



**INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION, MEMORY, AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE
IMAGETIC REPRESENTATION OF THE ARGENTINE DICTATORSHIP: THE
CINEMATIC ADAPTATION OF LA CASA DE LOS CONEJOS, BY LAURA
ALCOBA, DIRECTED BY VALERIA SELINGER**

**TRADUÇÃO INTERSEMIÓTICA, MEMÓRIA E SUBJETIVIDADE NA
REPRESENTAÇÃO IMAGÉTICA DA DITADURA ARGENTINA: A ADAPTAÇÃO
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Eduardo dos Anjos Maia Dias¹

ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between intersemiotic translation, memory, and autofiction, adopting the notion of adaptation as “repetition with variation” (Hutcheon) and understanding, following Ricoeur, that memory translates lived experience into new signs. It also engages with Beatriz Sarlo’s critique of the “subjective turn,” which values individual experience in the construction of historical knowledge. In this context, *La casa de los conejos* (Alcoba, 2008) and its cinematic adaptation (Selinger, 2021) are approached as processes of intersemiotic translation, in which the passage from literary narrative to audiovisual language entails an expressive reconfiguration of testimony. The book articulates remembrance, fiction, and testimony to reconstruct childhood under the Argentine dictatorship, while the film directly dramatizes these events, transforming memorial material into staged action. Thus, both works, through distinct paths, translate and reinscribe traumatic experiences in the public sphere, renewing historical representations and proposing, even if indirectly, a critical reflection on the demands for justice and the search for the disappeared that persist in the post-dictatorship period to the present day.

Keywords: Adaptation. Comparative Analysis. Autofiction. Censorship. Cinema. Argentine Dictatorship. Latin American Dictatorships. Cultural Studies. Literature. Mourning. Memory. Autobiographical Narratives. Remembrance. Historical Representation. Trauma. Intersemiotic Translation.

RESUMO

O presente artigo examina a relação entre tradução intersemiótica, memória e autoficção, adotando a noção de adaptação como “repetição com variação” (Hutcheon) e entendendo,

¹ Doctoral student in Literature and Culture. Instituto de Letras. Universidade Federal da Bahia.
E-mail: edu_diaz73@hotmail.com



com Ricoeur, que a memória traduz o vivido em novos signos. Também dialoga com a crítica de Beatriz Sarlo à “guinada subjetiva”, que valoriza a experiência individual na construção do conhecimento histórico. Nesse contexto, *La casa de los conejos* (Alcoba, 2008) e sua adaptação cinematográfica (Selinger, 2021) são abordadas como processos de tradução intersemiótica, nos quais a passagem do relato literário para a linguagem audiovisual implica a reconfiguração expressiva do testemunho. O livro articula rememoração, ficção e testemunho para reconstruir a infância sob a ditadura argentina, enquanto o filme dramatiza diretamente esses acontecimentos, convertendo o material memorialístico em ação encenada. Assim, ambas as obras, por caminhos distintos, traduzem e reinscrevem experiências traumáticas no espaço público, renovando as representações históricas e propondo, mesmo que indiretamente, uma reflexão crítica sobre as demandas por justiça e a busca pelos desaparecidos que persistem no pós-ditadura até os dias atuais.

Palavras-chave: Adaptação. Análise Comparativa. Autoficção. Censura. Cinema. Ditadura na Argentina. Ditaduras Latino-Americanas. Estudos Culturais. Literatura. Luto. Memória. Narrativas Autobiográficas. Rememoração. Representação Histórica. Trauma. Tradução Intersemiótica.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo examina la relación entre traducción intersemiótica, memoria y autoficción, adoptando la noción de adaptación como “repetición con variación” (Hutcheon) y entendiendo, con Ricoeur, que la memoria traduce lo vivido en nuevos signos. Asimismo, dialoga con la crítica de Beatriz Sarlo al “giro subjetivo”, que valora la experiencia individual en la construcción del conocimiento histórico. En este contexto, *La casa de los conejos* (Alcoba, 2008) y su adaptación cinematográfica (Selinger, 2021) se abordan como procesos de traducción intersemiótica, en los cuales el pasaje del relato literario al lenguaje audiovisual implica la reconfiguración expresiva del testimonio. El libro articula rememoración, ficción y testimonio para reconstruir la infancia bajo la dictadura argentina, mientras que la película dramatiza directamente esos acontecimientos, convirtiendo el material memorialístico en acción escenificada. Así, ambas obras, por vías distintas, traducen y reinscriben experiencias traumáticas en el espacio público, renovando las representaciones históricas y proponiendo, aunque de manera indirecta, una reflexión crítica sobre las demandas de justicia y la búsqueda de los desaparecidos que persisten en el posdictadura hasta la actualidad.

Palabras clave: Adaptación. Análisis Comparativo. Autoficción. Censura. Cine. Dictadura en Argentina. Dictaduras Latinoamericanas. Estudios Culturales. Literatura. Luto. Memoria. Narrativas Autobiográficas. Rememoración. Representación Histórica. Trauma. Traducción Intersemiótica.



1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of a memorialistic work and its adaptation requires attention not only to the text and images that constitute them, but also to the paratextual elements that shape its reception. Among these elements, the preface occupies a central place, as in it the author often explains intentions, ethical frameworks and interpretative guidelines that guide the reader. In the case of narratives that deal with traumatic experiences, especially those marked by state violence, the preface becomes even more relevant, functioning as a space for agreement between individual memory, historical responsibility, and the need for testimony. It is in this sense that the careful reading of the preface to *La casa de los conejos is justified*, whose function goes beyond that of a mere introduction, providing essential keys to understand the gesture of remembering and its conversion into a literary and filmic narrative.

For these reasons, as important as the narrative of the short story *La Casa de Los Conejos*, by Laura Alcoba or its transposition to the cinema by Valéria Selinger is the preface that addresses the author's motivations for the construction of the work containing her childhood memories in the period of the civil-military dictatorship in Argentina. The translation of this period through memory involves sacrifices that go beyond the simple fact of transcribing past experiences. It requires an arduous commitment between the writer and the collectivity, in addition to the commitment to oneself.

