Reconciliation or Reencounter in the Southern Cone of South America: Amnesty, Forgetfulness, Forgiveness, Impunity, Memory, and the Power and Politics of Theatricality

Lee Ann Johnson
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/5031

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
RECONCILIATION OR REENCOUNTER IN THE SOUTHERN CONE OF SOUTH AMERICA: AMNESTY, FORGETFULNESS, FORGIVENESS, IMPUNITY, MEMORY, AND THE POWER AND POLITICS OF THEATRICALITY

by

Lee Ann Johnson

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Political Science

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2008
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Grandmothers, Mothers, and Sons and Daughters of the Plaza de Mayo, to the tortured, murdered, and disappeared of Argentina and Chile, to the families of Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi, and to Doctora Michelle Bachelet, President of the Republic of Chile and Doctor Rafael Correa, President of the Republic of Ecuador and the hope coming from South America. It is also dedicated with much love to the memory of Chris Anton Steinmiller II. I miss you, Chris.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the wonderful people who honored me by agreeing to be on the committee that made this possible, thank you. You, and particularly your faith in this project and in me, have inspired and sustained me as did the previous encounters that led me to seek your help. I am still astounded by your quick and positive responses to the idea. Dr. Hauptmann, I don’t think I’ll ever forget the conversation in which you pointed out that I needed to write a thesis. I stand behind my comment that you are the greatest. But, Dr. Isaak and Dr. Johnston, so are you. I know this has been backbreaking work for you, but I hope you know that for me to hand you these pages is the greatest tribute I could possibly pay you.

And, in no order other than how they come to me, to the members of Blue Dahlia for an unforgettable evening working on this project while wrapped in your music at the Kalamazoo Museum.

To Marti for invaluable reminders and information about the psychoanalytical nature of all of this, and even more, for that afternoon at Saffron when you saw the real possibility in what I only saw as a dream that seemed crazy even by my standards. You made it feel real. It didn’t work out this time, but I won’t hesitate to try again later.

To Elena for dinner and “Evita” when I absolutely could not look at this screen for awhile and maintain any semblance of sanity, your constant exhortations to
Acknowledgments—continued

“keep typing” helped me to do just that, and your help when my command of Spanish was exhausted were invaluable.

To Tina, Chris, Nathaniel, and Noah for pushing me through this if only by reminding me there would be no reason for a party if I didn’t finish.

To Maria Perez-Stable, Greg Fitzgerald, Donna Ring, Galen, Rike, Patricia VanderMeer, Greg Peet, Laurel Grotzinger, and the rest of the Western Michigan University reference librarians and staff for more help than any of you ever should have had to be, thank you. I still think I set the record for the most complicated questions ever asked, and certainly none of you has ever said anything to change that idea.

To Catherine Boyle of Kings College, Diana Taylor at NYU, and Thomas Hauser, author of Missing, for your wonderful and inspiring work.

To all of you who listened to my insecurities about all of this disappearing into some virtual reality and at least told me it was safely stored on your computers.

And last, but certainly not least, to Karl as much for being clueless about what I’ve been trying to do for the past three years and the daily reality checks that provoked thank you.

Lee Ann Johnson
This thesis explores how scholars have defined reconciliation along with the difficulty of doing so. Focusing especially on the Chilean and Argentinean experiences, I argue for the necessity of attaining political or national reconciliation after periods of violent authoritarian rule. I consider truth and reconciliation commissions and detail the mandates under which some have operated. My premise is that although truth and reconciliation commissions are a wonderful tool for facilitating reconciliation, their legalistic and structured nature keeps them from being all that is needed to achieve reconciliation. I suggest that the creative nature of theatre makes it the perfect complement to the work of the commissions. I comment on the malleable nature of theatre and why it is such a successful tool both for oppressors in maintaining their superior status as well as for victims in their struggles to overcome their oppression. I conclude by surveying some works of theatre from Argentina and Chile and their contributions towards achieving reconciliation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ........................................................................................................ ii

**CHAPTER**

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1
   Definitions ......................................................................................................................... 7
   Background ....................................................................................................................... 10
   Endnotes .......................................................................................................................... 21

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................. 22
   What Kind of Justice? ...................................................................................................... 24
   A Religious Perspective? ............................................................................................... 27
   Legality and Bringing Perpetrators to Justice................................................................. 34
   Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation ......................................................................... 40
   Truth and Reconciliation ................................................................................................. 43
   Reconciliation, Memorialization, and the Past ............................................................... 47
   Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 56
   Endnotes .......................................................................................................................... 58

III. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSIONS .................................................. 59
   Accomplishments of Truth Commissions ..................................................................... 73
   What Kind of Commission? ............................................................................................ 77
# Table of Contents—continued

## CHAPTER

| Conclusion | 80 |
| IV. THEATRE AS RECONCILIATION | 84 |
| Public Expression and Therapeutic Drama as Components of Reconciliation | 85 |
| Military Theatre | 87 |
| Theatre of the Absurd | 89 |
| Trial by Theatre | 91 |
| Theatre and/of Oppression | 94 |
| Church and/as Theatre | 95 |
| *Estaba la madre* | 96 |
| Some Chilean Works and Argentina’s *Paso de dos* | 99 |
| Conclusion | 104 |
| Endnotes | 106 |
| V. THE POLITICS OF THEATRE AND THEATRICALITY | 107 |
| Argentina | 113 |
| *Escrache*: Survivors Take Theatricality and Politics into the Streets | 121 |
| Chile | 124 |
| *Tejas verdes* | 125 |
| Conclusion | 127 |
| VI. CONCLUSION | 130 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 136 |
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Remembering helps the people of a country avoid committing the same crimes, calling things by their name; a criminal is a criminal... The worst thing that could happen in Chile... would be for oblivion to do away with this problem"
(Sola Sierra, president of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared, El Siglo, February 20, 1998)

"It is best to remain silent and to forget. It is the only thing to do: we must forget. And forgetting does not occur by opening cases, putting people in jail. FORGET, this is the word, and for this to occur, both sides have to forget and continue working"
(Former General Augusto Pinochet, September 13, 1995, two days after the 22nd anniversary of the military coup)

This paper grew out of as an independent study written for the last semester of my BA, a paper called Theatre as Reconciliation. I became fascinated with the need and the search for reconciliation after periods of protracted violence during authoritarian regimes. When countries with authoritarian pasts evolve to democratic governments, those who held power do not go away. They often regard their quests for power as temporarily thwarted, at least for the moment, and to irritate them further is to risk them plunging the country back into authoritarianism and violence. Yet the victims of the violence cannot wait to be able to begin repairing their lives. The premise of that original paper is that aspects of theatre make it an ideal vehicle to form and facilitate reconciliation. Nothing has yet happened that has changed my mind.
This paper, in part, is a deeper exploration of what others have written about reconciliation, particularly truth and reconciliation commissions, since these are the most commonly used method of dealing with the issue, and also other aspects used to bring about reconciliation: amnesty and impunity for perpetrators, forgetting, communal and historical memory. While disagreeing with the granting of amnesty and impunity, I believe that otherwise, these are all good parts of a solution but that theatre still makes an excellent addition to these other methods. Theatre forms community and has a unique commitment to expressiveness that can help overcome the shame victims frequently have to surmount in order to be able to begin reconciliation or reencounter. It creates a hybrid experience that frequently depends on a mixture of reality and imagination that in itself is freeing. Theatrical parts are memorized — *learned by heart* — in order to free participants to evaluate and interpret their experiences in the arena of the theatre. The stage can be used to bring forward victims’ experiences and issues forward for assessment and validation. We even have the expression bringing something “center stage,” meaning to focus on its importance. Public sharing of the horrors they’ve endured offers victims a chance to make their pain known. It also allows the public a chance to comprehend these horrors and contemplate their own actions or inaction in the face of the abuses committed to these victims.

In searching through the literature on reconciliation, I have found a surprisingly consistent reference to standard Christian principles within the writings. Strangely, this is true even in the works writers who say they are attempting to stay in the secular realm. I rarely found attention to the need to achieve reconciliation gently, or in a manner that did not make still powerful perpetrators feel threatened. Little mention is made of the need to
find a way that could protect a new democracy struggling to consolidate itself so that it does not descend again to authoritarianism and violence, or recommendations as to what some vehicles that would satisfy these criteria might be. The question this paper will address is, can a combination of creative and more traditionally legalistic methods facilitate reconciliation for victims of political violence and still protect fragile states struggling to attain democracy?

Still, after this broader search through the literature, I have not found information about a way to achieve reconciliation that meets these crucial criteria. Therefore, I would like to propose that theatre--street theatre, theatre of protest, written theatre, graffiti as theatre, to the most organized theatre performed within the confines of a stage in a theater, in combination with more formal, legalistic means such as the more commonly used truth and reconciliation commissions, is the ideal vehicle for providing an opportunity for reconciliation and healing. For the purposes of this paper, I am concentrating on examples from Chile and Argentina. And since the more formalistic commissions are better known, I will concentrate mostly on the potential in the arena of theatre with one section devoted to giving the reader an overview of the work of the commissions. I do not mean in any way to belittle the works of the legalistically-bound commissions; I only intend to suggest that victims and states will benefit best from this combination of methods that incorporate different sets of rules. If the commissions are charged to archive records of abuses and make suggestions to prevent them happening in the future, theatre can address the emotional trauma of victims in a much freer and more creative way through its own conventions.
The works of Diana Taylor have given me a deep interest in Argentine theatre with its broad range from the *Madres* on the *Plaza de Mayo* to military displays designed and performed to reinforce their victory in the “Dirty War.” I think Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro summarizes the nature of military takeovers and their attendant theatre well with the simplicity of her statement “Life here is surreal” (Gambaro 1992, ix). Taylor calls the first chapter of her book *Disappearing Acts* “Caught in the Spectacle.” I hope she would be pleased with my decision to refer to many of the same spectacles she cites as theatre. To define more clearly what I mean as theatre, I am talking about the public expressions of risk and pain through some type of public, visible spectacle. These independent yet inter-dependent public acts carry with them the possibility for catharsis and reconciliation among victims of governmentally-sanctioned torture and murder—largely because of their visible, public component.

Oppression and human rights abuses are unfortunately common occurrences in Latin America. Repressive regimes follow repressive regimes. They are known for putting economic and political interests ahead of any type of human rights, particularly the right to dissent. The use of torture as a deterrent to disagreement, perceived threat or subversion, or as a means to obtain information is also frequent. This paper started out to be an exploration of the issues of amnesty and reconciliation brought on by the violent regime change in the Southern Cone of South America. Amnesty laws often come into play to protect still powerful oppressors from the legal ramifications of their human rights violations. Fledgling democracies need the protection from those powerful people who were vested in the authoritarian regimes. This leaves victims of human rights abuses and
their families and friends with little legal recourse to reconcile their pain. Those victims might be living in close proximity to their former oppressors, and because of the pain of their shared histories, these groups are unable to live cooperatively.

It was this lack of means of reconciliation -- healing of wounds so deep as to be outside the boundaries of normal human understanding -- that led me to investigate other, perhaps more creative means of forming and achieving this reconciliation. I propose that theatre provides a wonderfully therapeutic means of finding and achieving reconciliation that cannot be found in more traditional and commonly-used attempts. Much as in my previously mentioned earlier paper, I will explore various types of theatre, very briefly those common in North America, but in much more depth, the drastically different theatre of Argentina and Chile. Rather than looking at them only to discuss their differences and as separate, unique entities, I will look at various theatrical works to explore their potential benefit in achieving reconciliation. In the tradition of the great Václav Havel who said “theatre should always be somewhat suspect,” that it is a “very special, conspiratorial sense of togetherness that to me is what makes theatre,” my definition of theatre is wide enough to include formal, informal, and nearly spontaneous acts of theatre, poetic theatre contained in books and on public fences and walls, and the uses of theatre both as a tool of repression and under more open, democratic governments.

My premise and the focus of this paper is that theatre, in all these different forms, offers an ideal means to allow victims and their families and friends to create their own reconciliation, and through the theatrical processes, to explore the many facets--experiences with torture, the death of loved ones, self doubt, exile--and the other human rights violations and traumas they endured. I hope to present examples of efforts made
by repressors and repressed to demonstrate the effectiveness of theatre as a tool and to encourage further exploration of theatre's potential in this area.

Throughout this paper, I will focus on the cases of Chile and Argentina. I have chosen to focus on Chile because of the impact the coup of 1973 had on my own thinking and also because of the exciting and innovative theatre coming from Chilean playwrights and authors. The removal of a duly-elected Marxist president by Chilean oligarchs and military in cooperation with North American interests shattered the illusion of stability and left Chile with a very surreal and violent landscape for a time. The famous dichotomy seen here is of people who rioted over having to stand in line for cooking oil, but were not nearly so concerned about having to step over corpses left in the streets. But for comfortable people who have never had to face a similar circumstance, it is almost impossible to comprehend the situation. The interpretation that judges survivors as cavalier and unconcerned about the lives of dissenters might be a facile and unfair way of viewing what is really a much more complex reality. Any person living in that situation who was not directly a part of Pinochet's rule was living under constant fear. Normally caring people were forced to make choices between their survival and standing up for the rights of strangers. Perhaps it is understandable that such a daily necessity such as a cooking oil shortage would have more impact than the bodies of dead strangers littering the streets. Perhaps that really was not what was happening at all but just the fact that silence and the appearance of compliance were the only means of survival—not only for the person immediately concerned but also for his or her family.
The passions aroused by the cooking shortages that helped bring about the 1973 coup were only equaled by those brought on by the economic crash of 1983. During this period of economic disaster, the passion was aroused against General Pinochet who the privileged class had seen as their savior from the deprivations they experienced during President Allende's term. The possibility that comfort will take precedence over concern for other human beings calls for something out of the ordinary to bring about the ability, the chance for victims of human rights abuses to reconcile the wounds of the past as well as for bystanders to be able to deal with survivors' guilt. To a certain extent, a tangible, forced awareness of the interconnected nature of life is necessary to enable such a society to heal itself. Wounded members cannot contribute fully or positively to a healthy society, and that fact alone mandates that some means of reconciliation be found.

Definitions

It can be difficult to say what reconciliation is. In doing a web search to find what is being written about national or political reconciliation, I also found pages of websites dealing with making the numbers in a person's checkbook match the ones the bank has on record. And more pages devoted to divorce mediation. Pinning down what reconciliation might mean specifically becomes problematic because the word is used to convey so many different meanings. This is not only because the word is used to cover a wide range of topics, but also because it might not be the best word to describe what might actually be the formation of a new, cooperative relationship among persons who were previously in a relationship of animosity or had no relationship. Since the prefix re means to
go back or return to a previous place or condition, the term *reconciliation* needs to be defined precisely.

Doctor Michelle Bachelet, President of the Republic of Chile accepts the idea that forgiveness needs to be a part of reconciliation. Therefore, she does not see it as the appropriate term for the healing that victims of intense violence need to achieve. In an interview called "Only Cleaned Wounds Can Heal" for *Truthout*, she says:

Reconciliation also means that the victim must forgive the perpetrator. But not everyone is capable of forgiving. It depends on the experiences of the individual, on that person's ability to overcome them, and that's not something that you can order everyone to do. But the government can establish the conditions under which the different camps can encounter one another in joint projects.

Reconciliation, she believes, means that the victim must forgive the perpetrators, and because of experience individuals have had, they might not be able to forgive. The reconciliation I seek to address does not demand the ability to forgive and might most accurately be referred to more specifically as political or national reconciliation. The need for it often arises from violent change from an authoritarian regime such as came about because of the Chilean Coup of 11 September 1973 and its aftermath.

Reconciliation comes from the Latin *reconciliatio* meaning "the restoration (of good relations, etc.)" *OED Online* gives the following definitions:

1. a. The action of reconciling persons, or the result of this; the fact of being reconciled.
   
   b. *spec.* in religious use, of God and man.
   
   c. Restoration to favour.

2. Reunion of a person to a church.
3. The purification, or restoration to sacred uses, of a church, etc. after desecration or pollution.

4.a. The action of bringing to agreement, concord, or harmony.

   b. Accountancy. The action or practice of rendering one account consistent with another by balancing apparent discrepancies; reconciliation statement, a statement of account whereby such discrepancies are adjusted.

As stated earlier, the word reconciliation is in itself problematic because of the prefix re since there might not have been good or any kind of relationship that existed before the time of oppression, and the relationship of oppressor to oppressed is something that should not be restored. The Oxford American College Dictionary, however, lists reconciliation only as an extension of reconcile. Interestingly, the definition here sidesteps the difficulties inherent in the re prefix as the definition includes “cause to exist in harmony, make or show to be compatible.” I choose to stay with the use of the term reconciliation. For the purpose of clarity throughout this paper, I will use the word reconciliation not to mean a restoration of relationships, but a process that has as its goal the formation of healthy relationships between former perpetrators and former victims whether or not such relationships might have existed previously, much similar to the definition found for reconcile in The Oxford American Dictionary. The purpose of re-forming broken connections or the formation of these new relationships will be to allow members of those groups to live together cooperatively in their society.

I use theatre to refer to and explain the drama, the spectacle of public art that can be performed or displayed. This is as opposed to theater, which for the purpose of this
paper will refer to a place where theatre might be shared or even where a movie might be watched.

Background

In 1970, Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens became the president of the Republic of Chile with 36.3% of the vote with the other candidates voting to accept his narrow plurality gained in the election. Allende’s political agenda was sympathetic to the Soviet Union, putting him at odds with the Chilean oligarchy and the United States. Chile already had serious economic problems--slow growth, inflation, and unequal income distribution and a concentration of economic power within a small elite. Since Allende had less than a majority, some argue that he did not have a clear mandate to institute changes, but the results of the election are not in dispute. Allende tried to socialize Chile, nationalizing the major industries, particularly copper, reform health care and education, institute a free milk program or children and made an attempt at agrarian reforms. The government of Eduardo Frei, Allende’s predecessor, had already begun nationalization by acquiring a fifty-one percent share in foreign-owned copper mines. The economy flowered briefly as Unidad popular (Spanish for Popular Unity; the name given to the coalition of parties that backed Allende) imposed state control over most of the economy, but it was not sustained growth. Governmental reforms aiming at a more equitable distribution of land were opposed by landowners, some of the middle class, the rightist National Party, and eventually the Christian Democrats. In particular, The Catholic Church did not like the direction toward a more liberal view of the educational reforms Allende instituted.
Some middle class and well-to-do sectors of the society initiated destabilizing strikes starting in October 1972. Small business owners and some student groups joined striking truck owners who were incensed over plans to establish a state trucking agency with headquarters in a remote southern province. They hoped to bring Chile to an economic standstill. Supporters of the government rallied. Factories that the owners were trying to close were seized by worker committees who kept the factories operating. Shops were kept open by either workers or local residents. Volunteer drivers drove 1,000 requisitioned trucks to keep the economy viable. Class lines sharpened with workers and the poor supporting the government while middle- and upper-class members were in violent opposition. The strike lasted twenty-four days. In addition to destabilizing the economy, the strike brought General Carlos Prats, head of the army, into the government as interior minister of the new cabinet Allende formed.

Michael Fleet states that Prats was an able politician who had led the army through difficult times while dealing with civilian politicians and resisting challenges from within the military and cabinet to his leadership. But following Allende’s re-election, his position became shaky. Civilian and military groups plotted against the Allende government. Their meetings led to the coup attempt of 29 June as well as to unsuccessful attempts on 18 May and August. Prats was isolated by mid-August and forced to resign from both Commander-in-Chief and Minister of the Interior. General Augusto Pinochet replaced him.

According to Steve Stern, the coup attempt of 29 June 1973, did not amount to much militarily. Armored trucks and tanks from a regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Souper met at 8:45 that morning and began firing on La Moneda and the
Defense Ministry. Troops supporting the constitution mounted a defense and isolated the plotters. General Prats walked over to the rebels and convinced them to surrender, and the failed coup attempt was over by noon.

The Christian Democrats, Chile’s largest party, under Senator Particio Aylwin pursued a hard line against Allende. During renewed strikes in July and August, the Christian Democrats refused to meet with Allende for discussion and compromise. They joined with right-wing groups to charge *Unidad popular* with destroying the constitution and legal order. They urged the military to take action to end the situation.

Allende raised wages several times throughout 1970 and 1971, but the increases were negated by the rising price of food. Fluctuation in the international price of copper hurt the economy during those years as well, further stressing the fragile regime. And, according to Peter Kornbluh, CIA attempts at destabilizing Allende’s government. The other two parts of the triad were diplomatic pressure and a blockade of loans or credits to Chile.

On Tuesday 11 September 1973, according to Pedro Matta in an email dated 7 November 2007, it rained lightly. Matta was a law student then and, after the coup, was detained in Villa Grimaldi, one of Chile’s most notorious detention centers for his activism. At 4:00 AM, troops stationed throughout Chile reported to the *junta* leading the coup. At 6:20 AM, President Allende was notified of the rebel attack on Valparaiso. By 7:00 AM, those troops were deployed to take urban centers from local politicians. At noon, rebels bombed *La moneda* from British Hawker Hunter fighter jets. The bombing continued for fifteen to twenty minutes. President Allende either committed suicide or was assassinated by the attackers while defending *La Moneda* and the Chilean constitu-
tion from the rebels. Leadership passed to what was originally a four-man *junta*. They decided against a rotating presidency, and General Pinochet of the army was named head of the junta. On 13 September 1973, in a move to solidify Pinochet’s control over any opposition, the *junta* dissolved the congress and outlawed the parties that had been part of Allende’s Popular Unity coalition. The national stadium, as well as other sites throughout the country, became concentration camps that held as many as 40,000 prisoners. Deaths and disappearances reached thousands in the first months, and 130,000 people were arrested over a three-year period.

Noam Chomsky (1994) explains the parallel operations used by the CIA under Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger to eliminate Allende’s government. Edward Korry, then the U. S. ambassador to Chile, who Chomsky describes as a “Kennedy liberal” (Chomsky 1994, 395) was to put Track I in place. That was the less drastic plan to destabilize Chile. In Korry’s words, he was to “do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty, a policy designed for a long time to come to accelerate the hard features of a Communist society in Chile.” Track II, the more drastic line, was aimed at provoking a military coup. This information was concealed from Ambassador Korry.

Reports of events of the coup still remain controversial. I tend to favor those of Peter Kornbluh and Noam Chomsky because these two writers have so well established their legitimacy. Both are well-known for their integrity and knowledge in the field.

