IN AND OUT OF THE PERIPHERAL NETWORK CITY: URBAN SPACES WRITTEN BY VIOLENCE IN POSTWAR GUATEMALA

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ABSTRACT

IN AND OUT OF THE PERIPHERAL NETWORK CITY: URBAN SPACES WRITTEN BY VIOLENCE IN POSTWAR GUATEMALA

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In and Out of the Peripheral Network City: Urban Spaces Written by Violence in Postwar Guatemala analyzes transformations of urban space and culture in contemporary Guatemala. More specifically, the study focuses on material and discursive responses to urban violence as they appear in literature and related cultural products in and about postwar Guatemala City (1997-present). The study contends that, while Guatemala City undeniably operates under the same logic as substantially larger Latin American megacities, with populations of 8 million and up, it must be read under its own terms, considering its recent history and cultural production that responds to such history, as well as the city layout, which shapes cultural mediations of people. Thus, I propose the trope of *the peripheral network city*—a mid-sized, partitioned urban sprawl, shaped by citizen and state involvement, with qualities of the megacity and the megaslum—to analyze Guatemala City's heterogeneous spaces and the role of violence in constructing them.

I conceptualize the peripheral network city through the lens of four main theoretical approaches: the archive, the repertoire, necropolitics, and violence. Discussions of these main theoretical concepts draw upon critical debates by thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Ann Laura Stoler, Antoinette Burton, Diana Taylor, Mike Davis, Achille Mbembe, and Slavoj Žižek, among others. To read the peripheral network city, the

specific texts under consideration are the site of the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* [Historical Archive of the National Police, AHPN] and its novelistic representation in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's 2009 novel *El material humano* [*Human Matter*], photographs of disappeared persons on the walls of buildings in Guatemala City's Historic Center, the novel *Ruido de fondo* [*Background Noise*] (2006) by Javier Payeras, and the collection of short stories *perZONA* (2014) by Juan Pensamiento Velasco.

By offering new paradigms through which to read the Global South city in the 21st century, this study contends that cultural production, and the city itself, register traces of the recent past and ensure the survival of urban violence not as a transient mode but rather as a structuring principle of culture in postwar Guatemala. More broadly, the dissertation posits that such a reading of violent urban spaces allows us to understand Latin America and the Global South from a Guatemalan perspective, which until now has been largely ignored by cultural criticism.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of Professor Nancy Marino.
If I am but a distant echo of you in many decades, I will be the best.
"En la literatura, no hay muchas ideas radicales."

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The research and writing of this dissertation about urban space took place in several metropolitan areas: those of the capital districts of Upstate New York and Mid-Michigan, Milwaukee, Virginia Beach, and in raucous internet café-video game arcades in Guatemala City. In mapping out this personal cartography, the indebtedness I have accrued is immense. First and foremost, I must acknowledge my advisor, Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, for her sound critiques of my work and willingness to step outside of her area of expertise on the colonial Andes to explore unchartered territory with me. Her dedication to students has undoubtedly served as a model to emulate and this dissertation has benefitted from her rigorous attention to details, which permeates these pages. Words hardly seem sufficient to express my debt of gratitude to the other members of my committee, particularly to Joseba Gabilondo, who, like my advisor, stepped well outside of his academic comfort zone to lend a hand. He has an uncanny ability to keep me on my toes and ask me the hard questions, while remaining extremely patient as I do my best to answer them. His unfailingly innovative theoretical interventions never cease to amaze me and, without him, not a single word of this dissertation would have been written.

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despite my own doubts and insecurities, saved me in more ways than I can list here. I thank Danny Méndez for aiding me with bureaucratic maneuvers and other nuances of the profession. Aside from being a phenomenal teaching supervisor and mentor, Adolfo Ausín offered good humor and sound advice, which lifted me up more times than he probably realizes. I am grateful to the anthropologists Najib Hourani and Mindy Morgan, both of whom offered just the right courses at just the right times and welcomed me as one of their own graduate students with warm collegiality. Also in the Department of Anthropology, Laurie Medina must be singled out for her kindness and for frequently chatting with me about the topics we so enjoy. A very special thank you is also due to Emily Holley, Associate Director of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and Distinguished Professor Emerita Laurie Kaguni, Director of the Center for Mitochondrial Science and Medicine, for their staunch support over the years.

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than I could have ever hoped to teach them and our continued correspondence (as well as their encouragement) sustains me through writing marathons.

All academic writing is an exercise in intertextuality and this dissertation builds on the work of distinguished scholars, many of whom I am fortunate enough to call friends. I am beholden to Arturo Arias, Jean Franco, and Diane Nelson who, aside from writing books that changed the way I see Guatemala, have always been enthusiastic about my research in ways that have enriched it. Arturo has been an especially fantastic mentor, friend, and rock with whom I have always been able to comfortably talk about our country of origin. Equally, I owe more than I can properly acknowledge to Tatiana Argüello, Nanci Buiza, Debra Castillo, Gloria Chacon, Maya Chinchilla, Sophie Esch, Carolyn Fornoff, John Kennedy, Leda Lozier, Alicia Miklos, John Petrus, Ana Patricia Rodríguez, Gabriela Ramirez-Chavez, María Roof, Ignacio Sarmiento Panez, and Oriel María Siu, all of whom have impacted my work in more ways than they can imagine. To those who were not immediately involved in this project but nurtured my growth at the institutions where I have studied, I wholeheartedly thank Gunnar Anderson, Gail Bulman, Kathryn Everly, Gustavo Fierro Zevallos, Myrna García-Calderón, Alan Hersker, Lora Lunt, Vilma Manzotti, Oscar Sarmiento, and Liliana Trevizán. You are all present in these pages.

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Indeed, the research on which this dissertation is based would not have been possible without funding from a variety of sources at Michigan State University. I thank

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Finally, I bow deeply to all Guatemalans, whether in the homeland or in the diaspora, who dare to dream of brighter tomorrows. *Que nunca pierdan sus chispas*.

PREFACE

All translations from primary sources originally in Spanish are mine unless otherwise indicated. Although these translations will prove redundant to bilingual English-Spanish readers, I did not want to distance some readers whose primary language is English. For longer quotes in Spanish, I have included the original accompanied by the English translation in brackets separated by spaces.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AGCA	General Archive of Central America (Archivo General de Centroamérica)
AHPN	Historical Archive of the National Police (Archivo Histórico de la Policia Nacional)
AVANCSO	Association for the Advancement of Social Sciences in Guatemala (Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales en Guatemala)
CEH	Commission for Historical Clarification (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico)
H.I.J.O.S.	Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice and Against Forgetting and Silence (Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia y Contra el Olvido y el Silencio)
LASA	Latin American Studies Association
PN	National Police (Policía Nacional)
PNC	National Civil Police (Policía Nacional Civil)
REMHI	Interdiocesan Project for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica)

Introduction

Guatemala City as an Object of Cultural Studies

I first arrived at the office of the *Asociación para el Avance de Ciencias Sociales en Guatemala* [Association for the Advancement of Social Sciences in Guatemala, AVANCSO], in the Historic Center of Guatemala City in July 2015, just as local student bands were rehearsing for the Independence Day parades to take place on 15 September. As the national anthem played, I knocked on the door of the AVANCSO office, hoping to learn more about its publications to see if there was anything about the proposed topic of my dissertation, postwar urban violence, that would deepen my research. I immediately found myself in the office of senior investigator Juan Vandeveire, who, aside from showing me the most recent AVANCSO publications, took an interest in my ambition to write about postwar Guatemala City from the perspective of cultural studies. Upon learning that I spent evenings with my sisters in Zone 18 on the northern edge of the sprawling capital, Vandeveire cited the Puente Belice, a massive bridge I was forced to cross daily, as a powerful metaphor for the socioeconomic inequalities in urban Guatemala today (Figure 1, p. 2).

The bridge, the busiest in the country, was inaugurated on 18 November 1958, between Zones 6 and 18, two of more than twenty numbered subdivisions in the Guatemalan capital. Despite its heavy traffic replete with tractor trailers and buses filled over capacity, the bridge has received little maintenance in its six decades of existence and chunks of it have been known to fall on squatter settlements in the ravines below, which house some of Guatemala City's poorest residents. At the time of its inception, the

Puente Belice was a hopeful symbol of modernization on the eve of the Guatemalan Civil War. It now stands for hardly more than a pulsing artery of pollution-ridden traffic as the privileged few traverse the zones above the desperately impoverished population. The only hope for residents below the bridge to leave the ravines, according to Vandeveire, is either through gang involvement or to marry outside of their social class, implying that transnational criminal organizations or wealthier spouses hold the keys to moving beyond Zone 18's urban decay (J. Vandeveire, personal conversation, July 2015).[1]

Figure 1: Puente Belice. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

[1] A 2016 article by engineer Jorge Erdmenger from *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala's foremost newspaper, reflects upon the history of the Puente Belice and the modern challenges it faces.

In this sense, the Puente Belice parallels Guatemala's own urban transformations and societal problems over the years, especially insofar as they have been negatively impacted by the internal armed conflicts. Considering Vandeveire's crucial observations, I was inspired to look beyond the literary representations of Guatemala City to understand the themes described within the pages of contemporary novels by authors of the postwar generation such as Javier Payeras and Rodrigo Rey Rosa as they are plainly visible in the spaces of the metropolis around us. As Vandeveire demonstrates, when we use a large urban space such as Guatemala City as raw material to reflect upon the aftermath of war, it becomes evident that post-conflict life can be more volatile than the period of turmoil that precedes it. The Puente Belice is but one of many examples that force us to reflect on what aftermath of the conflicts "looks like" in Guatemala. The ways in which people respond (or fail to respond) to a prolonged period of state-sponsored insurgency often alters how we perceive urban spaces and, in turn, sheds light on new (violent) societal norms in a neoliberal cityscape where the state has forgotten its most vulnerable citizens, in what Jean Franco would call "the antistate" (*Cruel Modernity* 217).[2]

In my own ponderings of the Puente Belice and terrified crossings of the rickety bridge, I also recall Vandeveire's interactions with other scholars. Among them is the anthropologist Diane Nelson, whose fieldwork in Guatemala began in 1985, a year marked by the proliferation of death squad activities. In tune with the dark symbolism of the

[2] Franco uses this term in *Cruel Modernity* (2013) when she describes the rape, murder, and mutilation of women who work in *maquiladoras*, factories in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico run by foreign companies and exporting its products to the country of that company. She writes, "Women are the losers in the antistate," but also asks "Why isolate Ciudad Juárez or Mexico as a whole? (216)". Her question points to the fact that Mexico is not the only Latin American antistate where "the government [is] dedicated to reinventing the nation as a neoliberal paradise" (206).

Puente Belice, Nelson reflects on the potential role of cultural responses to urban violence in postwar Guatemala with a chilling declaration:

> In Guatemala, where the war is officially over but peace is still a process, where you're never sure which innocent-looking face hides a serial murderer, where survival is never assured, and violent sequels constantly threaten [...] monuments, altars, and art works [...] may serve as tools—or weapons. (*Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala* 88)

Beyond her suggestion that both material *and* artistic expressions can exist alongside with and illustrate the underlying discourses that characterize life in postwar Guatemala, Nelson, by virtue of the categorization of such entities as tools or weapons, also implies that cultural products can help us think critically about the violent contexts to which they belong. In the case of both Vandeveire and Nelson, it is evident that urban violence is palpable in Guatemalan culture today. On the one hand, it exists as the state ignores the most marginalized sectors of society, exposing class disparities in the city space. On the other, a vast array of cultural production denounces one of the longest periods of open conflict in Latin American history as it continues to impact everyday life across classes and ethnic backgrounds.

As such, this dissertation, entitled *In and Out of the Peripheral Network City: Urban Spaces Written by Violence in Postwar Guatemala*, examines transformations of urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala in the period from 1997 to 2017. I have elected to situate my project in this time span because it reflects twenty years since the signing of the Peace Accords, the event credited with officially ending the Guatemalan Civil War.

Prolonged violence, however, indicates that the postwar period is essential for understanding Guatemala and Guatemalans in the new millennium, especially in relation to post-Cold War environments in other Latin American countries and elsewhere in the Global South.[3] Therefore, my study focuses on responses to urban violence as they appear in literature and related cultural products in and about postwar Guatemala City. It contends that, while Guatemala City undeniably operates under the same logic as substantially larger Latin American megacities (with populations of 8 million and up in the city proper), it must be analyzed under its own terms, considering its recent history and cultural production that responds to such history, as well as the city layout, which in turn shapes cultural mediations of people.[4] Thus, I offer the trope of *the peripheral network city*—a mid-sized, partitioned urban sprawl, shaped by citizen and state involvement, with qualities of the megacity and the megaslum—to analyze Guatemala City's heterogeneous spaces and the role of violence in constructing them.[5]

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[3] I follow cultural critic Anne Garland Mahler's understanding of the Global South when she writes, "the term 'Global South' originally came into use in the late 1970s to refer to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a replacement for the term 'Third World,' thus shifting the East-West framework of European colonialism and Cold War decolonization to a Gramscian North-South vision of power relations in which multidirectional capital flows mostly benefit the geographic North. However, in the last ten years and in such fields as cultural studies, history, and sociology, the concept of the Global South has diverged from a mere regional designation [...] to address spaces and peoples negatively impacted by globalization including within the borders of wealthier countries, such that there are economic Souths in the geographic North and Norths in the geographic South" (100). In my view, post-Katrina New Orleans represents an economic South in the geographic North whereas high-rise condominiums and luxury shopping malls in postwar Guatemala City constitute Norths in the geographic South.

[4] Urban geographer Alan Gilbert offers this numerical cutoff point in his edited volume, *The mega-city in Latin America* (1996). According to Gilbert, cities can be constituted as megacities if they have a population of 8 million and up in the city proper.

[5] I would argue that our idea of a megacity is an inherently modern place. Urban theorist Mike Davis reminds us that, in the megacities of the Global South, there are megaslums, some of which have populations of more than a million people in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, or Kolkata, in India. To quote Davis, "Megaslums arise when shantytowns and squatter communities merge in continuous belts of informal housing and poverty, usually on the urban periphery" (26).

I conceptualize the peripheral network city through the lens of four main theoretical approaches: the archive, the repertoire, necropolitics, and violence. Discussions of these main theoretical concepts draw upon critical debates by cultural critics such as Jacques Derrida, Ann Laura Stoler, Antoinette Burton, Diana Taylor, Mike Davis, Achille Mbembe, and Slavoj Žižek, among others. To read the peripheral network city, the specific texts under consideration are the site of the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* [the Historical Archive of the National Police, AHPN] and its novelistic representation in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's 2009 novel *El material humano* [*The Human Material*][6], photographs of disappeared persons on the walls of buildings in Guatemala City's Historic Center, the novel *Ruido de fondo* [*Background Noise*] (2006) by Javier Payeras, and the collection of short stories *perZONA* by Juan Pensamiento Velasco (2014). Although the literature of such renowned authors as Miguel Ángel Asturias, Francisco Goldman, Rigoberta Menchú, and Augusto Monterroso are pivotal to understanding Guatemala (with the literary interventions of Asturias and Menchú particularly important for understanding violence in Guatemala City), I am interested in texts that come *after* the official end of the internal armed conflicts in 1996.[7] Because of this temporal

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[6] Cultural critic Nanci Buiza suggests that, "in a less skeptical age," *El material humano* might be translated as "the human predicament." She writes "[s]uch a notion might nowadays seem quaint or pompously existential, but in a novel that grapples with the consequences of Guatemala's violent past, it takes on a stark actuality" (58).