I will evoke, finally, all that Argentine insanity, all those beings swept away by violence. I decided to do so because I often think of the dead, but also because I now know that we must not forget the living. Even more: I am convinced that it is essential to think about them. Strive to give them a place too.

That's why it took me too long to understand, Diana. No doubt, that's why it took me so long.

But before I begin this little story, I would like to make one last confession to you: that, if I finally make this effort of memory to talk about the Argentina of the Montoneros, the dictatorship and the terror, from the perspective of the child I was, it is not so much to remember, but to see if I can, finally, once and for all, forget a little"² (Alcoba, 2008, pp. 6-7) Own translation, from.

² Voy a evocar al fin toda aquella locura argentina, todos aquellos seres enraptrados by violence. Me he decided, because very well in the dark, but also because now there is no such thing as forgetting the living. Más aún: estoy convencida de que es imperresistible pensar en ellos. Esforzarse por hacerles, también a ellos, un lugar. This is what he tardado so much to understand, Diana. Sin duda por eso he demorado tanto. But before starting this little story, I wanted to make a last confession: that if I have lost this effort of memory to talk about the Argentina of the Montoneros, of the dictatorship and of terror, since the time of the child that I went, I am not both for remembering and for seeing myself with you, at the end, on a single occasion, forget a well.



The evocation of the *Argentine insanity* and citizens *Swept away by violence* It aims not only to build a memorialistic rescue, but also an attempt to highlight, in the present, both the dead and the living who went through this traumatic period. By stating that it took him a long time to understand the need for *Strive to give them a place*, the author recognizes the complexity of the work of memory, which is not limited to the remembrance of the absent, since there is also the need that involves those who remained: the survivors who carry the pain of mourning or the cruel search for the disappeared.

In addition, Laura confesses, once again, that the effort to narrate the Argentina of the *Montoneros*, the dictatorship and terror, from the perspective of children, does not have as its main motivation the act of remembering, but the paradoxical desire to forget, perhaps attenuate the weight of these memories.

From this conception of the act of narrating, it is possible to establish a direct relationship between the author's memorialistic experience and the process of translation of that historical reality, from the temporal displacement to an affective and traumatic space. The concept of intersemiotic translation, understood as the transposition of meanings between different symbolic systems, is carried out in the construction of the narrative by considering that the act of remembering does not consist in linearly reproducing past historical events, but in translating personal and subjective experiences into other forms of expression, reorganizing them in a new atmosphere of intelligibility. This conception also implies recognizing that, in this type of writing, fidelity to historical academicism becomes dispensable, that is, the requirement of chronological rigor, documentary objectivity and interpretative neutrality, because the objective is not to reconstruct the past according to the parameters of traditional historiography, but to produce meanings based on what has remained alive and disturbing in experience. Memory; in these two cases: literature and cinema; It works less as an archive and more as an inventive translation, which operates displacements, condensations and gaps to make visible what the documentary record cannot encompass: the affective impact, the silences, the permanence of trauma, vulnerability, the feeling of powerlessness, mourning.

Traditionally, translation theories have focused on the equivalence between the original text and the translated text, assuming fidelity as a criterion of validity, based on the principle that translation in an attempt to promote an adaptation of the "original" would be something inferior. However, as Linda Hutcheon (2011) points out, this obsession with fidelity is anachronistic, especially in the field of contemporary adaptations, where the importance of creative gesture and reformulation is recognized. For Hutcheon, to adapt is to repeat with variation: the pleasure is in the reinterpretation of the known with a touch of novelty. According



to the author, adaptations are in all spaces of everyday life, from the adaptation of a literary work to a film to a theme park or video game, in addition to being statistically responsible for numerous awards on TV and in Cinema.

Adaptations are everywhere these days: on television and movie screens, on the stages of musicals and dramatic theater, on the internet, in novels and comics, in arcades, and also in the theme parks closest to you.

(...)

If adaptations are, by definition, such inferior and secondary creations, why are they so present in our culture and, indeed, in increasing numbers? Why, according to 1992 statistics, are 85% of all best picture winners at the Oscars adaptations? Why do adaptations total 95% of all miniseries and 70% of made-for-TV movies that win Emmy Awards? (Hutcheon, 2011, pp. 22-24)

Applying this logic of repetition by variation to the field of memorialistic narratives and in the field of transpositions, as in Alcoba's short story for Selinger's cinema, and considering the subjectivity narrated or staged in the reinterpretation of a historical fact present in the discourse; it can be safely stated that the process of remembrance, therefore, constitutes a kind of intersemiotic translation. Paul Ricoeur (2003) states that memory is the attempt to reappropriate an absent past, which returns in the form of a present image, paradoxically marked by absence and anteriority. In this way, when remembering, the past is not relived as it was, but what was lived, or transmitted, is translated into new signs, into narratives that reorganize the past, based on the needs and conditions of the present and the idiosyncrasies of the protagonist-narrator, for this reason, these narratives, especially those that recall exile and repression during Latin American military dictatorships, potentially bring another side of history "neglected" by history that refers to the fact itself and not to its affective and traumatic repercussion. The repetition of themes: trauma, absence, silence, mourning; takes place in subjective variation, where personal testimony gains fictionalized and affective contours. Such narratives, such as the film *I'm Still Here* (2024), directed by Walter Salles and adapted from the book of the same name by Marcelo Rubens Paiva, exemplify how the discourse of the first person can operate as a mechanism for reinventing the past, resistance, catharsis and rescuing personal and collective memory, all of which is enhanced through the film adaptation that also appropriates repetition with variation, including the subjectivity of the literary work.

This movement is pointed out by Beatriz Sarlo (2007) as the "subjective turn": a contemporary tendency to promote a shift from the focus of the great historical discourses to the centrality of individual experience, memory and identity. However, the author emphasizes



in her speech the validity and importance of historians and their research for a better understanding of historical facts.

