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Writing Exile(s) from the Periphery: *Hijos del exilio* and Transnational Memory of the Southern Cone Democratic Transitions

Abstract: Exile and migration to, from, and between the Southern Cone countries have been commonplace throughout the history of the region. However, from the 1960s onwards forced displacement would become a 'ubiquitous phenomenon' (Roniger et al. 2018, 32), with Europe a natural destination for an unprecedented exodus of individuals, as well as families, fleeing dictatorships from across the region, including Argentina (1976–1983) and Uruguay (1973–1985) (Graham-Yooll 1987). As this chapter elucidates, for the *hijos del exilio* – those who were born and/or brought up in exile – there is no neat division between country of origin and country of exile; their lives reveal ebbs and flows, multiple journeys and 'returns' during the democratic transitions of the 1980s, some permanent, others fleeting. Whilst there has been notable academic interest in the first generation of exiles – those who were adults when they left South America – there is a general absence of the *hijos del exilio* from the dictatorship and transitional memory landscape, which obfuscates the microhistories and diverse hidden voices of transition. This chapter challenges the exclusion of second-generational exile voices from dictatorship and transitional memory landscapes, by comparing the work of two child-exile writers: *De exilios, maremotos y lechuzas* (1990) by Dutch Uruguayan author Carolina Trujillo and *El azul de las abejas* (2013) by Franco-Argentine writer Laura Alcoba. These semi-autobiographical works challenge widely held assertions and myths about exile that circulated during the dictatorship and, in particular, the transitional periods, and allow for a deeper and more nuanced approach that destabilizes the notion of transition as a top-down or national process.

Introduction

> Hundreds of us children are burdened with this gaping wound, a legacy of the dictatorship: (we are) broken, placeless, orphaned and in search of identity.[1] (Carolina Meloni, Argentine brought up in exile in Spain, quoted in Conde 2019)

1 "Cientos de niños argentinos cargamos con esta brecha imborrable, herencia que nos ha dejado la dictadura: fisurados, desterritorializados, huérfanos y en busca de identidad." All quotes in Spanish have been translated by the author.

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Exile and migration to, from, and between the Southern Cone countries have been commonplace throughout the history of the region; however, from the 1960s onwards forced displacement would become a 'ubiquitous phenomenon' (Roniger et al. 2018, 32), with Europe a natural destination for an unprecedented exodus of individuals as well as families fleeing dictatorships from across the region, including Argentina (1976–1983) and Uruguay (1973–1985) (Graham-Yooll 1987). The words of Carolina Meloni, a child when her family went into exile in Spain, where she still lives, offers us a stark reminder about the profound intergenerational reverberations of exile and the legacy of violence beyond the geographical boundaries of the Southern Cone. As this chapter elucidates, for the *hijos del exilio* – those who were born and/or brought up in exile – there is no neat division between country of origin and country of exile; their lives reveal ebbs and flows, multiple journeys and 'returns,' – often during the democratic transitions of the 1980s – some permanent, others fleeting. Whilst there has been significant academic interest in the first generation of exiles – those who were adults when they left South America – Meloni alludes to what I assert is an absence of the *hijos del exilio* from the dictatorship and transitional memory landscape, which obfuscates the microhistories and myriad 'hidden' voices of transition. Further, she raises the more pronounced marginalization of those *hijos* who never returned to the Southern Cone, a transnational group that Mariana Norandi has called the *no retornados* [non-returnees] (2016).

Challenging this lacuna, this chapter offers a nuanced depiction of the Argentine and Uruguayan dictatorships and transitions as experienced by children and adolescents, by foregrounding analysis of the child-exile in work that is also *by* two *hijas del exilio*: French-Argentine Laura Alcoba and Dutch-Uruguayan Carolina Trujillo, two writers whose biographies abound comparisons.[2] Alcoba was born in Cuba in 1968, before returning to La Plata with her activist parents a few months later. Amidst the escalation of violence and with her father imprisoned from 1975, she and her mother were forced into hiding in the so-called *casa de los conejos* – the rabbit farm that served as a front for the opposition printing press *Evita Montonera* – the events surrounding which are fictionalized and inspired the 2008 eponymous novel (originally published in French in 2007). While Alcoba's mother fled to France in 1976, the young Alcoba would remain with her grandparents in La Plata, visiting her father in prison on a fortnightly basis before joining her mother in Paris at the age of ten in 1979. Born in 1970, Carolina Trujillo's biography reveals a similar trajectory to Alcoba and many other Uru-

2 I use these terms to acknowledge the dual or hybrid identities adopted by the authors themselves.

guayan exiles, first fleeing with her mother and sister to Argentina in 1974 while her father remained in prison in Uruguay, before leaving for the Netherlands in 1976, when the Argentine military took control of government. Both authors therefore could be considered *exiliadas hijas* themselves as well as *hijas del exilio*.[3] Although this suggests slippage between the first and second generations, there is, as we shall see, a clear ontological difference between those who were adults when they went into exile and the *hijos* – undergoing "an exile that comprises the country of childhood" (Arfuch 2018, 688) – coming of age *after* dictatorships ended in the early-mid 1980s and their home countries grappled with nascent democratic transitions. Furthermore, while Alcoba would remain in France permanently, Trujillo and her family went back (including her father who had been released) in 1985. She eventually returned to the Netherlands in the early 1990s, before finally settling there in 2005. Both writers can thus be viewed as belonging to the category of *no retornados*.

Meanwhile, exile and state violence are recurrent themes in the authors' work, inspired by real events, from Alcoba's parents' journey to Cuba in *Los pasajeros del Ana C.* (2012) to Perón's exile in Spain. In terms of overlap with Alcoba's own lived experience, *La casa de los conejos* can be viewed as part of a trilogy, along with *El azul de las abejas* (2015, published in French in 2013) and *La danza de la araña* (2014), that explicitly engage with the child's life during dictatorship, or in the case of *la danza,* a teenager. Whilst *la casa* explores a seven-year-old girl's experience of internal exile in Argentina, *El azul* is based on Alcoba's weekly correspondence with her father while in exile in Paris, deploying the child-narrator to shed light on the departure for and arrival to Parisian exile for the post-dictatorship generation. It is thus a fitting text to be read alongside Trujillo's 1990 young adult novel *De exilios, maremotos y lechuzas* [*Of Exiles, Tsunamis and Barn Owls*], written from the perspective, for the most part, of a child narrator and depicting the before, during and *after* of Dutch exile from Uruguay. Covering a slightly longer timespan than *El azul*, the work was conceived and drafted as the then-teenaged Trujillo was grappling with the problematic 'return' to a country dealing with the reestablishment of democracy. Preoccupation with state violence and exile appear in two of Trujillo's other novels: her 2002 *De Bastaard van Mal Abrigo* [The Bastard of Mal Abrigo], is set in an undisclosed Latin American country and, more recently, *De Terugkeer van Lupe García* [The Return of

3 Alberione favors the term *exiliados hijos* over the 'second-generation' and other possible terms, placing the verb before the noun for emphasis of the effects of the dictatorship for these children. Here, I use the term *hijos del exilio* as a term that allows for the slippage between first and second-generation exiles, acknowledging that many of those who were born in exile were in fact exiles themselves, as is the case with both the authors explored here.