[7] In *El Señor Presidente* [*Mr. President*] (1946) by Miguel Ángel Asturias, the narrative voice never mentions a specific country, although the author's country of origin helps us determine the location of the novel. "Mr. President" is a literary representation of the dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera, who ruled Guatemala from 1898 to 1920. In one instance, a map "in the form of a yawn" at the novel's end hints at the awkward contours of Guatemala's national territory. The use of *chapinismos* [colloquial Guatemalan phrases in Spanish] and talks of specific reference points such as the Cerrito del Carmen in Zone 1 of Guatemala City also help situate us there. For her part, Menchú's testimony offers a glimpse into the future Nobel Laureate's first visit the capital at the age of seven in 1966, where Guatemala City presented itself as an ideal haven for childhood fantasies such as a first ice cream cone (52). Later, the city becomes a much more

organization, the texts of Asturias, Goldman, Menchú, and Monterroso lie outside the scope of my dissertation. I have chosen the AHPN as my point of departure because I see the vast collection of police papers as the nucleus of the peripheral network city. It signals the establishment of Guatemala City as, to borrow Uruguayan cultural critic Eduardo Galeano's term, a "sanctuary of impunity" (2006), in other words a vital node in a complex network of violence, where crimes regularly go unpunished. The other texts of the selected corpus that are being analyzed here are also representative of significant cultural responses to urban violence in postwar Guatemala in the sense that urban space and culture are their main foci. As a group, the texts I have chosen may seem to be a heterogeneous ensemble of Guatemalan spatial/cultural production but the texts are unified by their common link to the representation of cultural responses to urban violence and the sociocultural processes that make up such violence.

By offering new paradigms through which to read the Global South city in the 21st century, this study contends that cultural production (as Nelson suggests in her ethnography), and the city itself (as Vandeveire emphasized in our personal conversation in 2015), register traces of the recent past and ensure the survival of urban violence not as a transient mode but rather as a structuring principle of culture in postwar Guatemala. More broadly, the dissertation posits that such a reading of violent urban spaces allows us to understand Latin America and the Global South from a Guatemalan perspective, which until now has been largely ignored by cultural criticism.

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volatile place after the bombing of the Spanish Embassy in Zone 9, eventually forcing Menchú to seek a temporary clandestine life in a nun convent (252, 261).

Even though academic discussions about Guatemala have been dominated by anthropology and history, I would argue that the country (and especially the capital city) is an ideal site for cultural studies. Guatemala City, Guatemala is the largest urban agglomeration between Mexico City and Medellín, Colombia. With a metro population of 5.7 million people out of the country's total population of 17.2 million, the city's cultural significance is overshadowed by the fact that little academic attention focuses on urban Guatemala, instead emphasizing the western highland region, where the bulk of human rights abuses took place during the country's nearly forty years of United States-funded civil war (1960-1996). Nevertheless, as a center stage for human rights abuses and diverse cultural responses to them, a critical understanding of Guatemala City is key to the development of contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies, which as a field has produced much work on urban spaces and subjectivities in recent years. Just as French philosopher Michel de Certeau encourages us to rethink the representation of modern urban space from atop buildings (92), the topography of the peripheral network city as seen from an airliner above offers glimpses into the contradictory nodes of modernity and poverty, carefully-planned elite enclaves and unplanned squatter settlements, both as the result of neoliberalism, and challenging geographic features that combine to make the postwar Guatemalan urban milieu.[8] Located in Guatemala's central mountainous region in proximity to the Pacific Ring of Fire in a valley that sits between volcanoes and a lake,

[8] De Certeau makes his observation from the World Trade Center, reflecting on the buildings' height, which once offered panoramic representations of space in Manhattan and the surrounding areas. That the World Trade Center no longer towers over New York City is a testament to the fact that spaces (and ways for us to see them) are constantly evolving.

the city has experienced exponential growth from the second half of the 20th century to the present despite (or even because of) significant environmental events.[9] Indeed, Guatemala City was founded after a massive 7.5 earthquake leveled the former capital of Antigua in 1773, prompting the Spanish Crown to move the center of government and commerce to the neighboring valley in 1776 (Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit 6).

Aptly, then, in their reflection on this administrative decision to establish a new capital city, Kedron Thomas, Kevin Lewis O'Neill, and Thomas Offit remind us how Guatemala City, literally and figuratively, "was born from disaster" (4). This bleak outlook of disaster has characterized Guatemala City for much of its history, notably during the Guatemalan Civil War, when crimes such as forced disappearance became commonplace, as university professors, their students, and political activists spoke out against right-wing military governments. Over time, Guatemala City, like the rural parts of Guatemala with which it is normally associated, became another front in the civil war, and widespread impunity meant that urban violence became ingrained as a quotidian element of the culture. In the wake of the internal armed conflicts, this grim truth is even more apparent. In the new millennium, despite the so-called "Post-Peace" or postwar era associated with the end of 1996 to the present, urban Guatemalan life is intrinsically linked with danger. The Peace Accords, which promised limited state intervention in Guatemala, have resulted in a vacuum in public safety in the form of elevated drug and

[9] Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit write how the internal armed conflicts, coupled with the 7.5 earthquake in 1976, forced an influx of immigrants on the capital. Even after the earthquake, migrants continued to arrive in the capital in search of work in large numbers, resulting in the construction of makeshift settlements on whatever arable land was available, an antecedent to the present-day megaslum (6).

gang activity, alarmingly high murder rates that skyrocket past those of the war years, and a general attitude that the Guatemalan capital is a nexus for all that is wrong with humanity.[10]

Despite Guatemala City's dangerous reputation and prolonged warlike qualities that seem to signal the opposite of intellectual life, a characteristic shared with Central American neighbors such as El Salvador and Honduras, contemporary thinkers—human rights activists, archivists, artists, and writers—have sought to use cultural production as a sounding board to reconfigure the urban imaginary in the postwar era.[11] By combining textual analyses with readings of urban space in the peripheral network city, I agree with Colombian philosopher Armando Silva that the city is a permanent aesthetic creation, approaching Guatemala City not only as a significant urban area that influences creative works but also as a creative endeavor itself as peace-committed people seek to generate notions of hope, healing, and justice in a place of traumatic memories.[12] Indeed, the peripheral network city allows us to scrutinize urban space and culture to bring to light

[10] A 2014 article from *The Guardian* ranks Guatemala City as one of the ten most dangerous cities in the world due to its murder rate of 116.6 per 1,000 persons, with an average of just under 100 murders every week throughout the country. Belize City, San Salvador, Tegucigalpa, and San Pedro Sula are other Central American cities on this list, in addition to cities in Jamaica and South Africa.

[11] A Salvadoran cultural response to urban violence can be found in the novel *El asco* [*Revulsion*] (1997) by Horacio Castellanos Moya, which describes an artist's journey back to San Salvador from Montreal after the death of his mother. The novel is harshly critical of postwar El Salvador, speaking negatively about everything from fast food restaurants to more traditional Salvadoran foods and corrupt politicians. Because of its critique of neoliberal policies, the novel is a good accompaniment to *Ruido de Fondo* by Javier Payeras. In the Honduran context, the bilingual anthology *Women's Poems of Protest and Resistance: Honduras (2009-2014)* (2015) edited by Lety Elvir and María Roof is another example of a Central American cultural response to urban violence.

[12] For further reading on Silva's notion of the city as a permanent aesthetic creation, see *Imaginarios urbanos, Bogotá y São Paulo: Cultura y comunicación urbana en América Latina* (1992). Cultural critic Rebecca Biron continues this idea when she states, "Cities can be considered works of art, where art is understood in its broadest sense as the material and performative expression of both ideas and sensibilities. Such an approach confronts the ways in which different urban imaginaries account for the spatial and temporal particularity of the Latin American urban scene" (xii-xiii).

how state power and citizen involvement are instrumental in imagining and constructing Guatemala City, as elsewhere in other economically-divided urban areas in Latin America and the Global South.

The inspiration for my dissertation rests in part on the fact that Guatemala (and, indeed, Central America) has been largely invisible in the field of Latin American Cultural Studies, despite the global significance of the region. Very few projects to date exist about urban violence in Guatemala from the perspective of culture. Although anthropologists and historians have been producing work on Guatemala since at least the middle of the 20th century, few of these scholars have focused on the capital city, resulting in an academic void even among circles of well-established specialists of the country. Scholars of Guatemala, like tourists and missionary workers, often leave the city immediately upon their exits from La Aurora International Airport in favor of the western highlands, a symbolic act largely attributed to the perceived danger of urban Guatemala. As Kedron Thomas, Kevin Lewis O'Neill, and Thomas Offit put it, in tune with their reminder that Guatemala City was born from seismic disaster followed by sociopolitical upheaval, "research in the historically *ladino/a* (nonindigenous) capital city has often been viewed as uninteresting and even irrelevant, prompting many foreign researchers, like tourists, to leave Guatemala City only moments after their flights touch down" (4). In their own reflections on Guatemala's marginal position in academic discussions in the United States, the three anthropologists affirm that "the theorization of the city remains woefully incomplete" (7), which this dissertation aims to reverse.

Arturo Arias provides some explanations for the underdevelopment of work on Guatemala, shedding light on multiple layers of marginality that characterize the country in relation to Guatemala's and, indeed, Central America's subaltern position in the advancement of Latin American Cultural Studies. In his book, *Taking their Word: Literature and the Signs of Central America* (2007), Arias refers to the entire Central American region as "the invisible hinge between North and South, with the brief exception of the 1980s, when political scientists paid attention to its revolutionary struggles before moving on to world systems theories" (xvi-xvii). The second decade of the 21st century, after the publication of Arias's book, also reflects renewed political interest in Central America, especially in terms of the influx of unaccompanied Central American child migration to the United States, which spiked in 2014. Central America also made a significant impact on global media outlets in the year 2018, which was plagued by the Nicaraguan political crisis, the end of Temporary Protected Status for diasporic Hondurans and Salvadorans, and the child separation crisis under the zero-tolerance policy of the current United States presidential administration, linked with the exodus of Central American asylum seekers. The peril of these circumstances illuminates Central America's peripheral status, even in comparison to Mexico, which Central Americans must pass through to enter the United States by land.[13] As Arias contends,

[13] Political scientists Jonathan T. Hiskey, Abby Córdova, Diana Orcés, and Mary Ann Malone, in *Understanding the Central American Refugee Crisis: Why They Are Fleeing and How U.S. Policies are Failing to Deter Them* (2016), cite how tens of thousands of unaccompanied children from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras arrived in the southern United States in the spring and summer of 2014 to seek asylum. The event was labeled a "humanitarian crisis" by the Obama administration and promoted President Obama to meet with Central American leaders to devise a plan to curb the spike in immigration from these nations. In January 2018, the current administration announced that it would end Temporary Protected Status for an estimated 200,000 immigrants from El Salvador, prompting concerns that dropped remittances would lead

although Latin America constitutes its own marginality in relation to the hegemony of the United States, there are what he calls "subhegemonic" countries within the region that exert some degree of power over their less-powerful neighbors, both in economic terms and in relation to the circulation of literature (xi); this latter notion is particularly true in the case of Mexico and Argentina, as both countries wield subhegemonic power in Latin America and in the field of Latin American Cultural Studies. I would argue that Colombia, Peru, and Chile also fit into this category, due to the global popularity of authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Isabel Allende, respectively, and the superior economic progress in the Chilean case in comparison with other parts of Latin America.[14]

In this regard, Guatemala and its capital (as well as the literature in and about Guatemala City) are doubly marginalized, a characteristic shared by the other nations and cities of Central America, "which is marginalized by the cosmopolitan center [the United States] and by countries exercising hegemony in Latin America" (Arias xi-xii). The double marginality of Guatemala in comparison with subhegemonic Latin American countries, themselves marginal in relation to their northerly counterparts in the Americas, becomes even more poignant when we consider the political presence that the United States has consistently had in the country, as described in the historical context of the next chapter. The systematic exclusion of Central America from academic spaces (including

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to increased poverty and urban violence in the Central American country. Immigrants from Honduras face a similar fate as of May 2018 (Acevedo, 2018).

[14] The CIA World Factbook lists Chile's 2017 GDP at $263.2 billion whereas the GDP of Guatemala is at $138.3 billion for the same year.

departments of Spanish and Portuguese or Romance Languages at liberal arts universities, which would theoretically be apt venues for its exploration) calls attention to the urgency of my study to help us determine the vital contribution of Guatemala and Central America to larger geopolitical frameworks beyond the region. Given Guatemala and Central America's relative invisibility, it is no surprise that the country has been slow to find its place among existing Latin American cultural criticism, particularly as such criticism pertains to the theorization of Latin American and Global South cities.

The peripheral network city serves as a point of reference throughout the dissertation, with each subsequent chapter illuminating its specific elements. The first chapter provides a theoretical background about urban studies and the making of Guatemala City and the next three chapters are dedicated to cultural analysis of the primary texts at the core of this study. Chapter One, "Conceptualizing the Peripheral Network City," begins by providing a discussion of scholarship on cities in the Global South, Latin America, and Guatemala to help situate the marginal place of urban Guatemala in cultural studies. The chapter then provides a genealogy of the concept of the peripheral network city as I conceptualize it through the lens of violence in postwar Guatemala City. Each subsequent chapter of cultural analysis accentuates a specific aspect of to the peripheral network city to analyze it from a variety of angles.

Chapter Two, "The Archive as Nucleus of the Peripheral Network City," uses the Historical Archives of the National Police (AHPN) as a point of departure to understand official narratives of state-sponsored human rights violations that belong to *the archive,* a main pillar of the peripheral network city. The concept of the archive guides the chapter,

which examines both the site of the AHPN and its novelistic representation in the novel *El material humano* (2009) by Rodrigo Rey Rosa to understand the archive's role in writing urban violence into the fabric of the peripheral network city. A close analysis of these texts, both of which are sites of trauma, reveals how the AHPN in Zone 6 (an ostensibly marginal outer zone of Guatemala City) is reconstituted as an *Arkhe/Aleph* (center and origin of state power) crucial to the advancement of contemporary Guatemalan thought deeply rooted in globality, thus underscoring the centrality of the AHPN in postwar Guatemala, the cultural significance of the peripheral network city approach in the postwar context, and the centralized place of the archive within it.[15]

Chapter Three, "Embodied Practice: Record Keeping Beyond the Police Papers," moves the analysis to Zone 1, often perceived as the literal and figurative center of Guatemala City (and, indeed, of modern Guatemala). The chapter analyzes the *embodied practice* (*repertoire*) of the strategic placement of archival materials (in this case photographs of disappeared persons and messages) in Zone 1 by the Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice and Against Forgetting and Silence [H.I.J.O.S.], living relatives of war victims who were forcibly disappeared. The discourses of state-sponsored violence in

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[15] Héctor Hoyos defines globality as "a broadening consciousness of the world as a whole," particularly through literature. We can use this term to understand links between cultural production that responds to dictatorship, civil war, and other forms of insurgency in the Global South. The aleph motif, which takes its name from the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, derives from the intertextuality between Rey Rosa's novel and Jorge Luis Borges's short story "La casa de Asterión," included in the *El Aleph* anthology, published in 1997. Hoyos further develops the aleph motif in his book *Beyond Bolaño: The Global Latin American Novel* (2015) "to allude to a key precedent to the emplotment of globalization so prevalent in the contemporary Latin American novel" (2). Just as Borges's Aleph "provides a quick illustration of how cultural products may participate in the creation and recreation of narratives of the global," it also forces us to consider where the center of the Latin American or indeed the world universe lies. In the Guatemalan context, it is applicable to the AHPN (as both the *Arkhe* and the *Aleph* denote beginnings and origins) as well as the idiosyncrasies of the peripheral network city and where the cultural center of the country lies.

these visual narratives (often with first-person messages in graffiti from the perspective of the victims), allow war victims to acquire agency in the present and occupy city space where they were once forgotten, with "agency" understood as that which has to do with "a variety of public practices that link creativity with social contributions" (3), following Doris Sommer.[16] In other words, citizens are acting out against state power in the literal center of the peripheral network city. Simultaneously, the H.I.J.O.S. photographs demonstrate how the *repertoire* adds another layer to the peripheral network city by exposing the reciprocal interplays between the state-controlled *archive* and citizen-driven *embodied practice*. Inscriptions of the past spill beyond the parameters of the AHPN (and the notion of the archive) where the police papers are codified, digitized, and stored vis-à-vis the performative use of city walls, streets, sidewalks, and billboards as surfaces for inscriptions of forced disappearance that have dominated discourses of violence in the peripheral network city.