Taking these innovations together, the current academic trend and the market of symbolic goods that proposes to reconstitute the texture of life and the truth sheltered in the remembrance of experience, the revaluation of the first person as a point of view, the claim of a subjective dimension, which today expands on the studies of the past and the cultural studies of the present, are not surprising. These are steps in a program that becomes explicit, because there are ideological conditions that sustain it. "Contemporaneous with what was called in the 1970s and 1980s the 'linguistic turn' or often accompanying it as its shadow, the subjective turn was imposed" (p.18, emphasis added). This subjective shift also accompanies the recent renovations in the field of sociology, in which the identity of the subjects has once again taken the place occupied by the structures. "The reason of the subject was restored, which was, for decades, a mere 'ideology' or 'false consciousness'" (p.19, emphasis added). Consequently, oral history and testimony have restored trust in this first person who recounts his life in order to preserve the memory or to repair a wounded identity. (Sarlo, 2007, p. 03)

It is in this horizon that the textual narratives *La Casa de los Conejos* (2008), by Laura Alcoba, as well as the filmic narrative *La Casa de los Conejos* (2021) by Valéria Selinger, are configured as exercises in intersemiotic translation of the memories of the Argentine dictatorship witnessed by its protagonists. Although in both there is the striking presence of the child protagonist and her impressions, in the book it is clear a return through memory, as the narrator as an adult reconstitutes her past; while in the film there is the child character not remembering, but living the time in real time, considering real time in the fictional atmosphere. In the short story, the starting point is the remembrance of childhood experiences, later resignified by the narrator voice as an adult, who reelaborates the past in the light of temporal distance, the repertoire of life he acquired over the years and critical consciousness.

The author, still a child during the experience of repression, recounts years later, recalling as an adult, episodes that mix direct experience with collective and family accounts, creating a hybrid narrative that articulates individual memory, inherited memory and fiction. As stated by Heller, Vecchi, and Marcondes de Mello in their article *Between Discourse and Experience: La Casa de Los Conejos*, by Laura Alcoba (2019), this writing configures a "hybrid memory", which transits between testimony and literary elaboration. In the fragment below, there is a manifest thought in the book that supposedly the girl Laura would have, after refusing to answer what her surname was to her neighbor, because it would be denouncing the subversion of her parents, however silence, denial is also a risk, just like the act of speaking, of communicating. Recreating, perhaps, another life with other surnames and



moving between them on the thin line of whiteness, carrying with them the weight of responsibility on their childish shoulders would be the solution. Who knows?

But could I have said I was the daughter of a military man? No, impossible. In that case it wouldn't be me. Could she have been the daughter of López Rega the Witch? No, much less, of course not, this man is a cynical and wicked murderer, everyone knows that, and he would only be able to generate monsters. And I don't think I'm a monster, no. But what could I answer then? After all, what is my last name? ³(Alcoba, 2008, p. 49) – Translation.

It is observed in the author-character the difficulty of finding an immediate solution to the condition of clandestinity, evidenced at the moment when she is questioned by her neighbor about her surname. Because he is a child, the assimilation of a political concept inherited in relation to López Rega, the so-called "witch", becomes noticeable, as well as his refusal to adopt such a surname, even in the face of the possibility of protection or survival. This mental configuration of the character, tensioned between what can be said, what should be silenced and previous knowledge, even if fragmentary, about historical events and their protagonists, reveals the construction of a narrative constituted by a hybrid memory. It is a memory forged under the pressure of the circumstances experienced, which operates as a subjective re-elaboration of the historical fact. In the film this thought does not occur but the pressure that the girl suffers when she is approached screaming by her mother who insistently asks her what she had said to the neighbor. Her expression initially denotes innocence in the face of the situation, however, little by little, it is replaced by the expression of fear, anguish and guilt when she perceives the intensity and intonation in her mother's desperate and terrified approach.

Returning to Hutcheon's thought, mentioned at the beginning of the article, the author points out two central factors for the rise of adaptations. The first refers to the emergence of new means of mass communication (GROENSTEEN, 1998b, p. 9) and the channels made possible by contemporary technologies, such as the internet, which have significantly expanded the repertoire of narratives in circulation. The second is related to the concept of "repetition with variation", which presupposes a predisposition of the public to be interested in narratives that they recognize as part of their memory, while at the same time seeking the effect of surprise. It is in this articulation between familiarity and novelty that the success of

³ "¿Pero podría haber sido yo la hija de un militar? No, imposible. En ese caso yo sería muy distinta. ¿Podría haber sido en cambio la hija de López Rega, el Brujo? No, less aún, por supuesto que no, ese hombre es un asesino cynic y perverso, todo el mundo lo sabe, y sólo podría engender monstruos. Y yo no creo ser un monstruo, no. ¿Pero qué podría responder, then? ¿Cuál es, al fin y al cabo, mi nombre? (ALCOBA, Laura. *La casa de los conejos*. 1st edition, Barcelona: Spain. Edhasa, 2008).



adaptations is constituted. In the case of the book *La Casa de los Conejos*, the Argentine Military Dictatorship of the 1970s is a theme that is already widely disseminated in the historiographical sphere, arousing the interest of the public because it is part of the collective memory. However, Alcoba's account emerges as an innovative element, by offering an intimate and singular perspective, a factor that contributes decisively to the success of both the book and its film adaptation, which includes the novelty itself, the intimate perspective, within another novelty that is the transposition of the literary to the filmic.