Lupe Garcia], 2009, which, as the title suggests, deals with the return of the children of exile. However, *Exilios* is the only of these to be written and published in Spanish.

By bringing these two second-generation exilic narratives into dialogue with one another, the chapter's contribution is two-fold. First, I advocate a move away from postmemory (Hirsch 2008), the lens through which much second-generation memory work in the Southern Cone has been viewed. (Blejmar 2016, Levey 2015, Ros 2012, Serpente 2011) By now it is well-established that memory may be transmitted to those who did not live through or remember a particular event or period. However, there has been limited discussion on memory work situated at the interface of generational and geographical displacement. Second, the chapter views these voices as a challenge to the widely held assertions about exiles (and their children) that circulated during the dictatorship and the transitional periods: first, the 'Golden Exile' myth, prevalent during the Southern Cone democratic transitions, which depicts exile as an overwhelmingly positive experience occluding the hardship and challenges, and second, the idea that the second-generation of *no-retornados* are fully integrated in host or receiving societies. By exposing exile and being the child of exiles as a more complex and multilayered experience, such ostensibly transnational iterations of memory place the transitions in a different light, advocating new ways of thinking about the lasting and deep impact of the dictatorship on the children of exile. In doing so, the chapter offers an alternative and nuanced perspective on democratic transitions, which, for the most part, have focused on the process as experienced by the nation and concerning elites and judicial and political institutions, rather than the individual voices impacted in and by transition. Thus, we can challenge the gap between what happens at national level and the microhistories obfuscated by transitional 'macronarratives.'

The chapter begins with a discussion of the absence of the *hijos del exilio* (including the *no retornados)* from transitional and, contemporary memory landscapes, in order to frame the authors' respective bodies of work, advocating for an approach to transition that encompasses hidden or marginal voices The second, more substantive, section compares the novels in detail. Split into three parts, the first, "Rupture and Adapting to Exile," looks at the use of the child's gaze, and the blurring of fiction and autobiography, as a way of depicting the integration and daily lives of the *hijos del exilio*. The second, "Writing Home," considers the narrators' epistolary relationships with their incarcerated fathers, which serve as a reminder of the ongoing violence in their home countries. The third part, "After Exile," deals with depictions of the transitions that followed the dictatorship periods and the (potential) return of the, by now teenage, protagonists. There is here a mirroring of the nation going through transition and the transitional turbulence of

adolescence in the young protagonists' lives. The chapter closes by revisiting Fanny Söderback's (2012) concept of 'temporal revolt' in order to position the texts as a destabilizing force from the periphery in response to transitional memory narratives that are often (quasi)hegemonic and might otherwise have gone unchallenged.

Absent voices: Hegemonic memory narratives of transition

Post-dictatorship memory narratives concerned with truth, justice, and redress for the victims of state terrorism in the Southern Cone have tended to exclude or marginalize the exile experience, adopting an historical approach to exile, focusing on the period during which human rights violations were taking place (Franco 2008, Markarian 2006). More recently, the introduction to Roniger et al.'s (2018) volume centers on the contribution of returning exiles to the culture and politics of the Southern Cone, yet little is said about those who did not return during or since the democratic transitions. Responding to this lacuna, Miorelli and Piersanti (2021) have conducted in-depth interviews with Southern Cone exiles, many of them *no retornados,* in London from the first generation (those who were adults when they were exiled). Indeed, the Roniger et al volume explicitly identified the need for more work on the consequences of exile on the second generation. Here, we may interpret this as both during the dictatorship but also the legacy during transition, when many returned, whilst others remained in Europe. Yet a decade later, this literature remains scant. This is in spite of the increasing public presence of the second-generation in the Southern Cone since the mid-1990s, which accounts for an upsurge in scholarly interest on post-dictatorship cultural production (Blejmar 2016; Ros 2012) and identity and activism (Fried 2016; Jara 2016). Together these important works have offered insight into how the second-generation experience of dictatorship differs from the experience of those who were adults during the dictatorship and transitions, pointing to a constellation of different perspectives. However, much of this work has focused on the children of the *desaparecidos* and murdered. In excluding the *hijos del exilio*, this body of work does not offer a nuanced picture of post-dictatorship generational change and the ongoing engagement with dictatorial rule and the democratic transitions that followed. This is particularly surprising when one considers the questions about exiles that the end of dictatorships brought into sharp focus – in particular whether their return to the Southern Cone would be feasible and how this would be facilitated.

Notwithstanding, when surveying the scholarly landscape on the *hijos del exilio*, several notable exceptions emerge. In Dutrénit's 2006 collection on Uruguayan exile, Porta's chapter specifically turns to the Uruguayan second-generation to shed light on the impact of exile, yet the focus is generally on those who returned to Uruguay (2006). In a similar vein, Serpente (2011) has explored the children of Argentine and Chilean migrants in London, not only those displaced by state violence, but those who migrated for other reasons. Whilst scholars like Norandi and Serpente, themselves members of second-generation diasporic communities, make invaluable contributions to diversifying the impact of dictatorship and exile beyond the Southern Cone, the emphasis on individual cases tends to prevent a comparative approach between different originating countries, something this chapter builds on by turning to literary narratives of exile.