Chapter Four, "Reproducing War: Systemic Violence and Necropolitics in the Urban Milieu," demonstrates that while embodied practice is a strategy for acting out against state power, the lack of state intervention proposed by the 1996 Peace Accords echoes Achille Mbembe's notion of the necropolitical, which allows the state to control its poorest citizens. *Necropolitics* and *violence* continue to dominate the cultures of urban space in postwar Guatemala, especially when we consider how systemic violence, as described by Slavoj Žižek, constitutes substantial aspects of the theoretical frameworks

[16] Sommer proposes this more specifically as a definition of *cultural agency*, which she sees as a transformative strategy to understand how art and culture act to denounce injustice and, from an academic perspective, to promote (or deform) Latin American culture as raw material for analysis (4).

guiding this study. As demonstrated by *El material humano*, the AHPN, and H.I.J.O.S. photographs, diverse cultural responses write violence into the peripheral network city, while simultaneously expounding upon the infinitely complex sociocultural processes that characterize it. Through a close analysis of Javier Payeras's novel *Ruido de fondo* (2006) and Juan Pensamiento Velasco's collection of short stories *perZONA* (2014), Chapter Four has a twofold mission: to assess how necropolitics and violence "reproduce war" in a climate of insecurity and, through the text's representations of various zones in Guatemala City, demonstrate how the peripheral network city operates under the logic of both the megacity and the megaslum in Guatemala.[17] Although the literary characters of these texts come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, their traumas are nonetheless written by violence as they traverse both the economically advanced and impoverished areas of the peripheral network city.

The conclusion, "The Peripheral Network City in the New Millennium," provides a summarization of the individual elements of the peripheral network city—the archive, the repertoire, necropolitics, and violence—to review their roles in the production of postwar Guatemala City space. The conclusion continues by examining commonalities among the chapters and offers some final thoughts on contemporary responses to urban violence in postwar Guatemala from the perspective of culture. The aim is to show how the texts analyzed here help us conceptualize the *peripheral network city* by writing violence into the postwar Guatemalan urban imaginary through a critical lens that

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[17] The notion of "reproducing war," which I further address in Chapter Four, comes from a 2010 ethnographic interview conducted by Deborah Levenson in a correctional facility the Guatemala City suburb of San José Pinula (*Adiós Niño: The Gangs of Guatemala City and the Politics of Death* 77).

addresses Guatemala City's prolonged identity as a systemically violent place after the Peace Accords. This section ends by establishing parallels between Guatemala City and other cities in Latin America and the Global South, thus delineating the use of the peripheral network city category elsewhere in the world. While the dissertation focuses on Guatemala, these final examples constitute a Guatemalan gaze on Latin American Cultural Studies and, more generally, Global South Studies.

I would like to emphasize that this dissertation is not meant to be a comprehensive study of all cultural production in postwar Guatemala that responds to urban violence, nor do I wish to suggest that cultural studies or even the peripheral network city provide all-encompassing theoretical models to understand urban Guatemala. Rather, *In and Out of the Peripheral Network City: Urban Spaces Written by Violence in Postwar Guatemala*, vis-à-vis urban space and culture, posits a contemporary turn that aids in the advancement of Central and Latin American thought in a global context from the perspective of Guatemala.

Chapter One

Conceptualizing the Peripheral Network City

In this chapter, I expound upon the historical and theoretical arc of the *peripheral network city*, which serves as the backbone of this dissertation. As I describe in the introduction, the term departs from theoretical underpinnings rooted in infrastructures of state power and record keeping, embodied practice, and multifaceted manifestations of deeply-politicized violence, which, I argue, deepen our understanding of urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala, Latin America, and the Global South. I first provide a brief geographical and historical background, highlighting key events of the Guatemalan Civil War, especially those that took place in Guatemala City. I then offer a summary of Guatemala's underrepresentation in Latin American Cultural Studies to provide an argument for the relevance of the country to contemporary debates in the field, followed by a brief overview of select works about Global South and Latin American cities. I then delve into extant scholarship on Guatemala in anthropology, history, literature, and cultural studies, and conclude with the epithet of the peripheral network city as a stepping stone toward a new theorization of urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala.

1.1 Geopolitics and the Guatemalan Civil War

To conceptualize the analysis in this and subsequent chapters, here I briefly sketch the geography of Guatemala and the history of the Guatemalan Civil War, with emphasis on events that shaped violence in Guatemala City. In terms of geography, Guatemala is

the northernmost of the Central American countries and shares borders with Mexico and Belize to the north and El Salvador and Honduras to the south, with coastlines on the Caribbean Sea to the east and Pacific Ocean to the south. It is divided into sub-regions: the Northern Lowlands, which is the vast jungle that extends to the border with Mexico, the low-lying Caribbean coast and eastern region of the country along the Salvadoran and Honduran borders, the Western Highlands, with a largely indigenous population, the Central Highlands and Capital Region of Guatemala City, and the Pacific Lowlands. It is also politically divided into twenty-two *departamentos* [departments], which, in turn, are divided into a total of 340 municipalities across the country. Guatemala City is in a department by the same name, Guatemala, which, in addition to the capital, has sixteen other municipalities. These municipalities each have some degree of urbanization, notably the satellite cities of Amatitlán, Mixco, and Villa Nueva. The Guatemala department shares borders with the Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, El Progreso, Escuintla, Jalapa, Sacatepéquez, and Santa Rosa departments.

Also noteworthy is the fact that, although the country's official language is Spanish, an additional twenty-three Mayan languages are spoken, the most prominent being K'iche' (1,000,000 speakers in the Western Highlands), Q'eqchi' (555,000 speakers in the Central Highlands), Kaqchikel (500,000 speakers in the Western Highlands), and Mam (480,000 speakers in the Western Highlands).[18] The remaining Mayan languages have less than 100,000 speakers each, with the Itza' language facing imminent extinction

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[18] Arturo Arias points out how Mayan languages in Guatemala are often erroneously labeled as dialects. In fact, the twenty-three Mayan languages of the country each have their own regional dialects (*YouTube* 2008).

at only twelve native speakers in the Petén department in the jungles of Northern Guatemala. In addition, the Xinka language also faces an uncertain future; it is not derived from Mayan and has unclear origins with fewer than 100 speakers in a tiny area of the Pacific Lowlands.[19] Garifuna, with approximately 5,000 speakers, is also a non-Mayan language related to Arawakan. It is unique to the Garifuna people of the Caribbean coast who trace their origins to West African slaves originally brought to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and deported by British colonizers to the Honduran island of Roatán in the early 19th century.[20] The linguistic diversity of Guatemala translates to demographics made up of *mestizos* (often called *ladinos* in Guatemala), of mixed European and indigenous ancestry, the indigenous peoples of Maya descent, and Garifuna peoples. These groups, in addition to immigrants from other parts of Latin America, especially the Central American countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, as well as settlers from Mexico, China, South Korea, Palestine, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United States, and Canada reside in Guatemala City.[21]

As with the other Central American countries, Guatemala is located along the Pacific Ring of Fire, which encompasses a major basin of the Pacific Ocean spanning a

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[19] The work of the Guatemalan linguist Rodrigo Ranero sheds light on the status of the Xinka language. While still an undergraduate at Pomona College, Ranero secured funds to rescue the dying language, first with workshops and community discussions in the Santa Rosa department and later with a Spanish-Xinka textbook to use in area schools. Ranero indicates that there are several dialects of the Xinka language, with notable structural differences (Ranero 2013 cited in Dary Fuentes).

[20] The *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* calls the Garifuna people "Central America's Overlooked Segment of the African Diaspora" (2010).

[21] A 2014 article of *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala's most well-circulated newspaper, discusses immigration to the country, with communities of Korean and German immigrants most influential in Guatemala City, which now has a Korea Town and an Avenue named for Seoul, as well as a regular Oktoberfest. Immigrants from the neighboring Central American countries are also common in Guatemalan and many of whom have established small eateries with typical foods from across the isthmus.

25,000-mile horseshoe shape from New Zealand, up to Japan, and along the coast of the Americas to its southernmost tip in Chile. This geographic location means that Guatemala is seismically active, with frequent tremors and thirty-seven volcanoes within its territory, three of which, the Volcán Acatenango, Volcán de Agua, and Volcán Pacaya are visible from Guatemala City. The seismic activity in this region of the country is precisely what triggered the establishment of Guatemala City in 1776, when the capital was officially moved from its former site at Antigua. Even though Guatemala City itself is susceptible to earthquakes, it has grown significantly from the second half of the 20th century to the present, when "[b]etween 1973 and 1987, a period that includes the most intense years of the armed conflict, the population of Guatemala City nearly doubled from 890,000 to just over 1.6 million" (Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit 6). If the 7.5 magnitude earthquake directly below Antigua in 1773 gave birth to Guatemala City, then these statistics demonstrate that its population growth can also be traced through the internal armed conflicts, which ignited considerable waves of internally displaced persons.

In the two decades before the war, however, Guatemala experienced a prosperous era. In what is now commonly-referred to as the "diez años de primavera" [ten years of spring, or the Guatemalan Revolution], the period between 1944 and 1954 is marked by the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of the thirteen-year dictatorship of Jorge Ubico, replacing him with the democratically-elected presidents Juan José Arévalo in 1945 and Jacobo Árbenz in 1951. It was during the Árbenz administration that the country experienced an expansion of voting rights for illiterate Guatemalans, the abolition of forced labor, a constitution ratification, the improvement of the health system and social

security, and agrarian reform (Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby 4). Another hallmark of the Árbenz administration is the "zonification" of Guatemala City, the modern process modeled after the layout of Paris that now characterizes the design of the capital. In 1952, working under the supervision of Martín Prado Vélez, at the time mayor of the capital, the civil engineer Raúl Aguilar Batres "was called upon to reimagine Guatemala City's layout [...] characterized by the numeric zone system still used today and adopted by other Guatemalan cities such as Cobán and Quetzaltenango" (Bentley 4). Originating in the Historic Center in Zone 1, the zones numbering one through twenty-two work their way out in a spiral snail shell pattern, and this system is now "regarded as a way for people to create reference points, estimate arrival times, and pinpoint specific locations within the city" (Bentley 4-5).

In addition to the modern characteristics associated with Guatemala City's zones, this layout by Aguilar Batres also carries, I argue:

> cultural, socioeconomic, and inherently warlike implications of organizing the metropolitan sprawl into nameless, numbered units, as demonstrated by the fact that the wealthy elite originally inhabited the historic center but have since spilled into the periphery when Zone 1 became poorer and more dangerous during the war, and because warzones are hostile environments occupied by combatants and illicit activities in times of impunity. (Bentley 5)

In other words, while the zones of Guatemala City represent progress, they also denote socioeconomic divisions in the city and their nameless, numbered units correspond to the

segregation of Guatemalan urbanites and anonymity of war victims within the confines of the capital. Still, this advancement should still be heralded as a sign of progress during the Árbenz administration and its push toward modernization in Guatemala.[22] As support for the president grew, particularly from left-wing political parties including the Guatemalan Communist Party, clashes with the United Fruit Company also began, whose lands Árbenz attempted to expropriate as part of agrarian reform, setting the stage for his ouster. Nicholas Cullather, who worked for the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States (CIA), describes how the U.S. government played an instrumental role in overthrowing Árbenz due to the anti-communist agenda of then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower. With the support of Nicaragua, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic, all of which were under the dictatorships of Anastasio Somoza, Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, respectively, the CIA financed and directed the undercover operation to overthrow Árbenz to stop the perceived spread of communism (106). As historians Greg Grandin, Deborah T. Levenson, and Elizabeth Oglesby tell us, "[f]or its part, the United States would model its disastrous 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba on the 1954 Guatemalan operation, a serious miscalculation that not only failed to topple Castro but further polarized hemispheric politics" (5), showing how the origins of the Guatemalan Civil War are deeply rooted in Cold War politics in the Americas.

[22] As presented in Deborah T. Levenson's *Adiós Niño* (2013), "[b]y the year 2010, capitalist modernity could not provide Guatemala City with a safe walk or a regular—clean or dirty—water supply in its mundanely named Zones 1-8, 11, 12, 17-21, and others not in the confined wealthy areas, much less develop national wealth and distribute it to an increasingly poor population" (12). Therefore, we can begin to discern attitudes such as wealth and privilege and poverty and squalor and associate them with specific zones throughout Guatemala City.

Between 19 and 27 June 1954, the CIA worked to overthrow the Árbenz government, dropping leaflets from planes on the central plaza in Zone 1 Guatemala City and orchestrating what Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby refer to as "a full-spectrum coup, distinguished from previous U.S. interventions in Latin America and elsewhere because it drew on every aspect of U.S. power, using politics, economics, diplomacy, psychology, and mass media to destabilize Árbenz's government" (4). Aside from the leaflets to announce the ouster of Árbenz, Jean Franco recalls the immediate notifications sent to the American School of Guatemala, where she had been teaching at the time. Teachers remained on the campus in the Vista Hermosa neighborhood of Zone 15 for several days, news reports on the radio were tuned out with incessant music of the marimba, and Franco sought refuge with the author Alaíde Foppa, who was married to a cabinet advisor to Árbenz (J. Franco, personal communication, October 22, 2016).[23] Árbenz was overthrown because he had legalized the communist party in Guatemala and moved to nationalize the plantations of the United Fruit Company and was subsequently replaced with Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas. With the 1954 invasion and replacement of Árbenz with Castillo Armas, the actions of the CIA demonstrate how the capital city served as a catalyst for the internal armed conflicts. The bombing of Guatemala City and other urban areas immediately around it at the time was initially resisted by the Guatemalan Army, but the aftereffects of the attacks caused a gap between civil servants and politicians as well as in various sectors of Guatemalan society (Cullather 106). Castillo Armas would go

[23] Foppa was later forcibly disappeared in broad daylight in Guatemala City on 19 December 1980. She is presumed to be have been killed for her leftist leanings.

on to reverse the land reforms set in motion by Árbenz and removed voting rights for illiterate Guatemalans. As left-wing guerrilla groups began fighting with government military forces, Castillo Armas was assassinated on 26 July 1957 in the presidential palace in Guatemala City by Romeo Vásquez Sánchez, a leftist extremist.

As Cullather indicates, by overthrowing Árbenz, the CIA ended up undermining its own initial goal of creating a stable government in Guatemala. The rollback of previous civilian governments, especially that of Árbenz, resulted in leftist insurgencies in Guatemala City and rural Guatemala in 1960, the year which began the Guatemalan Civil War (117). In a 1959 *New York Times* article by Petra Fischer entitled "What's Doing in Guatemala City," the journalist draws attention to new hotels, boutiques, and restaurants in Zone 1 of Guatemala City near where the CIA overthrow took place. This area boasted glorified eateries and places to stay that "seem to mushroom overnight in the fancier districts," writes Fischer, who promotes Guatemala as a tourist destination for its "Mayan and Spanish colonial past, its country scenery and Indians (more than half of the population) who cling to their customs, costumes, languages, and lore" (Fischer n.p.). Fischer's description of Guatemala City is laudatory and mentions how easy it is to get around the modern capital's zone system, with shops and nightclubs that cater to tourists. Seemingly oblivious to the ensuing war and the role that the U.S. government played in its beginnings, Fischer encourages readers to visit Guatemala City and enjoy its modernity in an exotic land where tradition still exists for most the population, noting that Zones 1 and 4, the downtown area, and Zones 9 and 10, "stylish residential districts" are the only important areas to visit (Fischer n.p.). Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby echo

the contradictions of Fischer's article when they mention "[a]fter the overthrow of Árbenz and the installation of a pliant government, the United States began to invest heavily in tourism. Major chains built hotels; Washington funded the construction of roads and the modernization of the country's airport so it could handle jets; and the Guatemalan government relaxed its visa and currency-exchange requirements" (2). Allusions to Fischer's utopic descriptions of Guatemala City could be felt in 1966, when civilian rule was temporarily restored after the election of Julio César Méndez Montenegro, under a platform of democratic reform. Major insurgencies campaigned by the army, however, ensured that the presidency was short-lived, and military-backed Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio was elected president in 1970, granting the military more control over citizens, which foreshadows a series of military-dominated governments that would violently clash with guerrilla groups and indigenous peoples.