Part of the answer certainly has to do with the constant emergence of new media and mass diffusion channels. This has undoubtedly fueled a huge demand for different types of stories. Despite this, there must be something particularly appealing about adaptations like adaptations. I would argue that part of this pleasure comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the attraction of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; The same goes for change. (Hutcheon, 2011, p.25)

Another factor of paramount importance in Alcoba's work is the alternation between times: the present of writing and the past of childhood lived under political repression. This alternation does not establish a hegemony of the present over what has happened, but establishes a game of temporal layers that intertwine and mutually translate each other. A continuous rereading of filling in gaps and re-elaboration of the narrative. It is in this sense that Alcoba's work does not seek to reconstruct a single truth about the period, but to offer a perspective marked by a sensibility that mixes the naïve vision of a child Laura with the need for confrontation to detach from what is experienced by the adult Laura through her narrative; the homonymous film directed by Valeria Selinger works as a filmic translation of the memory narrated by Alcoba. When adapting the work for the cinema, Selinger emphasizes silence as an essential element of childhood under surveillance: *Growing up respecting silences*, emphasizing the importance of silence as a method of survival and overcoming childhood: (...) *it is to make a leap from childhood to adulthood, skipping the stage of innocence* (Selinger, 2023). Silence, in this case, is also a sign, a language that translates oppression and fear. The director recreates the narrative with visual and sound resources, operating a new reading that, although distinct from the source work, remains faithful to the emotional and political essence of the story.

According to Pollak (1989), collective memory is crossed by disputes and tensions, as there is always a negotiation between what is remembered and what is silenced. This tension is also manifested in the adaptation, which chooses what to show and how to represent. *La casa de los conejos* is therefore shown to be a translation of the translation: the film translates



Alcoba's narrative, which in turn translates the historical period, based on his idiosyncrasies and the memories of his childhood.

For me it was extremely important that the film was a feminine vision and not an exposition of the tragic events of the last dictatorship. The choice was not to enter into any militancy discourse or not to show much of what was happening outside. The girl lives in that house and the story is told from inside the house and from inside that girl. Their silences contribute to this look. The decision was not to overexplain the evidence, to ignore explanatory conversations. Everything that is told is based on what the girl understands or interprets. That's why it's a choppy, fragmentary film, with a sloppy camera and many silences, unspoken, cuts.⁴ (Selinger, 2003, p.12)

As is pointed out in the film, dictatorial censorship repressed journalists, editors, filmmakers, playwrights, politicians, students; anyone who spoke out questioning the system was treated as an enemy of the system. The film *La Noche de Los Lápis*, for example, reveals how high school students were treated for questioning the prices of the collectives' tickets and for fighting for the student free pass: torture, death and disappearance. Fear and silencing were a strategic form of repression to stay in power and lead it for years. The thesis *Cinema and censorship in the Brazilian and Argentine military dictatorships* (2019), which received an honorable mention at the Capes Award, written by Professor Ana Marília Carneiro, describes in detail the process of **institutionalization of film censorship in Argentina, focusing on the period of the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), but contextualizing it since the 1960s. Selinger's film, although made post-dictatorship, thematically resumes this period of political upheaval, denouncing, through the behaviors of militant characters, the entire structure undertaken to repress intellectual, artistic, ideological and contestation activities; However, as mentioned by the director, there is no pamphlet intentionality. Every narrative is willing to center the actions, interpretations and expressions of the child within that context of censorship and persecution. It is worth mentioning that the house was a place where a clandestine newspaper was produced that was distributed at dawn wrapped in gift paper, all to circumvent the censorship agencies.**

The aforementioned thesis cites the **Ente de Calificación Cinematográfica (E.C.C)** as the central body of this censorship system. **Created in 1968**, during the government of

⁴ "For me it was extremely important that the film was a look of a child and not an exhibition of the tragic events of the last dictatorship. The election was not to enter into any militancy discourse or not to show too much of what happened away. La niña vive en esa casa y la historia se narra desde dentro de la casa y desde dentro del interior de esa nena. Sus silencios contribuyen a esta mirada. La decisión fue no sobreexplicar evidencias, pasar por alto conversaciones explicativas. Todo lo que se cuenta es desde lo que la nena entiende o interpreta. So it's a broken film, fragmentary, with a camera that is not easy and very silent, things not said, cutouts".
<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/375557-valeria-selinger-para-mi-era-esencial-que-la-pelicula-fuera->



Juan Carlos Onganía and supported by Law No. 18.019/1969, known as the "censorship law", it endowed the Ente with unprecedented repressive mechanisms limiting public access and inhibiting artists from expressing themselves.

(..) Ente de Calificación exercised film censorship of a moral and political nature, banning more than 700 films during its existence. The Ente had as exclusive attributions the prior reading of scripts, the control of the casts scheduled for production, the prohibition of films and the possibility of making "purifying" cuts in the films. Before the creation of the Ente de Calificación Cinematográfica in 1968, the Consejo Honorario de Calificación Cinematográfica – CHCC, the body responsible for exercising film censorship, could demand cuts without a prior judicial sentence, demand the preventive seizure of films, institute fines for exhibitors of films without classification, but it is important to emphasize that it did not have the competence to prohibit them. (Carneiro, 2019, p 29.)

The Ente de Calificación Cinematográfica was composed of representatives of ministries and civil entities with an ultraconservative profile, such as Catholic leagues, which reinforced a censorship policy based on moral and political values. As Carneiro (2019) observes, the scope of cultural repression included persecutions, exiles, and disappearances of filmmakers and artists, among whom Raymundo Gleyzer stands out.

During the brief period of political opening between 1973 and 1976, under the government of Héctor Cámpora, there was a temporary relaxation of censorship, particularly during the administration of Octavio Getino at the head of Ente. However, this inflection was quickly reversed after the 1976 coup, when a policy of severe cultural repression was again established.

In this context, the narrative of *La Casa de los Conejos* itself thematizes the intensification of censorship, the publications banned by the regime, the experience of clandestinity and the struggle against repression, as well as the preservation of the memory of spaces of resistance, such as the Mariani-Teruggi house and the Evita Montonera printing house. It is a cinematographic work that could never have been shown in Argentine theaters during the dictatorial period, since censorship was not restricted to the simple suppression of content considered subversive, but was part of a broad project of "moral cleansing", aimed at preventing any narrative capable of evidencing state violence, armed struggle or social contradictions. There was permanent surveillance over the representations of memory and recent history, so that productions that addressed political militancy, repression or disappearances were systematically vetoed or subjected to alterations and those responsible punished with imprisonment, torture and/or deaths.