The peripheral position of *hijos del exilio* in general, and the *no-retornados* more specifically, can be attributed to their young age during dictatorship and them only coming of age in the democratic transitions (from the mid-1980s onwards)[4] translating into a lack of public presence and political protagonism until the mid-1990s. However, it is also closely connected to the narratives surrounding exile that emerged during dictatorships and persisted well into the democratic transitions, which excluded exiles from the category of victims. A reason for this is the historical and cultural formulation of the exile figure in terms of victimhood, the result being that the exile experience was "sidelined by other forms of exclusion" (Roniger 2007, 32), particularly by forced disappearance in the case of Argentina. This arguably inhibited collective claims of victimhood and discussion of exile within a human rights frame throughout the transitions, and even beyond. Furthermore, this gulf between victimhood and exile continued through region-wide transitions to democracy in the 1980s and early 1990s, during which narratives of suffering and the claims for legal redress tended to focus on the emblematic victims (the disappeared in Argentina, and the long-term political prisoners in Uruguay) as activists and relatives took to the streets to demand justice. After the dictatorship, turning to the transition, returning exiles were treated

4 Defining the parameters of the democratic transitions is not an exact science. The end of Southern Cone dictatorships involved negotiation through elections and the eventual transfer of power, which ranged from a relatively short year in Argentina to several years in Uruguay, as in Chile. For the most part, the 1980s were dominated by discussions over how to address human rights violations. By the start of the 1990s, both Argentina and Uruguay had undergone two democratic presidential terms, without violent transfer of power, marking the end of the transitional phase of democratic handover. Having said this, many of the issues at the fore in the 1980s remained persistent throughout the 1990s, and questions emerged about the quality of these (re) emerging democracies.

with suspicion, partly because of widely held assumptions about their time in exile. As Jensen (2010) has found in the case of Argentina, those who left were commonly viewed as fortunate to have survived, leading to their erasure as victims from national consciousness, but also obfuscating more nuanced formulation of exile. In Argentina, this was likely exacerbated by the lack of official expulsion by the regime, but it is apparent that the myth of, or at least some version of, *exilio dorado* [golden exile], through which exile is construed as a more positive experience, permeates most of the Southern Cone country studies.[5] It was also exacerbated, as Jensen explains, by the narrative of the regimes themselves, that the exiles had left voluntarily and abandoned the struggle, a viewpoint that was also shared by members of the revolutionary left. This is problematic given that many of those who left for exile had disappeared family members or had been imprisoned and tortured themselves or that families were separated for prolonged periods. There is, therefore, no neat distinction between the exile as 'fortunate' survivor and the exile as victim or having suffered upheaval, displacement, and issues of integration in the host countries. In the case of Argentina, Roniger et al. highlight an even more hostile depiction of exiled citizens, citing the dictatorship's demonization of exiles as a strategy that led to their isolation from the political scene (2012, 100–101). This may have been more prevalent in Argentina, because, unlike Uruguay, there was no state policy to facilitate the return and reintegration of exiles after the dictatorship.[6] However, it is clear that hierarchical formulations of victimhood have resulted in the marginalization of exile from broader post-dictatorship memory culture, including the literature on first and second generations. These features have obfuscated the child-exile by tending to view the latter's experience as an extension of that of their parents (Norandi 2016). The result is a tendency to downplay the long-term psychological and societal effects of exile, and their legacy for future generations, something that for much of the transitional periods went unchallenged.

Attention to these other experiences, through the work of Trujillo and Alcoba, refocuses our gaze on other aspects or layers of democratic transition. As noted above, in the case of Latin America, scholarly attention on transitions tend to focus

5 For discussion of this phenomenon in Argentina, see Franco 2008, Jensen 2010; for Uruguay, see Porta 2006.

6 In Uruguay, the reintegration of the country's large number of exiles was a key strand of the Sanguinetti administration's policy to address the past. In 1985 the government created the *Comisión Nacional de Repatriación* [National Repatriation Commission], the explicit goal of which was to support returning exiles. Chile experienced a similar trend of assistance from 1990 onwards. In contrast, in Argentina, in the absence of official support for the return of exiles, this task was mainly left to the voluntary sector, for example the *Oficina de Solidaridad para Exiliados Argentinos* [Office of Solidarity for Exiled Argentines].

on elites, institution building, markets and truth and justice processes (cf. Barahona de Brito et al. 2001, Remmer 1992, Hagopian and Mainwaring 2012). In this way, transitions in general are often portrayed as a national process, a period of flux that a country must pass through in order to achieve some form of democratic consolidation. Instead, I propose that it helps to think of the transition in plural, as a multilayered set of interconnected, yet distinct, processes in which memory is shaped and shapes. As well as helping us to understand the lack of visibility or nebulous approach to distinct groups during transition, the focus on truth and justice processes at national level also tends to occlude certain categories of voices, in this case the diverse community of exiles who spent the dictatorships and beyond outside the Southern Cone. Furthermore, the view of the transitions as experienced by and in a particular territory can occlude transnational voices from beyond the region. A nuanced approach to transition as an evolving and multilayered process permits closer scrutiny of the stakeholders and voices that emerge during transitional periods.

Indeed, a combination of generational displacement and the dispersal or scattering of second-generation exiles across contrasting linguistic, cultural, and historical contexts, has made in-depth comparative analysis of the *hijos del exilio*, and in particular, the *no-retornados*, more complicated. That both authors write in the languages of the host country is, of course, the direct result of their exilic childhoods, and in the case of Trujillo (whose writing is mainly in Dutch), can explain why much of her writing has remained outside the post-dictatorship memory canon. Similarly, Ferrari has described Alcoba as part of "a minority, given that Spanish is their mother tongue and they have adopted French as their second language . . . because of exile," functioning as a type of "double displacement"[7] (Ferreri 2017), simultaneously spatial and linguistic.[8] However, it is also because they have re-

7 "un grupo minoritario dado que han pasado por el español como lengua maternal y han adoptado como lengua extranjera el francés . . . a causa del exilio."

8 Although there is, as noted, a dearth of scholarly work to date on *hijos del exilio/no-retornados*, it is worth briefly inserting a caveat vis-à-vis Alcoba's work. Indeed, her trilogy of novels dealing with her own experience of dictatorship (*La casa de los conejos*, *El azul and La danza de la araña*) have not only circulated widely in translation in Argentina, but have been published and framed by the Argentine publishing house Edhasa as Argentine/national literature. In particular, *La casa de los conejos* has been incorporated into analysis of the child's experience of dictatorship in Argentina (Blejmar 2016; Bonatto 2018; Ros 2012), finishing where *El azul* picks up. However, there has been less written about *El azul*, the novel discussed here. Arfuch (2018) has compared *El azul* with similar autobiographical works. Her work is a notable contribution, but I propose comparative work that goes *beyond* the preoccupation with biography and genre, to elucidate the ways in which the texts unsettle dictatorship and transitional narratives vis-à-vis the *hijas del exilio*, by shedding light on neglected voices affected by transi-

mained in the countries of exile as adults. Writing during the transition, Andrew Graham-Yooll (1987), editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald*, predicted that the children of exile who did not return to their countries of origin would fully integrate into the European host societies. These cases problematize the notion of 'full' integration by showing that in spite of writing in Dutch and French, they remain deeply affected by state violence and engage with the dictatorship period and its aftermath in different ways. Although this chapter is more explicitly concerned with the textual portrayal of the *hijos del exilio* during and after dictatorship, rather than assessing the veracity of Graham-Yooll's claim, the synergies between Trujillo and Alcoba's biographies and work imply that the *hijos del exilio*, and particularly the *no-retornados* inhabit a unique transnational space that differentiates them from their exiled parents and generational contemporaries in the Southern Cone, but situates them as transitional voices that merit further attention. Moreover, a comparative reading poses a challenge to the peripheral status within the regional and national canons of these authors' works in which they engage with recent transitions.

