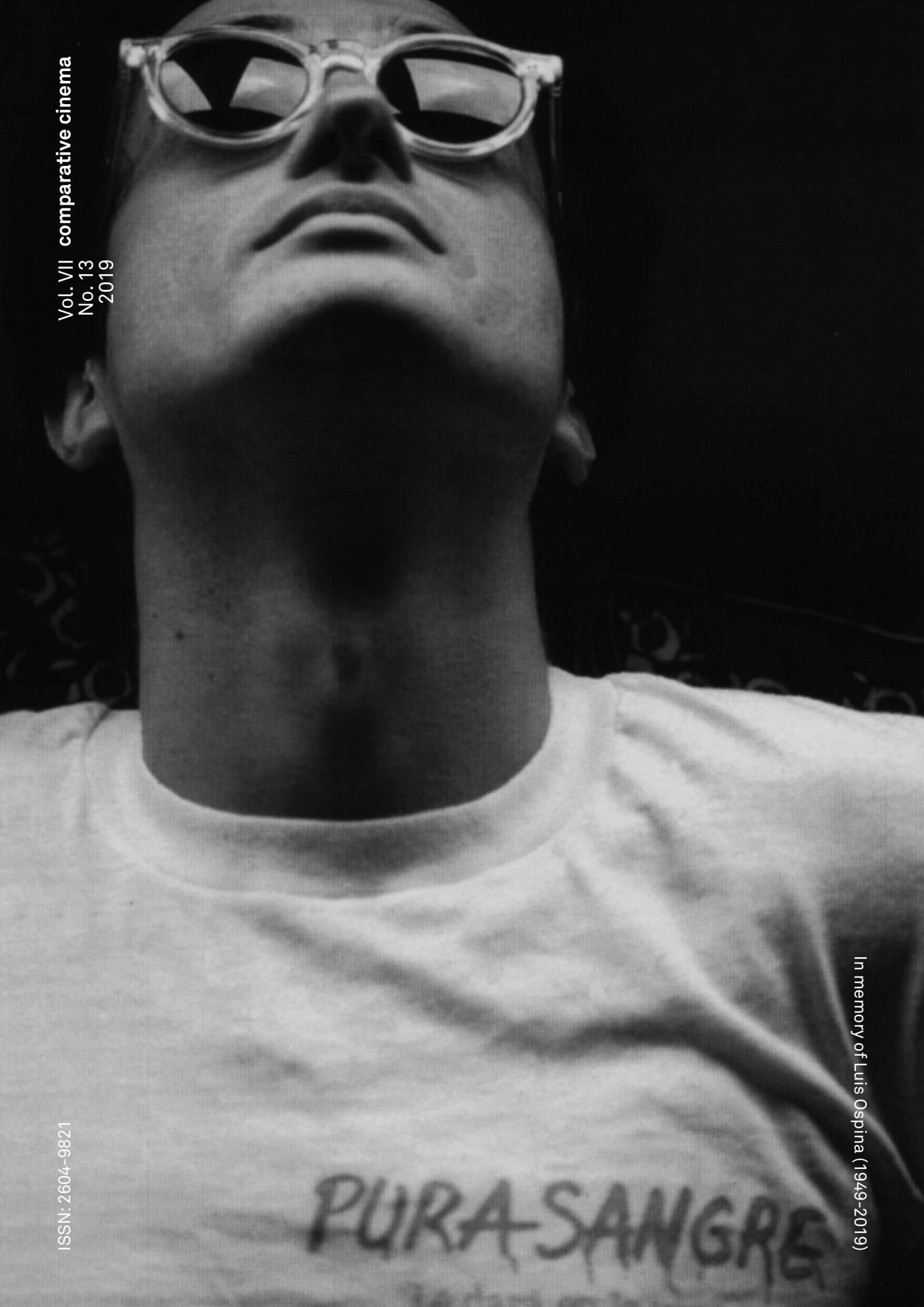


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In memory of Luis Ospina (1949-2019)

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Luis Ospina photographed by Carlos Duque, 1983.