Valeria Selinger's film, released only in 2021, confirms the censorship dynamics described by Carneiro, as it not only reveals the mechanisms of repression, but also promotes



the viewer's awareness through the suffering of the victims, focused from the child's perspective on the screens through her melancholic gaze and her meager smile. The work recovers a narrative that, in the context of censorship, would be classified as "subversive", "unpatriotic" or "contrary to morals and good customs", according to the ECC's criteria. By giving voice to a child forced to be silenced and who lives under the terror of the regime, *La Casa de los Conejos* reconstructs one of the most emblematic episodes of repression in La Plata, configuring itself as a form of cultural and memorial resistance that could only emerge decades after the dismantling of the censorship apparatus.

In order to reflect on this historical period, which constitutes the background of both the literary work and the film adaptation, the magazine L'Atalante brought together, in June 2024, the writer Laura Alcoba and the filmmaker Valeria Selinger to discuss aspects related to the dictatorial regime, the narrative constructions, the choice of the protagonist-actress and, above all, to the rereading procedures mobilized by Selinger in the process of transposing Alcoba's work to the cinema. Asked about the cinematographic translation of the sensations of silence and fear present in the book, the filmmaker recalled her own childhood experience during the coup d'état, showing how this experience contributed to the elaboration of her narrative approach. The presence of a character whose melancholic expression reveals itself to be introspective and silent also proved to be fundamental for the aesthetic direction of the film. However, Selinger points out that the music composed by Daniel Teruggi (brother of the militant Diana Teruggi, murdered in the attack on the house that functioned as a resistance apparatus) constitutes the central resource to express what the protagonist does not verbalize, thus operating as a mediator of the emotions and feelings of little Laura in the midst of the silence imposed by repression.

In the book there is one word next to the other and what is told is precisely silence. That's what caused me noise, what attracted me to this story, even though I lived far away (...) Because my Argentina, the Argentina I know, is the one from that time. (...) The construction of the film as a period film was easy for me because it was what I knew. If I were from another generation, maybe it would be a different story. Regarding silence, music has an important function. It appears a little, as they say in French, as 'the icing on the cake', because Laura introduced me to Daniel Teruggi — Diana Teruggi's brother — who wanted to make the soundtrack for free. (...) It is not only music to say what the girl does not say, but silence is also expressed, as I mentioned before, in everything that is communicated through the girl's eyes. And precisely, if the girl's gaze was not based on silence and the need to be silent, surely the mother would be explaining: 'look, here we are going to do this because of that'. There would be explanations all the time, we would see scenes with more information.



But this is not the case, precisely to exacerbate the child's silence. (SELINGER, pp.137-138, 2024).⁵

In that same interview, when asked about the existence in the cinematographic image of elements capable of expanding, feeding back or offering other perspectives or meanings to that image-memory presented in the book, Alcoba cites a part of Selinger's film that for her gave more drama to the scene:

I believe that there are a number of elements in Valeria's film that, without betraying the book, come exclusively from cinematographic expression. In fact, around the scene of the mother's departure, when one feels that she is leaving, there are a series of elements that are not exactly in the book, but that add something and that give an almost more dramatic or, in any case, more embodied meaning to the start. (ALCOBA, p. 133 2024)⁶

Opposite to the film that is created for projections in dark rooms and needs a technological apparatus for its execution, in addition to being aimed at a specific audience, the literary text has a solitary relationship with its reading public, having as raw material the language, and not the image, which is created by each reader in his process of reading and resignification; in addition, it is worth emphasizing the operability of the book, which does not need energy or a specific environment to be read, while cinema, in addition to what has already been mentioned, "cannot exist without the minimum of immediate audience" (BAZIN, 1999, p. 100). About these differences and reinforcing the creative freedom described by Alcoba in the previous quote, filmmaker Selinger comments:

For me, a book is letters on a sheet, where, in fact, there is no image. Images are an invention of the reader, they are projections in his mind. On the other hand, in a film,

⁵ "In the book there is a word on the other side and what is being told, it is precisely this silence. Eso es lo que a mí me hizo noise, lo que me gustó, lo que me atrajo de esta historia y de la historia que se cuenta, al vivir (...) Because, mi Argentina, la Argentina que yo conozco, es la de esa época. (...) The construction at the level of period film was easy for me, then, because it is what I knew. Si yo hubiera sido de otra edad, por ahí hubiera sido otra historia.

Respecto del silencio, una función-te importan-te la tiene la música, que aparece un poco, como se dice en francés, como «una cereza sobre la torta», porque Laura me presentó a Daniel Teruggi—hermano de Diana Teruggi—, quien quiso hacer la música gratis. No solamente es música para decir lo que la nenana dice, también, en cierto modo, el silencio está expuesto, como dije antes, en todo lo que nos explica y se habla desde la mirada de la niña. Y, precisely, if the view of the child did not escape from silence and the need to silence, surely the mother would be explaining: «mira, acamos a hacer esto, porque tal cosa». Habría todo el tiempo explicaciones, se verían escenas de cosas que pasan. But it is not just like this, precisely to exacerbate this silence of the child." (L'Atalante, n° 39, pp. 131-141, Valencia, Spain: . Ed. Associació Cinefòrum L'Atalante e El camarote de Père Jules. January 2024).