Tales of/from two writers: Child-exile in *El azul* and *Exilios*

Rupture and adapting to exile: The child's gaze

Both texts are narrated in first person by young female protagonists, and begin in dictatorship-era Argentina and Uruguay, amidst escalating violence and threats to the lives of the parents of the child narrators (six-year-old Laura in *Exilios*, and the unnamed eight-year-old in *El azul).* They take the reader through the various stages of exile: the before, during, and after: preparation, the departure, the journey (in the case of *Exilios*), and their integration and settling in to these new surroundings (through language, play, and letter-writing). Although the texts were written by the now-adult authors, the narrative voice in both texts is, predominantly a young child. In *El azul* the reader is never informed of the name of the child-narrator, but in the first pages of the novel she tells us, through conversational French lessons with her teacher, that she is eight and then eleven towards the end of the book

tion, yet obfuscated by the reductionist focus on transitions as an essentially national, elite or institution-building process Furthermore, bringing Trujillo's lesser-known work into dialogue with Alcoba's narrative challenges the peripheral position or 'placelessness' of the *hijos del exilio*, including the *no retornados*.

after the several years in exile spanned by the novel, roughly corresponding to the age, dates, and location of Alcoba's own exile. *Exilios* reveals a similar pattern of coincidence with Trujillo's own experience in the Netherlands, although the characters are given different names (her younger sister "América" becomes Cristina). There is a clear blurring between the adult author (as well as the occasional adult narrator in *Exilios*) and the child narrator, between autobiography and fiction, as well as approximation with the past viewed through the lens of the present. As Arfuch has said in the case of Alcoba, this work sits at "thresholds of the autobiographical, a story that recognizes a self-fictional trace" (2018, 88). Similarly, the preamble to Trujillo's novel describes the work as an example of "autobiografía enmascarada" ["concealed autobiography"], one in which, like Alcoba's work, the various characters correspond to real-life people (Alcoba 2014, 15). Interestingly, the subtle changes between the autobiographies of the author and child-narrator draw our attention to the fictional element. In this way, the child-exile's voice is deployed to go beyond the singularity of one person's biography. Indeed, as Alcoba asserts, "I'm not working with my own story, although it is related, but it is one that is connected to the history of many others"[9] (quoted in Menestrina 2020).

The fictionalization of the lived experiences of the authors, particularly the use of a fictional narrator, points to the wider experience of the *hijos del exilio,* often neglected, as noted, from work on the post-dictatorship and obscured by their parents' exiles. For Trujillo and Alcoba, who were both able to remember aspects of the before and aftermath of exile, these semi-fictional accounts is a way of making visible the child-exile and explore the unique, but not uncommon, positioning of the *hijos del exilio*. As Alcoba has argued, the child's perspective also permits a certain amount of critical distancing vis-a-vis the past, to broach subjects that the adult narrator may not be able to without accusations of politicizing the text. The texts may be written from a child's perspective, but, as Blejmar has astutely distinguished vis-à-vis *La Casa de los Conejos*, without "infantilizing the child" (2016, 99). The adult's perspective on the childhood exile is ever present, through reminders that the adult author is recounting and revisiting the past from the present, with phrases such as "I don't remember" etc. In *Exilios* the adult-narrated chapters, as we see in more detail, reveal a marked difference in the way that adults and children experience displacement, but also hint at the profound impact of exile on the entire family.

The narrators' young age, and the difficult experience of leaving their homelands is highlighted in different ways throughout the texts. In *Exilios* each section

9 "no estoy trabajando sobre mi historia personal sino con una historia que tiene que ver, en parte, pero que se conecta a partir de la historia de otros".

is split into short vignettes, often entitled with a list of randomly asserted nouns, like the novel's title. The effect for the reader is a more immature way of thinking and seeing the world. This is also evident in the lack of overly elaborated scene setting. Instead, the reader is given a number of clues or allusions to the wider dictatorship contexts. For example, Alcoba's narrator mentions early on her regular prison visits to her father (Alcoba 2014, 11), then later "the disappearances, the murders and the fear"[10] (20) although the dictatorship is never explicitly named. In *Exilios* the scene is set by the dialogues between mother and daughter, with the young child's persistent questioning about the reasons why her father is in prison. But it is actually the adult voice, Laura and Cristina's mother, Sara, who narrates the first two chapters, before handing over to her daughter, before resuming this role., Finally, as they journey into exile, Laura becomes the eyes through which the reader views exile. Sara's adult voice conveys the fear and panic, but also the worry over what to tell the children about the father's imprisonment: "I don't know how to tell Laura the truth, mum says not to tell her, to lie about it"[11] (Trujillo 1990, 21). The narrative then switches to Laura, and the shift in narrative voice is quite clear: "I understood everything mummy had told me about daddy, that he was in prison because he thought differently to the *milicos* and the *milicos* wanted everyone to think like them and how . . . and also that daddy did not want children to go hungry and . . ." (Trujillo 1990, 25).[12]

The sense here is of the child repeating what they have been told almost parrot fashion (adopting "milicos," the derogatory term for members of the armed forces), but the stream of lengthy sentences gives away their young age and that they do not quite understand the implications. The child-like naivety surrounding exile in *Exilios* is emphasized again: "I later discovered that the world is round and is full of countries all over the place and you can never fall off a country because right next to it is another one and another and another and another."[13] (Trujillo 1990, 25) Again it also highlights the difference between children and adults vis-a-vis the exile experience. Articulating the child's voice on difficult pasts also means trying to find subtle ways of establishing the wider historical context for the reader and the ways in which even very young children can pick up things that are said or not said, the stories told by adults, overheard conversa-

10 "las desapariciones, los asesinatos y el miedo."

11 "no sé cómo decirle a Laura la verdad, dice mamá que no se lo diga, que le mienta . . .".

12 "yo había entendido todo lo que mamá me había explicado de papá, eso de que estaba preso porque pensaba diferente que los milicos y que los milicos quieren que todos piensen igual que ellos y como . . . y además papá no quería que los niños tuvieran hambre . . .".