Comparative Cinema is a scientific journal that addresses film studies from a comparative perspective. It is published by the Center for Aesthetic Research on Audiovisual Media (CINEMA) at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), in Barcelona. Since its inception in 2012, it has investigated the conceptual and formal relations between films, material processes and production and exhibition practices, as well as the history of ideas and film criticism in different social and political contexts.

Comparative Cinema tackles an original area of research by developing a series of methodologies for a comparative study of cinema. With this aim, it also explores the relations between cinema and comparative literature, as well as other contemporary arts such as painting, photography, music and dance, and audio-visual media. The journal is structured into monographic issues featuring articles, interviews and the re-publishing of crucial texts, which are sometimes complemented by audio-visual essays, either as part of a written article or as an autonomous work. Each issue also includes a book review section which analyses some of the most important works in film studies published in Spain and abroad.

Comparative Cinema is published biannually in English, though it may include original versions of the texts in other languages. It is an open access, peer-reviewed publication which uses internal and external evaluation committees. As such, it is recognized by international indexes such as DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and Latindex (Regional Information System for Online Scientific Journals of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal).

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[SPA]
Bajo las matas
En los pajonales
Sobre los puentes
En los canales
Hay Cadáveres.

[ENG]
Beneath bushes
In scrub
On bridges
In canals
There are Corpses

Néstor Perlongher, "Cadáveres"
("Corpses").

French cinema theorist Jean-Baptiste Thoret considers the clearest precedent to cinematographic gore to be the assassination of President Kennedy, which every American watched on their television screens. According to Thoret, this lifeless body, moving forwards in a convertible, would become a seminal image of New Hollywood. This issue of *Comparative Cinema* aims to tackle the figuration of corpses in cinema history. It takes as its basic hypothesis the idea that no work which deals with death is arbitrary, since it establishes the final causes of its fear in the times in which it lives (Frankenstein at the dawn of modernity and the zombie epidemic in the times of AIDS, for example, create a theme out of different fears over very particular and complex corpses). In this regard, we are proposing a reflection on the historical construction of how society feels in the presence of dead bodies, expressed through its popular works: the intention of this proposal is to help develop an anthropology of the various

national cinemas and their genres, based on the cinematographic representation which each time, canon and authors, have employed for their corpses.

Cinema is part of the tradition of rituals for the evocation of the dead that are also rituals of separation from their corpses. As theorist Gonzalo Aguilar points out, "once the image is formed, the corpse can be buried". One of the fundamental texts of classic Greek tragedy (and by extension one of the most important objects of study in universal aesthetics, which has gone from Aristotle to Hegel, from Hölderlin to Brecht, and from them on to the most important thinkers of our time, such as Steiner, Agamben, and Žižek) is *Antigone* by Sophocles, whose conflict revolves around Creon's prohibition of burying Polynices' corpse. A prohibition that Antigone disobeys. Celebrated philologist George Steiner notes that "Sophocles' *Antigone* is not 'any text'. It is one of the enduring and canonic acts in the history of our philosophic, literary, political consciousness" (1984, "Preface"). In this sense, we note that the dilemma over the representation of the corpses and the political and moral implication that this aesthetic decision involves have been in our culture since its inception. Thus, ever since Ancient Greece, the motif of the corpse implies the transit from a religious sphere to a political one. The corpse as a motif points to (as we see from the tragedy of Antigone) a dilemma that creates tension in the religious, ethical and political spheres: in the passage from the polis to the necropolis, the imaginary that each society inherits and updates of the representations of Greek tragedy comes into play.

The motif of the corpse and its cinematographic treatment (being an object that is never specifically addressed in cinema history) deserves an in-depth study in the cinematography of countries in times of war or dictatorship (or their transition). If we start from the hypothesis that the corpse is what is repressed, the problematic “real” matter that begins to emerge in periods of decomposition of authoritarian regimes (that is, when the body of the dictator becomes present), we must also think about the mechanisms of this repression, the effects of censorship and how to frame the concept of taboo. The interference of censorship in the representation of corpses has direct implications on the imaginary of death that is forged in these societies, and very specifically on the experiences of social mourning that depend on recognizing the dead and their burial. There is no mourning without a grave, and there is no grave without a corpse.