The systematic slaughter of indigenous peoples in the Western and Central Highlands of Guatemala often focuses our attention away from Guatemala City when we think about the internal armed conflicts, despite the fact they began in the capital. As historian Kirsten Weld suggests, however, the decades of the 1970s and 1980s mark "a time when the city acted as a 'war zone in the age of martyrs'" (125). This is due, in part, to "a marked escalation in state-sponsored assassinations, both inside and outside the city, of those individuals at the forefront of efforts to crack open democratic political spaces" (125), in other words, people on the Left who opposed the efforts of the Guatemalan government. A sharper turn to urban violence was felt in 1977, when a prominent lawyer and student leaders were killed by security forces in Guatemala City and on 29 May 1978,

when the military massacred thirty unarmed Q'eqchi' Maya peasants who had peacefully gathered to discuss rights to their land in the town of Panzós, which "shifted the conflict into a new register" (Weld 127). As noted by historian Deborah Levenson, "[i]n the city, where tens of thousands of urbanites protested what they immediately named 'The Panzós Massacre,' there was in 1978-79 a sharp increase in kidnappings in Guatemala City" (Levenson 33). The spike in violence was largely due to the actions of Germán Chupina Barahona, a graduate of the School of the Americas, who was appointed as General Director of the National Police [PN], a position he held for the duration of the military dictatorship of General Fernando Romeo Lucas García (Weld 127). Weld remarks, "the Chupina period (1978-1982) was distinguished by the extraordinary autonomy and direct authorship over urban violence exercised by PN authorities (all military men)" (128). Chupina was immediately set on enhancing the PN by selecting civilian collaborators from different zones throughout Guatemala City, called *orejas* [ears], or spies, who carefully monitored the actions of those who promoted democracy. In the same year, Commando Six, a special operations unit of the PN, began executing political crimes in Guatemala City (Weld 129).

Eventually, Chupina attempted to absolve the PN and replace its members with his chosen civilian collaborators in the zones of Guatemala City. As Weld describes, "Chupina's vision of police rationalization produced an increase in both common and political violence. The second half of 1978 saw Guatemala City's streets and outgoing highways littered with corpses, their faces smashed in, hands amputated, backs pierced by bullets" (129). The year 1978 also saw an increase in anti-government sentiments and

movements in Guatemala City, such as the strike of urban bus drivers for higher wages on the campus of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. The riot-control squads of the PN frequently fired directly upon striking workers from the bus company, or participants of other demonstrations such as state workers, municipal water authority workers, and political demonstrators, often killing people but strategically taking the organizers to torture them before their untimely deaths (129). In 1979, Death Squads, which had been in operation since the late 1960s, increased their activities in Guatemala City, some of which originated under the control of Chupina. Hit lists were compiled of left-wing and socialist democratic figures; subsequently, the Death Squads, with the government's approval, carried out political assassinations against "known criminals" with communist leanings. Among the most prominent people to fall victim to the urban Death Squads at the time included Oliverio Castañeda de León, president of the Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios [Association of University Students of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, or AEU] as well as other student leaders from the same institution who were either forcibly disappeared or killed. In the end, as Weld puts it, "so many members of the FUR and PSD parties [...] were assassinated that the parties ceased to exist" (131). She refers here to the United Revolutionary Front and the Social Democratic Party, whose members were largely comprised of university professors, students, and other learned citizens who had been targeted by Chupina. Because the United States closely monitored the Death Squad activity in Guatemala City, we can conclude that these murders were integral parts of Cold War politics.

As Weld observes, the late 1970s show how Guatemala City "had become a war zone, with confrontations between urban guerrillas and the PN, Mobile Military Police (PMA), or army nightly shattering an otherwise cowed silence" (131-2). Death Squads often operated under conditions of extreme secrecy, leaving behind little or no immediate evidence of their crimes, as Weld describes, "hardly marking the cityscape until the moment a corpse was dumped" (132). The perpetrators of these crimes were almost always dressed in civilian clothing, making it much more challenging to identify the criminals. Rural crimes, by contrast, were largely carried out by uniformed troops, allowing for their easy identification (132). Into the 1980s, violent crimes continued in Guatemala City under the direct influence of Chupina, the most significant of which is undoubtedly the police firebombing of the Spanish Embassy on 31 January 1980 where Maya peasants, including Vicente Menchú, father of the future Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum, were killed. The peasants had gathered at the embassy to bring attention to repression they faced in the Quiché department in the highlands. Regarding this event as transformative in nature, Levenson suggests the following:

> [i]t could be argued that the police firebombing that killed over thirty people who had peacefully occupied the Spanish embassy in January 1980 to protest and publicize the war in rural areas made the war 'official' in the city. What followed left no doubt that the state had declared all-out war there. Uniformed police kidnapped students from the funeral march for those killed at the Spanish embassy a few days after the assault on it. Thirty-one secondary and university students and factory workers were

> kidnapped in one day during the May 1 protest that year. One June 21, the narcotics squad division of the National Police 'disappeared' twenty-seven trade unionists in broad daylight out of a labor central's office a few blocks from the National Palace (33).[24]

The "official" declaration of the war in Guatemala City in 1980 was followed two years later by another wave of terror at the hands of Lucas García's successor, General Efraín Ríos Montt, who rose to power after a military coup. As one of the most infamous antagonists of the Guatemalan Civil War, Ríos Montt reclaimed much guerrilla territory, suspended political parties, and formed civilian defense patrols, which operated with great force in spy networks in Guatemala City, not unlike those set forth by Chupina. Ríos Montt's reign of terror, now characterized as genocide by the United Nations, also marks what Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby call the climax of the internal armed conflicts because Montt's government launched, among the previously mentioned movements, a scorched-earth campaign against Maya communities (5). By 23 June 1994, the *Comisión para el esclarecimiento histórico* [*Commission for Historical Clarification*, CEH] was established under the auspices of the Oslo Accords, part of a series on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to establish, in an objective way, an impartial perspective on human rights violations and violent acts we now associate with the Guatemalan Civil War

[24] MiMundo.org, a blog that serves as the personal platform for independent documentary photographer James Rodríguez, focuses on postwar Guatemala. In one blog entry on 24 February 2008 entitled "Chupina Barahona, Death Does Not Absolve You," Rodríguez points out that on the previous day, the HIJOS human rights group "publicly condemned the recently deceased German [sic] Chupina Barahona." Before his death, Chupina was "undergoing a judicial process for crimes against humanity within the Spanish court system," chiefly for his involvement in the assassinations of Oliverio Castañeda de León and other left-wing oriented university students, the disappearance of union leaders, and the firebombing of the Spanish Embassy.

(CEH 15). The duration of the commissions was two years, from February 1997 to February 1999, with the financial support from the governments of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The CEH was chaired by Christian Tomuschat, a German jurist, who later appointed Otilia Lux de Cotí, a Maya social leader and politician, and Edgar Alfredo Balsells Tojo, a lawyer and academic, to join his efforts.

Throughout the CEH, naming names is not allowed, however the resulting document is over 4,000 pages long and aims to understand why civilians (and especially indigenous people) were targeted during the Guatemalan Civil War, with the goal of preserving the memories of victims, fostering respect and observance of human rights, and denouncing violence as an instrument of political power (CEH 16, 20). The official end of the conflicts was marked by the signing of the Peace Accords on 29 December 1996 by then-president Álvaro Arzú (and mayor of Guatemala City on six occasions) and indigenous leaders. The Peace Accords "mandated constitutional amendments to redefine Guatemala as a multicultural nation, limit the army's mission, resettle displaced peoples, allow civil society groups, and reform the judicial system" (Levenson 22). In her analysis of the Peace Accords, Levenson asserts that "virtually none of its provisions were or have been implemented because, basically, the war concluded with a victory for the Guatemalan military, the state, and the economic status quo, and with the demise of a long revolutionary era" (22). With the end of the Guatemalan Civil War in mind, Levenson further argues

> [t]o begin to understand how deeply this defeat cut into and transformed Guatemala City in the last decades of the twentieth century [...] it is necessary to appreciate that since the 1954 coup that overthrew a democratic government, the very existence of strong resistance to oppression and repression was as important as the oppression and repression. In the decades following the 1954 coup, many Guatemalans understood and portrayed the power of the state and of wealthy elites as temporal and historical, not absolute. Even with its ups and downs, the popular movement made exploitation and state violence in some way or another provisional because these could be assaulted by demonstrations, strikes, occupations, and citywide uprisings, as well as by a social imaginary that made challenging domination possible. The movement generated the knowledge that violence is the political tool of the state and of elites [...] In other words, what ended with the Peace Accords was more than the civil war. A way of knowing the world and acting within it had been shattered. The dynamism of an urban subculture of class solidarity wherein jokes get made, songs created and heard, leaflets written, small newspapers mimeographed, banners painted and seen, and political conversations held, was no longer there. (22)

As such, a euphoric air of ethical activism is discernable with the CEH, whose rhetoric was further legitimized with the 1996 Peace Accords. After this official end of the conflicts, the CEH established a headquarters in the capital by 1 September 1997, with

support offices there as well as in Cobán, Santa Cruz del Quiché, and Huehuetenango in the Central and Western Highlands, and additional regional offices in Sololá and Huehuetenango. The Guatemala City offices also covered the neighboring departments of Chimaltenango, Jalapa, and Sacatepéquez. Together, these sites were established so that, in a voluntary manner, Guatemalan citizens could give their testimonies for the CEH report (33). A similar effort, the Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica [Interdiocesan Project for the Recuperation of Historical Memory, REMHI] the official report of the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala, also addresses the suffering of the population. Although this project could be interpreted as a precursor to the CEH and the Peace Accords, as it was launched in 1995, it was not presented until 24 April 1998, when Monsignor Juan Gerardi delivered a speech at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. Tragically, Monsignor Gerardi was murdered two days after the REMHI report was released to the Guatemalan public for his role in understanding systems of state repression (REMHI, n.p.). Effectively, the war had started and ended in the Guatemalan capital, and Gerardi's assassination shows how urban violence still figures significantly in the postwar Guatemalan cityscape.

Given the complexities of the Guatemalan Civil War and now the postwar era, which stretches from the last days of 1996 to the present, it is difficult to concisely describe the internal armed conflicts. Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby summarize the Guatemalan Civil War in a striking way:

> The conflict—more of an extended period of crisis politics than a recognizable civil war between two clearly defined opposing camps—was

> driven by, on the one side, diverse and increasingly militant peasant, worker, indigenous, and political moves and episodic armed insurgencies; on the other, murderous military and paramilitary forces financed by domestic economic elites and the United States. (5)

With the conclusion of the civil war, more than 200,000 people, mainly of Maya descent, were systematically killed by the state, tens of thousands were tortured, and hundreds of thousands of people were forced into exile, mostly in Mexico. A further 75,000 were forcibly disappeared by the Guatemalan government as the result of more than six hundred massacres all over the country, especially in the Western Highland region against indigenous communities (Grandin, Levenson, and Oglesby 5). As demonstrated by the CEH and REMHI reports, Guatemalan nationals were keen on understanding the recent past and making information about state violence public and freely accessible, but evidently not without continued strife on state and local levels. The 1999 presidential election of Alfonso Portillo, a Ríos Montt protégé, was especially troubling, followed by Álvaro Colom Caballeros in 2007 and Otto Pérez Molina in 2011, both of whom were arrested for corruption allegations, with Pérez Molina being forced out of office with vice president Roxana Baldetti on 2 September 2015 amid massive civilian protests.[25]

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[25] In an excellent analysis for *InSight Crime*, a premier online platform for investigations and analyses of organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean, Arron Daugherty explains that "La Línea" was a criminal network composed of subgroups of at least sixty-four people who worked for Guatemala's tax and customs authority, among them Juan Carlos Monzón Rojas, Vice President Baldetti's private secretary in 2015. In sum, "La Línea charged importers fees for fraudulently lowering the taxes on goods they brought into Guatemala. Non-SAT [customs authority] officials—the importers, lawyers, and so on—were responsible for coordinating the imports and collecting the fees […] The CICIG [International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala] hypothesized that container inspectors received nearly $1,000 a week for participating in this scheme, while the entire La Línea network earned around $328,000 per week" (Daugherty 2015). A high-end clothing store in Guatemala City functioned as the central office for the network and it was later found that former President Pérez Molina and Vice President Baldetti were the

This compressed and simplified history of the Guatemalan Civil War and its immediate aftermath testifies to how corruption and instability have marked the cityscape since the CIA intervention in 1954, but not without the modernization offered by the zone system. Since that time, urban violence has defined Guatemala and Guatemala City, which may account, in part, for the lack of academic attention on the country, even in the very field that emerged in the same way as the Guatemalan internal armed conflicts during the U.S. intervention in Cold War politics: Latin American Cultural Studies.[26]

1.2. State of the Field: Cities in the Global South and Latin America

As Arias points out, Guatemala and Central America have been largely excluded from previous scholarship in cultural studies because academic work on Latin America tends to favor more economically-advantaged nations such as Mexico or Argentina whose cultural production has a stronger global reach. The high levels of commercialization of the literature of the subhegemonic Latin American countries accounts for, in part, the

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ringleaders, as they were linked with several big companies that had moved millions of quetzals in their names. The discounted tariffs that had been exchanged for bribes from importers meant that both Pérez Molina and Baldetti enjoyed colossal financial benefits, as demonstrated by Baldetti's purchase of at least five luxurious properties and her secretary's purchase of home worth nearly $US 1 million in a gated community in Guatemala City. Currently, Pérez Molina and Baldetti are incarcerated, with Baldetti facing additional drug trafficking charges.

[26] Sara Castro-Klarén makes the assertion that Latin American Cultural Studies "was invented to contain Russia in the Cold War. The United States felt they needed to know more about Latin America in order to better control it so it wouldn't be communist" (*Vimeo* 2016). Arturo Arias adds: "Launched in a developmentalist mentality that introduced the notions of underdevelopment in the Third World, area studies (which included Latin American Studies) was a response partly to the increasing global influence of the United States but also to inadequacies in United States-centric understandings of the world in the context of the Cold War. Federal funding encouraged the field's growth. In the United States, area studies was strengthened by the passing of Title VI of the National Defense Education Act of 1958" (703).

fact that work on Guatemala and Central America has been left underdeveloped by previous scholarship, even within the domain of Latin American Cultural Studies. Despite this oversight, it is possible to trace strong parallels between Guatemala and other parts of Latin America and the Global South when we acknowledge the continued legacies of violence in the 20th century as they are felt in the present day post-conflict environments across the region, especially in cities. Scrutiny of postwar violence as it is understood in urban areas allows us to place the cultural production of Guatemala City in a global context, while simultaneously reinforcing an interpretation of Central and Latin America from a Guatemalan perspective. To account for the gaps in scholarship and place the discussion of urban Guatemala in a global context, however, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of interdisciplinary work on Global South cities, Latin American cities, and then Central America and Guatemala more specifically. What follows is not intended to be an in-depth analysis or comprehensive review of work on Global South or Latin American cities, but rather a sampling of scholarship that resonates with the approaches of this dissertation to situate Guatemala among existing cultural criticism on urban areas in the Global South.