13 "Después me enteré de que el mundo es redondo y está lleno de países por todos lados así que nunca te podés caer de un país porque enseguidita pegadito al lado hay otro y otro y otro y otro."

tions, what Fried (2016) has called the intersubjective spaces. *Exilios* hints at this through play in the scene where Sara finds her daughters playing 'mummies and daddies.' Yet in this scene, the children are using a window to separate them, acting out the prison visit experience (Trujillo 1990, 26). This ludic example is a way of exploring a serious issue – how children are affected by events they may not understand – but also asserting the difference between the way children and adults perceived this period.

Meanwhile, the child's perspective also says something about the different positions of children and adults and highlights the former's lack of agency. Laura says: "Mummy says we are going to Argentina, I don't know what that is"[14] (Trujillo 1990, 25). Similarly, Alcoba's narrator states this when she learns French in preparation for joining her mother in exile: "I only know that an adult told me that I had to start some time before."[15] The occasional adult voice, usually a grandparent, updates the narrator on her impending departure. The implication here is that for the child-exiles more generally, the decision was out of their hands. Norandi (2016), who fled with her family from Uruguay to Spain at the age of eight, describes the exile experience as one of confusion for children as they were unable to fully understand a decision that affected them so deeply yet was simultaneously beyond their control. Whilst there are references to the issues the parents face, the financial hardship, struggle to secure a home, or the sense of fear and worry from other exiles which is picked up by the child-narrator on the journey to the Netherlands (Trujillo 1990, 27), many of the episodes recounted are to do with the challenges and obstacles that specifically affect them: settling in at school (46), friendships, whether to disclose the whereabouts of the absent fathers, and stigma surrounding exile (77). Or in *El* azul, the shock and disillusionment that exile in France is not in the Paris that she had imagined, in the role play conversations she had enjoyed with her teacher back in La Plata, but a small town some distance away. This chapter, entitled "casi verdadero" (almost true) is about her negotiation of truth when writing to her friend back in Argentina, "because you couldn't really say that Blanc-Mesnil was very close to Paris, in fact it was really almost quite far"[16] (Alcoba 2014, 16) but it is ostensibly a nod to the reader about Alcoba's own fictional embellishment of this exile.

Language is also a clear part of the adaptation process for the child-narrators. This is particularly the case for those *hijos* who were exiled to non-Spanish speaking countries, like Trujillo and Alcoba, as well as the child-narrators. At the same

14 "Mamá dice que vamos a la Argentina, no sé qué es eso".

15 "solo sé que un adulto me dijo que tenía que empezar cuanto antes."

16 "porque no puede decirse que el Blanc-Mesnil quede muy cerca de Paris, en realidad casi cada un poco lejos . . .".

time, for the *hijos*, linguistic immersion is a more prominent feature of exile life, particularly because their schooling and many of their social interactions were in the language of the host country, but also because the possibilities of going beyond proficiency and attaining fluency are much higher for pre-adolescents or very young children. For those who remained in the exile countries permanently, what was a foreign language became their own. Alcoba herself has described exile as "the departure from silence and arrival to a new language"[17] (interview with Menestrini 2020), not only a journey from dictatorship to democracy, but to a new linguistic space. In *El azul* the pursuit of linguistic proficiency is established from the outset, with the opening lines forging the link between exile and language: "my journey started, in some way, behind my nose" (9).[18] Later we learn that this is connected to the narrator's almost obsessive attempts to learn French and pronounce the vowels like a native speaker. However, once in exile, language is also connected to fitting in and muting difference: "I would like to erase it, make it disappear, rid myself of this Argentine accent" (Alcoba 2014, 34) and later "in spite of my efforts, I still speak with an Argentine accent, an accent I despise more than ever" (72).[19] As well as attempting to master the language, the narrator questions what it must be like to be a native speaker of French, drawing the distinction between those who 'inherit' the language from birth, "passed down from parents to child over generations,"[20] compared to those who learn as older children (Alcoba 2014, 56). Yet, by the end of the novel, three years later, she achieves this much desired fluency: "Until finally one day I thought in French. Without realizing and without meaning to. I thought and spoke in French at the same time . . . my mother expressed her shock in Spanish: 'You spoke in French,' she repeated. And it was actually very strange." (119)[21]

This is a milestone moment in which French, the language she is using outside the home, infiltrates the domestic Spanish-speaking space. This is the moment when she acquiesces to her father's repeated requests for a photograph of her and her mother for his cell. In this sense, the transformation from her self-consciousness when speaking in French to speaking without thinking is a crucial

17 "la salida del silencia y la entrada de otro idioma."

18 "mi viaje comenzó en alguna parte detrás de mi nariz".

19 "Quisiera borrarlo, hacerlo desaparecer, arrancarlo de mi a este acento argentino". . . "a pesar de los esfuerzos que hago . . . .todavía hablo con acento argentino . . . un acento que detesto más que nunca . . . ya siento vergüenza."

20 "viene transmitiéndose de padre a hijos desde hace generaciones."

21 "Hasta que un día por fin pensé en francés. Sin darme cuenta y sin quererlos. Pensé y hablé en francés al mismo tiempo . . . . mi madre se había asombrado en castellano. "Hablaste en francés" repitió. Y de verdad era raro'.

part of her adaptation to exile, suggesting that she finally feels comfortable enough to be photographed in the exilic space.

Language is similarly highlighted in *Exilios,* although less explicitly, becoming a point of tension and difference between the various generations. On a family trip for the holidays the two sisters sing Christmas songs in Dutch, and their grandmother expresses annoyance at not being able to understand the lyrics, so teaches them a song in Spanish that is not even vaguely festive (Trujillo 1990, 51). As the novel progresses, the narrator's mother corrects her Spanish (Trujillo 1990, 73) and the letters to the father in prison reveal a number of spelling errors and phonetic spellings of basic Spanish verbs (74). Furthermore, language is also invoked to make a wider comment on exile, through games played with the other exiled children at the refuge, a halfway house where the girls and their mother spend the first four years. The game involves one of the children taking on the role of 'vendepatrias' or 'traitor' (8). Later in the novel, the target of the game is repeated. With a more sarcastic tone, the narrator notes the divide between the 'perfect' or 'model' exiles who have their suitcases packed, ready to return, who never learn the language with those who do: "little by little the traitors started to really understand Dutch" (38).[22] Here the adult voice is more keenly felt, pointing to the underlying tension within the exile community as well as alluding to the accusations levelled at them from those who stayed in their home countries. Trujillo addresses the problematic exile figure but also positions herself, her mother, and sister on the side of the 'traitor exiles' as her mother gets a job and a more permanent residence. Indeed, their ties to the wider exile community shift with the passing of time: in the early period of exile their mother has a Chilean boyfriend, also an exile; by the time the father is released from prison, she has a Dutch partner. Cristina has become "Cris" (Trujillo 1990, 66) adopting a less Spanish-sounding moniker, a subtle erasure of cultural difference in order to blend in, which also points to fluid and mobile identities around naming repertoires reported in other exilic and migratory contexts (Lulle 2021). These changes and the increasing integration and immersion, both linguistic and cultural, is hinted at through both novels with the passing of time (the narrator in *El azul* reaching puberty, examples of teenage activities – a point I return to below). Language is connected to geographical distance, conceived as cutting or loosening ties with the homeland, generational difference (experienced differently by the second generation), and adaptation to life in exile.