We take Italian, Spanish, and Argentinian cinematography as archetypal examples of these problems of representation and foreclosure. The articles by Annalisa Mirizio, Luis E. Parés and Gonzalo Aguilar and Ana Basualdo delve into the limits of these representations, accepting the historical frictions that have determined the imagery of this complex motif.

Annalisa Mirizio studies the links between two symptomatic Italian corpses in the 1970s: Aldo Moro and Pier Paolo Pasolini. In both cases, the echoes of history (the Red Brigades that kidnapped Moro, the Communist Party that expelled Pasolini) contaminate their possible representation and

interpretation. Meanwhile, historian Luis E. Parés wonders about the macabre tradition of the Spanish Baroque, practicing a national “necro-history” that interchanges creeds, politics and traditions: from the cinema made under the Franco regime to the cinema that began with the Transition.

The example of Argentina deserves a space of its own, one that is particularly productive in terms of our interests. In this sense, Gonzalo Aguilar reflects on the immanent and transcendent corpses of the country’s history. Evita Perón, the missing people in the last military dictatorship and Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (the de facto ex-president who overthrew Perón in 1955 and was assassinated by the guerrilla organization of Montoneros) all allow Aguilar to speculate on the journey of a corpse, as such, to their popular communion: to their consecration as the image of the people.

Finally, writer Ana Basualdo examines the contemporary representations of the missing people, reading against the grain the fictional works of the H.I.J.O.S. (Spanish acronym for “Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence”, which coincidentally also reads as “children” in Spanish) of the missing people that started to produce their stories over the last 20 years. Her journey through Remembrance Park (the commemorative area in Buenos Aires which looks onto Río de la Plata, where so many corpses ended up submerged) becomes a trip that intertwines the time of horror with a time that asks which monuments, which representations can, must, should (?) be erected,

practiced, to give substance, body, to what has been taken away.

The case of Argentina finds a disturbing echo in Colombian cinema: Carolina Sourdis converses with filmmakers Luis Ospina and Camilo Restrepo about the presence of corpses in Colombian cinema history. First, the corpses produced by the partisan struggles, and later, by the conflict between government and guerrillas, whether concealed or turned into trophies, emerge in the cinema that Ospina and Restrepo review and produce: how is a corpse filmed, how it is fictionalized, in a country full of tremendously real corpses? Ospina, the late leading filmmaker of Colombian cinema, attempts to consider this problematic question with Restrepo, a young prodigy of this same cinema.

Representation of corpses has a long cinematographic tradition that still requires further study: from the corpses of explorers and American indigenous people that Griffith and Bitzer portrayed in *The Massacre* (1912), a fundamental work of film classicism, to the state funeral that displayed Lenin's embalmed body in *Three Songs About Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine*, 1934) by Dziga Vertov, to classic fictions that have marked cinema history, like *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) and *Rope* (1948) by Hitchcock, to mention just a few paradigmatic cases. In the representation of corpses, aesthetic variables typical of cinema history and its aesthetic

norms often come into play, as well as determining factors that have to do with the historic moment of those particular societies in which those cinematographic representations were made. This is the essence of the article by Daniel Pérez-Pamies and Marta Lopera-Mármol; it compares the treatment of the corpses of the protagonist of *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) and Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks* (David Lynch & Mark Frost, 1990-2017), placing these figures in a transitional and dialectical perspective that is crucial to understand how cinema and television are related with a declining tradition, and perhaps pointing the way towards a representative future.

Do common patterns exist in the filmic expression of the corpse? Is there a classicism and a modernity in the cinematographic treatment of corpses? Is there a direct link between the most popular corpses in history and the cinematic imaginary that derives from them? Are the bodies of Kennedy, Lenin, Evita Perón, Aldo Moro, Franco, Che Guevara and Laura Palmer the driving forces behind significant and particular film treatments?