Extant scholarship places Global South cities in a theoretical context that extends beyond the geographic regions to which they belong. One such example is literary critic Loren Kruger's *Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, Performing, and Building Johannesburg* (2013), which discusses the interplays between racial tensions, cosmopolitan diversity, and spatial urban imaginaries in post-apartheid South Africa. Exploring the myriad colloquial names given to Johannesburg, from "Johazardousburg," which speaks directly

to violence in the city, to the more common “Jo’burg,” Kruger underscores the need to theorize the “anticipation of the city’s real and imagined dangers, as well as the desire lines that natives and newcomers alike have traced, pushed, and even forced along the city’s edge and fissures or through even its most impenetrable barriers” (x). Thus, to describe the racial tension felt in the face of crimes after the end of apartheid in 1991, the proliferation of segregated urban districts creating sharply racialized edges throughout the city, and representations of these phenomena through both artistic-cultural and material means, Kruger offers the term “edgy city” to define Johannesburg. She states, “[b]eyond the expression of subjective edginess, the term ‘edgy city’ describes the objective layout of oddly shaped and unevenly developed districts, an urban form that has defined the city from the start. Johannesburg’s growth and slump through cycles of speculation and retreat over unevenly joined parcels of real estate has always eluded the order of a rational street grid” (3). In other words, the feelings of edginess felt by Johannesburg residents due to prolonged racial inequalities from the legacy of apartheid, coupled with the physically-segregated edges of district boundaries found throughout the material city, combine to create the edgy city. The edgy city, as we learn from Kruger, is written and embodied through South African city literature and performances and exemplified by Johannesburg’s segregated layout, which has been normalized by well-established district boundaries and city planning that systematically separates people based on their race (5). A rhetoric of extremes is present in the literal city of Johannesburg, where “edginess is more ordinary than exceptional,” as seen in the sharp contrasts between the slum townships, home exclusively to people of color in poverty,

and the gated estates of the mainly white elite (5). To push Kruger's concept of the edgy city further, cultural production also pinpoints the evolution of the South African urban environment, with narratives and performances alike portraying Johannesburg's extremities to delineate the figurative shape and structure of the urban landscape (16).

Outside the context of apartheid in South Africa, the idea that the city is imagined and theorized through material and discursive means can also be found in more economically-advantaged parts of Global South. Literary critic Jini Kim Watson's *The New Asian City: Three-Dimensional Fictions of Space and Urban Form* (2011) also focuses on the relationship between fictional representations and urban transformations in cities of Asia's so-called tiger economies: the city-state of Singapore, Seoul, South Korea, and Taipei, Taiwan.[27] Rather than coin her own term to categorize Singapore, Seoul, and Taipei, Watson borrows the "New Asian City" from architectural critic Jeffrey Kipnis, who uses the term "to describe the bustling metropolises of newly industrializing countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and, more recently, mainland China" (2). The "newness" of the New Asian city speaks to the development of economic growth after decolonization, from the colonial period to the late 1980s. Watson uses the idea of the New Asian City to argue for "the massive shift in urban forms, [which] produces a particular kind of fictional text, one that foregrounds the complex realities and conflicts of these transformations" (2). Enabled by their new positions in the global economy in the

[27] The tiger economies refer to rapid economic growth and an increase in the standard of living, originally employed to talk about the Four Asian Tigers of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, while Indonesia and Malaysia represent the newer Tigers of the 21st century. Although Singapore, Seoul, and Taipei are now part of the Global North due to their economic advancement, they were still part of the Global South during the period Watson writes about, from the colonial period to the 1980s, and for that reason I have included them in my review on city scholarship.

1970s and 80s, the New Asian cities have experienced rapid development, resulting in more sophisticated infrastructures and more financially advantageous places within global trading routes. These global developments, as well as other urban and architectural processes, are staged in fictions, which create literary representations of, what Watson calls, "a range of contradictions specific to the New Asian City," such as country/city, body/building, public/private, and nation/globe (21). The spatialized transformations of Asia-Pacific development from Global South to Global North are marked not only by the historical transition from colony to post-colony but also how we read the development of the New Asian City through literature from Singapore, Seoul, and Taipei. I have chosen to emphasize Kruger's and Watson's books because, despite their geographical, socioeconomic, and racial disparities, they each exemplify how theoretical categorizations can capture the essence of Global South cities, both through material urbanization and cultural responses to the process of such urbanization. The edgy city speaks to the centrality of spatial practices and cultural production in thinking and writing Johannesburg in the 20th and 21st centuries, a link traceable to other post-conflict urban environments where cultural production reckons with the recent past and traces of the recent past are palpable in the material city. Although Watson's borrowed term of the New Asian city is regionally specific to Asia, the idea that spatial practice and representations of space intersect and directly influence each other has important repercussions in other parts of the Global South.

These African and Asian examples of recent scholarship on cities are influential because they help us think about the relationship between urban space and culture. It is

possible to trace this relationship to other parts of the Global South such as Latin America, where there is a vast reservoir of scholarship on cities. One work that stands out for the way it theorizes contemporary urban space in Latin America is Alan Gilbert's *The mega-city in Latin America* (1996), where the urban geographer tells us that a megacity is a city with a population of at least 8 million by the year 2000 (2). He identifies six megacities in Latin America, which together had a combined population of 70 million by the end of the 20th century: Mexico City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, and Bogotá. These cities resonate with Arias's conception of the subhegemonic Latin American country, which are more economically-advantaged than their other southerly neighbors. Thus, we can begin to see the parallels between subhegemonic Latin America and not only the global dissemination of literature as mentioned by Arias but also the global importance of cities in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, as well as in Colombia and Peru. Aside from the large populations of these cities, Gilbert's work focuses on their projected futures in relation to shantytowns, poverty, air and water pollution, and traffic congestion (1). In one of his subtitles in the introduction to his work, Gilbert openly asks if megacities are different from smaller cities, observing how variables such as violence are difficult to measure by size, since Detroit is statistically more dangerous than New York and at least six significantly smaller Brazilian cities had higher crime rates than Rio de Janeiro when his work was published (4). Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the size of Latin American cities does have an impact on certain urban problems such as unemployment, shortages of food, water, and electric energy, and crime. As Gilbert puts it, "it is possible to argue that size of a city does make a difference to certain kinds of

problems. Even if size effects are irregular and unsystematic, that does not mean that size makes no difference" (5). By stressing the size of megacities, Gilbert draws a direct correlation between population and intensity of urban problems, which are integral parts of the identities of the Latin American cities he takes into consideration.

The data-driven statistical information that Gilbert provides shows how cities can be written by numbers and percentages. In the realm of cultural studies, we can see how cities are written by narratives and other forms of cultural production, as well as by cultural phenomena akin to those described by Kruger and Watson. Without question, one of the most influential cultural critics of contemporary Latin American cities is the Argentine Néstor García Canclini who, like Arias, notes the most prosperous countries of Latin America are Argentina and Mexico, with the addition of Brazil (*Culturas híbridas* 13). In his most well-known work, *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* [*Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*] (1989), García Canclini theorizes the concept of hybridity, which emphasizes the dichotomy of tradition and modernity in Latin America. Relying heavily on examples from popular culture, García Canclini shows how Latin American knowledges are in constant flow between the high culture of art and literature and the manipulative forces of mass media. He sees hybridity as a constant condition of the human experience in Latin America and questions why around 10% of the Latin American population lived in cities at the turn of the 20th century but now 60-70% of Latin Americans live in urban sprawls (264-65). Despite the importance of these numerical figures, for García Canclini the "protagonists" of urban culture are public space and electronic technologies, which often seduce the

masses of consumerism more than the high culture of literature (269). García Canclini speaks at length about Tijuana, Mexico and its multicultural hybridity as displayed by the presence of English, Spanish, and indigenous languages in public spaces, radio, television, and graffiti. Certainly, the idea of hybridity is present throughout Latin American cities beyond Tijuana, which experience the convergence of the audiovisual and the literary, the "cultured" and the popular, and the traditional and the modern, which we see in the latter case through the industrial production of handicrafts, once exclusively made by hand (314).

García Canclini's concept of hybridity shows how cultural practices in Latin American cities have transformed in the latter half of 20th century. Although undoubtedly his most well-known piece of scholarship is *Culturas híbridas*, Garcia Canclini also focuses his attention on cities in *Imaginarios urbanos* [*Urban Imaginaries*] (1997). He tells us that, above all, we should think about the Latin American city as a place to inhabit and a place to be imagined. Tapping into the anthropological side of his academic work, García Canclini encourages us to ponder the everyday aspects of Latin American cities, which are constructed with houses, parks, streets, highways, and traffic lights, as well as with the images and sounds of cultural production. Novels, songs, movies, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and television also imagine and inscribe the city's identity. Big cities that are programed to work by and for human beings, often designed in the European grid infrastructure in Latin America as a tangible legacy of colonialism, are often multiplied in individual and collective fictions (107). García Canclini also notes that traffic jams and other ways of traveling through urban Latin America invite us to reconstruct

our own daily interpretations of the city (111). Less theoretically complex as *Culturas híbridas*, *Imaginarios urbanos* nevertheless allows us to ponder how Latin American cities are imagined as well as our own potential place within the Latin American urban imaginary.

García Canclini's work is foundational to Latin American Cultural Studies and has set the stage for further scholarship in the field in relation to cities. Rebecca Biron's edited volume *City/Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America* (2009) and *Cultures of the City: Mediating Identities in Urban Latin/o America* (2010), co-edited by Richard Young and Amanda Holmes, are two examples of recent academic publications that shed light on the cultural mediation of people and the urban spaces they inhabit, with emphasis on such topics as city literature, mass transit, fear as an episteme of everyday life, drive-by shootings, and, more broadly, further theorizations of the Latin American megacity. In the introduction to her book, Rebecca Biron contemplates how Latin American urban centers "emerge as the material results of violence and social conflict [...] to produce cities that are inextricably tied to place and time even as they also participate in a global network of meanings" (xii-xiii). Equally important as these local and global urban imaginaries is the fact that we can also read Latin American cities in terms of, what Biron calls, "material and performative expression of both ideas and sensibilities" (xiii). If we follow Biron's lead, then we can approach Latin American cities as "sources of cultural information," allowing us to confront them not only as idealistic or apocalyptic representations of modernization and globalization but also as economic systems and zones of social conflict (xiv). In other words, we can read urban Latin America through

everyday cultural practices. Furthermore, Latin American cities have a "privileged status as rich sites for cultural studies" because even though they are at once material and imaginary, they "defy fixed definition on either side of that dichotomy" (xxvi).

In tune with Biron's reading of Latin American cities in context, Richard Young and Amanda Holmes, in *Cultures of the City*, expand their view of urban imaginaries to include U.S. cities with significant Latinx populations, such as Detroit and Los Angeles. Young and Holmes are primarily interested in the relationships between people and urban spaces in Latin/o America and how these relationships, in turn, shape the identities of Latin American/Latinx urbanites with attention to ethnicity and socioeconomic diversity as well as everyday social practices and performances. The inclusion of Asunción, Paraguay and the smaller Brazilian cities of Recife and Salvador rather than the much-studied megacities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, allows Young and Holmes to attest, regardless of size, "[i]n Latin America, culture takes the urban experience as its source and focuses on different forms of experience through cultural production" (2). In other words, no Latin American city is impervious to diversified cultural mediations of people. Ultimately, Young and Holmes are interested in exposing "the dynamic relationships formed between individual groups and urban environments," which are a "source for reflection on the complex interaction between people and familiar urban spaces, and how these places engage many aspects of identity and culture" (1, 2). They achieve this goal by working across disciplines and national experiences to analyze literature, art, film, and photography as well as "particular events, conditions, and practices of urban life," to understand how "the relationship between cities and their

inhabitants is culturally mediated in ways that contribute both to the construction of identities by urban dwellers and to the attribution of identity to the city" (2). Above all, Young and Holmes understand culture in Latin American cities as that which "encompasses the full range of human behavior and its products, whether embodied in thought, language, actions, or material artifacts" (2).

The assertions of Biron, Young, and Holmes are significant because they expound upon how we can understand Latin American cities as creative practices, while at the same time deconstructing how cultural expression is significant for the circulation of meaning both within and outside Latin America. In Latin America, as elsewhere, culture takes the urban experience as its source, which, in turn, allows cultural critics to use cultural production to emphasize different forms of the Latin American urban experience. For their part, single-authored books in recent years tend to focus on specific cities in Latin America and, not surprisingly, these studies overwhelmingly focus on megacities located in the subhegemonic countries of the continent. In *Porous City: A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro* (2013), cultural critic Bruno Carvalho centers his discussion on the idea of porosity, which speaks to the permeability and closeness of socioeconomic inequities found in Rio de Janeiro. Carvalho's concept of the porous city stems from the Cidade Nova [New City] neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro because of the confluence of multiethnic cultural spaces found in that area, which contrasts with other neighborhoods that are more racially segregated. In examining Rio de Janeiro's role in the making of Brazilian culture, Carvalho uses the concept of porosity to his advantage to question what it means when the city's most oppressed inhabitants are also the most visible.

Paradoxically, he argues, a divided city such as Rio de Janeiro is also a porous city because mobility and segregation coexist in Brazil and we connect the disparate categories of people in our minds. Carvalho writes: "[t]o speak of porosity [...] accounts for the connections implicitly in the city's socio-spatial segregation, manifested most visibly in (seemingly) unrelated realms: widespread urban violence and popular culture" (12). The irregular geography and socio-spatial diversity of Rio de Janeiro, as contradictory as they may seem at first glance, are precisely what impact our perceptions of urban Brazil today. The penetrable "porous city," with its openings through which different people may freely pass means that "[s]ocio-racial mixture and cultural inclusion can abet other forms of exclusion, just as stratification does not preclude fluid boundaries" (ix). In sum, urban Brazilian cultural practices are related to spaces of racial and socioeconomic mixture, which, over the years, have been targets for "state-sponsored modernization projects, hygienist practices, intellectual discourses, and city planning" (13). It is here we can begin to draw important parallels between Carvalho's discussion of Rio de Janeiro (and the Latin American city more generally) with the previously-mentioned works on Global South cities by cultural critics working elsewhere.

While Carvalho's notion of porosity focuses on a cultural history of Rio de Janeiro, his consideration of the porous boundaries of multiethnic encounters has much to tell about how cultural production has been shaped in Latin America, while considering the possibility that Brazilian cultural practices offer much insight on modernity and urban practices in the Global South. In this same regard, another noteworthy scholar is the cultural critic Laura Podalsky, whose 2004 book *Specular City: Transforming Culture,*

Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973 resorts to the concept of the specular, or that which has reflections, to "analyze the transformation of Buenos Aires, both its material conditions and its discursive representations, in relation to contemporary class struggles during a key transitional phase of Argentine history" (ix). Podalsky refers here to the interregnum, that is the time between President Juan Perón's fall from power in 1955 and his restoration in 1973. As she analyzes literature of this period from such authors as Julio Cortázar, Podalsky discerns striking similarities between the material city of Buenos Aires as it is seen in new architectural designs, transportation patterns, and consumer practices, and cinematic and literary responses to these socioeconomic phenomena (ix-x). For Podalsky, the "specular city [is] a mapping project to sketch out Buenos Aires as a complex conjuncture in which material city, urban cultural production, social relations, and national politics all interact productively, shaping one another" (x). In unison with the Latin American interventions of García Canclini, Biron, Young, Holmes, and Carvalho, in addition to the ideas set forth by Kruger and Watson in Africa and Asia, Podalsky probes the relation between cultural production and social relations further by declaring: "[a]ssuming culture to be productive as well as reflective, I argue that the discursive real continuously affects material reality by shaping people's perceptions and actions" (x). The specular city designates that films and literary texts reformulate the representations of Buenos Aires that were already present in the material city's buildings and streets.

