***Memories from Darkness; Archaeology of Repression and Resistance in Latin America (1960s-1980s)*. Pedro P. Funari, Andrés Zarankin and Melisa Salerno (editors)**

Chapter 11: Revealing Memories from Darkness

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"The prisoner was taken away in the middle of the night nineteen months ago. He was hooded and brought to an undisclosed location where he has not been heard of since. Interrogators reportedly used graduated levels of force on the prisoner, including the "water boarding" technique – known in Latin America as the "submarino" – in which the detainee is strapped down, forcibly pushed under water, and made to believe he might drown. His seven- and nine-year-old sons were also picked up, presumably to induce him to talk. These tactics are all too common to oppressive dictatorships. The interrogators were not from a dictatorship, however, but from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The U.S.'s prisoner is Khalid Shaikh Muhammad, the alleged principal architect of the September 11 attacks. Muhammad is one of the dozen or so top al-Qaeda operatives who have simply "disappeared" in U.S. custody. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the Bush administration has violated the most basic legal norms in its treatment of security detainees. Many have been held in offshore prisons, the most well known of which is at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. As we now know, prisoners suspected of terrorism, and many against whom no evidence exists, have been mistreated, humiliated, and tortured. But perhaps no practice so fundamentally challenges the foundations of U.S. and international law as the long-term secret incommunicado detention of al-Qaeda suspects in "undisclosed locations." "Disappearances" were a trademark abuse of Latin American military dictatorships in their "dirty war" on alleged subversion. Now they have become a United States tactic in its conflict with al-Qaeda". Human Rights Watch, 2004.

"Memories from Darkness" is a contribution to an emerging "archaeology of repression". Focusing on the twentieth century, and on what Gonzalez-Ruibal (2008) has usefully called "supermodernity", such approaches show how specialized technologies were developed and deployed to serve the ends of authoritarian regimes and state terror, with a lineage from German and Italian fascism, French colonialism in Algeria, a broad swathe of military governments in Latin America, and to the current "war on terror". They also show how we can trace and reveal evidence for resistance in the context of an explicitly engaged archaeology that recognizes the valency of political action in shaping our understanding of the past and the implications of research for social justice and human rights.

This characteristic stance of engagement, in which archaeological practice is enmeshed in political processes, is well demonstrated in Roberto Rodríguez Suárez's account in this volume of the execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967 and the excavation of his body thirty years later. Guevara – emblematic of revolutionary opposition to authoritarianism and one of the most widely recognized faces across the world – was long believed cremated until the confession of General Mario Vargas Salinas in 1995 described a common grave at Vallegrande Airport. Field survey and excavation was a diplomatic tightrope involving Bolivia, Argentina and Cuba, complicated by the uncertain politics of Bolivia's election and neoliberal agenda. Soil analysis, resistivity studies, infrared photography and sample excavations were interrupted by CIA-linked misinformation and the suspension of research by local authorities. When finally recovered, Guevara's remains were returned to Cuba and were interred with military honours in a dedicated mausoleum at Santa Clara, where he had won the decisive battle of the Cuban revolution in 1958.

It would not have been possible to excavate the burial at Vallegrande Airport in a way that ignored Che Guevara as an emblematic figure of the twentieth century, or that was independent of the political configurations in Latin America in the 1990s, where countries were within a few years of the collapse of military dictatorships. It is equally impossible to imagine a "neutral" excavation of the site of Club Atlético in Buenos Aires, where over a thousand detainees were tortured and murdered in 1977 (Zarankin and Niro, this volume). Many of the relatives of *los desaparecidos* still seek closure through the recovery of evidence of death and any archaeological interpretation will be incorporated into histories of vital importance to those still living. As Pedro Funari, Andrés Zarankin and Melisa Salerno rightly observe in their introduction to this volume, subjectivity needs to be explicitly recognized for its role in interpretation. These are Latin American archaeologists and intellectuals writing about a period that had a profound effect on their families and themselves, in some cases using the memory of their own experience of detention and torture in their reading of the past. Here is Claudio Niro writing about his own detention:

"9 May 1976, I arrived at Vesubio, a clandestine center of detention located at Camino de Cintura and Richieri highway (Mantanza Department). Four individuals following Suárez Mason's orders got me off a Ford Falcon. I was hooded and my hands were tied at my back. Meanwhile, the individuals insulted me and hit me, forcing me into a room. Once inside, they made me stand against a wall with my legs wide open. Several torturers kicked my testicles once and again. This procedure was called "ablande". It was intended to intimidate the prisoner before getting him or her into the torture room … "Cuchas" were small rooms were four or five people stayed hooded, handcuffed and leg-ironed to walls and other prisoners. Once in the "cuchas", kidnappers forced us to take off our clothes and wear brown uniforms they had previously handed us in. This procedure made us lose -along with our clothes- all traces of an exterior life" (Zarankin and Niro, this volume).

Alejandro Haber (this volume) argues that an "objectifying" archaeology – that attempts to use the evidence from military dictatorships as if it were a set of neutral resources – would constitute a "regime of truth" that would itself be a form of repression and an extension of colonial attempts to contain and control indigenous histories. This signals a decisive break with "objective" culture-history traditions of Latin American archaeology, as Carl Henrik Langebaek (this volume) argues. But this does not mean the abandonment of analytical rigour and the use of scientific techniques, as the Che Guevara project so clearly shows. If anything, engagement with archival evidence, oral recollection and the complexities of past and present political interests makes the truth value of archaeological techniques all the more important, as is clear in both Nancy Vieira and Luis Fondebrider's chapters on the challenges that forensic archaeologists face in interpreting mass burials. When the results of such research may be critical in litigation and tested against the rules of legal evidence there is no latitude for technical error or unjustified assumptions.

Indeed, cases such as those reviewed in this book show the futility of the assumption that archaeology can somehow be independent of the world in which it operates. An epistemology that better explains the compelling authenticity of these studies is Bruno Latour's insistence that "word" and "world" are part of a continuum of knowledge creation, a set of translations connected in a chain of "circulating references" that we "pass over" repeatedly and compulsively as we seek to deepen our understanding by both generalizing from particular instances, and by reducing the complexity of individual circumstances to their essential features (Latour 1999). In the context of an archaeology of repression, Latour's scientific process of "packing the world into words" is chillingly apparent. The chaos and terror of detention and torture is reduced into a survivor's narrative and assembled along with the material traces of the detention centre and fragmentary police records as a set of "circulating references" that are evidence for a persistent "technology of power", a syndrome far more substantial than the individual experience. Because there are many who will gain by arguing that these references are fabricated, or exaggerated, these things and words – what Latour calls the "operators" in the chain of reference – are constantly challenged for their relevance or authenticity. The value in this system of circulating references lies in the continuity of enquiry, in the "reversibility" of the constant movement from word to world and from world to word that tests and re-tests the validity of testimony, the relevance of the material and the logic of interpretation.

In Latour's seminal case of an ecological study of the Amazon forest margin, the process of knowledge creation will cease if the continuing circulation between field site and laboratory – questions, answers and new questions – is broken (Latour 1999). In the system of circulating references that constitutes the archaeology of repression, the process of knowledge creation will cease if the engagement with memory and social justice is broken and the authoritarian regimes of super-modernity are presented as settled history, removed from the issues of the present day. This essential contribution – the refusal of interruption in the name of "objectivity" – is well demonstrated in Claudio Niro's association of memory with the material remains of the detention centre and the archaeological project:

"I have recently returned to the place where Vesubio was located. The ruins are the first thing you see when you get there. Vesubio was demolished at the end of 1978, as a consequence of the OEA's Commission for Human Rights arrival. Vesubio's remains are enclosed by a barbed wire fence. The problem is you cannot enter the area. A person who lives there denies access, threatens Human Rights Organizations, and unleashes his wild dogs on everybody. Anyway, on one occasion I could get in and recognize some red tiles which covered the bathroom floor. I closed my eyes and thought: camp remains and horror. I remembered the time they made us wait in front of the operation theater, while we heard screams of pain, chamamé music, and the executioners' voices. At that moment, I asked myself how the torture would be like, and if I was going to stand it. It was impossible to know the answer. My body and my partners' bodies shook. Fear. I was forced into the operation theater. They took my hood off and I was blinded by the light. A loud voice asked me to collaborate. I recognized it: it was Vasco's voice. Four guys held me tightly, undressed me, soaked me up, and tied a wire to my big toe. They started electrocuting me with another wire. Emptiness. I did not actually know for how long they tortured me. I felt they took my soul out of me. They finally took me completely hurt to the "doghouses" with my partners" (Zarankin and Niro, this volume)