We hope that this issue's articles and materials can be of help in tackling these and other questions relating to what is a singular, problematic figuration. As Néstor Perlongher's paradigmatic poem notes at the end of his stanzas: "there are Corpses".

**Fran Benavente, Santiago Fillol
 and Glòria Salvadó Corretger**

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Notes on some Argentinian corpses

Cinema takes part in the tradition of rites for evoking the dead that are also rites of separation from their corpses. Once the image is formed, the corpse can be buried. Sometimes this image is a tombstone, others a death mask or a photo. Cinema provided a new possibility: filming or recording the corpse while it was alive. In this way, photography and cinema were the two most powerful instruments of immortalization (embalming) of the 20th century. This article investigates immanent and transcendent corpses in Argentinian history: Evita Perón, the *desaparecidos* (“missing people”) of the last military dictatorship, and Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (the de facto ex-President who overthrew Perón in 1955 and was murdered by Montoneros’ guerrilla organization), among others. Based on the cinematographic representations which evoke these corpses (with varying degrees of accuracy), as well as the popular expressions that accompanied them (militant songs, colloquial expressions, etc.), this text explores the transformation of a corpse, as such, to its consecration as the image of the people.

Keywords

CORPSE
REPRESENTATION
POPULAR CULTURE
ARGENTINA
FILM HISTORY
DESAPARECIDOS

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Gonzalo Aguilar (Buenos Aires, 1964) Professor of Brazilian and Portuguese Literature at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and a researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (Spanish acronym: CONICET). He is the director of the Master’s Degree in Latin American Literatures at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, and has been a guest lecturer at Stanford University, Harvard University and Universidade de São Paulo. In 2005, he received the Guggenheim fellowship. He co-wrote *El cine de Leonardo Favio* (1993) and *Borges va al cine* (2010). His books include *Poesía concreta brasileña* (2003); *Other Worlds: New Argentine Film* (2008); *Episodios cosmopolitas en la cultura argentina* (2009) and *Más allá del pueblo. Imágenes, indicios y políticas del cine* (2015).

What is death to our entire cinematographic generation, who dived deep into the film archives, but the effect that corpses have when falling in cinema?

Serge Daney

1. Indexes

Since its origins, cinema was linked with death, or rather, with the living dead. In olden times, there were rites that evoked the dead through images (masks, paints, costumes, mummies) and cinema is, in a way, a culminating moment in that tradition. André Bazin explained it with a metaphor: the cinematographic image is like embalming. Although many images throughout history could be used to predicate the magical nature of things, in cinema it acquires a disturbingly real indexical and ghostly character. Unlike the other methods mentioned (masks, paints, costumes, mummies), cinema is the only one which offers us the recordings of a living body in movement. Bazin talks about an “embalming of reality” and when he uses Jesus’ shroud as a simile for the machine created by the Lumières, he is appealing to the sacred nature of the image, even in times of disenchantment and modernity. The appearance of dead people’s lives was consigned to the screen. That is why one of the earliest myths of cinema is Dracula, an undead creature that sucks people’s blood.

Therefore, the radical novelty of cinema is that it acts as *a moving index* which, just like photography, has been “produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature” (PIERCE, 1955: 106).

Cinema takes part in the tradition of rites of evoking the dead that are also the separation from their corpses. Once the image is formed, the corpse can be buried. Sometimes this image is a tombstone, others a death mask or a photo. Cinema provided a new

possibility: filming or recording the corpse while it was alive. In this way, photography and cinema were the two most powerful instruments of immortalization (embalming) of the 20th century.