22 "de a poco los vendepatria empezaron a entender bien el holandés."

Writing home: Exilic epistles to absent fathers

If the last section was concerned with the adaptation to and impact of exile for the child-narrator, this section turns to these child-narrators' engagement with their home countries through the act of writing home. Here I take as a starting point something that both narratives have in common: the epistolary communication with absent political prisoner fathers. As other scholars have noted, the epistle is a recurring trope in diasporic cultural production, in cinema (Naficy 2001, 5) and exile narratives more specifically (Arfuch, 693). In the texts under consideration, the letters are just one example of the various fragments and strands by which the memory of a childhood in exile is constructed, alongside anecdotes, diary entries (in *Exilios*), recounted conversations, anecdotes, photographs, songs, etc (Alberione 2016, 7). In the case of *El azul*, as explained in the Epilogue, the novel is based on Alcoba's encounter, many years later, with the letters her father wrote to her over a period of two years. As the letters were lost, this re-reading was only based on the letters her father wrote to her, a somewhat one-sided conversation. This piecing together of the past is a reminder that childhood exile is viewed and filtered through the present by the now adult writer.

In both texts, the letters to and from exile replace the routine prison visits to their fathers that precede the girls' departures for Europe. These trips give brief insight to the strict controls, the culture of fear, and the inhumane treatment of prisoners. Before departing for Europe, both child-narrators make a final prison trip, which marks the beginning of the epistolary relationship with the absent father. In *Exilios* this unfolds in the chapter entitled "El Ultimo Padre" ("The Last Father"), foreshadowing the family separation and breakup of the family. Here, the narrative voice switches backwards and forwards between Laura and the girls' father: "I know that they are leaving, I don't know where to, but it will be far enough away that I won't be their father anymore, it already astonishes me to see them so big . . . now these are the last visits, the last daughters, the last identifiable pieces of me. I'm broken . . ." (Trujillo 1990, 28)[23]

Here the father's fears are voiced as he laments what he sees as the end of the paternal relationship in its current form, while alluding to the uncertainty and open-endedness of that exile journey. The shift in narrative voice gives different perspectives on the same set of events, the child's voice not fully grasping the severity of the situation, with the father's words portraying panic. Similarly, in

23 "Sé también que se van a ir, no sé a dónde, pero será lo suficientemente lejos como para que yo deje de ser padre, ya me asombra verlas tan grandes . . . ya son las últimas visitas, las últimas hijas, y los últimos trozos de mí mismo que veo, yo quedé roto."

the opening pages of *El azul*, the narrator is heading off to a fortnightly visit to her incarcerated father, her habitual absence from school shrouded in silence (Alcoba 2014, 12). In the visit, the narrator's father urges her to write to him each week, so that they can keep up "some sort of conversation" (12) in spite of the distance. Indeed, although the letters are rarely reproduced in the text (they are mainly recounted by the child-narrators), they become part of a ritual of exile for both protagonists. In *Exilios* we are rarely aware of the father's voice (it is Laura's letters that are included very occasionally), only the daughter's perspective on what becomes "casi un ritual" ("almost a ritual") (Trujillo 1990, 46). The author explores this in the section entitled "familias de papel" ("paper families"). Here the physical presence of their father, the suspension of which was hinted at by "el último padre", is replaced with letters. In *El azul*, this is not only through writing to each other, but reading together (the father in Spanish, prohibited from reading any foreign language books and the narrator in French). For most of the text, this is the challenging text, *le Vie des abeilles* [The Life of the Bee] written by Belgian apiarist Maurice Maeterlinck. The narrator recounts these epistolary communications at various points and her encounters with Maeterlinck's book, interwoven with her accounts of increasing linguistic and cultural integration in France. Writing and reading become a way of negotiating the distance between them, but also keeping the family together symbolically. Indeed, Naficy (2001, 5) has argued that the epistle can make presence felt, in other words collapsing the distance that marks family separation.

The male characters are conspicuous in their absence. Their letters, mediated by the young female narrators, are a reminder of the ongoing dictatorships back in the Southern Cone and the treatment of political prisoners. We learn for example, that the father in *El azul* is only allowed five photos in his cell (Alcoba 2014, 43) and that there are very strict controls about letters or texts written in foreign languages. The long-term absent father, a trope that has appeared in the cultural production of *hijos del exilio* and Latin American cinema more broadly (Levey 2021), is a frequent reminder of family separation, but it also subverts the portrayal of exiles as 'fortunate survivors,' showing that many left in fear for their lives were themselves imprisoned or threatened with incarceration. The relationship between exile and victimhood is thus considerably more blurred. Indeed, the wider backdrop of dictatorship is implied through interactions with other exiles (from Latin America and from elsewhere in Europe) in both novels, as a frequent reminder of the context of the narrators' exiles, that they are not the only ones to be displaced. The visit from Fernando and Raquel, friends of the narrator's mother who are in exile in Sweden, in *El azul* is a case in point. The child-narrator listens to them go through the sad inventory of the fates of their *compañeros*, as they are confirmed as disappeared, imprisoned or in exile, or in other

cases unknown (Alcoba 2014, 87). In this way, exiles are incorporated into the widening circle of those affected directly by dictatorship, as the reader is reminded what may have happened to the narrator's mother, had she not left Argentina.

Whilst the father in *El azul* remains out of reach, only contactable by letters, Laura and Cristina's father, released during the final months of the dictatorship, joins them in exile during the second half of *Exilios*. His much-heralded depature from prison soon gives way to the stark reality: the clear psychological damage he has sustained and his trouble reintegrating, not only into Dutch society, but into the family unit after a decade of incarceration. Again, the discussion of his breakdown and intrusion into the exile space is posed as very problematic; in a way the child's gaze opens up a way of talking about these aftereffects. In documenting the father's release from prison and the family's possibility of return, we are given insight into a more complex constellation of victimhood, in which Laura and Cristina can be understood as the children of exiles, exiles themselves and children of a political prisoners. This poses a critique of the prevailing tendency to view exile as outside other forms of victimhood, something that has only changed very recently in the region. Indeed, from the late 1990s, the *Comisión de Exiliados Retornados* [the Returning Exiles Commission] led a campaign in Argentina to demand state reparation for foreign exile. Debate also centered on whether the children who left for exile would be eligible, highlighting their positioning as 'almost' victims and 'not quite' exiles. In response to this, in recent years second-generation groups of returned *hijos del exilio* have emerged in the Southern Cone: for example, *Hijas e Hijos del Exilio* in Argentina (since 2006) and *Hijas e Hijos del Exilio Chile*, formed in 2018, to contest the notion of exile as a space of refuge (a challenge to Golden Exile), and frame exile as a serious human rights violation that has affected, and continues to affect, multiple generations.