The state-sponsored violence of Argentina’s Dirty War (1976-1983) is another example of the violent regime change that has infected South America. After Juan Perón
died, he was succeeded by Isabel Perón, his wife and vice president. She was an ineffectual president, and was removed from office by a coup engineered by a military junta. The junta used harsh tactics against suspected subversives, dissidents, or anyone suspected of disrupting the junta’s agenda. Opponents of the government and innocent suspects were removed from their homes or even kidnapped from public venues, sometimes not to be seen again. These people were taken to government detention centers and tortured and frequently killed. Babies born in captivity were stolen and provided for adoption to members of the elite. The missing became known as “los desaparecidos,” or “the disappeared.” Estimates of casualties for the seven-year-long period range from 10,000 to 30,000.

While “la guerra sucia” or the “Dirty War” was a domestic conflict that lasted for the junta’s entire rule, an outside enemy brought down the repressive government. Looking for a way to distract attention from complaints of human rights abuses and corruption, the junta mounted a campaign to restore las Malvinas or the Falkland Islands to Argentine control. Argentina claimed the islands while Britain administered them. The Argentine government believed it could regain control of the Falklands without Britain caring, and would thereby regain control of and popularity with the people of Argentina. Their anticipation of an easy victory was vanquished when after 72 days England won the war. The junta could not ride out the unexpected defeat, and in 1982, it removed its ban on political parties and restored some civil liberties. The 10 December 1983, election of Raúl Alfonsin’s civilian government marked the end of the Dirty War.

A major stumbling block to any process of reconciliation after periods of pro-
tracted violence such as these two coup d'états described above is that the perpetrators of
the violence frequently continue to live in close proximity to the former victims. Trauma-
producing social encounters between victims and their former persecutors are likely to
happen frequently. Another problem is that institutions formed to facilitate reconciliation
such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions frequently are not helpful enough. They
often only have the power to address cases that resulted in death or disappearance. Some-
times they have no legislative power at all.

Numerous articles, books, and essays have been written to explore what forms re-
conciliation might take to address protracted periods of political violence. Emphases in
this piece will be placed on:

1. defining what reconciliation is

2. what institutional and/or societal means might be best to attain and
sustain reconciliation and

3. what has not worked.

The aims of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are criticized across this
spectrum because sometimes their aims are not backed by legislative power. I see this as
helpful because it makes clear the independence of commissions from what might be
remnants of corrupt institutions left from the time of repression, and from the new gov-
ernments as well. I also think it forces the commissions to be more oriented towards a
restorative type of justice than one based on punishment. Others feel that this makes the
commissions weak since they cannot enforce punishments. Some commissions, such as
Chile’s, only have the power to act in cases where deaths or disappearances have oc-
curred. According to the website Strategic Choices in the Design of Truth Commissions,
the Rettig Commission had only four charges: to provide an general idea of how Pino-
chet's system worked, to account for any person who died or disappeared, to propose appropriate reparations, and to propose measures to prevent the violence from happening again. They can do nothing to help victims of torture or their friends or families who are striving to normalize their lives. This condition of limited scope has to be the case because of the power of perpetrators to throw the fragile new state back into violence and authoritarianism.

A consistent thread running throughout the literature is that reconciliation needs to happen, that people cannot simply go from being victims to being participative members of a society in which they live in close proximity to perpetrators who might have been their torturers or the murderers of their family members or friends. Lederach, (1997) for example, says that people need time and space to express the grief and trauma they experience because of the horrors they have endured (Lederach 1997, 26). Govier, who specifically sees herself as much more of a secularist than Lederach, says that people in common society need to cooperate. This cooperation, she believes, has to be based on the ability to trust. And, after atrocities, she finds that this trust can be difficult to achieve (Govier 2006, 7). Reconciliation would be the bridge to forming that trust.

The term reconciliation might not be the most appropriate one since it might mean a rebuilding of relationships to a previous, good condition. This frequently is not the case, since oppressed and oppressors might have been in adversarial positions for long periods of time, or they might have been strangers. And torture, frequently used by oppressors, is a rare hybrid of the public and the private that breaks down physical endurance, modesty, and sense of reality in victims. Methods of torture are so frequently used on the genitals and victims' minds, the most private and guarded areas of their lives. Yet
these acts are performed by oppressors who are present and in close proximity, who force
their presence into the victims' normally private spheres, thereby violating the deepest of
victims' personhood and denying them the protection of either privacy or community.
This confusion causes reactions such as Stockholm Syndrome\(^1\) and other post traumatic
stress conditions. It can make reconciliation more difficult because victims need to be
able to rebuild their own internal supports and senses of community, reality, and safety..

Most of my reading has supported my idea that reconciliation must happen be­tween oppressors and victims following periods of violence in order for both parties to be
able to live together cooperatively. Some support my thinking that fragile democracies
forming after authoritarian, oppressive regimes need to approach reconciliation very care­fully since oppressors frequently maintain power and, therefore, the ability to plunge
fledgling democracies back into chaos, violence and authoritarianism. After surveying
literature available on reconciliation, I would like to discuss the need to find alternate
means, or a complement to the use of truth and reconciliation commissions, grants of am­nesty or impunity, or court trials, to provide and achieve reconciliation. I argue that thea­tre both provides a way for victims to find their own reconciliation--with the horrors that
occurred in their past, with themselves and with their oppressors--and lessens the possi­bility of irritating still powerful former oppressors.

The goal of this paper is to explore national or political reconciliation that needs
to happen after protracted periods of violence. Part of this exploration is to be done by
assessing the reasons people might have for needing reconciliation as well as ways people
have found to facilitate reconciliation such as truth and reconciliation commissions with
and without legislative power, shaming perpetrators, restitution, or retributive justice.

Most importantly, I would like to propose theatre as a means to be used in coordination with other ways to achieve reconciliation. Theatre, in the sense of role-playing has been tried as a means in psychological and psychiatric practices and found a successful vehicle for healing emotional wounds. I would like to propose wider usage with a strong direction to the use of theatre as a tool of reconciliation. My main area of interest is South America, particularly Chile and the events surrounding the coup of 11 September 1973 and Argentina’s period of the Dirty War from 1976 to 1983 and its aftermath.

In 1980, several opposition groups formed an armed resistance to the Pinochet government. The government used this as justification for their increased violence. Pressure grew, both from within Chile and from international sources. General Pinochet, confident that he would have the support of the people, allowed a plebiscite. A strong “No” vote led to a general election in 1989. Patricio Aylwin won the election and took office in 1990. Pinochet, however, remained as commander-in-chief of the army until 1997. In addition to his place in the military hierarchy, Pinochet had selected most of the judiciary, and the majority of the senate supported the military. Reconciliatory measures could begin, but it was crucial that they proceed carefully.

Both the Chilean coup and Argentina’s Dirty War were classist debacles. Under Dr. Allende, the poor had made great strides, and goods were available to them. Educational reforms were in place to enable the poor children to attend schools, and this threatened the oligarchy. The violence oligarchs used to maintain their privileged positions left thousands dead, and their devastated friends and family members behind, or in exile.

Ariel Dorfman, some of whose works I will cite later, worked at La Moneda under Presi-
dent Allende. Professor Dorfman, like the current president, Dr. Michele Bachelet, and her mother were forced into exile after the coup. She, as well as two of her predecessors, was tortured under General Pinochet’s repressive regime. After years of civilian rule, both Chile and Argentina seem to have stabilized themselves and made enormous strides toward becoming healthy, democratic nations. Patricio Aylwin, the first democratically elected president of the Republic of Chile after the 1988 plebiscite resulted in a vote of no confidence against General Pinochet’s rule, formed Chile’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also known as the Rettig Commission after its chair.

In order to begin a discussion of alternate means of reconciliation, I feel it is necessary to be aware of the nature and limitations of more typical and currently used means. Chapter II will be a review of literature on the topic of national or political reconciliation. The works I’ve encountered cover a wide range of thinking and proposals. Chapter III will explore some of the positive and negative aspects of truth and reconciliation commissions in Latin America. Chapter IV will investigate elements of South American theatre conducive to and supportive of reconciliation. And Chapter V will consider the politics of theatre and theatricality.

I propose that theatre, which I see as encompassing many types of art and spectacle that can be publicly performed or displayed, provides a uniquely appropriate and helpful way to encourage reconciliation. The act of self-expression is freeing, and theatre encourages expression within a controlled, structured, and disciplined arena. Greek drama is usually seen as the beginning of western theatre. The word itself, in this context, comes from the Greek theātron meaning “a place for seeing, especially for dramatic representation, theater.” I include written works in my broad definition of theatre, particu-
larly Pablo Neruda’s last book, *Incitacion al Nixoncidio y Alabanza de la Revolucion Chilena* or *A Call for the Destruction of Nixon and Praise for the Chilean Revolution* because of its highly dramatic and expressive nature. Picasso’s *La Guernica* qualifies as a theatrical work by this definition. This thesis will attempt to show that theatre is an excellent way of achieving reconciliation in the South American cases previously named.
Stockholm Syndrome is a name given to a psychological defense mechanism that causes an identification victims form with their captors or oppressors as a means of self protection. The name comes from a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, that lasted from 23 August until 28 August 1973. Three men and a woman were held for six days in a Stockholm bank by ex-convicts. Those captives held within the bank protected their robber/captors from the police, and two women even became engaged to their captors. Anyone can be a victim of the Syndrome if the following conditions are met: The captive must feel that her/his safety is threatened and that the captor(s) will carry out the threat. The captive must feel that the captor(s) offer small kindnesses within the context of the threat. The captive(s) are isolated from any perspective but that of the captor(s). The captive(s) must feel that escape is impossible. The Syndrome has proven to be a common reaction across a variety of victims, including battered women and prisoners of war. It sometimes further divides victims from the natural sources of support they would have with each other because victims' trust and sense of reality have been so disturbed by the abuse.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"... understand that there is no other way of honoring the murdered dead... demanding that we build a world where people die peacefully in their beds when their time has come..." Ariel Dorfman in his foreword to My Neighbor, My Enemy

This section will be an overview of books and articles written on the topic of reconciliation through which I hope to acquaint readers with a portion of what is available on the theme. Reconciliation touches on many different levels of societal interaction, of personal psychology, of political thought and engagement, and various of these disciplines are tapped to address the issue. I have tried to select writings that reflect this variance. A lot of the writing about reconciliation focuses on it as a religious entity. I have chosen to include some of that line of thought because so much of the philosophy of reconciliation is based on tenets found in traditional philosophy found across the spectrum of major world religions. International law also comes into play when discussing reconciliation as do psychology, peace building, and policy making. I have attempted to find works that approach reconciliation in light of each of these.

I also touch on subjects such as amnesty and impunity that are seen by some as components of reconciliation. Amnesty and impunity are touted as potential solutions in some corners while others see them as ways of letting perpetrators off without consequence for atrocities they committed. To people who think along these lines, grants of amnesty and impunity are anathema. These people believe that exploring previous wrongs and through honoring the victims through memory and commemoration are the only ways to promote true healing. So I also include some of what has been written to persuade
along that line of thought. Translations from the Spanish are mine unless otherwise noted.

Many different types of situations can cause the need for reconciliation. Perpetrators can be proponents of either right-wing or left-wing politics and view the spread of their ideas or the maintenance of their status quo as justification for the torture and murder of dissidents. As I stated in the introduction, when searching for information on reconciliation, I found such listings for topics as diverse as straightening out a bank balance and arbitration in divorce cases. Even political or national reconciliation can mean different things to the people charged with finding ways to achieve reconciliation. In Peru, citizens needed to recover and reconcile in the wake of violence initiated by the Maoist revolutionary group Sendero luminoso or Shining Path and the retaliatory moves with which then-President Fujimori's government struck back. In Australia, a government policy forced removal of indigenous children and created a generation in need of reconciliation. In Rwanda and Bosnia, for example, citizens need help following genocidal ethnic cleansing. Sectarian violence has rocked Ireland for most of its history, dividing the country and leaving people who lost friends or loved ones in the troubles and need to find a way to reconcile. Similarly, the Middle East is constantly in turmoil and leaves a wake of people in need of physical and psychological healing. And these varying types of conflict, i.e., differing ideologies, differences in ethnicity, race, or religion, and divisions between separate classes all demand different ways of achieving reconciliation.

Some of the literature encourages a retributive type of justice and is very punishment-driven. More encourages restorative justice. Whether or not they acknowledge it, most writers fit reconciliation into the basic tenets of most major religions. Some writers
view forgetting the past as the way to proceed; more encourage memorialization and a search for the truth. I have grouped the literature I reviewed according to the writers' major visions of what reconciliation might look like or what they see as contributions or hindrances to reconciliation.

What Kind of Justice?

In *Amnesty After Atrocity*, (Cobban 2007), Helena Cobban cites eight goals that are the minimum that must be addressed by nations or societies emerging from mass violence:

1. Overcome communal and official denial of the atrocity; gain public acknowledgment.
2. Obtain the facts in an account as full as possible in order to meet victims' need to know, to build a record for history, and to ensure minimal accountability and visibility of perpetrators.
3. Forge the basis for a domestic democratic order that respects and enforces human rights.
4. Promote reconciliation across social divisions; reconstruct the moral and social systems devastated by violence.
5. Promote psychological healing for victims.
6. Restore dignity to victims.
7. Punish, exclude, shame, and diminish offenders for their offenses.
8. Accomplish these goals in ways that render them compatible rather than antagonistic with other goals (Cobban 2007, 22-23).

She finds that this list provides a useful starting point to determine how reconciliation might proceed. Many of the people she interviewed would make changes to the list, leading her to the conclusion that trying to form one inflexible, well-ordered list of goals might be dangerous to vulnerable members of societies recovering from atrocities.
Western-based movements' emphasis on criminal prosecution, she feels, can be much like an answer externally imposed, particularly if no attempt at dialogue is included. Many leaders in the societies she explored expressed that the rebuilding of societal links that could prevent future atrocities and enable the formation of a sustainable social peace would be their highest priorities (Cobban 2007, 23).

Cobban finds that a more politically and historically-based understanding of the causes that lead to atrocities in given situations can be more helpful in bringing those horrors to an end and bringing about the rule of law. The institution of the rule of law then can be based on the termination of grants of impunity that can promote a strong reliance on criminal proceedings and prosecution. She advocates a focus on what she terms the politics of conflict termination that requires that the politics of both peace-making and peace-building be given close attention. Her interviewees spoke of the need to stabilize economies and to build or rebuild a reliable socioeconomic order to prevent their societies from being returned to more atrocity-laden war. Economic justice took precedence over trials or prosecutions (Cobban 2007, 239-240).

Cobban revises the list of tasks for societies seeking equilibrium after atrocities that she stated earlier into ranks of importance. All points are of equal importance:

1. Establish rigorous mechanisms to guard against any relapse into conflict and violence.
2. Actively promote reconciliation across all intergroup divisions.
3. Build an equality-based democratic order that allows for nonviolent resolution of internal differences and that respects and reinforces human rights.
4. Restore the moral system appropriate to an era of peace.
5. Reintegrate former combatants from all the previously fighting parties into the new society.
6. Start restoring and upgrading the community’s physical and institutional infrastructure.

7. Begin a redistribution of resources to repair injustices of the past.

8. Promote psychological healing for all those affected by the violence and the atrocities, restoring dignity to them. (These issues, if addressed, will do much to achieve this psychological healing, but it will probably need continuing attention.)

9. Establish such records of the facts as are needed to meet victims’ needs (death certificates, identification of burial sites, etc.) and to start to build a record for history (Cobban 2007, 241).

The lists differ mainly in their recommendations for the treatment of perpetrators. Cobban’s research indicates that fragile societies are much better served by a policy that encourages amnesty, reconciliation, and reintegration into the society for offenders (Cobban 2007, 241).

Charles Villa-Vicencio, (1999-2000) Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Professor of Religion and Society at the University of Cape Town, and former National Director of Research for South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, posits that revenge, whether raw and individual or in the form of retribution mandated by a judicial system, in response to abuse or loss, is an understandable and possibly necessary reaction. He even feels that this course might be necessary. Villa-Vicencio believes that “The sheer weight of such evil, that no atonement, compensation or any other form of human balm can appease, lends credence and understanding to our ingrained human desire for revenge” (Villa-Vicencio 1999-2000, 166). Models of restorative and retributive justice, he argues, belong together as checks and balances for each other (Villa-Vicencio 1999-2000, 166-167).
A Religious Perspective?

John Paul Lederach (1997) bases his inquiry for *Building Peace* on three questions: What are the key characteristics of armed conflicts in the present age? What are sound ideas on which to build peace around these conflicts? What are practical ways to move toward peaceful and positive change in resolving conflict? What approaches have the potential for sustaining that movement toward peace? Lederach has what he calls a modest thesis. He believes that the nature and characteristics of contemporary conflicts make clear the need for ideas and approaches to their solution that extend past traditional statist diplomacy. Building peace requires a long-term commitment to making an infrastructure that uses resources from both inside and outside to empower reconciliation. He believes that “constructing the house of peace relies on a foundation of multiple actors and activities aimed at achieving and sustaining reconciliation” (Lederach 1997, xvi).

Lederach (1997) calls reconciliation “an important meeting point between realism and innovation” (Lederach 1997, 25). He believes that a method to facilitate reconciliation and a way to keep that method vital in divided societies must be found. “Reconciliation,” he says, “must find ways to address the past without getting locked into vicious cycle of mutual exclusiveness inherent in the past” (Lederach 1997, 26). People need time and space to express to themselves and each other the trauma, pain, loss, and grief that accompany the memory of the injustices they have experienced. Lederach believes that acknowledgment through the sharing of stories is the best way to validate experiences and feelings and is the first step toward the repair of persons and relationships (Lederach 1997, 26).
While reconciliation addresses the past, it must also help form the future so that it encourages interdependence. In all recent internal conflicts, the futures of the opposed parties are intimately and inextricably linked—interdependent. The fighting parties need the opportunity to see how their interdependent future might look. Reconciliation, Lederach believes, "represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet. To make this happen, people must be able to encounter themselves and their enemies as well as their hopes and fears" (Lederach 27-28). The third of Lederach’s working assumptions is that the innovation for reconciliation must be accomplished away from the mainstream of international politics (Lederach 1979, 27-28).

Lederach understands reconciliation as both a focus and a location where healing can take place. As a perspective, he sees reconciliation as based on and oriented toward the aspects of relationships broken down by conflict. As a social phenomenon, Lederach believes it is a place for encounter, for victims and perpetrators to meet to share their experiences, feelings, and perceptions. The goal of the sharing will be to create new perceptions and a new experience that the parties will be able to share. The paradox of reconciliation is that it links ideas and forces that appear to be contradictory but are interdependent. More specifically, reconciliation encourages an encounter between openly expressing a painful past and the search for a clear expression of an interdependent future. It provides a place where airing what has happened and letting go of the wounds the past has caused can enable the formation of new relationships, where there is a meeting between mercy and truth. Reconciliation gives time and place for justice and peace, a time and place where wrongs can be redressed while a common, connected future is strived for (Lederach 1979, 30-31).
Reconciliation suggests that the way to sort out these paradoxes is through accept-
tance of their inconsistent nature. That will keep a contradiction form creating a paralyz-
ing impasse that would result if one of the competing sides is the only side to be accepted
as valid. Reconciliation’s basic paradigm, Lederach suggests, embraces these dichoto-
mies. A focus on relationship, it suggests, will enable new thinking that will provide the
way to address the lack of a way around the stalemate on inter-group problems. Having
space for grieving the wounds of the past allows a clear view to plan a better future, and
the energy spent envisioning an interdependent future helps deal with the past (Lederach
1979, 31).

What is crucial in these and similar situations is to achieve and maintain a sus-
tainable peace. This is not to say that there will be no conflict between groups and indi-
viduals. Instead, what must happen in these strained relationships is that people must de-
velop the capacity to handle the conflicts that do arise peacefully. Societies that are sin-
cerely and meaningfully engaging in ‘national reconciliation’ are seeking to amend and
repair key relationships so as to shift away from hatred, fear, damaging oppression and
violence toward a path of cooperation and trust (Lederach 1979 21).

In her preface to Taking Wrongs Seriously, Trudy Govier (2006) explains that she
approaches political reconciliation from a secular point of view as opposed to Lederach
(1997) who leans towards a scripturally-based understanding. “The plain fact,” she states,
“is that people living in the same society need to cooperate; to cooperate, they need to
trust, and in the aftermath of violence and oppression, that is difficult” (Govier 2006, 7).
She believes that this leaning towards religious principles could be problematic for secular
theorists and practitioners. People alienated by wrongs that have been perpetrated against
them are not in a position to be able to trust and work together. She understands efforts toward reconciliation as attempts to end divisiveness and to build relationships based on a certain level of trust. Govier finds the idea of reconciliation to be problematic in many areas including psychology, ethics, law, and politics (Govier 2006, 7.)

Govier (2006) accepts the emphasis Lederach (1997) places on relationships. She agrees with his recommendation that for reconciliation to occur, concerned parties must look to the past to question what has been done as well as to the future to be able to move past the wrongs that have been acknowledged and understood. And forming healthy relationships can lead former enemies to be able to work together to create a feature without the atrocities of the past. One area where antagonists need to be able to work cooperatively is the formation of new and better institutions than existed previously. If these new institutions are not formed successfully, divisions from the past will continue into the future, making democracy and peace fragile and non-sustainable. Since 1977, when an Australian government report entitled Bringing Them Home described a policy of forced removal that created a “Stolen Generation” of children and made reconciliation an important political topic. In Canada, revelations of abuses of Aboriginal Canadians in residential schools between 1880 and 1969 make reconciliation an important matter for government and society (Govier 2006, 9).