2. Transcendent corpses

Walter Benjamin writes in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* that “seen from the point of view of death, the product of the corpse is life” (BENJAMIN, 1998: 218). However, it is possible that this corpse survives, mystified or with a more powerful presence than the ones alive. In Argentinian history, there are countless corpses that have lived on. They accompany us in images that show them in their moment of glory (or simply alive), and which cause them to endure in their sacred or re-enchanted state. Eva Perón, Che Guevara, the photos of the faces of the 30,000 *desaparecidos* (“missing people”)¹. Emblematic phrases reveal the power of these dead people: “Ever onward to victory”, “divine presence”, “I know you will reclaim my name and carry it like a flag to victory”, “they took them away alive, we want them returned alive”. These are corpses that impose a *transcendental plane*. They represent attempts to erase the boundary line between life and death, or to challenge what’s alive as not being sufficiently alive if it doesn’t possess that capacity for dedication and rebellion. Life is no longer contemplated from the corpse (as Benjamin says) but from the Revolution and its historical purpose in a general epiphany. They are the bodies of the community, the bodies that stopped being corpses to live on in images, forever.

In the case of Che Guevara, his corpse lying on a stretcher in Bolivia was associated with the figure of Christ, and travelled across the world. *The Hour of the Furnaces (La hora de los hornos)*, Fernando E. Solanas

and Octavio Getino, 1968) used this image as a way to encourage liberation movements: the death of the revolutionary wasn't the testimony of a defeat but another milestone in the battle². The faciality of Guevara's figure succeeded in surpassing death and establishing him as an emblematic figure for the battles that have taken place since his death. However, in the case of the *desaparecidos*, such faciality is impossible, and is multiplied on the banners that people carry on protest marches. In the face of any kind of political immortalization, the military implemented a strategy that prevented figuration.³ What to do, then, with the corpses?

In Argentina, Peronism (being the movement that most emphatically represents the people and the popular) carried out a consistent policy to provide certain corpses with a transcendent quality. Both at state level, when they were in government between 1946 and 1955, and then from a standpoint of resistance, after the government fell in 1955. In his testimonial volume *Operation Massacre* (*Operación masacre*) of 1957, Rodolfo Walsh wrote about the executions by firing squad carried out by the dictatorial government of the self-denominated *Revolución Libertadora* ("Liberating Revolution") in Tristán Suárez: "one of the executed men is alive". In the film adaptation that was made in 1973, the film opens with this "executed man". His paradoxical status fits in with all the aspirations of the Peronist resistance: opposition to power, evidence of state repression, the power of the popular struggle, and the choice between nation or death (i.e., dying for one's nation is life). The counterpart of this corpse is Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, one of the key protagonists in Perón's fall and the man responsible for the firing squad executions. A popular song that "went viral" in the early 1970s,

after he was shot by Montoneros' guerrilla organization, clearly shows that he is a lonely corpse, demystified or disenchanting before the return of the deaths of the popular leaders or fighters:

"Con los huesos de Aramburu
 Vamo'a hacer una escalera
 Pa que baje del cielo
 Nuestra Evita Montonera"⁴

[ENG] "With Aramburu's bones
 We are going to make a staircase
 So that our Evita Montonera
 Comes down from heaven"

The story of Eva Perón's corpse is well-known: she died in 1952 and was embalmed by Dr Pedro Ara, using a novel technique. After the coup d'état of 1955, the corpse was kidnapped and embarked on a journey via various military institutions until finally the kidnappers secretly took her to Italy. In the early 1970s, the body was recovered; it had been slashed and despoiled⁵. The short story "That Woman" by Rodolfo Walsh ("Esa mujer", 1965), the novel *Santa Evita* by Tomás Eloy Martínez (1995) and the films *Evita: The Unquiet Grave* (*Evita la tumba sin paz*, Tristan Bauer, 1997), *Eva Doesn't Sleep* (*Eva no duerme*, Pablo Agüero 2017) and *Eva from Argentina* (*Eva de la Argentina*, María Seoane, 2011) all revolve around the kidnapping of the body⁶.

Why was so much fury shown towards Evita's corpse? Because she wasn't completely dead, because she could come back anytime as a ghost that could bring down the military government. The Peronism embalming technique was an immortality policy and, in the form of Evita's body, it had been successful. It had removed the body from the organic cycle and had turned it into a sacred myth. But Evita's

embalmed corpse was so powerful that when Peronism was toppled by a military coup, the corpse was kidnapped, despoiled and hidden away.