Hence, as the result of her work on the two decades of the Perón interregnum, Podalsky offers a compelling argument for the importance of cultural studies in understanding Latin American cities. She accentuates the limitations of previous work by

social geographers who favor material phenomena and literary critics who limit their work to the analyses of specific texts about the Argentine capital without elucidating the social function of the urban spaces described by the literature. A cultural studies approach, Podalsky argues, allows us to both understand individual authors and their works while at the same time helping us recognize "how culture influences people's apprehension of the material city as well as their actions in that space. To help address these issues, the analysis of particular representations must be accompanied by the examination of the field of cultural production and consumption *and* of urban material practices" (xii, emphasis in the original). Podalsky understands literature and film in and about Buenos Aires "as registers of particular socio-spatial relations that they, in turn, help produce" (xii), and the creative works of writers and filmmakers and material restructuring of urban space by architects conceptualize the Argentine urban environment and patterns of cultural consumption (5). As with Carvalho, Podalsky uses her own term, the specular city, to discern a direct relationship with cultural production and the manmade urban environments described by that cultural production to highlight the interactions between culture and social/physical changes present in Latin American cities.

"The edgy city"; "the new city"; "the megacity"; "the porous city"; "the specular city": the texts and terms in this category represent a selective inventory of urban Global South and Latin American cultural production that plays an integral role in our perception of the relationship between the discursive and material city. Only when we understand this relationship in the specific geographical and sociocultural contexts with

which it is associated can we have an accurate reading of cities from the perspective of cultural studies. Despite the importance of these works mentioned here, especially those about Latin American cities, we can conclude that Guatemala and Central America are notably absent. The advances made by these works is fundamental, yet they all completely neglect Guatemala and the entirety of Central America, further stressing the double marginality and invisibility that Arias illustrates. To account for these omissions, the next section moves the discussion to scholarship on Central America and Guatemala, with the heaviest emphasis on the very few texts about this geographic area that focus on cities.

1.3. The Urban in Central America and Guatemala

Another edited volume on Latin American cities echoes the perspectives found in the work by Biron, Young, and Holmes described in the previous section and stands out significantly because it includes a chapter on a Central American city. *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (2014), edited by Brodwyn Fischer, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero, deviates from the norm of exclusion by including anthropologist Dennis Rodgers's chapter, "*Compadres*, *Vecinos*, and *Bróderes* in the Barrio: Kinship, Politics, and Local Territorialization in Urban Nicaragua," which focuses on the ways people bind themselves socially to space in Managua. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork spanning a decade from 1997 to 2007, Rodgers's work is significant because it considers how the Nicaraguan political context surrounding the Sandinista Revolution affects human relations with one another in Managua, particularly

in relation to gang formation. The neighborhoods where Rodgers works, while established as illegal squatter communities, are "inevitably embedded within, and shaped by, wider social, political, economic, and cultural structures" (145). In this sense, Rodgers's contribution allows us to situate Managua among other Latin American urban imaginaries. Although no work from either the English- or Spanish-speaking academy focuses solely on the theorization of Central American cities by cultural critics, Rodgers's chapter is vital for understanding the origins of socio-spatial relations that stem from the region's insurgency.

Considering the relationship between Central American conflicts and the evolution of material city and urban subjectivities, as Rodgers does, is essential to understand the notion of "post-conflict" or "postwar" period. With a focus on Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, it is this latter notion of the postwar era that cultural critic Beatriz Cortez sets out to interpret through literature in *Estética del cinismo: Pasión y desencanto en la literatura centroamericana de posguerra* [*Aesthetics of Cynicism: Passion and Disenchantment in Postwar Central American Literature*] (2010). Cortez sees the cultural production of these Central American nations through the lens of disenchantment, which she defines more specifically through the title of her book as "una estética del cinismo [an aesthetic of cynicism]" (23). Beyond simply viewing the postwar era as the period we are currently experiencing in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, Cortez is concerned with how the sensibilities of people across the Central American isthmus no longer register utopic feelings of hope as promised by the revolutionary projects of the 20th century. Rather than define the postwar as a specific cultural or

historical moment, Cortez is interested in exploring the sensibility of the postwar as a sharp contrast with the utopic and hopeful sensibilities marshaled by the Peace Accords and end of the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador and the era of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (25). Although she does not focus specifically on cities throughout her work, one of Cortez's points of departure is contemporary fiction that explores "la vida en el espacio urbano y, dentro de este espacio, el ámbito de la intimidad, donde la construcción de la subjetividad también tiene lugar [life in the urban space and, within this space, the scope of intimacy, where the construction of the subjectivity also has a place]" (27). The "disenchanted portrait" with which Cortez is interested is clear, she argues, in contemporary fiction that is inspired by Central American urban spaces.

One of Cortez's chapters is dedicated to how "un retrato de espacio urbano" [a portrait of urban space] is constructed in postwar Central American fiction and how this fiction, in turn, can prove that the city is the central axis of the construction of a postwar national identity in Guatemala and El Salvador (36). For Cortez, the postwar period shows how, aside from the internal displacements that brought people from the interiors of their countries to the capital cities, there has been a development in the number of narratives on the urban constructed and lived environments of Central America. Postwar Central American fiction creates the image of "desencanto" [disenchantment], as Cortez puts it, to represent urban space as a place where the darkest desires of the subject are realized but at the same time the individual, surrounded by the urban masses, feels more isolated. The fictionalized Central American city offers a space where the literary individual can negotiate different versions of their identity and question state power daily

and lack of security in Guatemala City or San Salvador. For Cortez, the possibility that the subject resists social norms of violence becomes another type of internal war that many urban Central Americans are forced to negotiate (37).

Cortez's work merits attention because, although it is not a spatial analysis of cities, she reads urban Central American fiction through close literary analysis. With a look more specifically focused on Guatemala City, *El futuro empezó ayer: Apuesta por las nuevas escrituras de Guatemala* [*The Future Began Yesterday: Bet on the New Writings of Guatemala*] (2012) is an amalgam of literary criticism and short literary pieces assembled by many authors of the postwar generation. In one of the entries of literary criticism, Edgar Montiel, a UNESCO representative in Guatemala, echoes the dystopic feelings of disenchantment as described by Cortez. Montiel notes how postwar Guatemalan literature overwhelmingly takes place in the "urbe" [large city], immediately focusing our attention on Guatemala City. The texts (poems, stories, chronicles, and essays) produced by young writers in the city, Montiel argues, allow us to see new types of sensibilities registered in everyday life there (9). In contrast with the importance of the *testimonio* of 20th century literature, Montiel argues that 21st century postwar literature is more concerned with creating contemporary fiction, self-intimacy, and the subjectivities produced by urban culture. The texts of the postwar period in Guatemala reveal the innermost feelings of the individual caught up in a violent and chaotic world, "buscando hacer legibles los tatuajes en la cara violenta de la sociedad" [looking to make legible the tattoos of the violent face of society] (9). These new writings showcase a desire to

negotiate a lost cultural identity or even one that has not yet been able to fully develop due to everyday violence.

Clearly, then, despite the chaos of Guatemala City, insurgent wars and the postwar period have given life to literary production. Writers Luis Méndez Salinas and Carmen Lucía Alvarado title their contribution to *El futuro empezó ayer* "La impostergable invención del presente" [The Urgent Invention of the Present], calling our attention to the importance of contemporary literature. On paper, say Méndez Salinas and Alvarado, the internal armed conflicts have concluded, but in social practice the Guatemalan people are witnesses of a democratization of violence and the appearance of complex structures of organized crime and narcotrafficking, with politics taking advantage of the façade of democracy to justify a corrupt bureaucratic system (16). What is more, literature written by people who experienced the war "en carne propia" [in the flesh] demonstrates "una necesidad de retomar los espacios públicos para visibilizar el surgimiento de nuevos códigos y nuevas comunidades que se desplazan por el espacio urbano" [a need to reclaim public spaces to make visible the emergence of new codes and new communities that are displaced throughout urban space] (17). Like Montiel, Méndez Salinas and Alvarado signal the importance of urban space in our perception of contemporary Guatemalan culture. They also note how literature written well into the 21st century, and not immediately after the conclusion of the internal armed conflicts, is what we should call

"postwar literature," because that generation of writers is not seduced by the harmonic promises of the Peace Accords (16).[28]

In addition to the important interventions of *Estética del cinismo* and *El futuro empezó ayer*, the historian Celso A. Lara Figueroa compiles a transdisciplinary history of folklore and oral histories in *Por los viejos barrios de la Ciudad de Guatemala* [*Through the Old Neighborhoods of Guatemala City*] (2006). Lara Figueroa's interest in folklore and oral histories stems from his desire to understand, in a similar fashion to García Canclini in *Imaginarios urbanos*, how these forms of cultural production bring life to avenues and streets, buildings and plazas, and even the volcanoes surrounding Guatemala City. Lara Figueroa provides an academic discussion of folklore in Guatemala before providing an annotated collection of folkloric tales from Guatemala City in a period of 200 years, from the city's 1776 founding to the earthquake of 1976, to understand the role of oral tradition in colonial neighborhoods of the Guatemalan capital, primarily in the Historic Center (xi). He recorded the oral histories by speaking with people to whom they had been passed down over the years. He then transcribed the stories and analyzed them. Lara Figueroa's book is perhaps the only publication to focus solely on literary stories of Guatemala City. Although his timeframe predates the context of this dissertation, the book stands out for its unification of urban Guatemala and literature. Indeed, what sets the publications of Cortez and Lara Figueroa apart, in addition to *El futuro empezó ayer*, is that they were published in Guatemala and place great (or full) emphasis on the

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[28] Having written this chapter before the publication of Ronald Rivera Rivera's book *La ciudad en la novela centroamericana contemporánea* (2019), I could not recognize its contributions.

importance of Guatemala City in understanding Guatemala and Guatemalan literary production today. Another noteworthy text from Guatemala is the literary critic Mario Roberto Morales's *La articulación de las diferencias o el syndrome de Maximón: Los discursos literarios y politicos del debate interétnico en Guatemala* [*The Articulation of Differences or the Maximón Syndrome: Literary and Political Discourses About the Interethnic Debate in Guatemala*] (2002), which, although not focusing specifically on Guatemala City, is an in-depth analysis of postmodern discourses of interethnicity in Guatemala and the internationalization of Maya culture and tourism in Guatemala. Morales explores terms such as nation, ethnicity, race, mestizaje, culture, and identity to unpack how cultural differences between Guatemalans of Maya descent and their non-indigenous counterparts are explored in literature and cultural spaces such as the Chichicastenango artisan market.[29] I mention Morales's work because it represents another formidable example of scholarship on Guatemala centered on literature and culture produced in the country.

I deliberately began my discussion of scholarship on Guatemala with these four texts because they represent exceptions to the rule in the U.S. academy, where most works on Guatemala have been produced in the fields of anthropology and history. A

[29] Ruth Bunzel, who started her career at Columbia University as the personal secretary of Franz Boas, father of American anthropology, wrote what is now a classic study of highland Guatemala entitled *Chichicastenango: A Guatemalan Village* (1967), based on fieldwork conducted in 1930-31. She is perhaps one of the first Americans to write seriously about Guatemala and spend extended time there to conduct research. She also carried out investigations on alcoholism among Maya peoples in Mexico and Guatemala. The market at Chichicastenango is now a major tourist attraction, with visitors descending upon the town on Thursdays and Saturdays to buy crafts and watch religious processions. The town is predominantly populated by K'iche Mayan peoples and several locations in Chichicastenango, most notably the Mayan Inn, pay homage to their cultures.

book published in Guatemala that follows this trend is *Sombras de una batalla: Los desplazados por la violencia en la Ciudad de Guatemala* [*Battle Shadows: Those Displaced by Violence in Guatemala City*] (1994), co-written by the anthropologists Santiago Bastos and Manuela Camus. Bastos and Camus provide insight into the lives of internally displaced persons in Guatemala City who were forced to leave their hometowns, largely in the Western Highland region, because of the internal armed conflicts. As the title of the book suggests, Bastos and Camus see Guatemala City's internally displaced persons as shadows, whose difficult living conditions marked by indigenous and peasant identities foreshadow an uncertain future. Humble housing with very few amenities immediately indicate the difficult living conditions of internally displaced persons in Guatemala City. The large city, by virtue of emotional stress and feelings of abandonment like the sensibilities described by literary critics, coupled with the warlike tension that began to intervene in the 1980s, also caused fear and feelings of repression for the (mainly) indigenous population in slum settlements (63).

Academic work in the U.S. academy follows the lead of Bastos and Camus in anthropology as well as history, which, until now, have dominated academic discussions on Guatemala in the United States. That is not to say that the anthropological and historical interventions are not essential resources. Undeniably, the anthropologist Diane Nelson's trilogy *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (1999), *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala* (2009) and *Who Counts? The Mathematics of Death and Life after Genocide* (2015), as well as her co-edited volume with Carlota McAllister *War by Other Means: Aftermath in Post-Genocide Guatemala* (2013), are

fundamental in linking past and present through a focus on Maya indigenous organizing and human rights activism to understand violence, both Maya and non-Maya participation in such violence, and continued loss in the postwar era. All of Nelson's texts make mention of Guatemala City, touching upon the parade that went through the city center after the Peace Accords were signed (and other urbanized areas of Guatemala) but the city is not the focal point of her work. For their part, historians Greg Grandin in *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (2000) and David Carey Jr. in *I Ask for Justice: Maya Women, Crime, and Dictators in Guatemala, 1898-1944* (2013) trace origins of social injustices and gender and racial inequalities in Guatemala, the latter case emphasizing the country's legal system between the dictatorships of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920) and General Jorge Ubico (1931-1944). The books offer sound observations about the origins of state violence and repression before the war. Here, urban Guatemala is shown as the place where the elite attempt to maintain power over the indigenous people and perpetuate the capital as the center of state power. Richard Newbold Adams's *Crucifixion by Power: Essays on Guatemalan National Structure, 1944-1966* (1970) is significant because it was published during the Guatemalan Civil War under the auspices of the University of Texas at Austin to map out power relations between Guatemala and the United States alongside Guatemala's own capitalist developments. Here, Guatemala City's early stages of modernization are exemplified by structural development and power of the military. The books I mention here are by no means an exhaustive list, yet constitute a solid core of academic work on Guatemala from

the fields of anthropology and history, which, to reiterate, have dominated academic discussions of Guatemala in the United States.

With this in mind, it would be counterproductive to say few academic works at all have focused on Guatemala, yet the fact remains that very few studies emphasize Guatemala City; among the exceptions are those books that have been published by anthropologists and historians in the 21st century, all published by Duke University Press, University of California Press, and University of Texas Press. These works tend to target specific elements of postwar life such as street children in Thomas Offit's *Conquistadores de la Calle: Child Street Labor in Guatemala City* (2010), gang formation in Deborah T. Levenson's *Adiós Niño: The Gangs of Guatemala City and the Politics of Death* (2013) and Anthony Fontes's *Mortal Doubt: Transnational Gangs and Social Order in Guatemala City* (2018), and religion as either a form of counterinsurgency in *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala* (2009) or salvation from violence in *Secure the Soul: Christian Piety and Gang Prevention in Guatemala* (2015), both by Kevin Lewis O'Neill. Although not specifically about Guatemala City, Kirsten Weld's *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (2014) offers an intimate look at the discovery of the Historical Archive of the National Police (AHPN) and the role it has played in the interpretation of history through recovered memories of past war crimes, with extensive personal anecdotes about the reinstatement of the police archives. Most importantly, it shows how Guatemala City began to mirror rural areas in its transition to another combative war zone in the 1980s, and for that reason it is notable. Other studies are broader in scope, focusing on social issues such as neoliberal-administered globalization

as seen through privatized urban development in J.T. Way's *The Mayan in the Mall: Globalization, Development, and the Making of Modern Guatemala* (2012) and Kevin Lewis O'Neill and Kedron Thomas's edited volume *Securing the City: Neoliberalism, Space, and Insecurity in Postwar Guatemala* (2011). In consideration of my focus on urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala City, the works of J.T. Way and O'Neill and Thomas are the most influential.