Peru established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to study the causes and needs relating to the intense violence caused by the government’s twenty-year long battle with the Shining Path. The Good Friday Accord of 1998 established terms to end thirty years of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. It was followed by well-funded community efforts to reintegrate and reconcile former fighters and injured victims from both
sides of the conflict. After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda’s political leaders tried to reconcile Tutsis and Hutus. They pleaded for forgiveness, acknowledging how impossible it would be to have criminal trials for all who had done the killing. Those leaders sought community processes of societal reintegration and reconciliation. After its civil war that lasted from 1991 until 2001, Sierra Leone formed a Truth and Reconciliation Committee to address victims’ concerns and perpetrators’ responsibilities and a special court to try those guilty of the most grievous wrongs. East Timor established a Commission for Reconciliation, Truth, and Reconciliation largely to attract East Timorese who had fled to West Timor to return. The Commission’s purpose was to “facilitate community reconciliation by dealing with past cases of lesser crimes such as looting, burning, and minor assault” (Govier 2007, 10) and to make recommendations to the government regarding reconciliation and the promotion of human rights. In its most familiar form, reconciliation is on a level between individual persons and seeks restoration of a close relationship after a time of alienation. In the broader political sense, the whole of a community might be involved. Individuals could not act as leaders or representatives, and individual responsibility and the correction of past wrongs are still of prime importance. But the need for reconciliation can also be on a broader stage. National or political reconciliation is on a still larger scale in the wake of civil or state violence and might involve thousands of people, relationships, and institutions. In Sierra Leone, the community aspect was of major importance after their civil war during which people, frequently children, were abducted into the army and forced to commit atrocities against the people of their own villages. Those child soldiers needed to be reintegrated into their communities (Govier 2006, 10).
Govier finds reconciliation to be a problematic word in itself since the prefix *re* makes it mean going *back* together after a break in a relationship, while in cases where reconciliation is sought after political violence, it is possible that there never was a decent relationship that could be returned to or repaired. She believes that it might be better to consider reconciliation as a process, something ongoing to keep strengthening and improving those relationships, rather than a goal. But even that view is uncertain because it does not detail the goal that the process must have. Instead, Govier feels that it makes sense to think of reconciliation in terms of building or rebuilding relationships (Govier 2006, 12).

Govier sees restorative justice, where wrongs are *righted* (italics Govier's) by perpetrators' acknowledgment and repentance while victims receive restitution and help with rehabilitation, as exemplified by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an ideal though it is sometimes unreachable. Though restorative justice is frequently relevant to reconciliation, it sometimes fails to be the right alternative according to Govier. She feels that if the wrongs against victims cannot be fixed, punishing the guilty, or retributive justice, must be considered. Sometimes readiness to act on this level is crucial to reconciliation because ending the culture of impunity is required to provide victims with a sense of security and confidence (2006, 15-16). I would add that only through knowing that people who have committed atrocities will be identified would go a long way towards making victims feel that their needs were being respected and met and that they could have more confidence in the future.

Govier (2006) asks if truth actually does promote reconciliation and comes to the answer that the only way to make that concept work is if truth is actually shorthand for
"acknowledged truth" (Govier, 15). It is the acknowledgment that wrongs have been committed and that steps will be made to right them or keep them from happening again that is necessary. That acknowledgment allows victims to feel hopeful about the future and to put their energies into achieving reconciliation. She reports that some scholars believe that only criminal trials can put an end to periods and stop feelings of resentment among victims (Govier 2006, 15-16).

I find the emphasis on punishment problematic. My first thought is that on a very human level, it will do more to promote further resentment than to forward reconciliation making it much more of an impediment than an aid to the process. Societies that are rebuilding probably have legal systems that have been destroyed or at least weakened. These fragile institutions cannot support the trials that would be necessary to assess retributive justice. And, formal criminal trials would have to be selective even though thousands of people might have been involved in violence and human rights abuses. And, something that seems valid though it might be the least important of reasons, because of the expense and the length of time required to conduct trials, retributive justice cannot fully meet the terms of reconciliation because the issues need to be addressed in a timely manner. On the very basest level, it simply is not efficient I share this thought with Govier: reconciliation needs to be about the building of relationships between alienated individuals or groups, and this provides the basis for a deeper objection. Reconciliation must not be based on having the worst offenders punished while others potentially continue without consequences. The ending of impunity, the admission of the truth, the beginning of faith in institutions, and, in my opinion most importantly, the end of fear, hatred and suspicion are all relevant components to reconciliation (Govier 2006, 15-16).
Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies (2005) emphasizes that political and military stability alone are not enough to end a long-standing conflict based on ethnic or religious differences. Peacebuilding must also include civilian security, the rehabilitation of the damaged society, and reconciliation, while reflecting on populations victimized by violence. One of the book’s goals is to link research to policymaking by considering ideas of policy design, operation, and how they are put into use so they can be applied in the real world (Jeong 2005, xi).

Legality and Bringing Perpetrators to Justice

In Accountability for Human Rights Atrocities in International Law, Steven R. Ratner and Jason S. Abrams (2001) assess individual responsibilities for violations against human rights as a separate area of international law. To do so, they consider international laws governing human rights, humanitarianism, and criminality and review a range of ways, prosecutorial as well as less punitive methods, of holding violators accountable. They found that Chile, Guatemala, Indonesia, and South Africa among other societies overcame their reluctance and became more willing to investigate their own officials as well as those of other countries. Amnesties and other forms of immunity have been revisited and are no longer shielding abusers from trials. Some European states have gone as far as to initiate legal proceedings against officials, both civilian and military, in Bosnia, Chile, and Rwanda, among others. Others have instituted laws to provide for across the board regulation to govern international crimes. These domestic processes have eroded some of the culture of impunity so characteristic of contemporary efforts toward holding offenders accountable. Many states acting cooperatively have formed a
treaty and a new way to bring individual perpetrators to justice (Ratner and Abrams 2001, xli-xlii).

Ratner and Abrams (2001) found, however, that investigations and trials are still not the standard. Truth commissions frequently do not have the time or resources to identify individual perpetrators. Many foreign governments support the choice of methods or lack thereof of regimes to achieve accountability, especially if those new regimes are fledgling democracies. Ratner questions whether or not the idea of trials to bring about reconciliation is a viable one and even if individual accountability is likely to bring about reconciliation. Atrocities committed by governmental and nongovernmental groups continue showing that in some ways, the progress toward improving human dignity is not a steady one (Ratner and Abrams 2001, xlii).

War Crimes and Collective Wrongdoings: A Reader (2001) contains an essay called “Whose Trials? Whose Reconciliation?” by Burleigh T. Wilkins. He begins by discussing the relative newness of using court proceedings to address violation of the just war tradition. Punishment as an institution, he points out, is designed as a protective measure, to keep people from hurting other people. In this sense, it is a forward-looking measure. Put into practice, however, it is backward-looking since only those who have already hurt or tried to hurt others can be punished. Then punishment’s ultimate goal becomes only to prevent further harm. He believes that these trials have no effect on the waging of war. Wilkins (2001) points out that advocates find trials essential to individualize guilt and promote reconciliation. He disagrees that trials are helpful because he finds that guilt is rarely individualized, and the ideas behind the trials omit the concept of collective responsibility (Wilkins 2001, 85-92).
In their introduction to *My Neighbor, My Enemy*, Weinstein and Stover (2004) state that they believe that the use of criminal trials amounts to the international community trying to impose legal order on something that though power-driven, is irrational. Truth, to those most strongly affected by collective violence, is frequently not in the facts but in the moral interpretation of the facts and how the facts are interpreted, manipulated, and distorted by those who originally committed the violence. Some who responded to their research thought of justice as having a job and an income. To some, justice was having trials where they were able to testify against soldiers and paramilitaries while others felt that only revenge would bring justice. Still others thought face-to-face apologies from neighbors who had betrayed them were necessary while some could not feel justice had been done without learning the truth about their missing relatives and being able to arrange for proper burial (Weinstein and Stover 2004, 4).

Weinstein and Stover (2004) mention that over the past decade, international observers have linked the process of justice to reconciliation. Justice, they define simply as trials, and reconciliation is used loosely to mean people re-forming prior connections that cross ethnic, racial, or religious lines. Diplomats, they state, have accepted the assumption that reconciliation can legitimately be reached through criminal trials. Stover and Weinstein, however, see reconciliation as a much less transparent idea with many meanings. Their studies led them to ask if the vague idea that reconciliation is a "lofty and worthwhile goal" (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 5) is valid. In addition, they question the narrow scope of various disciplines that study societies that have been subjected to mass violence and their inattention to the needs and hopes of the individuals whose lives have been destroyed by the violence. They encourage a wider view of reconciliation that as
both political and social, and justice as something that permeates societies. While they believe that criminal justice should be pursued, they do not see it as a panacea to right the wrongs of the past or heal victims of violence (Stover and Weinstein 2004 4-5).

Stover and Weinstein have set three goals for this book: to ground the debate about justice in an everyday context, to demonstrate empirically how ethnic hatred of whatever duration can affect the rebuilding of post-war nations, and to provide a model of post-conflict restructuring in the aftermath of ethnic violence. They define social reconstruction as a process of reaffirming and redeveloping a society and its institutions so they will be grounded in shared values and human rights. The factors that led to each conflict should be assessed based on such programmatic interventions such as security. Freedom of movement, access to information that is truthful and even-handed, economic development and engagement of groups across ethnic boundaries that will work as well at an individual, neighborhood, community, or state level of society to consider factors that created the conflict (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 5).

Stover and Weinstein believe that reconciliation and justice are ambiguous terms even though whatever it is that they might mean is frequently seen as a necessary precursor to the formation of a lasting peace. They note that trials and truth and reconciliation commissions are supposed to force societies coming out of violent upheavals to assess the past objectively and to achieve stability while building a democratic government. Truth and reconciliation commissions, they say, achieve their ends through restorative justice, or society's healing of injuries that occurred because of past crimes. In contrast, trials, their proponents believe, promote reconciliation through retributive justice or by transferring the responsibility for laying blame from victims to a more objective court that acts
according to the rule of law. Retributive justice does not seek to do away with vengeance, only to manage it. With individual guilt established after war and ethnic cleansing, retributive justice should help do away with the idea of collective blame for war crimes and genocide. Stover and Weinstein (2004) believe that those who place their faith in criminal trials are an example of humanity's need to reduce complicated issues to simple solutions. They believe that the rule of law can lend order to chaos by establishing behavior-regulating norms but cannot provide all that is needed to encourage reconciliation. The institutions of international law, they believe, are not competent to address the social and psychological aspects that regulate how people in groups and communities form ties, help in the building of trust that helps individuals and communities create the social networks that can lead to peaceful coexistence, or reach beyond the power of identification, with ethnic or other types of groups (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 14).

Stover and Weinstein (2004) stepped away from the use of the term reconciliation because they felt that it was overused as a means of promoting ideas of justice and because, as does Govier (2006), they find it to be so heavily laden with religious implications. They felt that because of this, the use of the word reconciliation kept them from full understanding of what would function to aid social repair in countries emerging from intense violence. They chose instead to use the previously-defined term "social construction" (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 14) and "reclamation," defined in Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language as "The act or process of reclaiming in any sense; restoration, as to ownership, cultivation, or moral life: (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 14).
Stover and Weinstein question whether a unifying identity can be reclaimed or promoted without a historical fiction or a myth that can be accepted across ethnicities. If such a myth can be created out of genocide, they believe, then that myth can be used in state building. They quote John Gillis (1994)

The notion of identity depends on the idea of memory, and vice versa. The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity. That identities and memories change over time tends to be obscured by the fact that to both as if they had the status of material things - memory as something that is to be retrieved; identity as something that can be lost as well as found... memories and identities are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena (Gillis in Stover and Weinstein 2004, 17).

They agree with Gillis (1994) about the possibility of identity being a fluid entity and suggest that social identity would be able to accommodate such shifts in concepts as to which group people belong, where their loyalties lie, and who they hate. If these identities can be changed, they might be able to be used for reclamation (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 17).

Stover and Weinstein (2004) believe that in order for social reconstruction to work, post-war communities need to define the process of justice and reconciliation and take ownership for seeing the process into place. Individuals and nations both have selfish, competitive natures that frequently express themselves in direct violence. But other conditions nurture the opposite traits, altruism and cooperation rather than egotism, conflict, and competition. All communities have conflicts that come from differences in class, ethnicity, age, and racial differences. They believe that this means that particularly at the community level, the issue should not be conflict resolution but conflict manage-
ment. Approaches that rely on resolving differences might create a fragile peace, but in the process, they do not make the basic structural changes necessary for long-term peace building. It is necessary for the approaches to form societal structures that promote tolerance of varying ideas and protect human rights in order to be effective in promoting healthy growth of new societies (Stover and Weinstein 2004, 18-19).

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

In his article “From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis,” Daniel Bar-Tal (2000) tells us that conflicts are a natural part of human interaction. He defines conflicts as any interaction in which one person or group feels that its goals or interests are thwarted by the goals or interests of another or others. It is crucial that the parties involved acknowledge the situation as conflictive. That perception is a necessary condition for the outbreak of conflict and becomes the basis for future evolution of the dispute. When conflicts become intractable, they require the formation of a group attitude that helps the society to adapt to the conflictive situation. (Bar-Tal 2000, 351-352).

A conflict resolution process can lead to formal termination of tensions between groups, and this can be part of a long-term process of reconciliation. A long-term reconciliation will have to be based on peaceful relations of mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, and consideration for all parties’ needs. Psychological reconciliation must be based on the formation of an attitude of peace, but this is extremely difficult to build when conflicts have been in place for long periods of time. From the psychological perspective of conflict analysis, Bar-Tal specifies, conflicts break out because of perceptions, beliefs,
attitudes, and motivations that have to change to enable conflict resolution (Bar-Tal 2000, 351-352). I feel that Bar-Tal’s analysis falls short at this point because even if he is pursuing a purely psychological point of view, it seems facile not to mention how crucial it is that there be an equity of access to wealth or at least resources, and that inequity in this area will surely create conflict.

Bar-Tal (2000) believes that the process of reconciliation is of special importance because through it, parties to conflict can form new relations in which they coexist peacefully, based on mutual trust and acceptance, cooperation, and consideration for each other’s needs. The process is not a necessary part of every conflict, only those that have persisted for at least twenty years and involved extreme violence. And Bar-Tal believes that different types of conflict require different types of reconciliation: ideological conflicts such as in Spain, El Salvador, and Chile, interethnic, interracial, or interreligious conflicts such as Northern Ireland, South Africa, Turkey and Israel, or disputes between more than one state such as Israel and Egypt or India and Pakistan. The outcome of the conflict resolution, particularly if it results in parties to the conflict sharing one state and one political system such as with South Africa, Rwanda, and El Salvador, or if resolution will mandate that disputing parties have to form two different states such as the French and Germans, Poles and Germans, or the Israelis and Palestinians. In the first case, one system has to incorporate the past rivals into the same societal, economic, legal and educational system conditions. The second type will result in two separate systems, and therefore, is concerned with the bilateral relations of two societies living in different states (Bar-Tal 2000, 355-356).
Bar-Tal (2000) does not find it surprising that social scientists emphasize different aspects of reconciliation to fit the type of conflict. Studies of reconciliation to be applied to El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, or Argentina emphasize the political process of democratization and justice as a necessary condition for reconciliation. In the South African case, the process of reconstructing the past—the acts of discrimination and violations of human rights—to promote healing in the society. He reiterates Lederach’s (1997) proposal that the first type of reconciliation is made up of truth that needs open telling of the past to proceed, mercy that needs forgiveness so new relations can be built, justice, restitution and social restructuring, and peace to achieve a common future with well-being and security for all the diverse parts of the society. Reconciliation between states, by contrast, is based on a psychological change to beliefs and attitudes (Bar-Tal 2000, 356).

In the psychological framework, reconciliation is an informal societal-cultural process touching most members of the society who form new beliefs about the relationship between their groups. The process can begin independently of conflict resolution, but the process of conflict resolution always accelerates the process of reconciliation. The psychological view of reconciliation is particularly important because well-entrenched attitudes need to be changed for less conflictive ones. The emphasis of the reconciliation process must be to change the conflictive ethos for one that does not provide the rationalization and psychological investment in continuing the conflict that the current way of thinking supports (Bar-Tal 2000, 356-357).
In his article “Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation? Testing the Causal Assumptions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process,” James L. Gibson (2004) says that the world’s truth commissions have been formed because of the assumption that if people understand the past, the understanding will contribute to reconciliation between the former enemies. The purpose of his article is to test that hypothesis. I think this is a slight variation on the actual case as it is not understanding but acceptance of the past and the ability to put it in the past that might help people achieve reconciliation. However, I also would assume that acceptance would have to come from first knowing the truth.

“The ‘truth hypothesis’ is ultimately a macrolevel expectation probably requiring longitudinal data at the level of the nation-state. But the hypothesis also pertains to individual citizens and is testable at the microlevel in the short-term” Gibson states (Gibson 2004, 201). In testing this hypothesis, Gibson finds that when the “Truth” about South Africa’s apartheid past is accepted, a more reconciled attitude to racial differences comes with the acceptance. This article then addresses what Gibson sees as “one of the most important issues in the comparative study of mass behavior and public opinion: can citizens who have been abused by authoritarian regimes be convinced to put the past behind and reconcile with those who formerly oppressed them?” (Gibson 2004, 202).

Gibson found that in many South African cases, finding the truth did help to achieve reconciliation. He found it to be a complicated indirect process and that religious black South Africans were an exception to his general finding that “those who participate in South Africa’s collective memory by accepting the “Truth” about the country’s apartheid past are more likely to hold reconciled racial attitudes” (Gibson 2004 202). I am
surprised by his finding that religious black South Africans would be an exception to this finding. Most religions have a component of forgiveness, particularly in connection with confession, and I would think this would make the religious more able and inclined to reconcile. According to Gibson, (2004, 202) most of the people who worked on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission believed that making the truth known would facilitate reconciliation. “National unity and reconciliation could be achieved only, it was argued, if the truth about past violations became publicly known and acknowledged” (Gibson 2004, 202, italics mine). It was thought that the shared memory would contribute to the formation of a nationwide shared identity -- that of a traumatized nation and that would be the impetus South Africans would need not to make the same mistakes in the future (Gibson 2004, 202).

Gibson points out that the contemporary discussion of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa is dominated by two themes. The first is that there is not an established definition for “reconciliation,” and the second that people were sure that reconciliation had failed or at least not lived up to the expectations most South Africans had for it. In this article, he seeks to focus on a dimension of reconciliation, “the extension of dignity and esteem to those off other races and cultures, through understanding, trust, and respect” (Gibson 2004, 202).

David A. Crocker says that how a nation decides to deal with past atrocities is of “intrinsic moral significance” (Crocker 2004, 1). He divides nations having to make this type of decision into three kinds: post-conflict societies (Cambodia and Rwanda) that want to become democracies but have security issues after protracted violence, conflict-ridden societies (Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and Peru) where civil conflict and democratiza-
tion might be based on negotiated agreements between the governments and opposition
groups regarding how human rights violators should be treated, and mature democracies
(the United States, Germany, Japan, France, and Switzerland) that have their own prob-
lematic pasts to deal with. He believes that the focus on new democracies limits what
societies in the process of healing can learn from how more stable societies work with
troubled pasts. Crocker (2004) believes that the terms transitional justice and accounta-
bility might be misleading even for societies making transitions to democracy because
those terms choose only one feature from many that are also important (Crocker 2004, 1-
2).

Crocker (2004) explains that there are other means of addressing problematic
pasts than trials and punishment or impunity and forgetting that are the limit of many dis-
cussions. Locally-based truth commissions, he believes are a third way, but in addition,
he suggests international criminal tribunals that might be permanent or ad hoc, lustration
(or the shaming and banning of perpetrators from serving in a public office), public
access to police records, public apologies and memorials, reburials, reparations to be paid
as compensation to victims or their families, writing both literary and historical, and am-
nesty either blanket or individualized, in short, using a broad spectrum of means. The
crucial considerations in deciding which tools might be the most effective should be what
lessons can be learned from other societies and their successes, what capabilities and li-
mitations the society has, clear goals for the efforts in addressing the past, and identifying
goals and how to evaluate success (Crocker 2004, 3).

Stanley Cohen (1995) sees lustration as one appropriate response to societies hav-
ing to contend with human rights violations committed by previous regimes. His concern
is with cases of democratic transitions that might have been caused by outside events such as Britain defeating Argentina in the Falklands. The transition involved, however, takes place within the country itself. He cites the following sequence: first a military regime steps down handing power to a civilian government. Or a dictatorship dissolves itself giving way to a multiparty democracy. Or a communist state collapses due to pressures from within and is replaced by a more democratic government. Second, the new government promises the confront the past and prevent its abuses from happening again, proclaiming allegiance to human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law. Then the international human rights community expects the new government to deal with the abuses committed by the old one (Cohen 1995, 7-9).

Cohen sees the lustration debate in a wide context with many issues ranging from the historiographic (concerning how the past is recovered and rebuilt), moral debates about accountability for what now are considered crimes but were once legal government policy, legal issues about due process and enforcement, and questions about the scope of international law. In this article, he restricts himself to the issues coming from criminology and sociology of crime (punishment, and social control) and those from the human rights community. He sees these two interests as linked by the idea of “crimes against the state” (Cohen 1995, 9).

Cohen sees the issues as divided into five debates. The first, he says, is about knowledge. The human rights community sees this as the “truth phase” (Cohen 1995, 11) of accountability. It means uncovering factual evidence, but also confronting or coming to terms with the past. It can be an objective in itself, or it can be tied to decisions as narrow as what to do about individual perpetrators or as wide as social goals concerning re-
conciliation. He has labeled accountability as the second debate. It involves the decision about what should be done with state criminals who had different levels of responsibility in the old regime. He calls it the “justice phase” explaining that his use of “accountability” is in its narrower, legalistic sense as synonymous with justice (Cohen 1995, 11, note 3). The other three debates concern impunity, expiation, and reconciliation and reconstruction (Cohen 1995, 12).

Reconciliation, Memorialization, and the Past

Alexander Wilde chose to speak of ‘irruptions of memory’ even though the use of irrupt, which, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, meaning to break or burst, is uncommon in English. It mirrors the Spanish irrumpir, also meaning to break or burst and carrying an implication of sudden interruption. For the purpose of Wilde’s article, these ‘irruptions of memory’ are public events that find their way into the Chilean national consciousness. They are unbidden and often appear suddenly and bring about associations with symbols, causes, and ways of life that associate themselves with Chile’s political past that, to a major part of the population, is still present in their experiences. The events are public because they have been covered in the media and concern the authority of public institutions and the elites responsible. The occurrences involve a time of the country’s recent history surrounded by conflicting political (italics Wilde’s) memories of acts and leading figures of the dictatorship, of the blame politicians should carry for the conditions leading to the coup, and the violations of human rights during the dictatorship. Pinochet’s arrest triggered an irruption; when something similar happens, Chile becomes an arena with its public discourse deeply divided and permeated with representations of
the past that are mutually exclusive. These events are charged and become part of the national politic (Wilde 1999, 475).