3. Embalming

Eva Perón died on June 26th 1952. As the official message, broadcast by radio and the newly-arrived television said: “at 20:25 Eva Perón, Spiritual Leader of the Nation, entered into immortality”. The embalming policy (or rather, immortalization policy) was immediate. However, it is not the only strategy that can be attributed to Peronism. A little before Evita’s death, on June 3rd of that same year, one of the films that, over time, would become a classic in Argentinian cinema was released: *Dark River (Las aguas bajan turbias, 1952)* by Hugo del Carril. A renowned advocate of the movement (he also sang the “Peronist March”), his film met with great opposition in some sectors of the government, particularly from the powerful Raúl Alejandro Apold, the Undersecretary of Press and Broadcasting. Del Carril had to make some changes for it to be accepted and, once released, it was not given any official support. There has been much talk of a personal feud between Apold and Hugo del Carril, but without a doubt, the conflict around the film had other causes. A mixture of melodrama, political preaching and neorealism, the film distanced itself from the dominant cinema that was based on conventional genres and stories that avoided any direct references. The fact that it was based on a novel by an imprisoned communist writer (Alfredo Varela) was further reason for this pressure. Though in fact, Varela doesn’t appear in the credits. There is another reason that probably didn’t have any conscious influence, but the way the corpses are presented in *Dark River* marks a difference with the prevailing discourse and its immortalization policy. Instead of embalming, *Dark River* portrays

empty corpses.

The story begins with a voice-over (the same type as used by official news broadcasts of the time) that warns us that the story that follows happened “years ago, a few years ago”. The image then moves from the beautiful landscapes of the Mesopotamian estuaries (in what seems to be a tourism promotion short) to the corpses that are dragged along by the river, and which come from the green hell of the mate plantations. Unlike the embalmed corpses whose eyes are closed and skin is smooth, the corpses that are washed along by the river in *Dark River* have hollow eyes and putrefied skin. They don’t resemble a monument and they’re anonymous (“no face, no name, no family”, as the narrator says). They aren’t motionless and unalterable, they move with the flow of the river, decomposing. They are organic corpses; that is, affected by time. Mortal corpses. Closer to Heraclitus than to Parmenides, they are “floating corpses”.

The most important aspect of this comparison (embalmed corpse/ decomposing corpse) is that while the former signifies an immortality policy which, by association, also signifies a perpetuation of power (as in the case of Lenin, whose embalmed body is there for future generations to worship), the latter signifies a permanent struggle, working to give meaning to these corpses and to provide them with a certain direction. This is what happens in the film when the workers at the mate plantations discover the power of a trade union and rise up against the bosses (“blood fertilizes like a seed”, we hear at the end of the film). At the height of the Peronist government, Hugo del Carril opposes state immortalization policies with the existence of corpses that cannot rest, that have no deathbed, and need to be redeemed.

It is no coincidence that the most important requirement made by the

Peronist government to a Peronist film was that a prologue should be added to clarify that what happened with the corpses was something from *the past*, “years ago, a few years ago”. In any case, these corpses never cease to pass by, float or sink. The embalming policy imagines an out-of-time state which history comes along to frustrate, again and again.

4. Immanence and imminence

The indexical nature of the image also exists in language. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, “a proper name, personal demonstrative, or relative pronoun” are indexes (PEIRCE 1955: 108). But what happens when that corpse doesn’t have a proper name, something that is not a rare occurrence in Latin America? What happens when it’s a stripped, torn-to-pieces, vanished, or – to use a term with great historical meaning – a *desaparecido* (“missing”) corpse? In short, what happens when the proper name can’t be used or designate a corpse that’s there? Néstor Perlongher has offered a poetic answer in his text “Corpses” (“Cadáveres”) via a verb: “there are” (“hay”).

