectuals who challenged the regime (Parque de la Memoria n.d.). I think that this also applies to the importance of combating percepticide among individual visitors.

The text on the sculpture is written as “pensa/r es un/hecho/revol/ucion/ario...” and the awkwardness of this arrangement is intended to make visitors work to decipher its meaning. We are forced to think about what we are reading and therefore, just by looking at the sculpture, we are engaging in a “revolutionary act.” The use of enjambment and the ellipsis evoke a sense of continuity, as thinking and challenging the world around us is an ongoing act that we can never simply complete. In addition to being a noun meaning “act” or “fact,” the word *hecho* is the participle of the verb *hacer*, which means to do or to make. This is the only part of the phrase that remains uninterrupted, which serves to emphasize action as opposed to passivity. Considering that *hecho* means “fact” as well, it therefore also calls attention to the issue of truth and the fact that tens of thousands of people died during the dictatorship.

Here, the issue of perspective is quite clear. Depending on where the viewer moves, the phrase and its message become distorted. We are only able to read the words and interpret their meaning when facing the sculpture straight on, provoking us to consider how we find truth. In this sense, looking at “both sides” of the piece is not an option, but instead there is a particular perspective that allows us to confront the truth.

Considering the vertical split between the two pieces of steel from this perspective, the one on the right is slightly behind the one on the left. Could this perhaps symbolize the Argentine right’s desire to maintain political and cultural conservatism in contrast with the progressivism of the left? Running parallel to one another, the two pieces of steel are the physical representation

of a national division so deep that it is simply referred to as *la grieta*, or “the rift.” Carved out of the blocks, the letters are illuminated by the light shining through, suggesting that by reading the sculpture and thinking about its message, we are enlightened. In other words, it symbolizes how in addressing the fact that the state terrorized the nation, we challenge percepticide and see truth.

As earlier discussed, Argentines coped with the violence of the dictatorship by making a point not to think about what was happening around them, which is part of the reason why the dictatorship was so successful in its ability to terrorize them. By coming to the Parque de la Memoria and engaging with this particular sculpture, which is demanded by its position at the entrance, we work to confront the percepticide that the dictatorship fostered and therefore the dictatorship’s continuing presence in Argentine society as well. Much of the power of this piece and the others that make up the park’s sculpture garden, including “Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez” which I will later discuss, arises from the ability to relate their messages to more than Argentina’s dictatorship: it is not only in Argentina that thinking is a revolutionary act. In other words, the lack of visible specificity to a particular place and moment in time gets visitors to not only consider the dictatorship in Argentina but provokes thinking that they can take with them wherever they go.



Figure 5: Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado. From: Turismo Buenos Aires n.d.
(<https://turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar/es/otros-establecimientos/parque-de-la-memoria>)

Figure 6: Overhead view of the Parque de la Memoria. From: Parque de la Memoria - Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo del Estado 2020.

(<https://www.facebook.com/ParquedelaMemoria/photos/pb.100064773094075.-2207520000./3819258181450204/?type=3>)

Looking Around

In the middle of the Parque de la Memoria sits the *Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado*, dedicated to those who were disappeared and killed by the state from 1969 to 1983. Made up of four walls with 30,000 plaques for the estimated 30,000 disappeared, the monument has been inscribed with 9,000 victims' names, ages, and whether they had been pregnant. The inscriptions on the cold, gray walls make it reminiscent of a war memorial, even reminding me of the wall that holds the remains of my uncle, a Vietnam War veteran, at the US military's Willamette National Cemetery. Considering that the dictatorship is often referred to as a "dirty war," what might the design of this monument imply?

Although it is clear that the park is dedicated specifically to honoring victims of state terror, the form of the monument creates a bit of a contradiction, suggesting that these victims were casualties of a conflict with two equal and opposing forces rather than of an extreme abuse of power by the military state. While a war being "dirty" implies that it is in some way improper, perhaps the word "war" in particular promotes a particular idea about the conflict, which has also been referred to as *genocidio*, or genocide, a term that reflects a distinct perspective about state terror and assigns more culpability to the state. As I will later discuss, considering the monument's particular form, the inscription of the victims' names into walls in this way also limits their agency and can be interpreted as cementing them into the past, an act that has been met with mixed reactions.