Between 1920 and 1990, fifteen Latin American countries experienced authoritarian regimes: Argentina (1966-1973, 1976-1983), Bolivia (1964-1982), Brazil (1964-1985), Chile (1973-1990), Dominican Republic (1930-1978), Ecuador (1963-1966), El Salvador (1931-1982), Guatemala (1921-1986), Haití (1957-1990), Honduras (1963-1971, 1972-1982), Nicaragua (1936-1979), Panama (1968-1989), Paraguay (1949-1989), Peru (1968-1980) and Uruguay (1973-1985). Characteristically, military juntas usurped civil systems of government on the basis of "states of emergency", suspended civil rights and instituted martial law that depended on suites of repressive measures, including censorship, exile, detention, torture and murder (Funari, Zarankin and Salerno, this volume).

At the heart of these regimes was a particular form of terror captured in the neologisms "the disappeared" (*los desaparecidos*), "to be disappeared", or "to disappear" a person. When someone had been disappeared, the place and details of detention were unknown. Few returned and, since the fact or manner of death remained undisclosed, family, friends and community were denied any closure. In the words of Amnesty International: "due to its very nature, disappearance hides the identity of the perpetrator. If there is no prisoner, body or victim, nobody is presumably accused of having done anything" (quoted in Funari, Zarankin and Salerno, this volume. See also Feitlowitz 1998). Disappearances were "an even more effective means of spreading terror than open massacres, so destabilizing was the idea that the apparatus of the state could be used to make people vanish into thin air" (Klein 2007:90).

While each junta had its own national characteristics, there was broad co-ordination of repression by a group of military regimes through a covert agreement known as Operation Condor. They were supported by the United States government, which

provided advice, communication facilities and intelligence support and, at times, active assistance with covert operations (Feitlowitz 1998, Dinges 2004, Klein 2007, Mazz this volume). "Condor was a Cold War-era covert network of U.S.-backed Latin American military regimes in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, later joined by Ecuador and Peru in less central roles. The secret Condor apparatus enabled the militaries to share intelligence--and to seize, torture, and execute political opponents across borders. Condor agents also assassinated key opposition leaders around the world" (McSherry 2005:1). The discovery of the "terror archives" in Paraguay in 1992 provided evidence of some 50 000 murders, 30 000 disappearances and 400 000 detentions by the security services of the participating countries.

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Between 1980 and 1990, Latin American authoritarian governments began to collapse under the pressure of economic crises, international opposition and, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the removal of the perceived threat of communism. Removal of the most overt forms of repression strengthened broad coalitions seeking social justice and redress, increasing in turn the demand for evidence (Funari, Zarankin and Salerno, this volume. See also Feitlowitz 1998). Taken together, and in this context, the chapters in this volume suggest a five-part outline structure for an archaeology of repression and resistance: stigmatization, disappearance, resistance, recovery and engagement. Returning to Latour's epistemology of knowledge, this can be seen as an integral system of operators – circulating references that are continually interrogated to reveal memory from darkness.