“En el campo
 En el campo
 En la casa
 En la caza
 Ahí
 Hay Cadáveres

En el decaer de esta escritura
 En el borroneo de esas
 inscripciones
 En el difuminar de estas leyendas
 En las conversaciones de
 lesbianas que se muestran la marca
 de la liga,
 En ese puño elástico,
 Hay Cadáveres”

[ENG] “In the country
 In the country
 In the house
 In the hunt
 There
 There are Corpses

In the decline of this writing
 In the smudging of these
 inscriptions
 In the blurring of these legends
 In conversations of lesbians who
 show surrender marks to each other,
 In that elastic cuff,
 There are Corpses” (2002: 462-
 463)

The “there are” is the presence that pushes up from below, the imposing force, the body which, despite being dead, is there, undisturbed and disturbing us. “Corpses”, a poem written between 1982 and 1983, was published in the first issue of the magazine *Diario de poesía* (April 1984) in the context of the debate over the neo-Baroque or, in its Río de Plata version, the *neobarroso*. Benjamin’s phrase becomes revealing: the corpse lost all chance of redemption, the “divine presence” only comes back as irony or insufficiency.

“En lo preciso de esta ausencia
 En lo que raya esa palabra
 En su divina presencia
 Comandante, en su raya
 Hay Cadáveres”

[ENG] “In the necessity for this
 absence
 In what underlines that speech
 In your godly presence
 Commander, in your line
 There are Corpses” (2002: 457-
 458)

A “Baroque of the trenches” which used lyrical speech to highlight the conditions for the emergence of the political in post-dictatorial times: that is, the collapse of the unequivocal division between public and private, the macropolitics and micropolitics which had been dominant in the early 1970s. That is why the corpses not only represent those who died from repression but also the shadow of death that dwells in everything, even in details, in the tiniest or the most imperceptible things (and that is another of the poem’s baroque characteristics).

I mention Perlongher’s “Corpses” because I think that in the late 1970s it was the testimony to a discontinuity about corpses in the period that began in the second half of the 20th century. The immanence that is produced in the “there are” or, if we prefer to say it using the terminology of two philosophers whom Perlongher admired (in fact, he met one of them personally and interviewed him): a *plane of immanence*. I am obviously referring to Deleuze and Guattari and the idea that “Corpses” was written at a time when the *plane of transcendence* (not transcendental) above which the corpse had been placed in the time that preceded it, was now blocked. A historical journey of redemption or general epiphany cannot be glimpsed.

This plane of immanence demands something else: a hollow body (like the one in the film *Dark River*) to see how to give it a meaning. But unlike what happened in the 1950s, when corpses were floating enigmas, medical science and anthropology began to examine them precisely from their immanence. The age of the immortality of corpses in images was succeeded by one in which corpses talk, they carry within themselves the signs and footprints of their own history. It is the *forensic turn* that treats the dead body like an archive. “The body has become the

materiality of a crime, an archive of death. The study of corpses also exists in history to document mass violence and genocides: the *forensic turn* didn’t only happen on TV shows”, as Ivan Jablonka writes in *Laëtitia ou la fin des hommes* (2017).

Survival operates in this new stage in another way: thanks to medical-scientific knowledge, we can know many things about that person. The body contains information and that, in the context of the investigation of the *desaparecidos* under state terrorism, takes on the nature of a prodigy⁷.

In the films of that time, those made after Albertina Carri’s *The Blonds* (*Los rubios*, 2003), the corpse becomes a paradoxical figure: since it’s *desaparecido*, its identity is stripped of all corporality and faciality, and therefore the search is carried out in the remains of mass graves. This enables us to verify kinship and at the same time to show its limits: blood ties are proven to be insufficient for changes in families after the dictatorships. Once again, *The Blonds* enables us to think about this question. In one scene, Albertina and her double (played by Analía Couceyro) go to the National Bank of Genetic Data for a DNA analysis. While the director searches for information to find out where her parents are buried, the actress dramatizes the ghostly nature of the search: the bond with one’s parents is not only a matter of blood, it is also an affective one. Albertina and Couceyro, the director and the actress, enter the world of biopolitics, but they don’t intend to support it by searching for the DNA of a personless identity in the State. Quite the contrary, what they’re doing is undermining it: on one hand, because they separate the biological archive from the assumption of guilt (if the biopolitical archive assumes that we are potential criminals or culprits, then human rights assumes that each of the