In 1969, Argentina was under a different military dictatorship — that of General Juan Carlos Onganía — in which major cities such as Córdoba and Rosario saw massive civil unrest in response to state oppression. The fact that the monument lists 1969 as the starting date of the state terror it memorializes serves as a way to acknowledge that state terror in Argentina did not

begin with the coup in 1976 but instead was the result of mounting tension and instability in the country. However, it should be noted that for certain groups of Argentines, such as the country's indigenous communities, the dictatorship began long before, dating back to colonization and particularly the genocidal campaigns of the 19th century (Ray 2007, 118). In this sense, the 1969 start date of the monument feels somewhat arbitrary. While the Parque de la Memoria attempts to go beyond the 1976-1983 period to show how state terror had already been occurring, we must also keep in mind its lack of visibility regarding the nation's inherently violent history since it was first founded as a Spanish colony. As in many countries with colonial histories, this reflects a willful ignorance regarding Argentina's violent colonial past and demonstrates how, just as the dictatorship is understood by indigenous groups, a reality of percepticide is not unique to this period in the nation's history. In this sense, it is important not to assume that state violence and subsequent percepticide began and ended in 1969 and 1983, respectively, although they certainly escalated between these dates, giving them a wider and, for some groups, intenser impact.

Although Argentina is one of the few countries to bring some of the perpetrators of this period of authoritarianism to trial, the dictatorship is nowhere near behind us. In contrast with the Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado, along the right edge of the Parque de la Memoria sits the *Carteles de la Memoria*, a collection of street signs created by Grupo de Arte Callejero, who, in their work outside the park, have used street art to participate in *escraches* to publicly call attention to perpetrators who have yet to be held accountable. Lined up sequentially, the Carteles more explicitly explain how the dictatorship came to be and its lasting effects, including the damage caused to Argentina's economy and corruption within the penal system.



Figure 7: Carteles de la Memoria. From: Grupo de Arte Callejero, 2009.
 (<https://grupodeartecallejero.wordpress.com/2009/12/31/parque-de-la-memoria-1999-2010/>).

However, despite its several features and variety of art installations, the Parque de la Memoria does not make clear the continued weaponization of disappearances since Argentina’s “return to democracy.” Jorge Julio López, for example, was first disappeared in 1976 due to his affiliation with a radical leftist group, and after the official end of the dictatorship, he continued his activism by joining a group for people formerly detained and disappeared. Then, in 2006, López was disappeared a second time in the city of La Plata as he prepared to testify against Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz, one of the perpetrators of the dictatorship and López’s former torturer (Rizki 2020, 92). While López remains disappeared, he and other victims who continue to face intimidation and violence by those who participated in the dictatorship are not included in the park’s honoring of the disappeared.

In my own experience as a visitor from outside Argentina, I came away from my first trip to the Parque de la Memoria still thinking of the dictatorship as a fairly exceptional event in Argentina, but the dictatorship continues to impact Argentines because many of its perpetrators have not been held accountable, which means they consequently have yet to be completely stripped of their power in Argentina's democracy. Though the park aims to give visibility to victims of state terror, the timeline of the Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado and its memorialization of the disappeared leave this unclear, making the act of remembering the disappeared seem more relevant to the past than the present.

All this considered, it is not surprising that one of the biggest critiques of the Parque de la Memoria is that it was constructed in collaboration with the government of the city of Buenos Aires. Although it must be remembered that the 1976-1983 regime was illegally established through a military coup, it does seem ironic that a memorial to the victims of state terror would be managed by the state. As one former detainee explained, “We are not opposed to monuments in general, as long as they come from the people... In this case, some elected officials did not speak out for justice, but rather for impunity... We are demanding justice from the government, not consolation prizes” (Sion 2015, 41). In this way, the city government is able to have a greater say in how the disappeared are remembered and honored. As the quote suggests, building a park is not justice for victims of the dictatorship, nor can it absolve the government of its responsibility to achieve the justice they feel they deserve.