Between these occasional irruptions, Chile’s public life since transition has had what Wilde calls “a certain muffled quality reflective of what might be called a ‘conspiracy of consensus’ (Wilde 1999, 476) that started with political elites then spread throughout the society. Chileans appear to Wilde to have a widespread dislike of open conflict coming from low levels of social trust. Politicians seem to avoid debate and other confrontations characteristic of democratic politics. They try for elite consensus-building with few ways for citizens to air their discontents. Wilde finds that after a period of expressive politics, the government gave up the initiative it took with the formation of the Rettig Commission and the construction of the Memorial Wall to victims of Pinochet’s dictatorship and became reactive to the irruptions (Wilde 1991, 476-477).

Former President Aylwin, Wilde (1999) says, well realized the importance of the symbolic dimensions of the historic role of the presidency. Early in his administration, the Aylwin government carried out a series of ceremonies meant to help Chileans heal. The assumption of the Chilean Senate was televised and a mass inauguration took place in the National Stadium the next day. The National Stadium was notorious as a detention center from which prisoners were disappeared during the months after Pinochet’s coup in 1973. The ceremonies used speeches, personal testimony, and public recognition of people who had been banned from national life to acknowledge the collective suffering and take the demons away from what had become a sinister site. Wives who had husbands among the disappeared danced the cueca, Chile’s national dance, a flirtatious courtship dance, alone (Wilde 1999, 483).
Wilde believes that irruptions of memory belong to one of two categories. The first category is made up of chaotic occurrences that get media coverage and bring to mind associations with the repressive past without being linked to official actors. The second category is made up of public events provoked by state actors outside of the authority of the elected government, particularly if the military had initiated the actions autonomously (Wilde 1999, 486).

Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira (2007) say that the processes of national reconciliation became part of ending civil wars and making the transitions form authoritarian, military-controlled governments to elected civilian governments. Commissions for national peace and reconciliation aided in bringing an end to the warfare and re-forming regional political systems from Guatemala to Argentina. Some believed that reconciliation required forgetting the recent past, the granting of impunity to the guilty. Others believed that true reconciliation was just the opposite and resisted that idea of reconciliation and impunity being linked in any way. Some intellectuals and theologians even put forth the idea that true reconciliation could only be accomplished if the conditions that provoked civil wars and political repression were eliminated. They defined those evils in a nearly classical Marxist critique of capitalism and imperialism that was offered by radical Catholic theologians (Loveman and Lira 2007, 43).

Loveman and Lira (2007) identify the major political crises in Chile between 1818 and 2006 and la via chilena de reconciliación política (the Chilean Way of political reconciliation). La via chilena uses modalities of resolving conflict and peacemaking coming from the Athenian constitution and the codes of the Roman Empire or even earlier and is shared largely with Catholic Europe and Latin America though it has a particularly
Chilean aspect. Impunity and resistance to impunity, a quest for truth and justice and resort to amnesties when pragmatism necessitates it, and pardons when necessary to maintain social peace and governability are components. *Ni perdón ni olvido* (neither pardon or forgetting) -- appeals to memory and punishment of perpetrators as well as Christian forgiveness and beginning again. It also contains a mixture of re-forming the political and institutional combined with rational, cultural, and even literary pleas for reconciliatio after civil warfare that is particularly Chilean. In the course of forming and maintaining *la via chilena*, different forums and institutions were used as arenas for truth seeking and for fighting (frequently unsuccessfully) social and legal impunity. The consequence of *la via chilena* frequently ended in political compromises that had an impact on the findings and the legal and political applications of the law to maintain social peace (Loveman and Lira 2007, 44).

A distinctive Chilean way of political reconciliation as a response to political conflict and civil wars developed in the nineteenth century. From the time of independence in 1810 until the 1920s, it evolved to include discursive, institutional, and policy responses to the violence. The goal was political reconciliation. From the 1930s until the coup of 11 September 1973, the tenets of political reconciliation that mandated that justice should look forward instead of backward became accepted aspects of daily politics. They prevented major systematic breakdown during that time. From 1932 until 1973, Chile was the only Latin American country that did not have illegal governmental turnover or unconstitutional presidential succession (Loveman and Lira 2007, 45).
The Chilean memorial wall is a slab of white stone about three stories tall on which several thousand names have been inscribed in commemoration. Meade (2001) points out that the wall and other memory sites are public monuments, memorials, and parks that venerate, pay homage to, and try to get the memory of thousands of disappeared, tortured, and murdered victims of Pinochet’s regime into public record. However, even though these sites call people and occurrence to the public attention, they exist inside a society that has not reconciled with the horrors of the authoritarian regime or held it accountable for its violations of human rights (Meade 2001, 123-124).

Chile’s Villa Grimaldi, an old villa on the border of Santiago, Chile’s capital city, was transformed and used by the military as a site for detention and torture from 1974 to 1978. According to Meade (2001), about 5,000 prisoners were detained at Villa Grimaldi, and 240 of them were killed or disappeared. In 1995, it was designated as a “Peace Park” (Meade 2001, 125) and is Latin America’s only “memorial” (Meade 2001, 125) of torture. While Argentina tried members of the military for their parts in the “Dirty War” but has not preserved a site where visitors can learn about torture methods. Chile preserved Villa Grimaldi and other sites while the members of Pinochet’s government have self-imposed amnesty from their crimes (Meade 2001, 12).

While these sites exist, Meade (2001) points out that meager resources are devoted to making a record of who was there and what happened, and this, she says aids those who would keep the antihuman horrors of the Pinochet regime as an abstraction. However, the moderate to leftist Concertación acknowledges the abuses but refuses to demand reparations for victims or their families or to hold the military responsible for their abuses, and therefore, governs without confrontation (Meade 2001, 135-136).
Victoria Baxter's article, "Civil Society Promotion of Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Chile: Villa Grimaldi," focuses on how regimes coming to power after authoritarian rule balance their mandates, both moral and ethical, with the political constraints they need to be aware of during and after transitions to democracy. She points out that it is crucial to examine the role of civil society in dealing with truth, justice, and reconciliation, what she calls the major issues of transitional justice (Baxter 2005, 120-121). Baxter's purpose in this article is to describe how Chile's civil society promotes a memorial constructed on the site of a former torture center. In addition, she highlights the role a private actor can play in going beyond what can be accomplished by the formal process of transitional justice to promote the truth about past human rights violations and to promote justice and reconciliation (Baxter 2005, 121).

Chilean society, says Baxter, pointed out through opinion polls and statements made by political leaders early on in the transition that they felt they could choose a policy that would pursue peace, or one that would pursue justice. A fear permeated the society that honesty about the past would endanger the fragile transition to democracy by destabilizing it and lead to a return to the terror of the past. Since Pinochet still had support from a large part of society and the military, the fears were not unfounded. As late as 1993, Baxter points out, the military demonstrated in front of the presidential palace in a show of force widely interpreted as a warning to the government that it should not continue to press for human rights trials (Baxter 2005, 124).

Generally, the government followed the line that Chile had to move forward by forgetting the past. Specifically, when President Aylwin released the findings of the Retig Commission, he said, "For the good of Chile, we should look toward the future that
unites us more than the past which separates us” (quoted in Baxter 2005, 124). He said that efforts should go towards consolidating the democracy rather than “to waste our energy in scrutinizing wounds that are irremediable” (quoted in Baxter 2005, 124). Baxter points out that it might not be so easy for the victims to forget about the past, particularly because they were never acknowledged during the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They did not have a choice between peace and justice because the Commission did not explicitly offer them either option (Baxter 2005, 124).

Baxter suggests that civil society can help the past to be remembered publicly by, for example, recording and documenting past abuses, archiving testimonies, or giving evidence. Their efforts can complement those of truth commissions because the commissions lack time and resources to do the documentation. And the efforts of civil society can use the methods of both restorative and retributive justice. She mentions student groups who use documentation of human rights violations from NGOs to name abusers publicly. The students then set up demonstrations in front of the homes or businesses to combat official impunity for perpetrators with a model of public shaming (Baxter 2005, 125).

Sites of memory, Baxter (2005) believes, can be seen as effort to promote restorative justice. Their formation often promotes debates among survivors. This debate and discussion makes the sites useful catalysts to promote views and ideas of truth, justice, and reconciliation because they can provide survivor groups with another venue to discuss their past and their needs. She thinks that sites can serve preventative ends by telling the past in the hope that when people know and understand, they will prevent those beha-
viors in the future though the fact that memorials to the Holocaust have not prevented genocides is a powerful counterargument (Baxter 2005, 126).

She sees Chile's Villa Grimaldi is an interesting case because the NGO community has been very involved in permeating the site with historical memory. After civil society groups petitioned, the government officially funded the creation of a park and the memorial wall on the site of the Villa Grimaldi, but the government did not make pamphlets or audio guides explaining what the park commemorates. The site only has markers that identify that torture occurred in front of the remains of the buildings, but the markers provide little context about who was tortured or why Chile's government of the time would use torture against Chileans (Baxter 2005, 127).

The private actor Baxter (2005) mentions appears in other articles (Meade, 2001, for example). He is a Chilean citizen who left Chile in 1976 and returned in 1991 after living in the United States in exile. He then began research and advocacy at the site of Villa Grimaldi where he had been detained. In 1975, Matta, a law student, was arrested by Chile's secret police for organizing with others against Pinochet's regime. He moved back to Chile to give deposition about a disappeared friend before the Rettig Commission. He had worked as a private investigator in the United States and decided to stay in Chile and use the skills he had developed to research human rights abuses. In 1992, he found a former leftist militant who had collaborated with DINA (the Chilean secret police). Matta's interviews with her allowed her to express her regrets at what she had done (i.e., to reconcile) and gave him a lot of insider information about the daily activities at the torture center. Many of the prisoners were kept blindfolded so could not tell about the buildings or identify their torturers. Matta used the information to create a day-by-day
record of what happened at Villa Grimaldi. He was able to identify 1,600 former prisoners but believes there were closer to 5,000 detainees. Matta had an active part in designing the Peace Park and wrote a visitor’s guide, a booklet that is a historical overview of Villa Grimaldi with descriptions of types of torture used throughout the center. He also conducts free walking tours and has built a model of the center that he uses in tours and lectures (Baxter 2005, 128-130).

Elizabeth Jelin says that the transition from end of dictatorial regimes and periods of state-sponsored terrorism is a “multilayered process” (Jelin 2007, 138) because in it, the settling of the past’s accounts comes together with the need to build a future without the evils of the past. In “Public Memorialization in Perspective: Truth, Justice and Memory of Past Repression in the Southern Cone of South America,” she makes two basic points: policies relating to memorialization are part of transitional politics and cannot be seen separately. She believes that the processes develop on various levels, institutional, symbolic, and subjective, and that seeing how that happens, it becomes obvious that when people demand public memorialization, it is part of a demand for truth and justice (Jelin 2007, 138-139).

Jelin, (2007) like nearly every other author covered in this survey, points out the dichotomy between people who believe that full disclosure is a necessary component for reconciliation and those who believe that the past should be forgotten. Because of the dispute about the place of memory and forgetting in the democratization process, Jelin (2007) finds it unlikely that at any time and place a single memory could be shared by a society no matter what its size. After confrontations, she points out, one script, that of the winners, will be predominant. There is an active political struggle around what the mean-
ing of the memory itself might be, and the struggle is not between memory and oblivion or silence but between opposing memories (Jelin 2007 139-140).

Conclusion

The search for reconciliation takes many forms. Some, frequently perpetrators or those in charge of heading states through periods of transition, find forgetting to be the better path. They follow the idea that energy should be put into going forward rather than wasted in trying to deal with what is past and, therefore, cannot be changed. They promote the idea that if abuses occurred, they will damage efforts to go forward. They minimize the suffering of victims. Others believe that it is only through finding the truths about the past and leveling blame for atrocities through practicing either retributive or restorative justice. Truth and reconciliation commissions have frequently been found the most effective way to assess guilt and level punishment, but these commissions are frequently narrow in scope and can barely begin to meet the needs of surviving victims and their friends and families. Some have been charged strictly with investigating deaths, and cannot consider cases of disappearances and torture.

I believe that that, in cases of a democratic transition following an authoritarian regime birthed by political violence, the emerging democracy carries an enormous weight. In order for it to be a true transition, it has to assure that it will become a better state, one not likely to repeat the atrocities of the past. I believe that the only way to assure this is by knowing that past thoroughly. Chilean Pedro Matta has made an enormous contribution to keeping the memory of repression and torture alive by helping to create
sites of memory associated with the Villa Grimaldi, a notorious site of disappearance and torture.

I have to agree with those who support the cause of memory. It seems impossible to create a more just future without being well-schooled in the injustices of the past. It seems impossible to make progress if one is constantly starting from the beginning -- that the groundwork in what helps and what has not worked has been begun and is a wonderful place to continue.
Endnotes

1 According to “Beyond Intractability,” *lustration* comes from the Latin for purification. It is a means some countries use to deal with human rights violations within the transitional justice literature. Those found guilty of abuses in previous regimes are disqualified from participation in the process. It was commonly used in Eastern Europe.
CHAPTER III
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSIONS

"In Chile and Argentina, they had commissions in order to forget the past, to turn the page afterwards. But the trick is, how not to close the book . . .\"

Hevia Larenas, Chilean human rights lawyer
In interview with Hayner, 12 March 1993.
(Interview in Spanish; translation by author).

"The way of peace is truth . . ." Gandhi

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are the most common way of dealing with the need for reconciliation after periods of intensely violent political conflict. The commissions that have been called to date vary in their mandate and in how much and what kinds of power they have. Some have no legislative power and have only been called to assess testimonies and make recommendations to judicial bodies. At times, commissions are limited to administrative roles, compiling records and overseeing reparations granted to victims or their families. Though all the commissions are formed out of needs that come from different political climates, their goals of finding the truth and promoting reconciliation are the same. Some have had success in advancing human rights legislation because of the power granted by their mandate and the legitimacy of the commissions.

Many researchers believe that trials in front of truth and reconciliation commissions are the best way of establishing a knowledge of atrocities and from there forming a plan to achieve reconciliation. They think that an exploration of the past and exposure of the truth is necessary. Others find the commissions to be detrimental to the cause of re-
conciliation because they encourage remembrance of a horrible past. These people believe that amnesties and impunities would be the best way for victims to forget—that forgetting the past in the cause of beginning a fresh future is necessary for healing.

While I think that truth and reconciliation commissions are a wonderful component to facilitate reconciliation, I feel that they are incomplete. If I were to make a chart of how theatre fills in the gaps truth and reconciliation commissions cannot, it might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSIONS</th>
<th>THEATRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissions frequently do not have the right or ability to name or address perpetrators or to do more than say that atrocities occurred. This gives them little ability to facilitate reconciliation for victims who might have been personally attacked.</td>
<td>Theatre has the ability to use creative means to address the need for reconciliation. Fictional, theatrical conventions such as scripts or the use of props can be used to address victims’ emotional needs in a way that simple, hard facts cannot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama is not encouraged. It and emotion are peripheral to the testimony.</td>
<td>Drama and emotional exchange are central to theatre. They encourage emotional exploration and openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth telling is separate from the inevitable drama in the sense that the truth is intended to be an absolute and objective entity.</td>
<td>Good drama requires truthfulness but does not limit itself to one version or perception of the truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of trials cannot be determined solely by victims’ needs; they must follow responsibilities and directives as allowed by the specific commission’s mandate.</td>
<td>Trial by theatre can be scripted to facilitate reconciliation. It is not bound by an external mandate other than laws against slander.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity is required by legal proceedings. It might be difficult for victims to perceive any reconciliation in situations where perpetrators’</td>
<td>Objectivity is not allowed to obstruct the drama or how it addresses participants’ needs. Theatre has the ability and the freedom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
privacy is respected in a manner in which their lives were not.

to make participants' needs its focus as long as it does not slander perpetrators.

So, it is ultimately an openness and a freedom to encompass different interpretations of the truth inherent in theatre that by nature is not part of truth and reconciliation commissions, or any strictly legal body.

As Cynthia Milton (2007) says, "Truth commissions are both the product of historical processes and the sites of production of historical sources about the past." Commissions have been set up as very temporary entities with unrealistically small amounts of time to do their work. Milton (2007) states that Peru’s Comisión de la verdad y reconciliación was assigned to investigate, assess, and decide what should be done about twenty years of atrocities in only eighteen months. They were given the possibility of a five-month extension.

I have chosen to devote this section to the work of truth commissions, particularly because they are the standard, the single most commonly accepted way of facilitating political and national reconciliation and compiling information received during testimonies. The work of CONADEP, Argentina's Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas or National Commission on the Disappeared, produced a document called Nunca Más (Never Again) that is well-known for the valuable information relating to the Dirty War atrocities that it contains. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission charged to deal with the atrocities committed in apartheid South Africa is well-known, perhaps the best-known of the Commissions. First, I will summarize how various scholars have defined truth commissions and outline the work done by the Argentine and Chilean commissions. There is some inconsistency in definition, particularly because mandates and results can
vary so drastically between commissions. I think it speaks well for the overall concept of the commissions that there is room for this kind of loose definition. It seems more realistic when dealing with the vast amount and different kinds of trauma being suffered by the victims. But for the most part, there is a well-formed concept of what a commission should be, and some of the variances fit the commissions to the situations within specific countries. Then I will briefly outline the work done by the Argentine and Chilean commissions. Throughout this section I will consider the legitimacy and effectiveness of commissions as tools for reconciliation.

The following is a brief paraphrase taken from the website of the United States Institute of Peace. It is designed to be a brief overview of the varying mandates of some of the truth commissions that have been called to date. First, the Institute defines Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as bodies convened to investigate and report on human rights abuses that come about in a certain country or as a result of a particular conflict. The commissions provide an official forum for victims, their families, and the perpetrators to give testimony about those abuses. A truth and reconciliation commission's mandate usually requires that the commissions give recommendations about how future abuses can be prevented. The creation of the commissions, their funding, and their authority come from governments, international organizations, or both. The commissions exist for a specified period of time and have definite mandates. Their organizational arrangements vary, and they adopt different processes and procedures to produce a final with conclusions and recommendations. Their goals are to help end and account for past abuses of power, to encourage national reconciliation, and/or to support a new government or to legitimize policies to prevent abuses.
Argentina's Commission had 16 members. Ten of them were non-legislative. The commission was called on 16 December 1983 by the current president, Raúl Alfonsín. On 20 September 1984, the commission commercially produced its results as *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* or Never Again: Information from the National Commission over the Disappearances of Persons. Bolivia's eight-member commission, the National Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances, was convened on 28 October 1982 by President Hernán Siles Suazo to investigate disappearances that took place between 1967 and 1982. It documented 155 cases but disbanded three years later without publishing a report. Chad's Commission of Inquiry into the Crimes and Misappropriations Committed by Ex-President Habre, His Accomplices and/or Accessaries was convened on 29 December 1990 to address the crimes of the ex-president's eight-year rule. Its findings were published in 1992. In February 1991, Chile's Rettig Commission, called by then-president Patricio Alywin released its report. It detailed the eight-person commission's work detailing abuses resulting in death or disappearance between 11 September 1973 and 11 March 1990.

East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation had a three-part mandate: 1) to investigate human rights violations that happened between April 1974 and October 1999 that caused the death of approximately 200,000 East Timorese; 2) to facilitate the reconciliation and reintegration into society of minor offenders; 3) to recommend steps that might prevent further abuses and to address victims' needs. The commission was to operate for two years with the possibility of a six-month extension. Then Ecuadorean president Abdala Bucaram established a Truth and Justice Commission to investigate 176 cases of human rights abuses that took place over 17 years.
On 16 January 1992, the UN-brokered peace agreements mandated the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. It produced a report on dire acts of violence that had been committed since 1980. It is called *From Madness to Hope: the 12-Year war in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador* and was released by the United Nations on 15 March 1993. The German Study Commission for the Assessment of History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in Germany was set up in 1992. The 27-person commission assessed human rights violations committed by the East German communists between 1949 and 1989. In 2001, the Ghanaian parliament created the National Reconciliation to examine alleged human rights violations during instability and unconstitutional governments. President John Kuffuor swore in the nine-person commission mandated to promote national reconciliation by creating a complete record of human rights violations and seizures of property between 1957 and 1993. They were to recommend ways to prevent future occurrences of the violations and reparations for victims. The commission has heard approximately 2,000 cases.

Nepal's Commission of Inquiry to find the Disappeared Persons completed a two-volume report that was released to the public in 1994. Few of the recommendations were followed. Nigeria's commission was mandate to 1) find the causes, extent, and kind of abuses, particularly the incidence of murder and assassination, 2) to identify the guilty authorities, individuals, and institutions, 3) to see if the murders and assassinations were the fault of any governmental institution or liberation group, and 4) to recommend measures to prevent future occurrences. The twelve-member Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigated abuses by both Túpac Amaru and Sendero luminoso revolutionary groups and the excesses of the military under Presidents Fernando Belaunde,
Alan García, and Alberto Fujimori. Its final report was issued in August 2003. In 1994, Sri Lanka’s President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga instituted three different Commissions of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal or Disappearance of Persons. Their mandates were identical, and each was charged to investigate disappearances in a different geographical section of the country. Compensations were paid to some of the victims, and more than 400 members of the security forces were charged with human rights violations.

These and the other commissions were formed in a variety of ways by the people who called them. Margaret Popkin and Naomi Roht-Arriaza (1995) further explore their constitution and mandate of the commissions and explain a bit about this: some are ad hoc commissions appointed by the country’s executive branch, under the auspice of its parliament, others are international bodies overseen by the United Nations or regional institutions, and still others are more permanent structures overseen by an institution such as an ombudsman’s office. Their evaluation of the commissions they reviewed is based on four overlapping goals for the commissions: the creation of a solid, reliable account of events; construction of a platform where victims could tell their stories and achieve some type of compensation, their recommendations for institutional changes to prevent future occurrences of similar abuses, and the establishment of responsibility for the abuses and mandate for accountability by the offenders (Popkin and Roht-Arriaza 1995, 79).

Formation of commissions in Latin America, Popkin and Roht-Arriaza point out, is called for when civilian governments come into power after military and authoritarian dictatorships. Atrocities committed during the military establishment cause demands to be placed on the new civilian governments for an accounting of the prior regimes’ human
rights violations, and the job of making objective assessments of those violations falls to the truth and reconciliation commissions. Demands for the work of commissions have also come at negotiated ends to civil wars. (Popkin and Roht-Arriaza 1995, 81).