persons examined is a potential victim); on the other hand, because in that fictionalization they are destroying the pre-eminence of blood above affection and the idea of family is completely broken (blood and affection are on the same level, in contiguity: both the director and the actress give blood). In this sequence, we see the blood being extracted and the sheet of a face that is actually a skull, because genetic memory survives death. But in the narrative logic of the film, that skull is both a sheet of medical knowledge and a baroque emblem which, according to the tone of *The Blonds*, travels between frivolity (*vanitas*) and mortuary melancholy.

We return to the Baroque and modern allegory, though now stripped of the perspective of transcendence that it possessed in the historical form of the Baroque. The return of the Baroque style is disturbing. In its iconology, death is symbolized by a skull. The skull is not a corpse, it is death itself, which is used for melancholic meditation. The image is deprived of faces and therefore of identity. With the *desaparecidos* and genetic analysis a paradox occurs: the dead person is not recognized by their features but by the information they contain. The skull acquires a proper name⁸.

However, information (which, as

Benjamin said, imposed itself onto the narration) does not circulate without any interpretation or manipulation. The last famous Argentinian corpse (the district attorney Alberto Nisman, who died in 2015) has said a lot of things since it appeared lifeless in the bathroom of his apartment. Since then, specialists have not agreed on whether he committed suicide, or if he was murdered. Though everything seemed to indicate that there were too many interests at stake to assume that he was murdered, the corpse has not stopped talking since then, and it has done so by asserting or refuting all the hypotheses available. A new state of corpse appears when scientific information and political ideology fight over what it means and want to make it talk. In the new corpses, information replaces sacralization.

Even the most emptied, most anonymous, most destroyed corpse contains information and potential identity recognition. With only a strand of hair or a tiny part of the body, the DNA can be determined. This opens up a new phase in which the falling corpse begins to speak after death. The traditional separation between image and corpse collapses, because it can no longer rest in peace. It is important that it's there to tell us its story.

Translated by Daniela Torres Montenegro
(See original text at the end of the journal)

1/ The number has been disputed and it is true that it does not reach 30,000. But human rights movements decided to keep this figure which was established during the initial reports, when it was still impossible to measure the scale of the massacre. We must also consider the fact that the difference between the figures precisely expresses the uncountable; what can't be counted exactly, and which is *too much*. On protest marches, they generally use passport-sized photos that the *desaparecidos* took for their IDs, but which have been greatly enlarged.

2/ See the image of Che Guevara's body an hour and twenty minutes into the version of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*) (<https://www.youtube.com/>)

[watch?v=X_--jUxpjrQ](#) [access: September 15th 2019]). This passage has been widely disputed because it was added to a posterior version of the first one circulated.

3/ Videla's speech where he robs the *desaparecidos* of their existence and hurls them beyond life and death: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASMPYg0YueU> [access: September 15th 2019].

4/ A 2012 version which shows how the song has endured can be heard on *YouTube*, sung by children from the Peronist group La Cámpora: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgOSilufkew> [access: September 15th 2019].

5/ Apparently it was the Loggia P-2 that found the body. There is a famous fictionalization of Eva Perón's kidnapping in Rodolfo Walsh's short story "That Woman", included in his book *Los oficios terrestres*.

6/ The filmography linked with Evita is much more extensive (apart from the films in which she herself was an actress); I refer only to the ones that have the kidnapping of the corpse as their main subject.

7/ I say "prodigy" because when the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo began the search for their grandchildren and the children of *desaparecidos*, DNA analyses and expertise in genetic information archives weren't available yet. Initially, the search was based on written documents that were left in hospitals or other state institutions, as well as oral testimonies. DNA analysis changed the conditions of this search and provided them with a unique, accurate tool for determining kinship and filiations.

8/ Of course, there are other ways of identifying a skeleton. For example, by its teeth.

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