In *The Mayan in the Mall*, the historian J.T. Way suggests that it would be disadvantageous to categorize Guatemala as an "underdeveloped" country, because it is precisely the development of globalization, modernization, and neoliberalism that characterizes urban Guatemalan life today. Way describes his book as "[a] history of the construction of social space from the 1920s to the new millennium, [that] focuses on Guatemala City's poor neighborhoods, on the markets that provision them, and on their connections with the countryside and the greater world beyond" (1). Way illustrates the "[s]eemingly endless paradox" that is postwar Guatemala City in his discussion of the Grand Tikal Futura Hotel, an ultramodern, multi-story luxury hotel on the Calzada Roosevelt, a stretch of the Pan-American Highway named for former U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Way describes the hotel as sitting "at the epicenter of a country in which roughly three-quarters of the economically active population works in the informal economy, slightly more live in poverty, and well over half are illiterate" (2). In proximity to the glistening hotel, which is a futuristic rendering of a Mayan temple, are Maya vendors selling tortillas, cockfights, and gun sales within the confines of cinderblock shacks. The Calzada Roosevelt, in addition to linking Guatemala City with

the tourist hotspot of Antigua, also houses some neighborhoods "where gated enclaves of the wealthy rub elbows with shantytowns on open sewers" (2).

Effectively, Way tells us, the urban Guatemalan upper classes "build fortresses to hold back and hide the third world around them," an act that is deeply embedded with racism, U.S.-influenced consumerism in a country with few consumers (and, in this sense, displays heavily neoliberal tendencies), and social landscapes that have been disrupted by race, class, land, and labor disparities since the arrival of the Spanish (3). As Way observes, these patterns of haphazard unevenness predate the war, as evidenced by the development of the El Gallito shantytown in Guatemala City in the 1940s; however, racial disparities were exaggerated with a sharp increase in the indigenous population during the Guatemalan Civil War and Global South patterns of neoliberal development (5). As Way puts it, in Guatemala, "globalization is characterized by a dynamic that pairs the concentration of power with the fragmentation of social space" (11), ultimately exacerbating race and class disparities. In addition to the Grand Tikal Futura Hotel, Way cites another example of the juxtapositions of modernization at the site of *Cuatro Grados Norte*, a sophisticated dining and shopping atmosphere for the elite population of gated communities. As with the Grand Tikal Futura Hotel, Way argues, *Cuatro Grados Norte* "stands as a sad example of globalized Guatemala. It is chic, it could be in Denmark, and it is an oasis ringed by unspeakable human misery" (11). To sum up his observations, Way reminds us how, despite Guatemala's geographic location in the Global South, it is developed. It is precisely the development of world systems that have made modern Guatemala's heterogeneous urban spaces. Because both elite and poor areas of Guatemala

City reflect neoliberal development, Way places great emphasis on the fact that "[n]othing in Guatemala's primal nature, Indian soul, or location in Latin America caused these problems to be inevitable. The problems were developed, quite literally. Perpetuating the myth that Guatemala is underdeveloped perpetuates the myth that development can solve the very problems it has created and continues to create" (11). It is precisely the development of Guatemala that has caused everyday violence in the country to reach "epidemic and pathological levels", which Way sums up thus: "[t]he effects of the war, state terror, and grinding poverty have combined to create a social landscape in which safety and security, inasmuch as they ever existed, are things of the past [...] Around the nation, and nowhere more so than in the capital, shootings, robberies, and rape are everyday events" (200-201). The socio-spatial disparities and closeness of impoverished and wealthy sectors of the population make it difficult to categorize Guatemala City as scholars have done with the subhegemonic Latin American cities or other cities in the Global South.

While a close analysis of the effects of neoliberalism are of great value to Way's study, *The Mayan in the Mall* does not offer a single term to define Guatemala City. Without losing sight of recent development in Guatemala but still without a term to categorize the capital city, the anthropologists Kevin Lewis O'Neill and Kedron Thomas have published what is perhaps the most important text of this overview section because it makes initial attempts to define postwar Guatemala City. In the introduction to their co-edited volume, *Securing the City: Neoliberalism, Space, and Insecurity in Postwar Guatemala* (2011), O'Neill and Thomas, in addition to Thomas Offit, theorize

neoliberalism as it is experienced in Guatemalan urban space. Like Way, the three anthropologists note the spike in violence in postwar Guatemala, which

> has promoted not public debates about the structural conditions that permit violence to thrive in the first place, but rather a new set of practices and strategies that privatize what would otherwise be the state's responsibility to secure the city. These new efforts at security, evident as much in everyday lives as in social policies, constitute the practice of neoliberalism in Guatemala. (2)

The withdrawal of the state from the public sphere, undoubtedly in tune with the promises of the Peace Accords, also characterizes the development of neoliberalism in Guatemala today, a process that is now practiced and experienced by ordinary Guatemalans. For Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit, the transformative role of neoliberalism in Guatemala City is demonstrated by how it reconfigures relations of power and, as a result, also reconfigures the role of urban space (3, 10).

Aside from exacerbating long-term historical processes such as "the proletarianization of rural populations, the semiurbanization of and increased class differentiation in rural peripheries, increased internal as well as transnational migration, and the concentration of impoverished Guatemalans in the capital city's metropolitan region" (9), neoliberalism has also caused Guatemalans to reimagine their relationship to the state and capital city through the lenses of urban violence and danger, especially because gated elite communities with security guards can make Guatemala City feel more broken and fractured and, as a result, more dangerous than it already is (15). Certainly,

gated communities of this type are found throughout Latin America and other parts of the Global South in Africa and Asia, and in the Global North in the United States. The fractured nature generated by gated communities seems to allude directly to Loren Kruger's notion of edginess in Johannesburg, a characteristic only partially shared by Guatemala and South Africa, because "[s]egregation is more of an ideology than a lived reality in Guatemala City" (Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit 3). In comparison to larger Latin American megacities such as São Paulo, whose size allow the elite to withdraw from public life, "the practice of security in a mid-sized city, such as Guatemala City leads to more porous relationships between those who can afford walls laced with glass shards and those who cannot" (3). Undoubtedly, Guatemala City shares characteristics with the porous city, which, as Bruno Carvalho clarifies, is the term employed for the racial diversity in Rio de Janeiro. While Thomas, O'Neill, and Thomas are consistent in their observations that "[t]he spike in violence and insecurity in Guatemala over the last decade has [...] altered spatial organization in Guatemala City" (15), they do not originate a term to compensate for Guatemala City's contradictions, an oversight that this dissertation hopes to neutralize.

Collectively, the publications featured in this section echo anthropologists Thomas Offit and Timothy Smith, who declare that "scholarship on Guatemala began to focus on the ghosts of war and open wounds," after the Peace Accords (5). Although the importance of the studies I mention here cannot be overstated, we are still faced with looming omissions that this cultural studies dissertation seeks to remedy. As this overview demonstrates, much of the previous academic work on Guatemala has been

undertaken by anthropologists and historians, with few interventions from cultural or literary criticism and little emphasis on Guatemala City outside of scholarship by Guatemalans, despite the centrality of the capital in the country's recent history. In this sense, the present study approaches urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala in an entirely new manner. The abovementioned texts are representative of the fact that Guatemala still constitutes largely unchartered territory in the work of contemporary cultural critics. To develop a platform for cultural criticism on urban Guatemala and my readings of texts produced in the last two decades, it is necessary to explain the theoretical approaches that guide this dissertation. A theorization of Guatemala City's contradictory spaces accompanies my analyses. It seeks to demonstrate how the conjuncture of a variety of sociocultural processes provides insight into the critical lenses through which the texts studied here portray Guatemala City as a locus of violent national narrative.[30]

1.4. Imagining Guatemala City

The epithet of the peripheral network city expresses how people respond to the center of state power in the Guatemalan capital. However, Guatemala City is not just any capital city; that is, it is so complex that sites and practices of systematization and administration linked with epistemological anxiety and diverse forms of state power find themselves among multifaceted dynamics of urban space. In other words, state power

[30] Certainly, the archive can be understood as the catalyst of a violent national narrative, a possibility I further explore in Chapter Two and the Conclusion in my discussions of archives as a center of state power.

and manipulation is not just housed and counteracted in the peripheral network city, but it is also felt throughout those areas that resemble both the megacity and the megaslum. The Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe's essay "Necropolitics" (2003) and the Slovenian cultural critic Slavoj Žižek's book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008) provide critical models, in addition to the archive and the repertoire, to help us move in and out of the peripheral network city by reading urban violence as it is written by cultural production. Certainly, Taylor's work guides us toward a reading of cultural production, but the work of Mbembe and Žižek further places us in the context of the violent urban space, especially as it is manifested in the Global South. As Davis shows in *Planet of Slums*, human activity over time directly impacts the systematic division of cities in the Global South. Although the peripheral network city in the Guatemalan context does not differ from other cities in the Global South in this sense, it is important to stress how necropolitics and, more simply, violence, further deepen our perception of how to read urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala.

Inevitably, in the areas of the peripheral network city where the megacity and megaslum intersect as a direct result of human activity, the urban space can be an atmosphere rife with violence and violent acts. Consequently, Achille Mbembe coins the term "necropolitics," which attempts to account for the phenomena of violence and state power. In his influential essay by the same name, Mbembe proposes an alternative to the Foucauldian notion of biopower, that is the political power over bodies and the systematic division of people into those who must live or die, as well as to biopolitics, or how regimes of power exert power over human entities such as the distribution of

knowledge. Biopolitics is not, Mbembe argues, the default regime that governs the world, and certainly not in the Global South. Rather, necropolitics—the subjugation of life to the power of death, which amounts to permanent conditions of being in pain, rhetorics of fear ushered in by the state, and the subsequent logics of survival in fortified structures and ubiquitous militarization of the megaslum—situates itself as a guiding principle for everyday life among peoples of the world's economically-disadvantaged countries and cities (39). In other words, death, like the archive, directly corresponds with state control because the state defines its most marginalized sectors of society as already dead. Necropolitics is, in Mbembe's words, "the (mis)use of social and political power to dictate how people may live and how some will die" (11), which for him, in addition to power, is "the ultimate expression of sovereignty" (11). What Mbembe terms necropower is related to his "concern in those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations* (14, emphasis in the original). Necropower is directly related to state power, especially in elite spaces, which are the areas of town belonging to the colonizers, not the colonized peoples (26-7). In sharp contrast to the "fortified enclaves" of Rodgers's study, Mbembe employs the term "enclave economies" to talk about the extraction of resources from spaces of death, which would correlate to the megaslum. As Mbembe summarizes it, "[t]he state may, of its own doing, transform itself into a war machine. It may moreover appropriate to itself an existing war machine or help create one" (32), which further speaks to manipulations of state power in the Global South. Notions of necropolitics and necropower account for what Mbembe terms "*death-*

worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*" (40, emphasis in the original). The death-worlds indicate that the inhabitants of the megaslum, living under conditions of modern occupation or even de-occupation where state services are absent, also live in a permanent condition of being in pain with such dichotomies as "life in death/death in life/rhetorics of fear/logics of survival" (39). To be sure, I follow Mbembe and see necropolitics as the logic behind governing peoples of the poorest sectors of the peripheral network city and, indeed, even in other more developed parts of the city that resemble the megacities of the Global South. However, the necropolitics of the peripheral network city is not to be confused with the ostensibly simpler notion of violence.

My dissertation makes use of Mbembe's insights by understanding that in addition to the manipulation of archives, death also equates to state control, which, by virtue of the known epicenters of state control throughout the world, automatically locates us in the capital cities of Global South nations. The state can control the population by withholding or manipulating archival information and by defining marginalized sectors of society as already dead. Underneath the everyday façade of violence in the peripheral network city is necropolitics, which is the logic behind the megaslum connecting it with the state and how it functions (or, in this case, how the state does not function for its poorest citizens).[31] Violence, like necropolitics, is pervasive throughout the peripheral

[31] As Jean Franco puts it, in consideration of the women who were raped and killed during the Guatemalan Civil War simply because they were women, "[w]hat few could have foreseen was that the conditions for such degradation were created when the neoliberal state relinquished responsibility for the protection of its neediest citizens. What some have termed 'savage capitalism' keeps its eye on profit, not on people" (225). This neoliberal reality carries on in present day Guatemala.

network city and for that reason requires scrutiny. Indeed, Slovenian cultural critic Slavoj Žižek in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008), splits violence into several categories such as crime and terror (subjective violence), hate speech and discrimination (objective violence) and violence related to the development of economic and political systems (systemic violence). Certainly, while manifestations of violence often overlap and coexist with necropolitics in the peripheral network city, it would be erroneous to talk about violence without carefully assessing its role in the cultural mediation of citizens alongside archives and the repertoire. Žižek urges us to dispel any naïve notion of the "simplicity" of violence, instead assessing it as a multilayered phenomenon, as demonstrated by the categories of subjective, objective, and systemic violence; these forms of violence warrant our attention, chiefly because one form of violence often blurs our ability to analyze (or even see) others. Subjective violence is "performed by a clearly identifiable agent," objective violence is "inherent to the normal state of things [and] invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent," and, finally, systemic violence is that which relates to socioeconomic and political milieu, "experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level" (1, 2). As Žižek frequently points out, it is the subjective violence that is often at the forefront of our minds because we incorrectly interpret crime and terror associated with it as the true harbingers of international conflict as opposed to new configurations of global capitalism as laid out by Way, Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit in their discussions of neoliberal Guatemala City.

But Žižek also suggests that crisis (or what the state or even other states label as crisis) often serves to distract us from the systemic violence he describes. For Žižek, "[c]risis only explodes into media visibility as the result of a complex struggle" (6), forcing us to rethink the seemingly constant barrage of humanitarian crises as they are presented to us. Žižek uses the example of Starbucks in the United States, which, in one campaign, implied that for every cup of coffee purchased, the consumer saves a Guatemalan child's life (6). This false sense of "pseudo-urgency," to use Žižek's words, without addressing the fact that capitalist development is precisely what perpetuates violence in Guatemala, acts as a shield for humanitarian crises brought about by development. For Žižek, "[t]hrough this fake sense of urgency, the post-industrial rich, living in their secluded virtual world, not only do not deny or ignore the harsh reality outside their area—they actively refer to it all the time" (7). Although Žižek refers here to the way the Global South (Guatemala) is imagined by the Global North (a U.S. company and its consumers), his observation allows us to return to the work of Mbembe in his discussion of the permanent conditions of being in pain in around the megaslum, or elsewhere in the Global South city where "fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks [are] everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings" (Mbembe 39). The urgency of violence as it is displayed in the gated communities surrounded by barbed wire in Guatemala City show us how, indeed, the elite inhabitants of the peripheral network city do their best to ignore "the third world around them" (*The Mayan in the Mall* 3), to repeat Way's words, while at the same time, by the flagrant displays of security that they have purchased, constantly refer to the systemic violence within their reach.

It is thus Žižek's view on systemic violence that follows Mbembe's notion of the necropolitical. If the goal is to implement death in the slums of the peripheral network city, a perverse form of control away that contrasts with the institutionalization of the archive, then the urgency as it is interpreted in the materiality of the cityscape distracts us from the subjugation of life to the power of death. Moreover, abject poverty characterized by waste and disorder in the slums scattered throughout the peripheral network city is a deep-rooted condition of the models of necropolitics and systemic violence. Echoing Mbembe and Žižek, cultural critics Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi, in their discussion of abjection, indicate that people ignored by the state as wasted bodies constitute "what human life and culture exclude in order to sustain themselves" (1).[32] By interjecting the theories offered by Antoinette Burton, Ann Laura Stoler, Jacques Derrida, Diana Taylor, Achille Mbembe, and Slavoj Žižek into my conceptualization of the peripheral network city, we can read the Guatemalan capital as the center of state power in postwar Guatemala (the archive) and cultural responses to that power (the archive and the repertoire), as well as through its spatial paradoxes (necropolitics). These forces converge in the form of violence, which, by its systemic nature, pervades every aspect of life in Guatemala City, as evidenced by material and discursive forms of writing violence into the structures of everyday urban space and culture.