There are sound reasons for governments to use truth commissions to tackle the problems of victims of the atrocities of the past. The need to find the truth is related to the heinous nature of the violations committed during the previous regime while at war. There was secrecy and deniability regarding atrocities that were committed. Disappearances were particularly despicable aspects of the military-authoritarian regimes since people were frequently snatched from public streets or their homes or workplaces by plainclothes police or the members of death squads then never seen alive again. Detentions were not acknowledged; the families only found out occasionally when the frequently mutilated bodies of disappeared reappeared. And if killings were acknowledged, they were blamed on anti-government subversives (Popkin and Roht-Arriaza 1995, 82).

Truth and reconciliation commissions are able to sidestep some of the baggage and the difficulties more traditional investigators would have in searching for the truth about the past. Because commission members frequently did not come from the area or even were not involved in the country’s struggles, they would be much more likely to be able to be objective than conventional investigators who were intimately involved within the authoritarian regimes. Witnesses were also more likely to think that courts of outsiders would be safer and more reliable. Therefore, victims and witnesses were more likely to be willing to testify in front of the commissions. The courts and police, as institutions within the authoritarian structures, were both at least complicit in the violations, making
those institutions incapable of conducting objective, independent investigations (Popkin and Robt-Arriaza 1995, 82).

Re-creating or re-forming a judiciary or establishing constitutional reforms is time-consuming. And threats, real or perceived, to the hegemony or institutional integrity of the military might further complicate the ability of more traditional locally-based institutions to address atrocities. In both pacted transitions and negotiated ends to civil conflict, those who committed the atrocities are still present, powerful, and able to limit the ability of the legal systems to maneuver in different ways. In the case of pacted transitions, the new government might feel that it could not afford the use of more dynamic means of prosecution or re-formation of the institutions involved in the oppression. It would not be pragmatic because there is an unfavorable balance of power. In the second case, it might be the same government guilty of the violations that may have to put the transition into motion. (Popkin and Roht-Arriaza 1995, 82-83).

National truth commissions, Hayner states, are usually sponsored by legislative and executive governmental branches, sometimes, but not as often, by the legislative branch. Others are sponsored internationally, by the United Nations or nongovernmental organizations. Hayner says truth commissions ought to meet four primary criteria: truth commissions must focus on the past, not on a specific event, but aim at forming a broad picture of human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, be created for a certain purpose and exist temporarily for a pre-determined time period, and have authority vested in them by their sponsor so through the legitimacy and power of the sponsor, the commission is able to access privileged information, security to explore the issues, and their report should have impact (Hayner 1994, 600-604).
Hayner (1994) says that truth commissions should be kept separate from the formal legal accountability that would come from prosecuting perpetrators. The fifteen cases she cites show that commission reports rarely lead to prosecutions, and in most cases there are no trials even if the perpetrator(s) and the extent of their abuses are common knowledge. Usually the mandate of truth commissions prevents them from taking an active role in the decision to prosecute or grant amnesty, but some have recommended prosecution or forwarded their findings to courts for judgments. Because of the purposefully temporary character and narrow scope defined for the commissions, decisions about prosecution are usually political ones, or reflections of political realities away from the influence of the commissions (Hayner 1994, 604).

David A. Crocker (2000) also believes that truth commissions can contribute to achieving important goals in the democratization process. Rather than seeing them as bodies able to function independently as do Popkin and Roht-Arriaza, he thinks that they must be backed by other institutions and measures such as more traditional trials and punishment. Backing from civil society, he believes, is often necessary for the success of a truth and reconciliation commission, and more generally, for any legal body established to deal with wrongs from the past, particularly if the society practices deliberative democracy. He questions how a fledgling democracy can come to terms with severe human rights abuses, leftovers from earlier authoritarian regimes, or their atrocities committed in an internal armed conflict (Crocker 2000, 1).

While the El Salvadoran truth commission is a direct outgrowth of the settlement brokered by the United Nations to end the twelve-year civil war, President Aylwin created the Chilean commission internally, by executive decree, in February 1991, one month af-
after he became president of the republic. He established it to investigate the crimes against humanity of the Pinochet regime. Through the terms of the constitution put into place by the military regime, Pinochet himself was forced to step down and permit civilian rule, and this made the investigation of his human rights abuses possible—though the pacted transition restricted the commission’s mandate. Aylwin’s preamble to his edict creating the Rettig Commission stated that he considered it his obligation “to do all within his power to help bring this truth to light as quickly and effectively as possible” because “only upon a foundation of truth [is] it possible to meet the basic demands of justice and to create the necessary conditions for achieving true national reconciliation” quoted in Ensalaco 1994, 658. Aylwin’s decree assigned four tasks to the commission: to establish as thorough an understanding of the most serious of the human rights abuses as they could, to find and compile evidence that could make it possible to identify victims by their names, their fates, and locations, to recommend appropriate reparations to the victims’ families, and to recommend legal and administrative measures to keep similar violations from happening again (Ensalaco1994, 658).

Jonathan Allen (1999) calls truth commissions “a novel institutional response to the injustices and evils perpetrated and encouraged by predecessor regimes” (Allen, 1999, 315). He sees the use of commissions as an option that falls somewhere between full prosecution and unconditional amnesty. They can be a way to help establish legitimacy in new democracies by distancing the new governments from past abuses through the recognition and disclosing of those offences. Allen argues that full trials would threaten the new democracies because they would provoke hostility and division. In recent transitions from authoritarianism, democratization and transitional justice might demand that a
way other than retributive justice be found to address perpetrators’ complicity in the vi-
olation of human rights. But he also questions if the lesser capability to exact punishment
makes some truth and reconciliation commissions “a sacrifice of justice to expediency”
(Allen 1999, 315).

Allen (1999) suggests that some of the claims about truth commissions are better
understood as assertions based on issues of the claimants’ morality rather than on state-
ments that can be proven empirically. Allen states, “It is not that no reconciliation is
possible without truth, but, rather, that morally justifiable reconciliation requires the dis-
closure of truth and some concern to see justice served. Reconciliation on other terms is
demeaning or in other ways morally unjustified” (Allen 1999, 317). Allen (1999) men-
tions Mamdani (1996 and 1998) and his idea that the South African TRC focused on the
gross human rights abuses at the expense of the suffering of the black South Africans and
the benefits enjoyed by whites as a result of the injustices imbedded in the system or
structure (Allen 1999, 332-333). This racial issue is also prevalent in Latin America
where indigenous citizens suffer disproportionately to their neighbors of European des-
cent.

The publication of the report by the United Nations Commission on the Truth for
El Salvador in 1993 created an increase in interest in truth commissions. Truth commis-
sions are official bodies formed to investigate past human rights abuses or violations of
international law. El Salvador’s Commission on the Truth was established as part of the
peace agreement between government and the armed opposition. The body was given
eight months to write a report explaining how far human rights abuses and violations of
international humanitarian law had gone over twelve years of civil war in El Salvador. In
the end, the Commission report confirmed that official acknowledgement of the abuses in itself was important. The commission was based on the work done in Chile and Argentina where similar commissions were implemented to address the past. As of Hayner’s article, fifteen commissions had been set up, both of governmental and non-governmental origin. El Salvador’s was the first set up and paid for by the United Nations (Hayner 1994, 598-599).

It is important to note that neither the Chilean nor the Salvadoran commission had prosecutorial or judicial powers. Both were charged to investigate and advise, but neither could make formal criminal charges against suspected perpetrators, make a strictly legal determination of guilt or innocence, or assess criminal penalties. President Aylwin’s decree founding the commission included a reminder that only the courts held the power to judge and that the commission’s findings would have to be passed on to the appropriate court. The commission followed this guideline scrupulously, even to the point of not naming members of the military or security forces that commission members knew had been involved in specific violations (Ensalaco 1994, 659).

The commissions in Chile and El Salvador were formed out of different political conditions to recover the truth about what happened during decades of political violence and to keep the bloodshed from happening again. Mark Ensalaco says that the work of these two truth commissions should be done because the human rights abuses in Chile and El Salvador became symbolic of the human rights situations throughout the Americas. And, the experiences of those commissions support the idea that the truth commission should perform a critical human rights task in situations of transitions: they should
focus international attention to supervise the search for the truth to promote justice and the respect for human rights (Ensalaco 1994, 656).

David A. Crocker points out that a difficult problem for truth commissions to surmount in their deliberations is whether they were only looking for one truth, or if there could actually be several. Hard facts would be fairly difficult to dispute and noncontroversial, but interpretations among citizens and even members of the commissions vary. This is particularly true regarding who is guilty of atrocities. Chile's commission used general (sometimes to the point of ambiguous) terms to strive for agreement rather than accuracy. Working for agreement but identifying disputed issues would have been another possibility, but while the work required to come to consensus would stimulate public deliberation, it would undermine the commission's authority (Crocker 2000, 5).

The clearest reason for establishing truth commissions, according to Hayner, is that the commissions are authorized to find facts and establish a truthful statement of a country's past. By doing so, they help to provide a non-biased record of that country's history and questionable acts by its government. But when the events in question are well known, the commission's mandate becomes not so much to find the facts, but to acknowledge them. As commissions are, by Hayner's definition, set up to address the past, they can act to relieve international and domestic pressure on administrations to improve its human rights policies (Hayner 1994, 607).

Within three weeks of the release of the commission's report, three assassinations in Chile alarmed political circles. The third of the assassinations was of a prominent senator, and it put an end to the Rettig Commission being discussed in public. Copies of the report are rumored to be warehoused, out of circulation, to prevent the political divisions
they pointed out from occurring again. Still, the results of the commission’s work are important enough that they have been implemented anyway. Most importantly, the government established a National Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation to continue the commissions’ work and see that victims received reparations. Part of the corporation’s two-year mandate demanded continuing the search for remains of the disappeared, resolving the cases the Rettig Commission did not close, organizing the commission’s file, and putting specified reparations (including benefits for medical help and education and pensions for those who survived the disappeared or murdered) into practice (Hayner 1994, 622).

Accomplishments of Truth Commissions

Crocker (2000) says that it is not enough to find the truth, but that it must also be where the public can get it, especially if it is to facilitate other goals such as public deliberation. While some commissions have “named names” (Crocker 2000, 4) Crocker believes that their main asset is in finding the overall patterns, institutional context, and, though not to as great an extent, what generally causes and results from atrocities. Because they take testimonials directly from key actors, commissions play an important role in getting a complete picture of abuses and the impact the abuses continue to have on peoples’ lives. Because they do not have to determine guilt or innocence like judicial bodies, commissions can point out heroism in the context of the abuses (Crocker 200, 4).

Truth and reconciliation commissions have been accused of being counterproductive in the light of achieving accountability and leveling sanctions (see Llewellyn 1999). Crocker disputes this on these bases. First, because by naming likely individuals and
groups, the commissions contribute to ending the culture of impunity and assures that violators will not get away without some taint of having been accused. In addition, commissions can usually be put together quicker and less expensively. Therefore, they are able to address more alleged crimes. Trials frequently proceed from the findings and recommendations of commissions. And, truth commissions are not a moral second best, but have passed penal options to proceed to restorative justice. (Crocker 2000, 7).

The Rettig Commission particularly made a valuable review of the provisions, both constitutional and from statutes relating to human rights. Commission members recommended that anything in the constitution contrary to human rights law be removed. It demanded that the already amended constitutional requirements regarding the rescheduling of human rights guarantees be reviewed to determine their compatibility with Article 27 of the American Convention on Human Rights. The commission pointed out serious problems with the military code of justice since the military, among other wrongs, had let the War Time Tribunals order executions of suspects without previous legal proceedings. The commission also pointed out that the Supreme Court had been negligent in not monitoring the courts martial thoroughly enough (Ensalaco 1994, 666).

Chile’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission also reported extensively on the effect the atrocities had on victims, their families, and the wider society. And the body recommended reparations, both moral and material, to be paid to victims. It also called for the military and civilians, especially lawyers and judges, to have human rights education. Further recommendations were made that the judicial branch be more independent, changes be made in the laws on states of emergency, how much control the military should be allowed to have over civilians, stricter following of human rights law including
specific changes in in-country law be implemented, and governmental commemoration of the victims through the creation of monuments and support for culture and arts (Popkin and Roht-Arriaza 1995, 86).

Both commissions stressed habeas corpus remedies, due process, and the abuse of administrative detention. One deficiency corrected was that lower courts became competent to hear habeas corpus cases to speed the process when the delay of taking the case to a higher court would prejudice the rights of detainees. The commission recommended that extrajudicial confessions should be considered inadmissible as evidence or removed from their evidence if the suspect recanted later. The Rettig Commission focused on secret indictments that had been practiced routinely and compromised the accused’s right to an adequate trial as well as the fact that defendants were held in detention incommunicado for long periods of time without cause. Members of the commission also recommended that government officials who disregarded prisoners’ rights be dismissed or even prosecuted. The need for institutional reforms to improve the legal system, particularly in the appointing of judges and prosecutors was also stressed. The commission encouraged the law schools to institute human rights education and to do away with the formalistic method of education that produced judges and attorneys who would enforce the law mechanically (Ensalaco 1994, 667).

The Rettig Commission accomplished much in regard to ending uncertainties about the disappeared by leading investigations and urging that its report become a legal starting point to use to determine the status under the law of the disappeared. The Convention on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987) calls for an investigatory body in that it mandates that State Parties arrest any per-
son accused of torture after relevant facts have been investigated. The commission also contributed by recommending constitutional changes that would promote and sustain the rule of law (Ensalaco 1994, 672-673).

I agree with Allen’s (1999, 315) statement that morally-justifiable reconciliation requires that truth be disclosed with concern to serve justice. It seems that for reconciliation to have its own legitimacy, it needs to be based on justice. I think that for reconciliation or commissions convened to promote truth and reconciliation to serve society is for them to set the example of striving for fairness. Justice keeps reconciliation from becoming revenge. I think that truth and reconciliation commissions have well established their own legitimacy, and this in turn gives legitimacy to reconciliation, to those seeking reconciliation, and to the improved society that should grow from former enemies being able to live cooperatively.

Neil Kritz (1996) tells us that to make sure people have good mental health and stability, those people who are coming out of abuse and trauma must build coping mechanisms that are appropriate within the contexts of their societies. These methods of dealing with their pain need to help victims confront and process the horrors of the past so they can accept and acknowledge rather than repress them. There are many means that can help in this process, and the best must be determined by the individual’s makeup as well as the kind of trauma. But, Kritz (1996) believes that it is essential that both victims and perpetrators deal with the reality and consequences of the trauma (Kritz 1996, 127).

Groups, Kritz (1996) has found, respond similarly to individuals and need to find or make ways to confront the atrocities of the past, or the past will play itself out again in
the present. Not to address war crimes increases the wrongs done to the victims by lack of recognition of what they have endured. It promotes a culture of impunity that will make future abuses more likely. Victims’ resentments left unattended might turn into vigilante justice. In the past, diplomats and negotiators trying to end violent disputes might have seen focus on the atrocities as hindering the formation of stability and conflict resolution while currently it is seen as a crucial part of the peace process. Public airing and denunciation of past atrocities can put them into the past so the public is not likely to think the new state will be the same as the old one (Kritz 1996, 128).

Kritz (1996) believes that criminal trials can serve different functions. For victims, they can be a source of justice and catharsis. They show that grievances have been addressed and taken seriously rather than given impunity. Trials provide a forum where facts can be judicially confirmed and condemned. They can establish a societal precedence that violators will be held accountable rather than being granted impunity. Kritz (1996) believes that most importantly for long-term reconciliation, trials lay the blame with individuals rather than groups, and, therefore, they subvert the culture of collective guilt and retribution that can continue and increase bitterness and violence. Some form of criminal prosecution must be a real threat to discourage more abuses in the country in question as well as in others (Kritz 1996, 128-129).

What Kind of Commission?

Kritz (1996) believes that international tribunals are better suited to handle some aspects of prosecution while the country in question’s local courts are more appropriate for others. International tribunals, for example, are more likely to be staffed by experts in
international standards in an area of law that can be ambiguous. They are more likely to be seen as functioning impartially. They can best show that the international community will not tolerate more atrocities and help form international norms. International tribunals are more likely to have the necessary human and material resources than are nations that have recently undergone atrocities and have fractured judicial systems. The work of international bodies is enhanced by its proximity to the site of the violence, and the weaker the connection between the international body and the local population, the easier it would be for the locals to dismiss the international action. Kritz (1996) points out that in the former Yugoslavia, local media distorted information about the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia depending on the slant of ethnic nationalists. That, Kritz (1996) assumes will be repeated (Kritz 1996, 128-132).

Criminal proceedings against war crimes in domestic courts can also add to the legitimacy and credibility of a fragile new government and show its commitment to holding perpetrators accountable, to creating justice. They can help establish the legitimacy of new local courts, and these venues then can be much more grounded in the nuances of the area’s culture. This gives their decisions greater symbolic force because their verdicts would be made by courts grounded in the culture and values of the local community. The large number of those who should be tried for war crimes also recommends that local courts work in conjunction with international tribunals (Kritz 1996 132-133).

Because so many defendants should be tried, cases have been divided as much as possible into three ranked classes of guilt with different approaches for each. One category includes the leaders who gave orders and actually committed the worst of the atrocities. The second group is of those who committed the abuses but were not among the leaders,
and the third class is made up of those who had minimal parts in committing the abuses. Because of the large number of perpetrators, international tribunals have mostly limited their efforts to trying those in the first two groups. Kritz recommends that most who committed minimal abuses should be tried through bodies that do not assess criminal charges (Kritz 1996, 134-135).

Kritz (1996) believes that the most valuable function of truth and reconciliation commissions is in producing an official history of the abuses. He points out that on many occasions, the facts of the crimes are common knowledge. Truth and reconciliation commissions, however, can add acknowledgment of the crimes by a body that has domestic and international legitimacy. Kritz (1996) believes that truth and reconciliation commissions are not a substitution for criminal trials. They do not offer due process protections to those who are incriminated that they would get in actual criminal proceedings. But because commissions provide the authority to investigate the crimes officially, permit a cathartic airing in public of what was done to victims that ends in an authorized document, provide a space for victims and their families to get their stories into that official record and get some societal acknowledgment for what they have lost, and sometimes, the work of the truth and reconciliation commissions can lead to the awarding of compensation for victims and/or punishment for the abusers. Frequently a standard component of the mandate of truth and reconciliation commissions is that they evaluate and report not only on individual abuses but on the broader context surrounding them as well as the structural elements of government, security forces, and society that allowed the abuses to happen. After the commission members make their assessment, perhaps the most impor-
tant function of the commissions is that they then propose steps to prevent the abuses from happening again (Kritz 1996, 141).

Kritz (1996) points out that there is frequently the misperception that there cannot be both truth and reconciliation commissions and criminal proceedings. Blanket amnesties were granted in some Latin American countries, but in South Africa, pardon was granted only on an individual basis to those found guilty of abuses under apartheid. In order to receive amnesty, individuals had to apply and confess their crimes before the members of the tribunal. South Africa continued to back up the work of the commission with the possibility of criminal prosecution, and Kritz (1996) believes that the real threat of prosecution is what has made the commission so successful (Kritz 1996, 143).

Kritz (1996) believes that for countries to achieve justice after human rights abuses, they must first find the right balance between domestic and international involvement in the attempt. That balance changes from one case to another depending on the various factors surrounding the proceedings. He believes that criteria need to be established on how to make an objective evaluation of how the domestic bodies and procedures were able to address each situation and to see what international intervention might be necessary (Kritz 1996, 144-145).

Conclusion

Commissions convened to discover the truth concerning violations of human rights or truth and reconciliation commissions are formed to deal with survivors, of profound violence that occurs after protracted periods of political violence, either the victims themselves or their families, usually following a change to an authoritarian regime.
They are usually put into place by one of the branches of the new government though sometimes they are under the auspices of the United Nations. They have varying levels of power depending on the mandate that formed the commission. Commissions might be formed from citizens of the country involved, they could be international in composition, or have members both local and from other areas. They are ad hoc commissions, but after that distinction, there is a wide range of what might be considered the rights and responsibilities of the tribunal. Members must be willing to work within a framework but also to be flexible enough to adapt to the varying conditions and cultures of the area where the violence took place.

The commissions can be a wonderful tool to promote reconciliation if they are dedicated to providing a forum where victims and their families are free and safe to tell their stories. Members of the commissions must also keep detailed records of what happened largely in the hope that through the keeping and publishing of these accounts, powerful elites will take great care to prevent atrocities from happening in the future. Commissions are frequently best able to facilitate reconciliation if they have both international and local components. The international part adds legitimacy to the proceedings and might be the only factor that allows victims to feel safe giving testimony since members of local institutions might have been likely to be intimately involved with the deposed authoritarian regimes. International tribunals can also remove pressure from stressed or destroyed judicial systems within devastated countries that could not address the needs of victims. Local commissions, however, are valuable since they can operate within the framework of area customs.
While truth commissions are the standard way of meeting victims' needs and are an excellent way of compiling and archiving the records of atrocities, I propose that they are not actually the best way to facilitate reconciliation, at least not if they are the only means being used. This is particularly true in the case of Chile where General Pinochet, head of the former regime and charged with atrocities, has died without expressing any remorse for the atrocities of his regime. I propose that more creative means of achieving reconciliation should be found, can be found in theatrical explorations of the atrocities and victims' visions of the feature.

Memorialization also aids in the healing process, the remembering and validating of the horrors victims have undergone. These methods can be encouraged in conjunction with the more formal and legalist truth and reconciliation commissions. I propose that the imaginative self expression encouraged in theatre is such a way of building reconciliation and will explore this possibility in the next two sections. Perhaps it is not even that commissions for truth and reconciliation are not the best means; it might just be that they do not cover the spectrum of victims' needs as they could as a part of the solution. This inadequacy comes from the very nature of the commissions. They are official, legalistic bodies. Their functions, their legitimacy, their capacity for archiving human rights abuses are crucial. But in combination with theatre, a creative, non-official, but legitimate entity, they can address a much broader spectrum of victims' needs.

Commissions have their own element of theatricality. Court proceedings, even when they do not vary from their scripts, are high drama. And their official component, their legitimacy, and their function as archivists are all valuable to the cause of promoting. I do not suggest that theatre take over the work of the commissions, or even that it
could, only that the commissions could work well in tandem with the purposefully theatrical to provide more opportunity for healing.
CHAPTER IV
THEATRE AS RECONCILIATION

In 1988 the Chilean people imbued the word no with hope and made it Positive. And perhaps that is the most eloquent metaphor for the development of theatre in Chile since 1973 (Boyle 1992, 19).