After exile: Transitional returns and (non)returns

If the previous two sections were about living and writing exile, here we turn to the aftermath. The onset of democratic transitions from the early 1980s and the end of dictatorship in 1983 in Argentina and 1985 in Uruguay, brought with them the possibility for forcibly displaced Argentines and Uruguayans to return to their homelands. As mentioned in the first section, the return to Argentina and Uruguay was difficult for the first generation of exiles, as they sought to reintegrate but also dealt with the ongoing stigma of being exiles. As Jensen reminds us, for many, "instead of ending the obvious decentralization that has shaped the positioning between the displaced with others and deemed them to be 'inside' or

'outside', the return actually reinforces and deepens this" (2011).[24] Thus, the collapse of geographical boundaries did not mean the end of exiles being seen as outsiders or treated with suspicion, but the transitional possibilities brought their futures into stark relief. Furthermore, the upheaval of 'return' was not only an issue for the first generation of exiles but also for their offspring, many of whom were now teenagers or young adults, who "suffered the return to a country that was not the one they left, a far cry from the 'imagined Paradise,' that they yearned for from afar, or chose the option of 'no return,' to stay in the host country" (Alberione 2016, 4).[25] The upheaval and difficulties of exile and the return are explored in Trujillo's 2009 *De Terugkeer van Lupe García* (*The Return of Lupe Garcia*), which look at the childhoods of a number of returning *hijos del exilio*, one of whom is now an alcoholic, another involved in petty crime, to explain "why we are all so messed up."[26] Not only does she highlight tricky reintegration in a country where the *hijos* may only briefly have lived or not even ever visited, but she indicates the different transitional trajectories that are explored or alluded to in the texts under consideration, shedding light on the transitional periods as experienced by the *hijos*.

Indeed, it is the treatment of the transition where the novels diverge considerably. When the narrator of *El azul* leaves Argentina in the late 1970s, she states: "Until one day I left, and for good."[27] (Alcoba 2014, 15) It is evident that, like Alcoba, when she left, she had no way of knowing she would never return to live in Argentina, instead here the adult voice is strongly asserted. Whilst *El azul* ends some time before the Argentine transition, in *Exilios*, the potential, and then eventual, return to Uruguay after the father is released and joins his family in the Netherlands, dominates the final three sections of the novel. By this point, Laura and her sister are teenagers, a reminder that most of those who were babies or small children in exile were adolescents or nearing adulthood by the end of dictatorial rule. The physical and emotional changes in the *hijos del exilio*'s lives were thus closely linked and paralleled with the rupture implicated by return, and more broadly, the fledgling democratic processes in their countries of birth. Here, there is a clear mirroring of adolescence as a transitional phase and the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. The transition away from childhood is

24 "el regreso, lejos de anular el descentramiento vital que condiciona la relación y los desplazados con el mundo y los lleva a definir 'adentras' y 'afueras' se reedita y/o profundiza."

25 "les tocó luego sufrir el retorno a un país que ya no era el que dejaron, que distaba mucho de ese 'Paraíso imaginado' que anhelaban a la distancia, u optaron por el 'no retorno', por la permanencia en el país de acogida."

26 "Por qué estamos todos hechos mierda".

27 "hasta que un día partí, y para siempre."

strongly hinted at in both novels, with the narrator of *El azul* telling the reader she is now eleven, and noting her body's changes, as she becomes a '*señorita*' (young woman). The events of *Exilios* span a longer period of exile, and after nearly a decade, Cristina and Laura are in their mid-teens, at secondary school and engaging in small acts of teenage rebellion like smoking. Laura's thoughts on her everyday life are also voiced in her teenage diary entries. The dialogue between the sisters in which the return is first discussed marks a shift from the earlier child-like prose employed when they went *into* exile:

– Cris, do you really want to go back to Uruguay?
– I dunno, the thing is that I'm kind of bored here, I don't like it anymore.
– Totally, I want to leave here, I don't care if it's Uruguay or Africa.
– The only thing that I'm upset about is leaving my friends, I'll really miss them. (Trujillo 1990, 87)[28]

Here, the direct and persistent questioning of their mother, is replaced by hushed conversations in the teenagers' bedroom, in an exchange that demonstrates their growing age. Rather than repeating what they have been told is happening by an adult, the sisters have their own opinions on the return and its implications, conflicted between wanting adventure and leaving friendships behind. However, because they were not yet adults, the option of staying or returning, as for many of the *hijos del exilio*, was out of their hands.

Exilios also points to a considerable difference for those who were children or babies when they went into exile, encapsulated in the lexical precision of the return. For Cristina and Laura, they are undecided on whether to use 'volver' (return) or 'ir' (to go) whereas for their mother this is a definite 'volver' (Trujillo 1990, 93) suggesting a point of tension between the generations. This is not to say that all adult exiles wanted to return or did, but the notion of 'volver' for those with very limited memory of their homelands suggests a different type of exile and a different type of transitional return. This is elucidated in the final section before the return, when the narrator offers the reader two different endings of the classic fairytale, one which is more of a summary of the facts; the second posits a more uncomfortable account of the father's release and intrusion into their lives, as their mother starts selling their furniture and the house becomes empty (Trujillo 1990, 93). This subversion of the fairy-tale is told bitterly by the teenaged

28 – Cris, en serio que querés volver para el Uruguay?
– No sé, es que acá estoy media aburrida, no me gusta ya . . .
– Claro, yo quiero irme de acá, no me importa si es a Uruguay o a África.
– Lo único que me da pena es los amigos, los voy a extrañar mucho.

narrator, who no longer believes in, or can be consoled by, fictitious happy endings.