Additionally, the funding for the Parque de la Memoria is dependent upon who is in power. Leading up to Mauricio Macri's term as mayor of Buenos Aires, for example, stakeholders in the park worked quickly to accomplish as much as possible, fearing his ambivalence to human rights projects, and the park was eventually targeted for budget cuts (Sion

2015, 23). This is to say that the Parque de la Memoria is subject to the whims of whoever is in power in the city's government. In this way, collective memory of state terror is ironically left vulnerable to government authorities.

Another contradiction to the goals of the Parque de la Memoria arises from the land it occupies. In 1990, a group of young gay Argentines founded Villa Rosa on the edge of Buenos Aires, where the park sits today, and following the economic crisis of the early 2000s, families began to move to the community (Sion 2015, 36). To construct the park, the government displaced the neighborhood's inhabitants, offering some financial compensation to the 95 households (Sion 2015, 36). The destruction of Villa Rosa is ironic, as it is contrary to the missions of many of the disappeared, who were active proponents of social justice. Not to mention, given the dictatorship's heteropatriarchal values, queer Argentines were among those persecuted by the regime. It makes one wonder which of the disappeared we are supposed to remember if queer Argentines have continued to be victims of the state since the return to democracy. Some of Argentina's most marginalized, at the intersection of poor and queer, had created a space for themselves, and yet the government sought to destroy it. As stated by Brigitte Sion, "the state emptied a state of its living presence in order to mark the absence of the dead" (Sion 2015, 36). In this sense, too, the dictatorship lives on.

Some human rights organizations and the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo opposed the formation of the Parque de la Memoria in the first place. They refuse to "psychologically participate in the death of all disappeared," as they fear the government might want them to do (Robben 2000, 91-92). These groups claim that by memorializing the disappeared, the park promotes an attitude of acceptance regarding their fates, contradicting the Madres' demand that

their children reappear alive (Sion 2015, 42). In other words, the Parque de la Memoria undermines their ongoing activism on behalf of the disappeared.

However, Sion notes that “the vast majority of people with a stake in victims of state terrorism have openly supported the project,” including the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo — Línea Fundadora, which is a group that split from the previously mentioned Asociación over this very issue of putting the disappeared to rest (Sion 2015, 42-43). In this instance, the Parque de la Memoria is caught between two currently irreconcilable, and arguably equally important, demands, demonstrating that it is not only what we remember that is central to struggles for memory but also the way that we practice this remembering.

For some families of the disappeared, the park provides an important space to remember their loved ones, given that without remains or graves, they have been stripped of their ability to mourn their loved ones conventionally. Sion quotes one of the Madres who, upon visiting the monument, stated “I want to touch the name of my son” (Sion 2015, 83). According to Sion, “As a surrogate for absent bodily remains and graves, these granite plaques invite a physical contact between deceased and mourner, probably the first tangible encounter since the disappearance” (Sion 2015, 84). In contrast with the park’s sculptures, like “Pensar es un hecho revolucionario” and “Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez,” which visitors are asked not to touch, the Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado is powerful in the way it works to break the distance between visitors (who are often loved ones) and the disappeared, even if only through their names. Furthermore, the disappearance of bodies “added fuel to the tendency to deny: without a corpse to ritually mourn, there is always the fantasy that the person is not really dead, the atrocities not real” (Suárez-Orozco 1990, 368). By acting as a marker of

the existences of the disappeared at the individual level which visitors are able to touch, the Monumento combats the percepticide fostered by these individuals' physical absences.

After a few months of living in Buenos Aires, I revisited the park. My Latin American literature professor had asked us to go because at the time we were reading *La casa de los conejos* by Laura Alcoba, a memoir about Alcoba's childhood as the daughter of two Montoneros, which was one of Argentina's guerrilla groups. In the book, Alcoba describes her relationship with Diana Teruggi, who acted as a maternal figure for Alcoba with whom she grew quite close and to whom the book is written. On November 25, 1976, Diana was assassinated by police in the house she and Alcoba once shared. Diana's infant daughter, Clara Anahí Mariani — whose picture would become famous, even making an appearance in the 1985 film *The Official Story* — was disappeared, likely given to a family close to the dictatorship. On this second visit to the park, I returned with Diana's name and scanned the walls until I found "Teruggi, Diana Esmeralda 25 años." It was a strange sensation to find that suddenly this person existed outside of my 89-page book. Looking at Diana's name carved into the granite wall, I was seeing right in front of my eyes that she and everything Alcoba had described were real, an *hecho*. Then, it was not only the sheer amount of names that made remembering the dictatorship an emotional, overwhelming experience, but also, in some way, knowing an individual. As my eyes welled with tears, I mourned Diana.