⁶ "Creo que hay una serie de elementos en la película de Valeria que, sin traicionar el libro, vienen desde la expresión cinematográfica exclusivamente. De hecho, en torno a la escena de la partida de la madre, cuando se siente que la madre se va, there is a series of elements that are not exactly in the book, but that they bring something and that le dan un sentido casi más dramático or, in any case, más encarnado a la partida." (ibid, p.133)



the images are projected on the screen. There is, therefore, a kind of "game of mirrors" between the narrative material that is the book and the narrative material that becomes the film. In this case, both tell the same story, but with different elements: one with images and sounds, the other with letters and all that they imply. I believe that, possibly in this particular scene, when the mother announces that she is leaving, my own breaking point as a reader of the book appears — and what connects me most with my own story — due to the fact that my mother also left the country, albeit in other circumstances and at another time. The details are different, but it is the element that most identifies me, in my adolescent self, with the girl Laura. What I wanted to preserve most from that moment was the intimacy between mother and daughter. I wanted to value, in this framing — carried out with a fixed camera, only in that space with two beds and little light, because it is at night — the movement of the characters when communicating what they say and what they do not say. The girl, precisely in this scene, speaks a lot with her silence and with her looks, with this kind of rejection of what her mother is telling her. At the same time, it is the moment when, for me, the girl necessarily grows up, when she stops being a child, because she needs to live a different story. (SELINGER, p 133, 2024.)⁷

One of the differences that Valeria Selinger points out regarding the temporal position of the protagonist who holds the discourse is that in the film, unlike the book, the narrative does not start from an adult woman remembering a story lived as a child, but from a girl who is there, that is, the narrative develops with the character Laura reacting in person, they are not memories, but a cut of the past dramatized in the present, however referring to this same past, that is, Laura is a living character in the face of facts that belong to the past.

⁷ "Para mí, un libro son letras puestas arriba de una hoja, donde en realidad no hay ninguna imagen. Las imágenes son un invento del lector, son proyecciones en su mente. En cambio, en una película, las imágenes están proyectadas en la pantalla. There is thus a kind of «spectacle game» between the narrative material, which is a book, and the narrative material that comes to be the film. In this case we have the same history, but different elements: one with images and sounds, another with letters and what these implicate. Creo que, posiblemente en esa escena en particular, cuando la madre anuncia que se va, aparece mi propio elemento de quiebre como lectora del libro —y el que más me conecta con mi propia historia— por el hecho de que mi madre también se fue del país, aunque en otras circunstancias y en otro momento. Los detalles son diferentes, pero es el elemento que más me identifica en mí yo-adolescente, con la nena Laura. Lo que más rescaté de ese momento es la intimidad entre la madre y la hija. Quise hacer valer, en este encuadre, realizado con una cámara fija, solamente ese espacio —con dos camas y poca luz, por ser de noche— en que se mueven los personajes para comunicar lo que se dicen y lo que dejan de decirse. La niña, precisely in this escena, dice mucho con su silencio y con sus miradas, con esa especie de rechazo hacia lo que la mamá le está compartiendo como información. A su vez, es el momento en que, para mí, la nena crece obligatoriamente, en el que deja de ser nena, porque le toca vivir una historia diferente". (ibid, p.133)

Figure 1

Scene from the movie "La Casa de Los Conejos" depicted in Selinger's quote 8 (01:17:33)⁸



In fact, the film does not start from children's memory. When you write, even a synopsis, you always write in the present tense because the film develops in the present of the projection. The film narrates from the girl's point of view, but it is not her memory, because what the girl lives at that moment is her present.

Personally, I don't like voice-overs in cinema. It is something that causes me some discomfort, except when they are used, as in the films of Marguerite Duras, with a very specific aesthetic or artistic purpose. The first idea — which was not mine, but the first team I had — was to use a voice-over to narrate the film: evidently, I discarded this proposal. I understand why these adult voices exist, why they are in books. And it is very beautiful, in fact, that the book begins with "Hello, Diana, I'm going to write you a letter". I find this very intense, but in the film, it didn't seem to me that it made sense, because we see Diana alive. This is precisely the difference between the mental image that the reader builds from a book and the image and sound that exist when we watch a film as spectators. (SELINGER, 2024, p. 134)⁹

⁸ LA CASA DE LOS CONEJOS. Directed by: Valeria Selinger. Argentina: Sème Plànete; Film Buró; Mirafilm, 2020. Movie (feature film), drama, sound, color., 94 min.

⁹ In reality, the film does not take the child's memory. Cuando uno escribe, incluso una sinopsis, se escribe siempre en tiempo presente del indicativo porque la película se desarrolla en el presente del indicativo de la proyección. The film narrates from the perspective of the child, but it is not your memory, because what is living the child in this moment is your present. A mí no me particularmente gustan las voces en off en cine. It is something that provokes a great rejection, except when they are used as in the films of Marguerite Duras, with a particular aesthetic or artistic purpose. La primera idea, no mía, sino que me brindó el primer equipo que tuve, was a voice-over that had told the film: evidently, it was discarded. Entiendo por qué pueden estar esas voces adultas, por qué existen y tienen que escribirse en el libro. Y es muy bonito, de hecho, que se abra el libro con «hola, Diana, voy a escribirte una carta». It seems very intense to me, but in the film it doesn't seem to me that it had a reason to be, because we see Diana alive. It is, precisely, the difference between the mental image that is made of the reader of a book, and the image and the sound that exists when a film is aimed at a film, as a spectator." (ibid, p.134)



Although the construction of Selinger's script emerged from Alcoba's book, some differences can be seen regarding the proposal of the discursive structure. The filmic narrative uses expressions and the performance of the actors to express in gestures what will not be said in words, the soundtrack will also be an element of the discourse through its dissonant lyrics to break the silence and ratify the disharmony present at that time, in addition to the temporality in which Laura's story is narrated and the inclusion of scenes that do not exist in the book as already mentioned by Alcoba herself.

Therefore, the difference between the two media is not only limited to written and visual language, but also to what is specific to each of them. If cinema, with all its apparatus, may have some difficulty in executing expressions and methods that literature promotes, the opposite also occurs, and this is not a limiting factor, but an agent responsible for creativity and the opening of stylistic, discursive and narrative possibilities, such as the inclusion of fragments of the documentary film *Resist* from 1978, by Jorge Cedrón, as director Valeria Selinger clarifies:

It was difficult, first of all, to find documentary images from that time. This movie was the only one I found that I really liked. It is a film signed with a pseudonym, because the director who signs it did not actually exist. The real perpetrator was a person who is missing, and he made the film with archival footage. In other words, the images I use are from Jorge Cedrón's film, but they were not, in fact, from him. He found them and the rights were given to me by his daughter and nephew, who sold us the fragments and told us that the author himself did not know where those images came from, because it was a very chaotic time. In addition, the laws on the audiovisual sector were not as they are today. People filmed as they could, with what they could, and this material passed from hand to hand. I don't know how this material got to Cedrón. (SELINGER, 2024, p.136)

Also according to the filmmaker, the decision to put these images was precisely to show the opposite idea to that of the documentary, because, according to Selinger, the documentary genre has a didactic proposal for explaining what happens and this could take away from its main focus, which is to highlight the child's gaze.