Stigmatization was the process of marking out categories of people as opponents to order and stability. In general terms such people were "communists" , to be identified by their appearance and choice of dress. Melisa Salerno (this volume) shows how militarized regimes, heavily invested in the symbolism of uniforms and bodily regimentation, claimed contrary appearance and dress as evidence of dissident beliefs and subversion. Through this device, victims could be detained and incarcerated without any explicit knowledge of their political beliefs or actions. In this set of references, jeans, bright coloured clothing, long hair and beards were in themselves sufficient evidence for subversion or subversive intent. By relating a generalized threat to order and established interests to a set of easily identified external characteristics, the military juntas manipulated fear and prejudice in order to justify arbitrary violence in a manner analogous to racial prejudices long entrenched in Latin America. The "disappeared person" was most often killed in an attempt to eradicate identity and biography and terrorize a far wider range of people. The numbers of the disappeared are estimated at 1 500 in Brazil, 3 000 in Chile, 5 800 in Peru and 30 000 in Argentina. Bodies were usually disposed of in common, unmarked, graves or dropped into the ocean from helicopters. The majority of the disappeared remain unaccounted for and their torturers and executioners unidentified (Funari, Zarankin and Salerno, this volume).

Disappearance lies at the core of an archaeology of repression because, in the absence of documentary evidence and with only the fragmentary recollection of a few survivors, the

material traces of clandestine detention centres offer some hope of substantiating the record of the past – of understanding what Mazz (this volume) appropriately calls the "technologies of power".

Clandestine detention centres were usually set up in existing buildings and identified by code-names. Through Operation Condor each was part of a network that anticipated the system of "extraordinary rendition" characteristic of the post-2001 "war on terror": "people could be arrested in Argentina, sent to ESMA, ORLETI or Pozo de Banfield clandestine centers of detention ("chupaderos"), and moved to Uruguay. They could be tortured at Infierno Chico, transferred to Infierno Grande del 300 Carlos (Batallón No.13), and be finally killed (Batallón No.14) or imprisoned at maximum security prisons (Penal de Libertad, Punta de Rieles)" (Mazz, this volume). Mapping this network and recording the remnants of its detention centres offers the opportunity of grounding the fragmentary recollections of survivors and the occasional documentary source in a substantial system of meaning that recovers memory and defeats the objective of eradicating the lives of the regimes' victims through the processes of disappearance.

Andrés Zarankin and Claudio Niro's report on archaeological research at Argentina's Club Atlético sets out a powerful methodology for investigating clandestine detention centres. Club Atlético was located in the Federal Police warehouse's basement on Paseo Colón Avenue, Buenos Aires and processed an estimated 1 500 detainees while it was operative in 1977. Because (by definition for a clandestine facility) there is no surviving documentation, and in this case the building has been demolished, floor plans were reconstructed from the accounts of survivors, cross-referenced with each other, configured using analytical techniques derived from urban geography and then tested against the results of archaeological excavation. From this, the team could establish the mechanisms of repression and de-humanization: the central torture chamber and the surrounding holding cells where prisoners were kept hooded, and in handcuffs and leg-irons.

More tenuous perhaps, but invaluable in augmenting the system of meaning and memory, is material evidence of resistance to the regime of humiliation, torture and de-humanization in the detention centres. In his chapter in this volume, Mazz sets out two areas of possibility for an archaeology of resistance to disappearance: evidence for escape attempts and prisoners' craft work, such as toys made from wood and bone. For their part Navarreta and López (this volume) turn to graffiti, taking as a case study Cuartel San Carlos, Caracas, Venezuela, where they are able to identify at least ten different categories of expression by prisoners.

Such evidence for resistance will accumulate slowly, as more clandestine detention centres are opened for systematic investigation. Far more established is the recovery of corporeal evidence – the exhumation of bodies from unmarked graves that, more often then not, contain the remains of many individuals. Forensic archaeology is well established as a discipline in its own right with an arsenal of scientific techniques (Fondebrider, this volume). Its potential is well understood, particularly given the extensive use of forensic evidence in the war crimes trials that followed from the Balkan

conflicts of the 1990s. However, as Funari and Vieira de Oliveira's account of work at Rio de Janeiro's Ricardo de Albuquerque cemetery shows, exhumation and the subsequent identification of victims was often very difficult in the years when these approaches were first being applied. The Ricardo de Albuquerque cemetery contained more than 2000 unnamed bodies, largely homeless people and in common graves, among which were believed to be the bodies of 14 disappeared persons. Bones were mixed with plastic and metal debris from coffins and bodies had been carelessly exhumed, with bones often showing damage from picks. Damage to skulls made it difficult to use dental records and lack of funding prevented DNA analysis. These challenges of identification are confirmed by Mazz (this volume) for Uruguay. Mazz suggests that, in some circumstanced, we may need to be satisfied with a generalized "typology of death" which re-creates categories of experience of victims in the process of being stripped of their identity rather that recovering specific histories. But at the same time it remains important to continue to refine forensic techniques in the interests of producing ever-more-accurate forensic evidence.