I did not tell my host mom about my second trip to the Parque de la Memoria. Perhaps there were more pressing things to talk about at dinner that night, or maybe I feared hearing what she might have to say after what had happened when I talked with her about Alcoba's book. Given her family and wider social circle of relatively conservative, upper-middle class Argentines, in that moment she had made it clear to me how important it was for her to maintain

her understanding of the dictatorship as a necessary evil to reinforce the status quo as the result of a conflict that had gotten out of hand. While not having read Alcoba's book herself, I sensed her desire to villainize Alcoba's parents as the only people responsible for her dangerous and stressful childhood because of their lives as guerrillas. I tried to suggest that the military had a role to play, but she refused to look at both sides.



Figure 7: “Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez.” From: Buenos Aires 2019.
<https://buenosaires.gob.ar/laciudad/noticias/parque-de-la-memoria-detalles-de-la-unica-obra-que-esta-ubicada-en-las-aguas-del>)

Looking Beyond

There are four main components of the Parque de la Memoria: “the entrance square for leisure, the monument for commemoration, the sculpture garden for art, and the research center for learning” (Sion 2015, 95). While the park is designed with those interested in the disappeared (i.e., families and students) in mind, the entrance square functions as any other public park, which is important to keep the memorial alive. As part of the sculpture garden, in the Río de la

Plata, is “Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez,” a statue designed to resemble 14-year-old Pablo Míguez, who was disappeared in 1977 along with his mother. Míguez would be the same age as the artist, Claudia Fontes, if he were still alive today. Although passersby who remain in the entrance square may experience the park somewhat passively, like “Pensar es un hecho revolucionario,” engaging with this sculpture is another way the park gets visitors to actively remember the disappeared.

As the viewer faces the expansive Río de la Plata, separating Argentina from Uruguay, and sees Míguez floating atop the water, we are prompted to think about the death flights that once filled the river with bodies. Made out of stainless steel, the statue was constructed so that it reflects its surroundings and its visibility depends on the weather and time of day, sometimes blending into the water (Fontes n.d.). In reality, the statue is over six feet tall, but it appears much smaller from the lookout just off the shore. Wearing only a t-shirt and pants and standing casually with his arms behind his back, the image of Míguez evokes a sense of simplicity. These aspects of the statue work to demonstrate the innocence of many of the dictatorship’s victims and how the statue does not create a specific image, also aiding the viewer in our own reconstruction of a desaparecido. Because the statue was built to represent a child, it is important in refuting the idea that victims of state terror were violent, radical guerrillas who had done something bad enough to deserve their fate. In this way, visitors are forced to come to terms with the unjustifiably violent nature of the dictatorship, which allowed it to target children as well as adults.

In contrast with “Pensar es un hecho revolucionario,” the perspective of the viewer looking toward this statue is one only from behind. With his back to the viewer, in observing the statue of Míguez we must “activate the memory of [our] own ‘*desaparecidos*’ in order to

reconstruct his face” (Fontes n.d.). For some, this may be the memory of their family or friends. For others, especially those not from Argentina, like me, it is a bit more complicated. In my own reconstruction of a desaparecido, I can picture the faces of Argentine desaparecidos I have seen on the internet or plastered around the city of Buenos Aires, yet as a university student in my early twenties — as many Argentines were when they were disappeared during the dictatorship — I also think of myself and my peers. As earlier discussed, the dictatorship was not an isolated event in Argentina, and similar processes can be seen across time and space. Thinking about my positionality as someone from the US, with growing national division and increasing censorship at home, it is important that we recognize these similarities to remain critical and not fall into our own traps of percepticide.