The final two sections of the novel give us a glimpse into life after return, and the issues that the second-generation face. The teenaged Laura's innermost thoughts and perspective on the return is made present through the series of diary entries that track impending departure from the Netherlands, and their arrival and (re)adaptation in Uruguay. For those who spent exile in non-Spanish -speaking countries, the reintegration is not only cultural, but also linguistic. Indeed, one diary entry says: "Yesterday, at school, I understood a total of sixty-three words. I am sure I'm going to fail. Laura (sad)."[29] (Trujillo 1990, 104) These worries, and also the various examples of reintegrating in school and society at large draw a parallel with the challenges depicted in both books during the early days of exile, especially the *El azul* narrator's obsession with thinking in French. As Laura states, "Cris and I tried to be as Uruguayan as possible"[30] (Trujillo 1990, 106). Rather than slot in back to their old lives, they have to relearn being Uruguayan and integrate, although this time they are much older and more self-aware. A few pages later, their metamorphosis (as it is referred to) is complete: "we have learnt to be Uruguayan"[31] (107). Their transformation in the Uruguayan transitional space, bringing into comparison the girls' complex emotional state and that of a society emerging from authoritarianism, can be contrasted with Alcoba's character's own linguistic and cultural metamorphosis in the exile space, while the (re)learning and inhabiting a language (even your mother tongue) complicates the notion of language and identity as 'inherited'. What is interesting is that they ultimately adopt a hybrid, transnational identity. Although they have relearned being Uruguayan, Laura says: "I can still feel the Dutch language, but it is more muted, more deaf and more blind [. . .] always a little bit further away, a little closer, always, always, it is there".[32] (Trujillo 1990, 112) This suggests an embodied and sensory relationship to the exile space that is in constant flux. The real metamorphosis is, I would argue, the transnational positionality of the *hijos del exilio* in which the two spaces are constantly interacting, often below the surface, jostling and moving against one another, like tectonic plates. Here, as an extension of this, the transitions themselves are re-

29 "Ayer, en el liceo, en total entendí ciento sesenta y tres palabras. Estoy segura que voy a repetir. Laura (triste)."

30 "Cris y yo tratábamos de ser lo más uruguayo posibles."

31 "hemos aprendido a ser uruguayas."

32 "todavía me siento el holandés aunque más mudo, más sordo, más ciego" . . . . "siempre está un poco más lejos, un poco más cerca, siempre, siempre, está."

visited and restaged as multilayered and complex, not only political and collective, but individual, societally, *and* transnationally entangled.

This dialectical relationship is also obvious when looking at the authors themselves. Trujillo, somewhat disillusioned with fledgling Uruguayan democracy and transitional impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations, returned to the Netherlands for good. At the same time, she is described as "at ease with her dual identity,"[33] self-translating and moving freely within and between two identities. Even in the case of Alcoba, a clear case of *no retorno*, she says that since the end of the dictatorship, "my links with Argentina, where I regularly return, have intensified. There they see me as an Argentine writer. I see myself as a French and Argentine writer" (quoted in Chaplain Riou 2014).[34] Her experience of non-return, rather than slackening ties with Argentina, suggests that the situation for *no retornados* is rather more nuanced than Andrew Graham-Yooll might have predicted in 1987. The literary works of the two authors foreground the *hijos del exilio* (as children), destabilizing some of the assertions about them during the dictatorships and transitions; as now adult *no-retornados,* the writers alert us to multiple spatial and temporal identities that are not easily disentangled from one another. In this sense, placelessness does not, as might first be suggested, denote belonging 'nowhere', but is suggestive of a form of transnational positionality, not of the relocation of one identity or temporality to a new context, but a complex process of exchange in which temporalities and geographies are negotiated and transformed, resulting in the creation of a new or alternative transitional memory (de Chesari and Rigney 2014). The *hijos del exilio* have a different way of seeing the world, and *being* in it (Dutrénit 2006, 16).

Towards a conclusion: Exilic writing and the child's gaze as temporal revolt

At the heart of both authors' works is the creation of an exilic or even transnational literary space that subverts temporal and/or geographical distance from dictatorship to revisit the recent past. Read together, they expose and elucidate the child's inhabitance of exile and the aftermath of this exile during transition; in doing so they carve out a space for their voices, one that critiques the narra-

33 "a gusto con su identidad dual."

34 "mis vínculos con Argentina, adonde regreso regularmente, se intensificaron. Allá me consideran como una escritora argentina. Yo me veo como una autora argentina y francesa."

tives around exile that were forged in dictatorships and that permeated the transitions. They offer a more complex and bottom-up depiction of transition, one in which voices often excluded from high politics and memory narratives surrounding victimhood come to the fore.

To close, I draw briefly on Fanny Söderbäck's seminal work on revolutionary time. Although her discussion of the displacement of linear time emerged in relation to feminism, it is, I propose, applicable to the ways in which the texts here engage with the *hijos del exilio* and with transition (2012, 316). Revolutionary time is forward-looking in transgressing and surpassing the linear/cyclical dichotomy, moving in multiple simultaneous directions, adopting both distance and approximation to the past, reminiscent of postmemory in some respects. This is important because, as Söderbäck has argued, "the linear-progressive time paradigm is problematic as it runs the risk of forgetfulness and of *repetition*" (2012, 303). In other words, writing from the post-dictatorship, created by former child-exiles who are now adults, adopts and inhabits a child's perspective, piecing together letters, memories, dialogues, songs, and photos, in order to create an alternate, and highly mediated, vision of the past. To stay with Söderback, repeating the past means we will not learn, thus hindering our ability to move forward. Indeed, the examples discussed in this chapter mobilize the recent past and create a space for the *hijos del exilio*, reminding us of what was, but with a certain amount of critical distance, generational, geographical, and, as we saw, linguistic. As such, they encapsulate what Söderbäck describes as "a model of time that allows us to redeem the past and the present without instrumentalizing them in the name of a future always already defined in advance" (2012, 304). Rather than return to a specific period (Southern Cone dictatorships) and place (a country of origin, the exile country, or that of a parent) they bring to light in the present what state power has attempted to erase or control, and the broader societal narratives that stem from dictatorship and transition, shaped by distinct local factors in a new transnational context. As Söderbäck continues, we can view this practice as a form of revolt in that it constitutes "continuous displacement" (2012, 311) in which the borders or boundaries of time and place are not easily disentangled. This is, I assert, particularly resonant for the *no-retornados*. As this chapter has shown, they revolt against the restoration of a 'normal' national being and sense of belonging, insomuch as 'transitions' imply a linear or chronological movement towards a predetermined goal, one that will be duly concluded at a future point in time. These novels not only challenge the myths surrounding such temporalities, but they also expose the limitations of these transitions (the overwhelming focus on specific victims, certain geographies and a particular generation or generational unit). These narratives are attentive to an expanded transitional and trans-

national memory field, placing the transitions in a new light and incorporating a wider set of implicated and affected voices.

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