I didn't want, in any way, for the film to look like a documentary, to have to explain: "this is happening here", "this is the situation", "this is the president". Is there an explanation? Yes, with the signs, at the end. But, well, in the end the viewer has already seen the film and, if he wants, reads it; if he doesn't want to, he doesn't read it. To explain everything would be to move away from the girl's gaze. I wanted to show, as an explanation, only what the girl captured. I thought it would be interesting to give, as an antithesis, in the introduction, a little of the image of what the girl did not see. These images are there, in the opening credits, in addition to the narration at the beginning of the film. In fact, the frame (the image format) is also smaller, four-thirds. Then, precisely, we merge it with an image shot by us, of the mother and the girl running,



and then the screen opens up until it reaches the scope format, the final format of the film. (SELINGER, p. 136, 2024)

Some filmmakers use the technique of inserting real scenes in fiction films, this resource is known as *found footage* or pseudo-documentary, being considered as a stylistic strategy that aims to increase the immersion and realism of the narrative. The purpose of this technique can be varied and includes creating a sense of urgency, mystery or bringing more authenticity to the story. In the case of the film, the object of analysis of this article, this supposed search for authenticity would constitute a counterpoint in relation to the subjective turn analyzed by SARLO, since subjectivity is centered on capturing the discourse promoted by personal experience, moving away from the documentary and descriptive discursive formats, constitutive requirements of academic history. *Found footage* allows, therefore, a greater approximation of the fictional with the real and resizes Selinger's film to an in-between place, opening up the possibility of promoting itself in order to validate itself through official history as a possible document of memory. Regardless of the author-director's intentionality, becoming a document-archive of memory would be inevitable, as the filmmaker clarifies:

Cinema has this quality. Even in a burlesque comedy — I mean, any kind of genre, if we accept that genres exist — cinema has a documentary function. There is something called costumes, scenography, which relates an era and a way of filming that also relates a style or a period. There is always something documentary in everything that is filmed. A Latin American telenovela is also documentary, because it shows what the idiosyncrasy of a society is like at a given time, in a certain place and time. In this particular story, it is clear that the weight of what is called "memory" was important. On the one hand, there was the story that the book tells. From my point of view, the book is precious, Laura's writing is very beautiful, the story moves me deeply, I like it very much. On the other hand, there was the weight of memory work in the sense of social commitment, in the historical sense. Because it is a very specific period, a time with great controversies within the Argentine reality.
(SELINGER, 2024, p 138)

Cinematographic art, therefore, regardless of genre, will constitutively have a documentary dimension, since it registers diverse elements for the constitution and realism of the filmic work, such as costumes, scenography, behaviors, vocabularies, which reveal cultural and historical aspects of a given era. Works of fiction, such as soap operas, capture cultural aspects of a society in a spatial and temporal dimension. Specifically when it comes to the adapted story *La casa de los conejos*, it is perceived that in addition to the aesthetic and emotional strength of Alcoba's writing, the commitment to historical and social memory stands out, since the narrative is inserted in a controversial period of Argentine history.



2 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: TRANSLATION AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE AND REEXISTENCE

The paronymy applied in the subtitle highlights the applicability of translation in the sociocultural context of society. To resist is to survive in the face of a system that involves distortions, attempts at erasure, repression, among other challenges that try to repress other discourses that oppose or simply bring a reflection on the hegemonic, elitist or political discourse. The resistance lies in the act of promoting translation as one of the arms that sustain the multiplicity of voices in contemporary times. The other arm is in the proposal of the neologism "reexistence" that presumes to exist again and what is remembering if not to exist again through memories? For the archaeologist and researcher Ulpiano Bezerra de Meneses (1992), memory is fundamental to social cohesion, since although it refers to the past it is (re)constructed in the present, that is, for the existence of the past, the new will have to feed it back with the action of remembering it in the present in such a way that the collectivity recognizes itself within this reformulation, in other words, it would be a kind of "repetition with variation", as already mentioned in the theories described by HUTCHEON at the beginning of the chapter.

The memory of groups and collectivities is organized, reorganized, acquires structure and remakes itself in a constant process of adaptive features. The first is an organized system of memories whose support is spatially and temporally situated social groups. This memory ensures the cohesion and solidarity of the group and gains relevance in times of crisis and pressure. (Meneses, 1992, p.15)

Social memory, as a collective construction, is constituted from the multiplicity of voices and the valorization of the subjectivities emanating in the process, composing a heterogeneous and dynamic social fabric, metaphorically described by Stuart Hall as a "patchwork quilt", in which diverse fragments are articulated without homogenizing each other. In this context, literature and cinema are consolidated as privileged territories for the reconfiguration of the past and for the manifestation of these collective and individual voices, functioning as instances of symbolic elaboration of this memory. Intersemiotic translation, in turn, goes beyond the status of a mere stylistic resource and affirms itself as a practice of reexistence, as it enables the reelaboration of these discourses, promoting their resignification, expansion and circulation, while contributing to the visibility and permanence of these narratives in the cultural field, as well as their contribution to memory studies.