In her book *Queering Acts of Mourning in the Aftermath of Argentina’s Dictatorship: The Performances of Blood*, Cecilia Sosa recognizes her positionality as someone who studies the disappearances of the dictatorship without being directly tied to them:

Issues of legitimacy, authority and ownership are still under discussion in contemporary Argentina, maybe more than ever. The expansive reverberations of grief have contributed to generating expanded links among new beholders. There is a joy involved in this encounter, the surreptitious pleasure of being together in the aftermath of loss. (Sosa 2014, 174)

She argues that, paradoxically, “spaces of memory are *alive* in the country,” making the Parque de la Memoria one of the “amplified, hectic stages where new affiliations can be formed” (Sosa 2014, 173). We must remember, too, that the US had a significant role to play in the rise of the dictatorship as part of the Cold War, yet many US citizens — like my mom, who was born in 1965 — knew nothing of what had happened in Argentina during this period. It was by taking my mom to museums about the disappeared when she visited me during my study abroad program that she finally began to learn. In this sense, there is a responsibility to remember the

disappeared that goes beyond the borders of Argentina. Although we must be sensitive to those directly impacted by the dictatorship, this history is all of ours in some way.

Conclusion

On the day I first visited the Parque de la Memoria, when my host mom called me to dinner that night and inevitably asked about my day, I lied. I said that my professor had talked to us about everyone who had experienced violence during the dictatorship, and this is not completely inaccurate — she did in fact mention the guerrillas' use of violence. However, she brought it up in an effort to get us to understand the magnitude of the violence committed by the state.

I suppose I lied because I did not want to feel awkward or perhaps create enough conflict to have to move out of an otherwise comfortable space on the top floor of an apartment building in Recoleta — one of Buenos Aires's wealthiest neighborhoods — where my host mom had spent all of her life and could remember the blasts of bombs that guerrillas had planted shattering windows along her street. I imagine that if I had told the truth I would have remained sitting at the dinner table until she felt she had gotten me to accept the dictatorship from her perspective, and I was afraid of what might have happened if she found she was unable to succeed. Not knowing how to balance respecting her lived experience as an Argentine and having convictions of my own, was I also, then, acting complicit with the narrative created by “looking at both sides” for the sake of ease and comfort?

In the case of my host mom, “looking at both sides,” or legitimizing the violent actions of the oppressive state by minimizing the significance of state terror, may have been influenced by a desire to protect her community or perhaps a fear of downward socioeconomic mobility, particularly in a country with such a struggling economy. In reality, I see “looking at both sides”

as rather one-sided, as it promotes a particular image of the dictatorship that negates a significant imbalance of power between the state and civilian activists and encourages us to understand the dictatorship through what I would consider to be a false binary. That said, by no means do I have an answer as to how exactly we should remember the dictatorship or honor its victims. Instead, I use my interactions with the Parque de la Memoria and my host mom to reflect on the role of perspective in what about the dictatorship is remembered and how, examining how perspective creates a process of remembering that is complicated, to say the least, but also necessitates sensitivity to people's lived experiences while remaining critical in our work to find truth. Each of the pieces that I analyze from the Parque de la Memoria, particularly "Pensar es un hecho revolucionario" and "Reconstrucción del retrato de Pablo Míguez," play with perspective in a physical sense — none of which promote the idea of "looking at both sides" — and in this way they also get visitors to think about perspective in terms of how we see the dictatorship.

While certain perspectives can foster a lack of remembering defined by percepticide and rationalization, there are also those that allow us to find truth, which we see the Parque de la Memoria promote. Even with its criticisms and limitations, the Parque de la Memoria is valuable to creating a collective memory of the disappeared. Through its location, artwork, and monuments to the disappeared, the park strives for a narrative recognizing differences in power and serves as a physical reminder of the dictatorship and the effects of state terror. Although the process of remembering the dictatorship is difficult and complicated by people's conflicting perspectives, this difficulty does not absolve us of working to remember the dictatorship and its atrocities, including how it existed and continues to exist outside of the period of 1976-1983 in Argentina; rather, it highlights the importance and the urgency of questioning ourselves and the world around us, as we do by engaging with memorials such as the Parque de la Memoria.

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