How can you tell the truth if the mask you have adopted ends up being identical to your face? How does memory beguile and save and guide us? How can we keep our innocence once we have tasted evil? How to forgive those who have hurt us irreparably? How do we find a language that is political but not pamphletary? How to tell stories that are both popular and ambiguous, stories that can be understood by large audiences and yet contain stylistic experimentation, that are mythical and also about immediate human beings? (Dorfman 1991, 75)

This section will include a discussion of some works typifying different types of theatre and why I believe it to be an ideal vehicle to help accomplish reconciliation. After looking at other aspects of theatre in general that highlight it as a potentially helpful tool for reconciliation, I will explore the theatrical nature of the power hierarchy, both of the Church and the state. Then I will look at some specific theatrical works by Chilean and Argentine playwrights. I do not know if some of these works were written to facilitate reconciliation or not. I do know that because graffiti, music, plays, poetry, and other theatrical forms of expression can subvert the silence and shame that so frequently surround victims of abuse, these acts of spectacle can also chip away at the idea that victims in some way deserved the abuse they underwent, or that they were not abused. These works can aid in making a process that leads towards reconciliation. They can facilitate reconciliation not just between victims and their persecutors, but also within both victims and perpetrators. In order for victims to heal from the horror of the past, the horrors they went
through have to break out of the silence. Putting those horrors on a stage has the power to accomplish that.

Theatrical works can help to provoke a debate that can be cathartic because they can air issues too long shrouded in secrecy, terror, and shame. Bringing those issues into the open, in a space with the uniquely freeing blend of reality and the surreal that only theatre creates and sustains, can help to make a safe space for healing to begin. In a formal theater, the stage provides a distance between actors and the public, both physical and metaphorical. This can create an atmosphere less threatening to perpetrators who can feel safer in a non-judgmental, non-official atmosphere. This type of space allows them a kind of a safety in which to form a different perspective on the events they and their victims shared and air. And in this relative safety, grievances from both sides can be aired publicly.

Public Expression and Therapeutic Drama as Components of Reconciliation

Public expression is a recognized and legitimate form of healing by various schools of thought within the psychological community. Therapists use drama as treatment in diverse cases such as for survivors of abuse, recovering drug addicts, aggressiveness, hostility Asperger's Syndrome, and schizophrenia. In 1979, the National Association for Drama Therapy was formed “establish and uphold rigorous standards of professional competence for drama therapists.” They believe that drama therapy is an intentional, active, and experimental use of drama and/or theatre to achieve the goals of therapy. It provides the context for participants to tell their stories, name what they want to achieve and solve problems, express feelings, or achieve catharsis.
Proponents believe that through drama, the spectrum of inner experience can be explored actively. The skills required to achieve healthy interpersonal relationships can be enhanced. Participants are encouraged to try out diverse dramatic roles to strengthen their own life roles.

According to Fleshman and Fryrear (1981), traditional drama is the art form that most directly and openly deals with the human personality. Drama, for them, implies dramatic story structure while theatre deals with performers presenting material through action techniques, the actual presentation of the spectacle. Normally they use the term drama therapy to refer to healing applications both drama and therapy entities share (Fleshman and Fryrear 1981, 109-110). In the 1950s, various types of improvisational exercises came into the spotlight as tools for therapists. The senses and personal memories were used to help set up the "reality" (Fleshman and Fryrear 1981, 114) of their performances. Close connection between characterizations and the actors' personal life experiences was encouraged. The 1960s saw great innovation. Actors formed theatre groups to create personal growth exercises as well as to hone their theatrical skills. These groups made productions out of feelings, games, and improvisations that they developed from their experiences while working together. They frequently took on group action techniques of therapy. Actors sought new and direct means of communication as the traditional divide between them and their public was broken down (Fleshman and Fryrear 1981, 114).

Catharsis is well understood as part of both the dramatic and therapeutic processes—a means of freely discharging pent-up emotions. The term came from Aristotle's theory of Greek tragedy, and the concept became one of Freud's psychoanalytic
principles, clearly demonstrating a link between theatre and therapeutic interaction (Fleshman and Fryrear 1981, 121). Techniques resembling drama therapy including variations on psychodrama are used in diverse forms of therapy. Behavioral therapy techniques such as Behavioral Rehearsal and Role Modeling mirror theatrical beginnings. Role-playing games where the patient acts out different aspects of him or herself are common in Gestalt Therapy. Gestalt’s Waking Dream Technique (where the therapist helps the client live out an imaginative experience) might be called a modified form of drama therapy. Many forms of action and group therapy encourage clients to involve and express themselves more completely than they would ordinarily do, similar to the drama therapy approach (Fleshman and Fryrear 1981, 122).

Military Theatre

Historically, theatre has been used successfully as a tool of repression as well as a tool of empowerment. When the goal of theatre is to make one group heroic and right, to divide people and create fear, it is acted out following essentially the same routines as when its goals are healing, unity and the formation and strengthening of community ties. Even though the manner is the same, the outward aspects display themselves differently. The powerful rely highly on this side of theatricality to maintain their separation from the less powerful. Following theatrical cues, military men march to rousing music to display their unity and strength. They wear matching uniforms, sometimes heavy with medals declaring their bravery and allegiance to their fatherland and the depth of their fraternity. They speak in their own scripted language designed to keep the uninitiated from understanding, other, outside of the martial fra-
ternity. They march in tightly-choreographed parade formations and fly their aircrafts in precision drills designed to display their discipline, efficiency, might, skill, and their unity within their ranks, all designed as spectacle and an effective warning to anyone on the outside that those who are not part of their fraternity are other and will stay that way, will not be admitted. And the powerful fraternity will not take dissention lightly.

According to Nancy Caro Hollander, Argentines at the time of the Dirty War experienced a collective trauma that was global and cumulative in nature. This condition occurred because the populace had been organized by a state that used its entire arsenal of institutions--military, legal, educational, medical, mass media, and religious--in cooperation to impose a culture of fear that would spread throughout any elements of the population who could possibly be dissidents. Hollander quotes one of the generals in power at the time who said, “First, we are going to kill all of the subversives; then their collaborators; then their sympathizers; then the indifferent; and finally, the timid” (Hollander 2002, 172). Those military men, she points out, killed enough of the people they deemed potentially harmful to their status quo that they accomplished the “symbolic murder” (Hollander 2002, 172) of those who were timid or did not care. During the Dirty War period, random kidnappings, even of apolitical people, were carried out on streets, at homes, or in workplaces. The abductions, theatrical in their surreal nature, reinforced a new social reality both terrifying and unpredictable. While denying that they were using torture tactics, the military released certain victims who would intimidate those who heard their testimonies. Their stories created fear, isolation and silence, further dividing the society (Hollander 2002, 172).
This situation might be seen as a purposeful manipulation of the theatrical. Military men act out their carefully-scripted drills and parades, designed to display their power and ability and willingness to commit violent, atrocious acts. They play their parts in identical uniforms designed to display them as a disciplined block rather than as individuals, designed to intimidate the uninitiated and create/establish/identify a distinct other, a person or group to fill the role of threat and scapegoat. Their power allows them to demand strict adherence to their script and gives them room to improvise if necessary. This created other, in this case, anyone found to be a subversive element or anyone who could be a threat to the status quo in any way, will not be allowed access to their stage as those military men strike in highly choreographed ways designed to promote fear and division among the citizenry that the military hierarchy had labeled as subversive and enemy. Reclaiming the theatrical and using it to repair the damage done by its misuse is the perfect response. Hollander (2002, 174) says that “In state terror, each citizen is forced to live in a transitional space filled with constant impingements whose central symbols are the disappeared, the tortured, and the murdered.” Theatre as a tool of reconciliation can refill that space and replace those symbols with others that inspire community and hope rather than despair, division, and fear.

**Theatre of the Absurd**

*Through theater--good, bad, indifferent, and absolutely awful--I knew it was possible to glimpse layer upon layer of reality, “truths,”*
"lies." Propaganda alongside fear, terror, suffering, pain, courage (Boyle 1992, 11).

Havel (1990, 53) said that Theatre of the Absurd is the major theatrical innovation of the twentieth century because it demonstrates that humanity is in crisis, without any sense of security about its metaphysical foundation, on unstable ground. Characters in plays that are described as absurdist are experiencing irrevocable loss that they cannot admit to themselves. Everything is coming apart for these characters; their worlds are collapsing. While Havel sees these works as always being philosophical, he says that they do not philosophize as do those of Jean Paul Sartre, for example; what they express tends to be commonplace, even clichéd. They are not meant to be illustrative of any point, and they cannot be taken literally. "They merely point to the final horizon of our common general theme."

Plays that fall under the category of Theatre of the Absurd tend to be comic in tone, familiar with the phenomenon of embarrassment without end. Characters are often either silent or talking nonstop and stupidly. The plays are not nihilistic, but shockingly, they put participants inside the question of meaning by showing that there is not any. They lead participants to question meaning by pointing out the absence of meaning. Theatre of the Absurd offers no hope, but rather points out an absence of hope.

As stories of oppression frequently make sense only to those who feel that they were justified in committing the oppression, telling stories without demanding meaning from them, if it means that other forms of judgmentalism are suspended as well, is an excellent means for beginning reconciliation. The method breaks down the silence
and the shame that can surround victimhood by letting their stories be entities unto themselves. The storyteller and the story occupy center stage. The only demand made is that the story be told. This frees the narrator from having to try to make sense of the abuse she or he withstood. And the narrator/storyteller/victim also is relieved of making sense of the perpetrators’ motivations and actions. For the duration of the telling, the victim need not make sense of what happened to her or him and is allowed to tell the story as he or she experienced it. Putting the story on stage highlights it as a unique experience rather than leaving the victim to feel that her or his trauma is just like that of so many others. The format of Theatre of the Absurd allows for as much objectivity as could a court proceeding.

Trial by Theatre

The BBC reports that Italian prosecutors have recently issued arrest warrants for 140 people because of the parts they played in Operation Condor, a plot organized by Juan Manuel Contreras, former head of DINA (Dirección de inteligencia nacional or National Intelligence Directorate, the Chilean secret police) that several South American strongmen including General Alejandro Fretes Davalos, former head of the Paraguayan military initiated with backing from other Latin American right-wing regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay and joined later and to a lesser extent by Ecuador and Peru with help from the power elite in the United States. Assassination, such as that of Chilean ambassador Orlando Letlier and Ronni Moffitt, his colleague, in Washington, D. C. in 1976 was the means of choice. Operation Condor’s goal was the elimination of anyone they considered to be guilty of leftist dissent.
The legal implications of such a mass murder are enormous. Yet similar efforts, such as those of Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón, Italian Judge Luisianna Figliolia, and Argentine Judge Rodolfo Canicoba to bring perpetrators of human rights abuses to formal trial have not been very successful in bringing about prosecutions.

I do not mean to suggest that concerned members of the international legal community should give up on their attempts to bring perpetrators to justice. But, particularly in light of the lack of success such attempts have met to date, I would propose not that these judges stop trying to bring perpetrators to account and to provide restitutions to victims, but that there be an expansion in the focus of how these cases might be tried. Rather than the narrow focus of purely legal trials, the judges' supporters could promote theatrical trials as a possible alternative. I propose that the act of making theatre in itself offers survivors opportunities for creating their own reconciliation. Writing in itself can be freeing and cathartic, and using it to create a character, a situation, and particularly the ending of choice frees victims' imaginations and provides a creative outlet.

While trials by theatrical methods would not have the force of law behind them, this in itself can be freeing because they also would not have to follow the same rules or be bound by the same restrictions as would formal, more traditional legal proceedings. They would not be hindered by the need to have victims and perpetrators in the same physical space. In the case of those who were so enchanted over the possibility of General Pinochet being put on trial, a theatrical alternative would have removed the concerns some had that he might not be physically or mentally competent to withstand the rigors of a traditional trial. If the trial were to be performed in the form of an actual legal proceed-
ing, it would provide, if not an admission on the part of General Pinochet’s representa-
tion, at least a public airing of the crimes committed under his regime. And if he is found
guilty, the sentencing leaves open the possibility of the victims being able to forgive him
and share in healing after the catharsis. One of the major attributes of a theatrical trial is
that the option is always available. Now that General Pinochet is dead, this is the only
avenue left open to his victims.

Unfortunately, victims might have to guard themselves against charges of
slander and libel by their former tormentors or their relatives. To circumvent this
atrocity, trials could use other names or even mythical personages or animals in the
manner of George Orwell. In addition to removing the possibility of victims being put
on trial, this option allows victims the freedom to decide what form their accusations
will take, how the trials will proceed, and what the final verdict and its results will be.
Either a legal or a theatrical trial accomplishes the goal of removing the shroud of
secrecy and impunity that perpetrators have relied on to allow them to carry out abhor-
rent acts without fear of punishment. These attempts at justice and remembrance,
whatever form they take, serve the purpose of focusing attention on the atrocities that
transpired and making it less likely that they will happen again. Aside from the origi-
nal admission of crimes having been committed, reconciliation requires a sharing of
the commonly experienced horrors that result from those crimes. Theatre in the tradi-
tion of street theatre or theatre of protest provides an ideal space for interactive ex-
change.
Theatre and/of Oppression

In *Violent Acts*, Severino João Albuquerque says of the nature of violence:

“When the oppressed . . . rebel against oppressors . . . it is the former that are deemed the violent ones . . . For, in addition to the countless rights that the dominating conscience grants itself, there is one more: that of defining violence . . . Besides being a mere attempt to recover one’s humanity, the violence of the oppressed is in fact a lesson that has been learned from the oppressor” (Albuquerque 1991, 14). If the ability to define violence is the province of the oppressor, then the oppressed must find the means of surviving the violence, perhaps both physically and emotionally. If this can be done without spawning more violence, it opens the possibility of reconciliation and breaking of the violent cycle. Theatrical display provides a way to tell the stories that must be heard and to act on them openly with a passion that heals rather than hurts. Simply the act of creating an effigy for use in the trial could have therapeutic value. They could not provide monetary restitution to victims, but theatrical trials could become true grassroots efforts to provide catharsis and reconciliation for survivors of the violence. They are an excellent means to call much needed attention to survivors and what they have survived. They allow stories to be told.

In very public, theatrical display, victims, survivors, those who have lost loved ones to violence gather, in organized groups or informally, to pay respect, to seek healing, and to remember, at their real or figurative memorial walls throughout the world. People from around the world tour Chile’s Villa Grimaldi and other notorious sites of
detention and torture now exposed and made more approachable for inspection by a more open government. Some seek understanding about what their missing loved ones went through at the hand of General Pinochet’s regime. They mourn and remember.

Argentine mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared are sometimes themselves victims of abuses from police or soldiers. At least they have experienced the loss of their children. They realize they might never know what happened to their missing loved ones, so they create spectacle. They march on the Plaza de Mayo to remember, memorialize, to demand information, to reconcile themselves and their losses, maybe even to bring about reencounter with those responsible for the disappearance or death of their missing children or grandchildren. They might never even know what happened to their missing ones during the repressive times of the dictatorship. In the same way, people can create theatre as they gather on stages, formal or informal ones, to share lines they might have created themselves and then memorized—learned by heart—to remember and bring about reconciliation. These commemorations are memorial to the dead and disappeared as well as tribute to life and to the survivors.

The Church and/as Theatre

Though it should be and sometimes is a source of support to victims, I would like to propose that the Catholic Church, an institution of great importance to spiritual and temporal lives in both Argentina and Chile, is in itself a very non-inclusive theatre that can be used as a tool either to support and enable perpetrators’ impunity or to help
victims and aid in their reconciliation. Altars, translated into the secular realm, are the source of stages. Robes are of specified color, cloth, and pattern, all designed to define ranks and responsibilities in ways, perhaps purposefully, hard for the uninitiated to understand. They make uniforms for the clergy. They help keep those within the circle of the better-initiated at a distance from the laity while that same clergy has the altar/stage. Masses will probably be said in Latin rather than Spanish and certainly in either of those languages more readily than in the mother tongues of the indigenous. In a manner decidedly against scriptural mandate, this linguistic separation alone effectively divides congregants and more official church actors into in and out groups. It creates an other.

By scriptural mandate, according to both the Old and New Testaments, the Church is called to care for victims and for the poor. Yet, historically, it has been much more comfortable with the wealthy and middle classes than with those living in poverty. Certainly the Argentine church hierarchy was much more closely linked with the military and the maintenance of the status quo than with the poor. This is with the exception of liberation theologians, many of whom fell out of favor with the mainstream Church for exercising the preferential option for the poor and were frequently persecuted for acting according to that option.

*Estaba la madre*

The culpability of the hierarchy of the Argentine church in the atrocities and disappearances during the Dirty War is one of the issues explored in a new Argentine opera called “Estaba la madre.”
Long live freedom.  
Freedom to speak and make others speak.  
Long live the freedom to confess and make others confess.  
Long live the freedom to make arrests . . . and interrogate . . . and torture.  
Long live the freedom to scream and make them scream.  
And to make them disappear into the sea.

The preceding is the refrain to the “Ballad of Liberty” from Estaba la madre. It is sung by three generals as they ridicule Samuel, an Ashkenazi Jew and student they have detained. Luis Bacalov, himself an Ashkenazi Jew, wrote the opera “Estaba la madre” (The Mother was There) to commemorate the horrors of Argentina’s “Dirty War.” It also pays tribute to the Mothers of the Plaza and their persistence in getting information about their missing children.

The opera tells about the experiences of four mothers whose children were disappeared by the junta during that period. Bacalov does not hesitate to indict the Argentine Catholic Church’s upper echelon of the time for having been complicit in the disappearances. He praises those women who united in their grief and turned that sorrow into an effective way to seek information about their children and grandchildren. Estaba la madre is also a paean to the persistence of these women who were in their forties when they founded Las madres de la plaza de mayo and are now in their seventies. They still march together wearing white headscarves with their children’s names and the dates of their disappearances. These headscarves have become international symbols of human rights because of the very public and theatrical actions of las madres. The opera opens with the line “These are the crazy ones” referring to the mothers.
*Estaba la madre* is based on *Stabat Mater* (Latin for *The Mother was There*), a fourteenth century poem and hymn written to describe the lamentations of the Virgin Mary as she stands at the cross and witnesses her son’s crucifixion. Verdi, Rossini, and Pergolesi, among other classical composers, wrote their own versions of accompanying music, but Carlos Branca who directs *Estaba la madre* believes that Bacalov’s version is especially poignant because he feels that this adaptation tells a difficult portion of recent Argentine history. He also believes that it helps to express the fact that the pain of some Argentine mothers at the deaths of their children is compounded because they do not even have their children’s bodies so they can weep over them.

Julie McCarthy’s NPR report explains the setting: *Estaba la madre* is performed on a three-tiered set. It is designed to reflect Bacalov’s view of the structure of Argentine society at the time of the Dirty War. The set’s top tier holds the powerful: the elite of the military and the clergy. Bacalov adds this element of tension to the work by using religiously-oriented music and themes to tell his version of the Dirty War’s story while he unabashedly finds Church hierarchy to be culpable along with the military in the deaths and disappearances. Prisoners and their torturers are on the middle tier, and the mothers’ stories are acted out on the stage’s ground level.
The opera’s climax is the story of the fourth mother who is too grief stricken to sing or speak. She weeps as the limp body of her daughter, who worked as a union organizer, is cut down from an executioner’s noose and placed in her arms.

**Some Chilean Works and Argentina’s *Paso de dos***

In Chile, politically and socially active theatre groups took on a wide range of subjects. In 1972, DETUCH (Department of Theatre of the University of Chile) produced Gerardo Werner’s play *Le gran prescripción (The Great Prescription)* based on the case of Nazi War criminal Walter Rauff who stayed in Chile without punishment. The Chilean legislature would not try him on a genocide charge because the statute of limitations had expired. Werner intended *Le gran prescripción* to be a warning against the dangers of fascism, i.e., the opposition to Salvador Allende’s *Unidad popular* coalition. Some critics said that theatre from this period did not reflect the revolutionary changes society was undergoing. Boyle believes, in fact, that the opposite was true. She feels that the contemporary theatre accurately mirrored the ideological and political turmoil and polarization of the time. She also feels that it did
a good job of highlighting the more positive diversity of cultural expression (Boyle 1991, 33-36).

Some theatre groups were closed or forced to reorganize and perform less imaginative and challenging works as a result of General Pinochet’s coup d’état, indicating that his junta, like other powerful leaders, recognized theatre as a powerful entity, if not enlisted in their service, potentially dangerous to their oppressive regimes. During repression, while theatre groups were not able to explore the most experimental and innovative possibilities, political prisoners and other dissenters still found ways to subvert, mock, and humiliate their oppressors. Under freer conditions, Chilean theatre flourishes in the realms of experimentation and innovation across a range of topics and forms that stretch the imagination. These theatrical works allow an admission that torture and murder took place and strip away the heroic stature perpetrators have created for themselves. The painful work of reexamination of the past can then proceed and enable the process of reconciliation.

*Cuestión de ubicación* (*Question of Location*) is a work from the 1980s by Juan Rodrígán Rojas. It marks a shift in Chilean theatre away from the political and towards the more individual. This shift in focus was provoked by the 1980 plebiscite that consolidated General Pinochet’s totalitarian power until 1988. It was also a mandate for strict adherence to the Chicago School economics that Pinochet and his regime so favored. *Cuestión de ubicación* explores the breakdown of a family that needs to hide poverty from a neighbor more than the members need to do anything to improve the situation. At the same time, it satirizes the rampant consumerism the
government was promoting. In the work, a poor family living in a home otherwise without furniture squanders its meager resources to buy a color television. As most family members struggle to find the proper place for their new television, a malnourished daughter quietly starves to death (Boyle, 1991 189-190). Bringing out this kind of horror in a society so bent on denying or justifying is an important step in allowing the situation's victims to heal. And, maybe more importantly, it steps beyond the economically-driven frenzy of buying and competing to buy so likely to support another authoritarian regime and, therefore, perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Chilean Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* is not an opera, but Schubert's string quartet by the same title is the main character's favorite piece of music. She turns away from the music since it was frequently played in sessions where she was tortured and raped. "Death and the Maiden" is the story of Paulina who was a medical student at the time of the coup of in a country similar that might be Chile. She was kidnapped and tortured following a military coup, largely because she refused to name Gerardo, who is her husband in the play's present.