In his lecture *The Paradoxes of Memory* (2007), the historian Ulpiano Bezerra de Meneses mentions in the third paradox the relationship between individual memory and social memory, however he states that the first is inaccessible unless one socializes and only



when this occurs can it appear. This observation is pertinent to the extent that it is understood that the works cited, both literary and cinematographic, start from a place already constituted as socially integrated with the knowledge of the public domain and the externalization of these individual experiences through publication, dissemination and consumption is what will make it accessible and integrated with this knowledge. He exemplifies this relationship between the individual and the collective by citing the *souvenir* of the Eiffel Tower kept as a souvenir of a trip made and representing the materialization of that trip. The paradox will be in the question asked and answered by the author himself: How can something that was already manufactured in series before the individual's trip occurred, prior to his own travel experience, become a symbol of memory and affectivity? And the answer would be in the understanding that the individual experience, even in the face of a commodity manufactured under the alienation of the subject and created for collective purposes, represents a particular new experience for those who bought it.

Memory in this case requires narration to function. The souvenir depends, therefore, on language. Therefore, the Eiffel Tower souvenir is just the reference I need to narrate my individual experience. (Meneses, 2007, p.27).

Returning to the analogy of the souvenir, it is understood, therefore, that this object that already exists before the tourist experience and that provides symbolic inputs for visitors to build their narratives about the trip, encompasses the material atmosphere for the narratives of the travelers, so the official history also precedes the individual voices and brings materiality to them by serving as a starting point, since it was produced and legitimized by researchers of historiography and is part of collective knowledge. In this way, it constitutes a pre-existing repertoire that guides and makes possible personal narrative elaborations.

Starting from this frame of reference, the narrators mobilize languages and references that allow them to transform singular experiences into reports integrated into the public field: they are not, therefore, mere private confessions, but statements that are inserted in an already configured discursive fabric. This articulation results not only in the visibility of subjects that the official version omitted, but also in the reactivation of the repudiation of arbitrary practices of power and the affirmation of the struggle for justice and for the preservation of memory, because although in Argentina there was no amnesty for crimes against humanity, unlike in Brazil, and even if there was, it would not imply forgetfulness and much less should it be conceived as forgiveness, although subliminally there is this inference. About this relationship between the possible abuses of memory engendered by institutional strategies and led to induced oblivion, Ricoeur warns:



Do the abuses of memory placed under the sign of obliged, commanded memory have their parallel and complement in the abuses of forgetting? Yes, under institutional forms of oblivion whose border with amnesia is easy to cross: it is mainly a question of amnesty and, more marginally, of the right of grace, also called amnesty grace. The boundary between forgetting and pardon is insidiously crossed to the extent that these two provisions deal with judicial processes and the imposition of punishment, now, the question of forgiveness arises where there is accusation, condemnation and punishment, on the other hand, the laws that deal with amnesty designate it as a type of pardon. In this chapter, I will limit myself to the discretionary institutional aspect of the corresponding measures and leave to the Epilogue the question of the erasure of the border with the pardon induced by the erasure of the border with amnesia. (Ricoeur.2007, p. 459)

In this way, Paul Ricoeur argues that, just as there are abuses of memory, when an official, selective or ideologically oriented memory is imposed, there are also abuses of forgetting, expressed in legal mechanisms that produce a deliberate erasure of the past. In this context, amnesty appears as the main of these institutional forms of forgetting, functioning as a device that legally interrupts trials and suspends punishments in the name of social pacification, however, in doing so, it comes dangerously close to historical amnesia, that is, to the collective suppression of the reality of the conflict and the violence committed.

The philosopher points out that amnesty operates in an ambiguous zone in which it is confused with the notion of forgiveness. The boundary between the two is "insidiously" crossed because both pardon and amnesty deal with judicial processes and the issue of punishment. However, the philosopher underlines a fundamental ethical difference: forgiveness presupposes the recognition of guilt, the existence of an accusation of an act, judgment and moral accountability, for this reason it is located in the plane of the ethical relationship between subjects. Legal amnesty, on the other hand, suppresses the very possibility of such proceedings, canceling the imputation of crimes without public recognition of the acts committed and the possible judicial punishment. When the legislation qualifies amnesty as a form of forgiveness, it conceals this essential distinction, replacing a genuine ethical gesture of reconciliation with a political act of imposed forgetting, which legally erases guilt without confronting it historically, and therefore a deeper ethical reflection on authentic forgiveness and on the erasure of the boundary between forgiveness and amnesia is appropriate. Under the discourse of pacification and forgiveness, conditions are produced that prevent the public confrontation of the violence of the past, favoring processes of collective amnesia and blocking the ethical and historical elaboration necessary for a truly shared memory. Memory, therefore, revived through autofiction acts as a form of resistance in the face of numerous attempts to erase memory through indoctrination or political acts, such as amnesty.



As Ricoeur (2007) observes, the process of reappropriation of history by memory is also a form of resistance to oblivion. Remembering is, therefore, a political and existential act. Alcoba's narrative is an effort not to forget and, even more, to give a symbolic place to the dead and the silenced and to reassure himself in the face of the imperatives of the subconscious that make up his story. Her writing is an attempt to repair the wounded identity, as Beatriz Sarlo suggests, while at the same time building a new space for belonging and reflection alongside academic history that in no way, according to the author, can be neglected. This recent trend also becomes a legitimate way of access to history, since subjectivity, far from invalidating the narrative, becomes its driving force, enabling the emergence of new literary and cinematographic plots.

It can be concluded, therefore, that both the book and the film not only narrate an experience, but operate a re-elaboration of the memory of a collective trauma driven by the Argentine Dictatorship through individual perspectives that articulate subjective veracity, affective density and historical reach. These works simultaneously constitute critical devices that subvert the discourse of amnesty, exposing its euphemistic function of mitigating the public perception of the violations perpetrated during the Military Dictatorial Regime. When the narration becomes "a gesture of care and, perhaps, of survival", it is evident that the translation of memory itself takes on a political and subjective character: a mechanism for the elaboration of trauma, for the configuration of what previously remained fragmented and informed in the subconscious. Autofiction and cinema establish bridges between temporalities, registers and sensibilities, enabling the past to be re-inscribed and inhabitable in the present, even if transformed and apt for new transformations, starting with the necessary accountability and punishment of the agents involved in the crimes committed during these regimes of exception.

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