All of these aspects of an archaeology of repression are likely to share, in one way or another, the characteristic of engagement. Because the collapse of Latin America's military regimes prompted widespread movements pushing for the revelation of what had been hidden and for the punishment of perpetrators, any process of collecting testimony and recovering material evidence was bound to be socially and politically engaged. While engagement is a theme that runs through all the chapters in this collection, it is most explicit in Patricia Fournier and José Martínez Herrera account of the 1968 killing of peaceful demonstrators by Mexican armed forces at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco. While the importance of recovering memories of the past has now been acknowledged by most Latin American governments, including in some cases formal commissions and enquiries, Mexico has yet to acknowledge the role of the state in repressing political opposition ahead of the 1968 Olympic Games. Fournier and Herrera's chapter is, as a result, as much a call to future action as a study of the past. They write: "the 1968 massacre is still present in the collective imaginary, the social memory, the oral tradition, the written chronicles, and survivors' testimonies. The social demand to shed light on the tragic night at Tlatelolco and other criminal acts of state terrorism is clearly summarized by the slogan created in the first anniversary of the killing, a slogan which is valid among people who fight for a democratic Mexico: October 2 should not be forgotten!". Their conclusion is prescient; in early October 2008, several thousand gathered in Tlatelolco Square to pay tribute to those who had died forty years earlier and hear Mexico City's Mayor make a public commitment to uncover the truth behind the killings (BBC News 2008).

Returning, one more time, to Latour's process of "packing the world into words", we can see how a growing understanding of the mechanics of authoritarianism in the Latin American juntas of the last century can serve as a laboratory for revealing pattern and meaning in our own times. The violent repression of opposition by the Mexican government in its preparations for the 1968 Olympic Games anticipates the actions of the

Chinese government forty years later. State terror by means of disappearance in Latin America is built on precedents by French occupation forces in Algeria, and prefigures the continuing use of this form of terror today in Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and by Morocco in Western Sahara.[1] Clandestine detention centres such as Club Atlético in Buenos Aires prefigure Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (McSherry 2005). In Latour's terms a range of operators (survivor's accounts, building plans, documentary fragments, forensic evidence, excavation results) are translated into words and are articulated as a common system of references that move from past to present, and present to past, as understanding of their meaning widens and deepens.

The outcome of such research, as the title of this collection of essays signals, is the restoration of memory. In contrast to a reactionary nostalgia, such as the yearning of military juntas and their civilian supporters for a prelapsarian world of regimented order, a restored memory assists in processes of restitution and redress by insisting on understanding historical sequences of cause, effect and consequence (Boym 2001). Archaeology has always been part of such "memory projects", given that the recovery of material remnants from the past enhances recall through sensory experience and the claim of authenticity – the essential idea of the museum (Bennett 1995; Hall 2006).

We can perhaps think of the overall project of an archaeology of repression and resistance as the construction of a new, virtual museum in which the assemblage of material evidence, oral testimony and documentary fragments both empowers those for who the history of repressive regimes has specific meaning and also serves as a set of references for questions of human rights today, and into the future. For in this circulating system of references the engagement with questions of justice and human rights in the present day is ineluctable. As Major General Anthony Taguba, who investigated torture at Abu Ghraib wrote in the preface of a 2008 report by Physicians for Human Rights: "after years of disclosures by government investigations, media accounts, and reports from human rights organizations, there is no longer any doubt as to whether the current administration has committed war crimes. The only question that remains to be answered is whether those who ordered the use of torture will be held to account" (quoted by Lewis 2008).

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[1] see Project Disappeared; www.desaparecidos.org; International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances: www.icaed.org.

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