Gerardo has been appointed to be the head of the president's newly-formed commission formed to address military atrocities. Gerardo believes in the work of the commission. Paulina finds it to be ineffective, does not trust the commission to find the truth or to punish the perpetrators. Roberto, Dr. Miranda arrives with Gerardo at Paulina and Gerardo's home having given Gerardo a ride after a flat tire on Gerardo and Paulina's car. Paulina recognizes Dr. Miranda as her torturer and rapist and imprisons him, demanding he admit what he did to her and apologize. Paulina is of-
fended by having her trauma and that of all survivors excluded from the deliberations of the truth commission (it is set up only to address murders and disappearances), so she puts Dr. Miranda on trial in her home. According to Stephen Gregory, “The play stages a drama between a victim who demands justice for herself and others, an accused whose guilt or innocence cannot be definitively established either way, and a principled but pragmatic lawyer trying to pick a delicate path between two conflicting sets of demands” (Gregory 1996, 335).

Dorfman was afraid that the play would be criticized in Chile—that people would think he was attacking the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or even the victims. I can understand this concern. Dorfman portrays Paulina as unstable. To me, that seems a totally natural reaction to the torture and betrayal she has undergone, but, Dorfman has her say, “… And I can speak— it's been years since I murmured even a word, I haven't opened to even whisper a breath of what I'm thinking, years living in terror of my own . . . but I'm not dead, I thought I was but I'm not and I can speak . . .” (Dorfman 1991, 37). She is allowed to regain her voice, yet when Paulina speaks, she is frequently shrill. Her instability seems perfectly understandable in light of her torture and rape, yet it seems in some way held against her. She is reminded of it too many times.

“The point about the play is that it works in the grey zone of ambiguity. It allows each person in the audience, or each reader, to ask themselves who they are in relation to each character.” In response to “Death and the Maiden” being called propaganda, Dorfman denies that. He says that it is tragedy, and that tragedy can never be propaganda. “The play,” he says, “is not just a denunciation of how bad torture is. It
aims to help purge ourselves of pity and terror . . . “ (Dorfman 1991, 3-4). It aims to help its spectators reconcile. And I feel that Dorfman gives good insight into how difficult it is to promote reconciliation through legally-organized commissions. Gerardo, as the head of the commission in *Death and the Maiden*, is himself ineffectual and weak. His strongest moment is when he acknowledges how much stronger Paulina is. He can’t afford to believe that she is right about Dr. Miranda because it emphasizes his comparative weakness. His inability to accept her word in this present mirrors the way he betrayed her sexually while she was being tortured and raped for refusing to betray him.

I think Dorfman must have written *Death and the Maiden* to be a vehicle of reconciliation, but I think that aside from the literary worth, its major value is in pointing out how difficult is to find a path to reconciliation, let alone to achieve it, both on an individual and a national level. In Paulina, Gerardo, and Dr. Miranda, Dorfman has created a microcosm of the world of victims and perpetrators. He exposes and explores so many facets of the situation just within their personalities and interactions. I see this in contrast to Eduardo Pavlosky’s *Paso de dos* that, according to Diana Taylor, was the hit of Argentina’s 1990 season. Pavlovsky, himself a leftist, enemy of the military, and a psychoanalyst, was nearly abducted by the Argentine junta in 1978 and went into exile in Spain until 1980. Taylor expected an indictment of the military regime. The play, however, features only two characters, *He*, a military man who throughout maintains total control over *She*. According to the script, *He* is a torturer who has become obsessed with one of his victims. *He* calls *She* his necessity, and in the course of “*Paso de dos,*” *He* beats and murders *She*. Some viewers feel that the
play provides a cathartic experience, but others that the play merely plays out abuses on a complacent female body. Marguerite Feitlowitz suggests that even the title suggests complicity on the part of *She*. And maybe the complicity/compliance of *She* and Paulina's shrillness are the same thing, what their writers view as a failure on the part of the victim that led or to their oppression.

Conclusion

Art in general and theatre in particular provide avenues that can be followed to help create healing and reconciliation. They can encourage allow participants to explore oppression and traumatic experiences as well as their hopes for what a future might look like after they and their nations have been able to heal. Theatre can free victims from the restrictive ideas of what is currently possible and allow them to rethink what might become possible. The exploration in itself can be freeing for victims. It can provide victims with the opportunity to dream and to restructure their lives after their horrific experiences. Creating the theatre can allow victims the chance to rewrite their own past. This also presents them with a chance to create a new and more just future.

Perpetrators who have been allowed impunity by more standard legal channels could be addressed in theatrical manner. The creative nature of theatre allows victims to create their own trials or determine another way to subvert the freedom from recognition that perpetrators have enjoyed. Theatre allows the creation of stand-ins for the perpetrators to avoid any legalities victims might have to face as a result of a more traditional type of trial. The theatrical process--the formation of a script to address
wrongs and the assessment of judgment and punishment, deciding what types of charac-
ters will represent perpetrators, etc.--provides victims with an opportunity to create
an entirely new scenario.
1 According to Tapia, Andrés and Arnie Fishman, "The Bible on the Poor or, Why God is a Liberal." http://www.zompist.com/meetthepoor.html (accessed 27 January 2008), there are more than 300 biblical references to the poor, for example, Pss. 140:12 (New King James): “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor.” Isa. 25:4 (New King James): “For you have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” Luke 6:21-22 (New King James): “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man’s sake.” James 2:5 (New King James): “Listen, my beloved has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” Some verses even elaborate on God’s commands concerning the poor: Matt 5:42 (New King James): “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”
CHAPTER V

THE POLITICS OF THEATRE AND THEATRICALITY

Theatre has played an active role in the continuing colonization of Latin America since the Spaniards used plays to Christianize and colonize the indigenous peoples of the Americas in the sixteenth century. . . . For the conquerors and colonizers, theatre was a potent tool in manipulating a population already accustomed to spectacle. Moreover, theatre provided one more stage on which the vanquished were forced to participate in the drama of their own defeat. (Taylor 1991, 1)

In dictionary.com, the second definition of theatricality is suggestive of the theater or of acting; artificial, pompous, spectacular or extravagantly histrionic: a theatrical display of grief. It also lists “melodramatic” as a synonym. The Oxford English Dictionary online defines politics as a number of different things. For the purpose of this chapter, I am concerned with the third and fourth definitions:

3. a. The political ideas, beliefs, or commitments of a particular individual, organization, etc.

b. The assumptions or principles relating to or underlying any activity, theory, or attitude, esp. when concerned with questions of power and status in a society. Usu. with of.

c. With indefinite article. A political structure, outlook, or ideology.

4. a. Actions concerned with the acquisition or exercise of power, status, or authority. Freq. derogatory.

I am looking at politics more as an active force than as an ideological entity. At least I am not limiting politics in the sense of it being an abstract, and certainly not viewing it as anything derogatory. I am talking of a politic that is a very concrete and consistent way of thinking and a belief system that becomes the guiding force by which people, communities, and institutions could govern their interactions. In this section, I would
like to situate both theatre and theatricality into that sense of politics. I would also like to explore what I see as the power of theatre and its importance as a tool for oppression (e.g., but not exclusively, colonialism) as well as its value for relieving trauma in the aftermath of oppression and achieving reconciliation. This section will build on the idea of theatre by adding the dimension of theatricality which here means theatrical display used to make the strongest impact and impression. It reinforces powerful military displays and also encourages emotional catharsis.

Theatre is a set of conventions: the stage, comedy, drama, scripts, characters, lighting, music, props, and the many other facets. These conventions have rules to govern them, but the conventions do not have a direction of their own. That is what allows theatre to be such a malleable concept. As long as the conventions are followed, and they can be followed in very different manners, theatre works. What theatre then serves is dependent on the interests that are defining the parameters of what direction the conventions are to take.

Torturers, in high tradition of both theatre and theatricality, are frequently costumed or at least hooded if not wearing theatrical military uniform. They are frequently acting out new roles created by somebody else and guided by the fact that these roles give torturers power over others that they are not accustomed to having. Their victims might be neighbors, strangers, subversives, academics, intellectuals, people of color or different sexual preference, any other. In a personal email, Dr. Arnie Johnston and I discussed how we believe torture is a kind of psychodrama in which the torturers play a part. Set design, lighting, and props are all part of theatre's conventions, and strict attention is paid
to how these elements are set up. The torturers carry out a theatrical deceit, and this is practiced carefully even before the act of torture, which in theatrical term is, the spectacle of the torture itself, is performed. The torturer is put in a superior position over those victims who might be assigned subhuman or immoral identities, depending on the script. Torture, performed privately or publicly, in itself is a theatrical act with its own language and rituals that breaks down and changes reality for both the tortured and the torturer who might suddenly have power even over the life or death of another. It might be slightly less organized as in the case of an orientation hazing as opposed to an act of a state, but it is hard to conceive of an act of torture that is not planned out and carefully aimed designed to do as much damage to the victims’ psyches, and maybe bodies, as possible.

Perhaps theatre has even been more widely used as a tool of repression because of the ability of the powerful to exercise control over what will become theatre i.e., what will get the funding needed to become produced theatre. The state or power structure also maintains the power to decide what type of spectacle will be allowed in public space. And the graphically representational nature of theatre is designed to make an impression. As horrible as this might seem, the fact of theatre’s accomplishments as a tool of repression is probably the most profound indication that, used by caring people dedicated to the subversion of hegemony, theatre can be used in an inclusive, nurturing, supportive way. Then theatre can, and in some cases such as the uses of role playing and other theatrical methods in therapy, has been re manipulated to be a successful tool of reconciliation and healing. The same creative desires that cause people to form and put into scripts actions, characters, and images that conquer, divide, and instill fear can be used to heal and promote growth and unity.
Theatre and theatricality are similar concepts, but they are not the same thing. Albuquerque (1991, 47) quotes Andrew Kennedy to define theatricality as “the juxtaposition of style and the use of a specifically stage-conscious language.” It is exemplified in some of Latin America’s most successful works and uses references to theatrical elements such as references to acting, role-playing, and the theatre itself in scenes involving the reporting of violence. The reporting can be about violent acts committed by a character or characters in the piece, or it can be part of ritualizing violence. Essentially, theatricality contains elements of theatre and the way theatre works.

Diana Taylor (1991, 4-5) stresses the unseen, backstage elements not part of theatre’s visible spectacle. In the theatricality of elections, she tells, is more than the spectacle candidates make of themselves. In the broad spectrum, she believes that theatricality generally forms society because it makes a persuasive frame for discourse and calls on the public’s emotions and involvement to form a group united by a shared focus. In Latin America, this can translate to an elaborate show of what appears to be democratic politics. This show, actually an illusion, serves to cover up the authoritarian reality. Marginal groups try to institute a theatre to promote their concerns and interests. It is an oppositional theatre that uses their language in the service of empowerment to create solidarity and community (Taylor 1991, 4-5).

It is Taylor’s (1991, 4) second point that is the focus for this section. Both entities of theatre and theatricality are fluid in the social and political arenas because they can be used to support the power structure as well as to challenge or subvert it. They can be used to promote or end victimization. This condition exists in part because texts, ritual, and performance are in themselves supple and changeable. Theatre is politically unstable
partly because the public can change how it will react to any given spectacle. Both theatricality and theatre most frequently support the dominant structure, not because of any conservatism inherent in these elements, but because the powerful are most frequently able to control spectacle. “Economic and social factors, indirectly or directly determine authority--the publication of texts and performances” (Taylor 1999, 5). And the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de mayo prove that oppressed groups can take advantage of the fluid nature of theatre. In fact, Taylor says, in Latin America, theatre is more effective in undermining oppression than other art forms because through theatrical acts live actors interact with live audiences in ways that cannot be predicted strictly due to the live, and therefore volatile nature of the interaction (Taylor 1991, 5).

Eurocentrism limits commentators to thinking of performance that is not in the tradition of the Greek theatre as “nontheatre” (Taylor 1991, 27). This further marginalizes any nonwestern groups. The Conquest started the substitution of one power for another and the imposition of one structure on another: the imposition of a new language, culture, religion, of literacy as the accepted form of expression instead of the oral tradition. And withholding literacy from the indigenous while co-opting their methods of expression gave the conquerors another layer of domination. Missionaries used theatrical methods to spread Christianity and found it more effective to gut indigenous spectacles of their contents while keeping the spectacle than to replace the “pagan” practices already in place. While the new, empty spectacle was supposed to be promoting Christianity over the old religion, it was more at the service of the new state. What the Church said would be salvation of the native souls and what the conquest actually imposed were two different things. And the new theatre did not assimilate the indigenous or educate them; it con-
trolled them. So in spite of indigenous components, the reality and vision signaled by the productions had little relation to the indigenous reality. Missionary theatre and most of the indigenous population had mostly disappeared by the end of the sixteenth century, and after the Conquest, there was no real indigenous theatre. And this is the beginning of Latin American drama (Taylor 1991, 27-29).

According to Versényi (1989), Spanish friars in the New World knew quickly that the theatrical rituals of the indigenous were important to their goal of converting the natives to Christianity. Since they didn’t share a written language, the Spaniards sought a visual and aural one. The friars needed to communicate with the indigenous to convert them, and they chose theatre. He cites Pedro de Gante, a cleric in New Spain, was the first to mix indigenous forms with Christian doctrine as a precursor to the evangelical theatre to come (Versényi 1989, 220). His initial attempts made only superficial impact on the natives, but the development of the evangelical theatre became a powerful force (Versényi 1989, 221).

The Church itself supported the singers and dancers trained to be part of the new theatre almost the same as had the Aztec. Theatrical spectacle became part of the daily life of the indigenous culture. As a direct descent from the pre-Columbian practices, the lines between actor and role and play and spectator blurred. The spectacle was necessary to get the Indians’ attention, but the plays, written by the later Jesuit monks or indigenous under their direction were what the monks believed would induce the indigenous to turn from their pagan ways and accept Christianity (Versényi 1989, 222-223).

The conquerors’ executions of natives and other offstage theatrical displays of power belittled traditional indigenous theatre, but the new rulers still found the old theatre
to be subversive and dangerous. They outlawed any native-language production, forcing both indigenous and the Criollos to become audience, no more than silent, passive observers of the new power play being enacted on their land. Later theatre, designed for Spanish and Criollos was still dominated by church or state. Performances occurred on religious and secular holidays. They kept Spain central, and the indigenous other. Native languages and theatrical traditions were virtually lost. During the colonial period, works were imported, and American-born authors were mostly excluded until the nineteenth century when voices from Latin America began to become autonomous (Taylor 1991, 28-35).

Argentina

To write and produce theatre is to hold a certain power, to have power over the word not as the poet or the novelist has, but within a medium that has an immediate, dynamic and potentially subversive interaction with the society in which it is created and staged. It is to have power over the deed, the gesture, the acts of people on stage. (Boyle 1990, 146).

And I personally doubt that anyone played out a role with an entire country as a stage as did Eva Perón. Between 1963 and 1991, Argentina had thirteen different heads of state. Each one of them promised but failed to fix the critical situation. The condition came to be so horrible largely because of the excesses of Peronism and the anti-Peronist backlash. Between 1946-1955 and 1973-1974, Juan Domingo Perón and Eva, his wife, had the Argentine stage. Eva was portrayed as the redemptive Madonna, champion of the poor, and the lady of hope of the pampas. Her life, to say nothing of her funeral and the national mourning and solidarity that came out of it were quite a theatrical production in their own right. This theatricality was designed not to serve the usual aesthetic but to
hide Argentina’s economic and political catastrophe while maintaining the Perón mysti-
que.

Argentina’s ties to theatre and Peronism seem to be fit together in some kind of close interlock. Or maybe one does not even exist without the other because they are so closely related. I even had an anthropology professor tell our class that if we wanted to know about the history of Argentine politics that we should just go see Andrew Lloyd Weber’s “Evita.” I still cannot picture the generals skipping across the stage that was the Casa rosada (Pink House; Argentina’s version of the White House), but other than that, the more I read, the better a telling it seems to be. Eva Perón made a large mark on the world stage. She has been compared with Diana, the Princess of Wales and with Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis who also led very theatrical lives that were watched by the world even though they took the stage in a time more accepting of women and from the privileged class. The funeral of Diana and the mourning following it were also high theatre, reminiscent of Evita’s.

But I do not think that any woman has held actual power and been both worshipped and demonized at the same time and to the same extent as was Eva Duarte de Perón. Her life and particularly her meteoric rise are a dream for the stage. Born illegitimate in the small town of Los Toldos, she with her mother, sisters, and brother moved to Junín where her mother ran a boarding house. From there, she made her way to Buenos Aires at fifteen and even worked, Ironically, as an actor there for a time. By some reports, she was at best a mediocre actor, but it was this role that brought her to the attention of Juan Perón who was a soldier rising through the ranks of Argentine politics. But she seemed to find her stride at the side of Juan Perón and in the hearts of the Argentine
masses. She was able to maneuver herself into a position of power in a time and place where women, particularly those who did not come from the oligarchy, were not accepted and certainly not powerful.

Eva and Perón backed the losing Nazis in World War II. On 9 October of that year, Perón was informed by two senior generals that the President felt that he should resign due to public resistance and middle-class support of the Allies that might have led to civil war. This marked the first display of the enormous power Eva was able to muster. She called the Buenos Aires police department that was adamantly Peronist and suggested that maybe anti-Peronist newspapers should be closed because they had mentioned troop movements while Argentina was in a state of siege. Police squads closed down the papers in every major city (Barnes 1978, 37-41).

On 11 October, workers greeted him at the Ministry of Labor where he made a speech carried on every radio station while workers called for him to become president. The government was briefly reduced to three men. The cabinet resigned, and President Farrell offered his resignation as well. The garrison at Campo de mayo refused to let the president leave because that constitutionally would have meant that governmental powers would have been handed over to a civilian body, the Supreme Court. To those three military men left as the Argentine government, the overthrow of Perón by the military had become a popular uprising against the army. In their own shifting of the facts, the military men in the Casa rosada denied that Perón had been under arrest but rather had been taken to the navy prison on Martin Garcia Island under protective custody because of threats to his life (Barnes 1978, 42-47).
Perón was brought back to Buenos Aires under police escort while thousands of coatless and even shirtless workers (strange for Buenos Aires where a man could be arrested for removing his coat in a public park) (Barnes 1978, 47) met in front of the Casa rosada. The newspapers’ sneering headlines about the descamisados (shirtless ones) roaming Buenos Aires’s streets provided Perón with his slogan and cause. Perón spoke to the crowds, telling them he had resigned from the army while dramatically unhooking his sword belt and handing it to President Farrell. Perón told his crowd that “As a simple citizen, mingling with my descamisados, I wish to press all of you to my heart” (Barnes 1978, 47-49). One of the most theatrical gestures in history had moved Perón into position to begin a campaign to be elected president in the February election.

Far beyond that, Eva and Juan Perón had enough control of the theatrical to be able to elevate Eva to cult status. Her death was seen as martyrdom -- that she had literally given her health and even her life for the Argentine people. Her funeral had the Argentine populace weeping (or that part of it that loved Eva as opposed to the part that hated her and was theatrical in its loathing). Five days after death, the Sindicato de obreros y empleados de la industria de la alimentación (Union of Workers and Maids in the Food Industry) sent Pope Pius a telegraph requesting that he make Eva a saint. In November, the Agrupación de trabajadores latinoamericanos (the Latin American Workers Association) also approached the Pope suggesting that Eva should be made the saint of all American workers (Taylor 1979, 66). Money was saved for a monument, and Eva was even compared with the Virgin Mary (Taylor 1979, 82) as her theatrically-constructed myth grew and held Peronist Argentina. Anti-Peronists realized Eva’s power but saw it
in terms of the violence with which she had treated her enemies and her fiery rhetoric (Taylor 1979, 106).

From this state of politics as an art form, (Taylor 1999, 6) Argentina segued into a period of less than thirty years in which Argentina had thirteen different heads of government then led into the time of the “Dirty War” that the Argentine state fought against the Argentine people. Men in raincoats and Ford Falcons put the whole country into a theatre of terror. Like a Greek chorus, the Mothers of the Plaza de mayo reminded the world of the facts that the violence might otherwise have been able to remove from history (Taylor 1991, 97). Griselda Gambaro’s dramaturgy represented the sociopolitical and political and personal collapse and pointed out what terror is and who it serves. In the 1960s, her characters passively accepted the violence inflicted on them. In the 1980s, her characters became deeply aware that their passivity had disempowered them and would destroy them if they let it (Taylor 1991, 97).

(Griselda Gambaro) . . . was drawn to theater, as opposed to poetry or other literary genres, because of ‘an innate ability to visualize situations and conflicts, to visualize the action and to make even the word itself into action’ (Boling in Larson and Vargas, eds. 1998, 10).

Griselda Gambaro is probably one of Argentina’s best-known dramatists. I believe that her plays are a call to the attentiveness that is necessary to achieve reconciliation. In an interview with Betsko and Koenig (1987), Gambaro says that she believes that one always writes about the same thing only with variations. Her plays center on violence, from its capricious and absurd nature to “deconstruction of specific political and patriarchal structures of power, of which both women and men are victims”
I believe that these explorations of violence and victim/perpetrator interactions provide a basis from which reconciliation can proceed. Gambaro’s victims frequently ignore the danger others present to them. They sometimes have to convince themselves or let others convince them that they are really safe. The introduction to *Decir si, (To say yes)* (Dauster and Lyday, eds. 1990, 138) states that Griselda Gambaro’s characters frequently seem to be lost and in a world that functions without rules. They do not even seem to understand what is happening to them. Diana Taylor says that Gambaro’s protagonists are a deformed cast: anonymous, immature, passive, and grotesque. Her victims cannot orient themselves and become incapacitated by whatever catastrophe. The abusers see themselves as victims and adapt to crisis by redirecting the violence to other characters. Gambaro makes it perfectly clear that she believes that victimizers are made not born, and does not allow her public the comfort of viewing them as some psychopathic, monstrous other. They are just adapted to the crumbling regime (Taylor 1991, 99). Dauster and Lyday say that her work is rooted in the idea that we all victimize each other, that we are all involved in struggles that turn even the winners into losers (Dauster and Lyday, eds. 1990, 138).

*Decir si (To Say Yes)* shows a powerful barber and his customer who is complacently and comically compliant until the play’s gory end. The victim even tries to placate the barber by doing whatever the barber would like him to do, but once he has entered the barber’s shop, the customer no longer feels that he has control over the situation, over his own life and is worn down by . It is a consistent idea running throughout Gambaro’s plays that violence can come in different forms, and that people
are frequently complicit in allowing it to happen, or at least of accepting the violence as a normal condition.

From *Las parades (The Walls)*, Gambaro’s first play, she points out that victims and victimizers are both theatrical, that they both accept their parts in the dance, just in different ways. Her victimizers are frequently referred to in the stage directions with theatrical terms. One is even called a director. They split and double in ways that allow them to have a part of the personality that takes over the sadistic part of the role without destroying the whole character. Splitting allows psychic numbing to take over a part of the character so it atrophies while the dominant part becomes larger. This creates the common, one-dimensional theatrical type, a character that is either all good or all bad. The mechanism of Doubling works in a similar manner though it creates and maintains two nearly complete though distinct wholes. The victimizers are surrounded by a theatrical aura, but they are totally real (Taylor 1991, 99).

“*Argentina is seismic as well as schizophrenic*” Gambaro 1992, 2).

Gambaro’s dramaturgy comes from an Argentina that since 1963, when her first book was published, has been through five military coups, seen four other presidents put into office by the army, the fascist, fanatical theatricality of Peronism, several groups of urban guerillas, two elections that were obviously rigged, and the “Dirty War” run by the Argentine state that was responsible for some thirty thousand (the number is questioned, but this is the estimate given by las madres that has the greatest credibility with Argentine human rights groups) Argentines were tortured, disappeared, and murdered. In 1985, the Trial of the Century convicted the commanders of the “Dirty War” of numerous counts of crimes against humanity, but in 1990, Presi-
dent Menem’s unprecedented executive pardon set them free. He found the pardon necessary for Argentina’s healing and to give the military back its prestige (Feitlowitz in Gambaro 1992, np).

Gambaro’s main concern has been with violence—how it starts and grows, shows itself, its influence, and the ways it is recognized, observed, hidden and denied. In her plays, she probes the relationships between personal and political violence, tyranny and complicity, and public life’s mixtures of history and fiction and illusion and reality. In her plays, she uses tricks to explore the nature of and responses to theatricality in art as well as in daily life. Feitlowitz points out that Gambaro’s literature does not fit in with what people in the United States expect from South American literature since it is not based on magical realism. It also does not follow the costumbrista tradition, a folkloric interpretation of daily life (Feitlowitz in Gambaro 1992, 2-3).

The title of one of Gambaro’s plays, *Information for Foreigners*, implies not actual foreigners but Argentines who as late as 1973 still insisted on ignoring what had been happening for the past two years. It uses children’s games juxtaposed with scenes of torture among other contradictory pairings. Gambaro uses traditional Argentine games about capricious reward and reprimand to define the differences between mature and infantile violence, her view being that immature violence is not usually criminal where that of adults generally is. theatrically as well as in other ways, the games heighten the representations of adult violence and provoke anxiety. The audience shares these games as part of their culture. Normally they do not include threats or scapegoating as part of the game. The public is forced to contemplate the links between innocent and guilty violence in each person’s life and in the life of the
country. Gambaro thinks that if the play were not wrapped in theatricality that goes beyond the action but leaves the meaning intact, if it weren’t veiled, that no one would be strong enough to watch. Gambaro appropriates other pieces of theatre for use in Information for Strangers. A rehearsal of Othello is a disguise for Grupo 67, an Argentine theatre company that was arrested on drug charges and imprisoned. A female prisoner who seems to be an actress sings pieces of the lullaby from scene two of Blood Wedding by García Lorca, and the Guard sings from another song García Lorca uses in a puppet play. And García Lorca was arrested by Spanish fascists during the Spanish Civil War. This borrowing calls attention to how vulnerable theatrical artists are during repressive times (Feitlowitz in Gambaro 1993, 6-7).

Escrache: Survivors Take Theatricality and Politics into the Streets

"Si no hay justicia, hay escrache"
"If there is no justice, there is escrache" the escrache's motto

In The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Diana Taylor (2003) explains that etymologically, the word escrache is linked to scracè. Roughly translated, it means “to expose.” According to a web page within the radical education site, escraches have emerged as collective actions to socially punish members of the military responsible for the atrocities of the “Dirty War” who, due to the failings of the Argentine judicial system, either remain at liberty or are under comfortable house arrest. An escrache frequently gathers the information about these war criminals and ties it into a comprehensible whole that can take on a life of its own, that can repudiate the guilty and grow solidarity and friendship among the protestors. Social workers,
educators, others are invited to participate so that the aftermath of the escrache becomes an exercise in radical education as the locals continue the escrache that is mostly a demand for justice.

Taylor (2003) says that because the H. I. J. O. S., the daughters and sons of the disappeared who were illegally adopted or given to Argentine elites, who are only in their twenties did not enter the public arena until a decade after the fall of the military, they can afford to be more confrontational in their choice of techniques and in their use of public space. Through the use of escraches, they hope to point out that crimes, individual criminals, and criminal organizations continue to go unpunished even though democracy supposedly has returned. They believe that neoliberal economic policies in Latin America merely carry on the economic policies of the dictators in a more modern package (Taylor 2003, 182).

The H. I. J. O. S. are the next generation of Argentine activists, coming into their own now after being birthed by the Madres (Mothers) and Abuelas (Grandmothers) of the Plaza de mayo. They mimic the very theatrical public displays of the Madres and Abuelas, including the use of large photographs of the perpetrators, to call attention to human rights violators and former centers of detention and torture. After extensive and intensive research into the activities of suspected human rights violators, H. I. J. O. S. members and their supporters follow members of the military and others culpable in the disappearances and/or murders of their parents and make their presence and their crimes public knowledge. One escrache called to bring attention to el Olimpo, a detention center during military rule, in a Buenos Aires neighborhood took the form of a carnival parade with many of the participants dressed as jesters.
Amid the carnival atmosphere, participants handed out pamphlets saying "Warning - Killer in the neighborhood." According Michael McCaughan's online article, "Argentina: In the Year of the Scratch," in addition to the 30,000 adults killed during the "Dirty War," 500 children were either kidnapped or born into captivity then turned over to adoptive parents. Only fifty-nine had been recovered by the time this article was written. McCaughan points out that the event was filmed by police from one of the rooftops in case anyone might forget that the state still tracks its dissidents.

Diana Taylor (2003) points out that the use of photography links the three groups, the Abuelas, the Madres, and H. I. J. O. S. It is also a way of highlighting the absence created by the disappearances. The analysis of DNA is used along with the photographs in the legal cases surrounding the disappearances. Thinking of a DNA performance, says Taylor, along with the use of the photographic images, establishes that nothing disappears. The links are there and visible that the Grandmothers, the Mothers, the disappeared and the children are a chain through presentation and representation. And the theatrical natural of photographs as legal proof is clear. "Facts," Taylor writes, "cannot speak for themselves. The case needs to be convincingly presented" (Taylor 2003, 176). In the beginning, use of photos by these groups was particularly important in the absence of other human rights organizations that could address the crimes of the military. And the pictures were and are proof of the existence of the people in them. DNA and photo IDs both establish a person's individuality and identify the individuals in relation to the state. They are categorized, without context, and filed in official archives, giving the state power over the citizens who have been marked by those means of identification (Taylor 2003, 176).
In 1998, a photographic exhibit called *Identidad (Identity)*, commissioned by *Las abuelas de la plaza de mayo* in the hope that one person coming to visit the display would find her or his true identity as the child of one of the disappeared. The exhibit is made up of enlarged snapshots of couples or women detained or disappeared during Argentina’s “‘Dirty War’.” If the women gave birth in prison, their babies were given to supporters of the state. Some even had small children with them who were also adopted out. In the exhibit, mirrors fill the places the children would hold in these postmodern family portraits. Below the photos, a brief summary of details was posted -- the details of the arrests and any facts available about the missing babies or children. This is one of the theatrical/artistic outreaches created by *las Abuelas* when they realized that their search had changed. They were no longer looking for infants but for young adults. Now they are searching for young adults, people approximately the same age that their children were when they were disappeared (Taylor 2003, 176).

**Chile**

*Augusto Pinochet’s military dictatorship considered culture and personal expression forms of terrorism. But one theater group called Ictus was so popular that Pinochet let it continue. Ictus satirized Pinochet, and inspired laughter in citizens who otherwise lived in fear and despair. Pinochet tried to break the actors’ spirits by killing their families and friends, but they kept performing.* Marianne Combs, Minnesota Public Radio

*Will it be possible to know, but not to say, that the tortured inhabit our cities and that they can be seen at the coffee shops, at the restaurants, or taking their children to school?* Marjorie Agosin

Chilean Marjorie Agosin refers to her generation of Chileans, those born between 1945 and 1955, as the generation of disenchantment. To be part of this generation, she
says, means to be aware of the twenty years of dictatorships imposed on Latin America for two decades. She feels that the role of the writer is intertwined with the countries’ political tasks. She asks what the significance of a dictatorship is and how a writer is to document what traces might remain. To what degree, she questions, it is reasonable to continue to write poetry about the tortured body. And who gives authenticity to the writer’s responsibility for the political violence that overtakes a country. She sees the questions as necessary and the continual guidelines for those who write about the argument about state terrorism and those who survived and were victimized by it. Since the Latin American republics formed in the nineteenth century, she says, there has been a link between the work and the political role of the writer.

*Tejas verdes*

The screams of the condemned, the wailing of victims, the protests of the oppressed - you listen to them every day, they’re everywhere. But we don’t hear them.

We don’t allow ourselves to hear. If we could, life would be unbearable.

Mankind wouldn’t have survived any other way. We’ve learned to forget. We had to. Just think on that. The Disappeared in *Tejas verdes*

And those tortures inflicted on the bodies of Chilean dissidents and their supporters captured after the coup of 11 September 1973 were sometimes strengthened by the tension of being performed at sites of affluence, elegance, grace, peace. Spanish playwright Fermín Cabal wrote the play *Tejas verdes (Green Gables)* using that tension. *Tejas verdes* was a resort in San Antonio, on the Pacific coast of Chile, that became a detention and torture center shortly after the coup. The play is performed as a “promenade.”
In *Standing Witness*, his *New Statesman* article, Michael Portillo explains that this means that the play is performed without a stage. The public stands while actors appear among them unexpectedly. Sometimes the actors even knock against the public, making places for themselves then address audience members directly. Characters do not interact as Cabal originally wrote it as five soliloquies: one by the disappeared, the friend, the doctor, the gravedigger, the informer, the Spanish lawyer, and the soul in torment. Michael Portillo says that *Tejas verdes* is part of a campaign by Cabal to help bring Pinochet to justice.

In reading the soliloquies, it seems that they dance around each other in a way that must have been inevitable under such inconceivably terrible circumstances. Though the characters do not interact, they are bound by Colorina, or Goldfinch. She is a middle class girl brought in because her boyfriend is a revolutionary, and she refuses to betray him. She tells her friend the horrors of her torture. She is betrayed by the informer. It is because of her death that the doctor is forced to testify. He questions why the judge never asked about the marks on the other bodies. He denies that Colorina was tortured and makes what might be the play's most poignant statement because of her: “And in any case, sometimes the innocent have to pay the price for the guilty” (Cabal 2005, 35). The gravediggers give her body to a woman they believe to be her mother, and as a result, are terrorized by *DINA*, the Chilean secret police.

In this heart-rending piece, it is perhaps the speech of the informer that tears the most. First, it is not because of the horrors inflicted on her that she informs; it is when her torturers bring her six-year-old son into where she is confined. Her torturers begin breaking his bones in front of her, and her son begs her to tell them anything she might
know. It is the informer we meet as she speaks before a truth and reconciliation commission. She feels an obligation to repair some of the damage her collaboration has done. She feels an obligation to contribute to uncovering the truth and enabling justice in the context of reconciliation.

Conclusion

Theatre and theatricality are linked as pieces of a puzzle. In this case, I try to link those pieces and put the puzzle together in the frame of the politics of Argentina and Chile. Both countries have periods of intense political violence in their pasts, and much of the violence was fed by a flair for the theatrical in the form of tightly, theatrically-orchestrated military units. The theatricality of identical uniforms and choreographed drills and power displays highlighted military might and kept the uninitiated separate from their power.

The success of using theatre as a servant of authoritarian power speaks to the malleable nature of theatre itself. In addition to being a valuable tool in the promotion of repression, theatre can be used to help facilitate healing and reconciliation. The very basis of theatre, the dramatic telling of stories in a public space, is therapeutic and is used as a component in forms of analysis. The dramaturgy of Argentine Griselda Gambaro tells the horrors of people in the surrealism of Argentina during and after the wildly violent repression of the “Dirty War.” Her characters live in that same violence; their lives have gotten totally beyond their control, and they are sucked, hopeless, deeper into that violence.
On the Plaza de mayo, Argentina’s most politically public space, three generations of survivors of repression, las abuelas, las madres and now H. I. J. O. S. (Grandmothers, Mothers, and Sons and Daughters) seek remembrance, justice, and acknowledgment, for the loss of thousands of lives to military men who were granted amnesty in the name of keeping the peace. They use highly dramatic means from the use of photos of their lost to escrache, a technique adopted by H. I. J. O. S. to shame and to call attention to the war criminals and their crimes against humanity. Las abuelas had what was apparently a sudden realization: the missing babies and children they had for whom they had been searching were no longer children, were now the age their own children had been when they became victims of the Dirty War. They commissioned a photographic exhibit with pictures of their daughters and sons with mirrors in the spaces where the missing children, grandchildren, would be in these macabre yet disturbingly normal family portraits. The goal of the exhibit was to help these missing find their identities.

In comparison to the Argentine melodrama, Chile seems much more to contain its spectacle to the stage. Protests certainly exist, calls for perpetrators to be called to justice, but they are by comparison much quieter, more contained. When looking for information about the situation there to balance out this section, I was unable to find much. And indeed, Tejas verdes (Green Gables), the play I cite was written not by a Chilean, but by a Spaniard, Fermín Cabal. The heart-rending soliloquies of Tejas verdes point out what seems to be a particularly Chilean tension. Tejas verdes was originally a resort on Chile’s Pacific coast. Like Villa Grimaldi mentioned in the pre-
vious chapter, it was a graceful site, a peaceful place that was turned into a site of de-
tention and torture by Pinochet’s government.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

This thesis grew out of a paper I wrote that was originally called “Theatre as Reconciliation.” At first, it was mostly an exploration of what I then thought of as the vastness of theatre, and more specifically, ways that Latin American playwrights had used and were using their theatrical talents to help victims of oppression find reconciliation as well as how the repression itself depends on aspects of theatre. It truly has grown. I hope that in this incarnation, this work is a much broader review of reconciliation, theatre, and theatricality and how they are life and social forces that intersect profoundly with the political, how they are part of the political. Most of all, I hope that this will serve as a reminder of the wonders and horrors of humanity and the powerful intersect between that and the political.

Sunday late morning I was sitting here working on this project, looking online for some final details when I suddenly hit the wall. I looked at all these words and another articles with pictures of empty faces of people who had been tortured, or their families and friends who were having to learn to deal with their losses. And in counterpoint, and this seemed somehow much worse, the hopeful, smiling faces of the disappeared. I was struck as if with something heavy. The human soul and spirit, it seemed to me, were not meant to bear these horrors. And I, in Kalamazoo, was perhaps not even meant or not competent to have to bear reading about it. Fortunately, it was a beautiful sunny afternoon, and I was able to walk to campus for a performance of Mozart’s “Cosi fan tutte,” and that was substantially restorative.
Tuesday, after a moderately productive day, something similar happened. I suddenly doubted. Not everything. Certainly not the facts, the horrors, the deaths and disappearances, but the validity of telling so much of it again. After all, these things happened a long time ago. Chile’s coup occurred in 1973. The “Dirty War” lasted from 1976 until 1983. These things were over. And people much closer to the situations believed, even closer to the time of their occurrence, that forgetting was the best means of managing their truths.

Then, another intervention. That evening, the BBC reported about Lieutenant Colonel Paul Navone, formerly of the Argentine army. He was to face trial in a few days for his part in baby stealing during the “Dirty War.” Instead, according to the BBC, he was found in a park near his home in central Cordoba, Argentina with one bullet hole in his head and a handgun nearby. His testimony, specifically, was to be about the twins of Raquel Negro, a political dissident. The BBC compares this story to that of another former member of the Argentine military scheduled for trial who died in prison in December after cyanide mysteriously appeared in his cell. While both deaths are very possibly suicides, human rights activists are suggesting they be pursued as murders. They point out that they would not be the first assassinations committed to suppress evidence of the abuses of the “Dirty War.” As I write, on 25 February 2008, the reports of Lieutenant Colonel Navone’s death are one day old.

I had lost track with this side of the issue and had not followed the legal technicalities of Argentina’s recent search for reconciliation through its legal system until hearing this report, and a brief summary (taken from the McClatchy Truth to Power website) seems appropriate:
Major events in Argentina's unfolding human-rights trials

Key dates in Argentina's human-rights trials:

June 14, 2005 — Argentina's Supreme Court strikes down two amnesty laws that protected hundreds of officials in the country's 1976-1983 military dictatorship from prosecution for alleged crimes committed against dissidents and other political prisoners.

June 20, 2006 — The first prosecution stemming from the Supreme Court decision begins, against former police Officer Miguel Etchecolatz, who's accused of murdering, kidnapping and torturing prisoners.

Sept. 18, 2006 — Jorge Julio Lopez, a key witness in the Etchecolatz case, disappears near his house in the city of La Plata. He remains missing.

Sept. 19, 2006 — Etchecolatz is sentenced to life in prison.

Dec. 27, 2006 — Witness Luis Angel Gerez disappears near the capital of Buenos Aires.

Dec. 29, 2006 — Gerez is found beaten but alive a day after then-President Nestor Kirchner demands his release on national television.

Dec. 10, 2007 — Former Coast Guard officer Hector Febres is found poisoned to death in the Coast Guard facility where he was being held in the city of Tigre. He was to hear his verdict four days later on charges of torturing and kidnapping four prisoners.

Feb. 25, 2008 — Police find the body of retired army Lt. Col. Paul Alberto Navone in the town of Ascochinga. He'd been called to testify the following week about the abduction of twins born to a prisoner. Police say Navone committed suicide.
These events are not only relics of some distant past. They are imprinted on a nation and its psyche. And in addition to that, they continue to unfold; rather than being part of a past that is sealed off, these events continue to impose themselves on the present, therefore, on the future. As the H. I. J. O. S. and their supporters teach their children, these events will continue to be imprinted on their psyches, and the psyches of the people with whom they continue to come into contact. There must be a comfortable and convenient way for these people to explore and assess what has happened to them, what has formed them, and what part that will play in their futures. Justice, ideally a restorative rather than a retributive justice, must be an option. The hope for a future free of the risk of torture or death for a dissenting opinion must be an option. The hope for a society without the kind of vast economic and class disparity that created so much of the dissidence must be an option. The more I read and hear, the clearer it seems to me; forgetting is not an option.

Amazing things have happened in South America, the area of my passion. In Argentina, workers took over failing factories and made them productive while fighting legal battles to keep the owners from re-taking control. *Las madres de la plaza de mayo* (the Mothers of the Plaza of May), nominated for 1980’s Nobel Peace Prize, survived both a devastating economic crisis and a split that left three groups, *Las madres, Linea fundadora* (Founding Line), and *Las abuelas* (the Grandmothers) as well as giving birth to *H. I. J. O. S. (Hijos. Por La Identidad y la Justicia Contra El Olvido Y El Silencio* (*hijos* is Spanish for "sons" and "daughters" or "children." The acronym translates as Sons and Daughters for the Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence). Each
group has its own area of interest and method of operation and carries out its actions on Argentina's stage.

The differences in the personalities between Chile and Argentina had not occurred to me until the readings I did to put together the chapter on the politics of theatricality. To put it in its simplest form, Argentina seems to be much more theatrical than Chile. The only explanation to this that I have found is that the Argentine condition has come about as a result of the legacy of Peronism. I remember during the recent Argentine elections hearing NPR commentators speak of the election of Cristina Fernandez, wife of Nestor Kirchner, the former president, to the office of the presidency making Argentina a political dynasty. And I thought, yes, one that started in 1955 and has followed a meandering path until 2008 when that Peronist dynasty seems to be fairly consolidated, maybe even entrenched, by having its left wing now so comfortable in the Casa rosada.

Chile has had a series of presidents who are former detainees of the Pinochet regime. Doctora Michelle Bachelet, the current president, is the daughter of a military man who was tortured to death for his refusal to support the junta (Spanish for "together;" the name given to the coalition formed to rule jointly) following the coup. She and her mother were forced into exile after her time in detention. Her father, a military man, was tortured to death for his refusal to condone the violence during and after the coup. Yet she, an atheist, socialist, and single parent, has returned to serve Chile, first in the capacity of minister both of health and defense under the former president, Ricardo Lagos, and now
as the president. Doctora Bachelet has expressed a commitment to seeing that all Chilenos benefit from Chile's stability and growing economy.

I am heartened, humbled, and inspired by these developments from South America, particularly by the souls of people such as Doctora Bachelet who can come out from the depths of a horror that I cannot readily understand and want to pass on good to others. It strengthens my belief that reconciliation is not something to be debated but to be achieved so wounded people can be strong enough to promote healing and the good in others. Even if reconciliation comes at a difficulty, it seems clear that the benefit far outweighs the cost. Even if the people in question never take on political offices or are in the position to benefit others on such a grand scale, society in general will benefit from healthy citizens who are able to live together cooperatively.

I believe that truth and reconciliation commissions are an excellent means to facilitate reconciliation, but they are limited. I suggest that the nature of theatre makes it the perfect complement to the legalistic commissions.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Crocker, David A. 


Curran, Charles E. "Preferential Option for the Poor." 


"11 September, 1973 - The Day Democracy Died in Chile." 
http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A716591 (accessed 5 February 2008).


LIFTING OF PINOCHET'S IMMUNITY RENEWS FOCUS ON OPERATION CONDOR OPERATION CONDOR DOCUMENTS INDICATE 1976 TERRORIST ATTACK IN WASHINGTON MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED. 10 June 2004.


McCaughan, Michael. "Argentina: In the Year of the Scratch.


McSherry, J. Patrice. "The Undead Ghost of Operation Condor."