[32] In line with Childers's and Hentzi's ideas about abjection, other cultural critics have recently considered how to address the role of poverty (or, at the very least, symbols of poverty) in our interpretations of culture in the Global South. Writing on a special project conducted by the European Research Council (ERC), Stephanie Newell, in "Researching the Cultural Politics of Dirt in Urban Africa" (2016), talks about how dirt and its associated terms such as filth, waste, debris, contamination, disgust, and trash, permeates everyday life in urban Africa. In turn, this research expounds upon local perceptions of the body in addition to outsider's perceptions of African people living in cities as well as how the state interacts with its citizens living under such conditions.

In conclusion, the peripheral network city broadens our understanding of postwar Guatemala City. As my own theoretical episteme, it seeks to engage urban space and culture so that violence is integral to the imaginative and physical construction of metropolitan Guatemala. Above all, by engaging with the theories of the archive, the repertoire, necropolitics, and violence as they are envisioned by a variety of scholars from North and South, the peripheral network city allows us to understand the relationship between cities, state violence, and different forms of documenting and countering such violence. Guatemala is a major case that exemplifies Latin America as well as other parts of the Global South where notions such as necropolitics and state violence have characterized the social landscape for decades, an idea further explored in the next chapter on the archive and its place within urban Guatemalan memory and politics.

Chapter Two

The Archive as Nucleus of the Peripheral Network City

The peripheral network city brings four principal vantage points to light and collectively provides a framework for navigating urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala. The first strand of this framework, the archive, is the focus of this chapter. Undoubtedly, the systematization and administration associated with the archive alludes to careful arrangement of documented information in a repository according to a well-organized plan. Yet, the act of documenting violence in postwar Guatemala has unexpected origins away from well-established focal points and boundaries of the capital city, the latter of which are fringed by more urbanization. On a heavily traveled section of the Pan-American Highway between Guatemala City and Antigua, several satellite cities such as Mixco and San Juan Sacatepéquez divide the contemporary capital with its colonial counterpart. As captured in a 2006 image entitled "Bitter Boulevard" by the photographer José Manuel Mayorga, a sign hovers above the highway at the westernmost edge of the peripheral network city, with the phrase "FINALIZA CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA" [Guatemala City ends here] in caps lock. In her keen observation of Mayorga's photograph, Deborah Levenson opines that, beyond the geographic limits of the capital, the sign suggests that "Guatemala City is 'finished'—in such disarray as to be defunct—and inviting us to visit and see for ourselves" (215). Indeed, when Raúl Aguilar Batres created the spiraled zone system to systematically divide Guatemala City with zones 1-25, some of them such as zone 20 fell outside the area where the capital "ends," and to this day do not figure in the city's official subdivisions. Rather than focus on where

the Guatemalan capital "ends," my interpretation of the Spanish "finalizar," which seems to have been officially recognized by the municipality, this chapter highlights the potential origin of the peripheral network city. With emphasis on specific aspects of the peripheral network city—those that focus on partitions and state and citizen involvement—coupled with the concept of the archive, I contend that the Historical Archive of the National Police (AHPN) is the central and most important aspect of the peripheral network city, which forms the basis for the theorization of postwar Guatemala City and its cultural production. Just as the highway sign where Guatemala City "ends" invites us to inspect the city's periphery, the archive offers the possibility to rethink the origins of power within the city limits. Furthermore, the location of the AHPN in Zone 6 of Guatemala City, outside the established Historic Center in Zone 1, allows us to reconsider what Jacques Derrida might reference as the *Arkhe*, or the origin of state power in a zone that is not presently populated by cosmopolitan citizens.[33]

With the above in mind, this chapter calls into question official discourses of state-sponsored human rights violations as they are found in the parameters of the AHPN to understand how the archive contributes to the recording, representation and (re)writing of violence in the postwar Guatemalan urban imaginary. A brief historical background of the AHPN—its role in the Guatemalan Civil War, the war crimes that took place there, and its place among global Cold War culture and politics—prefaces a spatial analysis of

[33] In *Archive Fever*, Derrida refers to the *Arkhe*, which aside from the Greek origin of the term that designates origins, "coordinate[s] two principles in one [...] there where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological—but also the principle according to law" (9). Given this Derridean definition, I situate the *Arkhe* at the center of state power in the capital city.

the AHPN, which includes the immediate area around it in Zone 6, art by human rights activists on walls that enclose the site, and the present building, which houses a small museum and research area that faces an uncertain future. A close reading of the literary representation of the AHPN, Rodrigo Rey Rosa's 2009 novel *El material humano* [*Human Matter*], accompanies the spatial analysis to further explore the notion of the archive as a foundation of the peripheral network city. While existing criticism on *El material humano* tends to favor the novel's place among other postwar Central American literature, the relationship between literature and ethics, or the novel's intertextuality with the famed Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges and other distinguished novelists, my analysis combines a reading of the novel with the physical space of the AHPN and spaces of urban violence in Guatemala City. Theories of trauma by Cathy Caruth and fieldwork in the humanities by Debra Castillo and Shalini Puri support the unification of the spatial and discursive texts, while the concept of the archive is visible throughout the present chapter. A concluding conversation about the precarious environmental and political state of the AHPN alludes to its potential ephemeral nature and provides a stepping stone to the next chapter on the repertoire. By illustrating the archive as the nucleus of the peripheral network city, this chapter foregrounds the AHPN and *El material humano* to accentuate state violence as a driving force of culture in postwar Guatemala City.

2.1. A Brief History of the AHPN in a Global Context

In analyzing urban space and culture in postwar Guatemala in the broader context of Latin America and the Global South, my corpus is necessarily broad, although in this

chapter I try to sharpen the focus of analysis on specific elements of the peripheral network city through the lens of the archive. As Mónica Albizúrez Gil observes, the concept of the archive has gained currency in recent Guatemalan culture, literature, and history, noting that "[e]n el imaginario guatemalteco, la genealogía de la palabra archivo se encuentra asociada fundamentalmente al campo militar y a los procesos de recuperación de la memoria histórica" [in the Guatemalan imaginary, the genealogy of the word archive is fundamentally associated with the military field and the processes of recuperation of historical memory] (7). Indeed, the control of "información poblacional" [demographic information], Albizúrez Gil maintains, was a key military strategy to halt social movements against the regimes. She goes on to tell us how the archive "queda indisolublemente ligado" [is inextricably linked] to Guatemalan military intelligence during the internal armed conflicts, as evidenced by the Archivo Departamento de Prensa y Seguridad [the Archive of the Press and Security Department, now Guatemalan Ministry of Defense], which functioned as a database for alleged opponents of the state. Furthermore, the Archivo del Estado Mayor Presidencial [Archives of the Presidential General Staff] set out to control everyday practices with the overarching goal of systematically eliminating adversary political views among the citizenry (7). In tune with these practices, the AHPN is not only inextricably linked to Guatemalan military intelligence but also to broader systems of Cold War culture and politics dispersed across the hemispheres. In turn, the systematization and documentation of the AHPN establishes parallels with the historical, political, and sociocultural frameworks where powers and counter-powers encounter and clash with one another in the peripheral

network city, such that the material and discursive properties of the archive function to write violence into the innate properties of urban Guatemala, and vice versa as urban violence forms the basis of archival documentation.

Archives in Latin America, as Carlos Aguirre and Javier Villa-Flores put it so well, "not only help us reconstruct the past: they have their own, quite eventful history, one that involves instances of loss and destruction as well as cases of recovery and reconstruction" (11). Thus, to understand the multilayered relationship between the archive and the city in the Guatemalan context, a few words are in order about the history of the AHPN, which, indeed, exists as a history of recovery and reconstruction. On 17 July 2005, the AHPN was unearthed after stockpiled explosives spontaneously combusted at a nearby site in Guatemala City. Located in Zone 6 at a warehouse compound known as La Isla [the Island], in an area between the Historic Center and Zone 18, the largest, most populated, and most crime-ridden area of the capital, residents had long suspected the current site of the AHPN to house leftover war weapons, especially due to an earlier explosion at a nearby military base in Zone 5. As Kirsten Weld explains

> [i]n June 2005, a series of massive explosions at Guatemala City's Mariscal Zavala military base lit up the night sky in Zones 5, 6, 17, and 18, filling the already pollution-thick air with toxic smoke. The weapons, more than a ton of projectiles left over from the war, had detonated at a rate of thirty per minute over four long hours, spurring mass evacuations from the surrounding neighborhoods. When the dust had settled and the poisonous gas cleared, the PDH [Human Rights Ombudsman's Office] fielded a raft of

> complaints from local residents, who lived wedged between Mariscal Zavala and the National Civil Police's own arms storage facility, and into whose homes the blast's debris tumbled. (32)

Because of this, the PDH feared an explosion of similar proportions at the Zone 6 warehouse of the PN [National Police], which was disbanded by the Peace Accords and replaced by the PNC [National Civil Police] in 1997.[34] As Weld continues, "[t]hree weeks later, it [the PDH] sent its investigators to the PN installations to verify compliance and conduct a risk assessment of the surrounding area. It turned out that the explosives were still on-site, but they were not all that was to be found there" (32). This operation, led by the head of the PDH special investigation unit Edeliberto Cifuentes, who had previously held a leadership position at the Universidad de San Carlos, found that the PN had failed to remove munitions, which could have easily detonated in a heavily populated working class area of Zone 6 like their counterparts at the Mariscal Zavala military base. Cifuentes's team found, "nestled amid acres of detritus, wrecked cars, crashed planes, trash heaps, and parking lots—several nondescript buildings with odd-looking stuff crammed against the dirty windows. A sharp-eyed historian recognized the 'stuff' as files" (Nelson 86). The main structure at La Isla, the AHPN, was characterized by "an aura of

[34] Sophie Esch does well to remind us that clandestine arms storage is not unique to Guatemala City in the urban Central American context. She writes, "[t]hroughout the 1990s hidden weapon caches were discovered across the Central American isthmus. Sometimes the arms were not properly stored and an explosion revealed the weapons depot. The most famous case was *el buzonazo*, when in 1993 a bomb went off in a warehouse in Managua. It revealed a secret weapon cache of the Salvadoran guerrillas, which factions who were distrusting the police process had hidden in case they needed to take up arms again. During the 1990s more than a hundred such weapon depots, allegedly from the guerrillas, were discovered throughout the region" (150).

decay," writes Weld, and had been overtaken by nature: rats, bats, lizards, cockroaches, mold, mildew, rain, puddles, and wind, in the same space, "where detainees had once been regularly tortured to death" (Weld 29). Weld reflects on the elements that had taken over the AHPN in her reflection on the immense paperwork, which

> seemed endless, crude bundles by the millions spotted with vermin feces and cockroach carcasses, their hand-scrawled labels barely visible beneath years of dust, with puddles of cloudy water seeping into the piles of paper and rotting them from within [...] At the back of the edifice, humidity and neglect had conspired such that verdant plant life coiled up the walls, sprouted from within the masses of paper blanketing the earth, and hung down from the ceiling in long fronds. (29)

What makes the PDH's discovery even more remarkable is that former President Álvaro Arzú had previously denied the existence of any police archives. When Cifuentes and his team from the Human Rights Office arrived at the AHPN, Ana Corado worked as the ranking official. When Cifuentes inquired about the heaps of papers to the ceiling among the mini ecosystem, Corado told him that he was at the archives of the National Police (Weld 33).

As Cifuentes and his team discovered, the "crude bundles by the millions," as Weld describes them, equated to no less than "80 million decaying pages housed in a forgotten, rotting warehouse at La Isla, a former torture and detention center and police compound, with the AHPN as its nucleus" (Bentley 9). The 80 million pages constituted mismatched paperwork and notecards, both hand- and typewritten, with pictures of people who had

been detained or recorded by the PN. Immediately, both Guatemalans and foreigners alike became invested in the preservation of AHPN and the potential of its voluminous documents to narrate war crimes, leading to the swift establishment of the Recovery of the National Police Historic Archives [PRAHPN], or simply "The Project," supported by foreign financial aid from Sweden, Switzerland, and Spain (Weld 69). The Project's members were largely made up of university professors, their students, and other learned members of Guatemalan society. In other words, they knew that there was a great possibility that the people catalogued in the AHPN's papers could be their former colleagues or even family members. The Project workers were also cognizant of the fact that they represented the very same people who would have risked becoming forcibly disappeared for their political dissent in the decades of the internal armed conflicts, whose nonacademic allies included progressive priests, Maya peasant farmers, Leftist politicians, and even street children (Weld 1, 18). As Weld points out, the Project was intent on "rescuing the decaying records and analyzing their contents, with the aim of generating evidence to use in prosecuting war-era officials for crimes against humanity" (5). In her book about the AHPN, *Paper Cadavers* (2013), Weld provides an ethnographic account of the work accomplished by the Project. The mold, mildew, and animal life of the AHPN presented unfavorable conditions and health hazards in the first months after its inception, forcing the Project workers to thumb through the mismatched moldy documentation with gloves, protective masks, and special clothing (Nelson 217). The utter neglect by the part of the PN supports Weld's view that "important documents in Guatemala have a history of being treated as trash" (51), which I see as a form of state

violence and repression because many of the crimes were executed by the PN and memorialized in internal reports; other documentation includes criminal and surveillance reports, and a plethora of fingerprint files that were still discernable beneath the mold and guano. In addition to the weathered documents, the unkempt grounds of La Isla are characterized by dozens of rusty police cars, which, as I observed in July 2017, still sit around the corner from the AHPN at the time of writing. As the Project workers further navigated the AHPN and its documents, they grew to understand how much the police and military officials of the war years enjoyed impunity. At the same time, the fact that the fate of thousands of Guatemalans succumbed to mold and decay represents complete indifference toward the preservation of historical memory, leading Weld to declare that, today, the Guatemalan police archives act "as weapons against enemies of the state" (6).

Although many of the disappeared, raped, mutilated, and murdered victims of the Guatemalan Civil War were of Maya descent, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Weld points out that "[m]any of the forty-five thousand Guatemalans who disappeared during the war had lived and agitated in the capital city" (11), demonstrating that numerable victims were also mestizo.[35] Moreover, the public opening of the archives in Guatemala City in January 2009 meant little to indigenous peoples, some of whom spoke Spanish as a distant second language with infrequent trips to the capital, showing how the AHPN

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[35] As Jean Franco further shows, "[l]abels including 'underdeveloped,' 'marginal,' 'peripheral,' and 'third world' placed Latin America on a lower rung than the developed world that was the advance column of technological sophistication associated with the modern. Becoming modern meant overcoming underdevelopment by loosening the drag of those sectors of the population that were stigmatized as 'downstream,' 'unproductive,' 'traditional,' or, to borrow a term coined by Noam Chomsky, 'unpeople.' That is why the urgency of modernization transposed racism into a different key and turned the indigenous from an exploited labor force into a negative and undesirable mass" (8).

Project was overwhelmingly an urban elitist mestizo-centric realm (219-20). Still, the Project's expansion with an annual operating budget of 12 million quetzals (US$1.5 million) and almost all the 80 million police documents in digital form as of July 2018, with records of at least 28,000 individuals who have searched the documents (Nijhuis, n.p.), is "mammoth by local standards" (Weld 213-14). In other words, the power associated with the AHPN and police counterinsurgency, which was "[t]he work of containment [...] carried out with guns, helicopters, [...] three-by-five index cards, filing cabinets, and training in records management" (Weld 15), has been countered by the painstaking work of the Project members who have organized and digitized the documents in a computer system. Researchers as well as Guatemalans searching for information about family members can now conduct searches in databases of the digitized police papers according to the Guatemalan department where the crime took place, type of crime, and year of crime. Although many of the details about war crimes are painful, Weld maintains that the survival of such records "are necessary for the transition to democracy" (238). As I discuss in the previous chapter, the work of the PN's General Director Gérman Chupina Barahona from 1978-82 represents a moment when the actions of the PN were at their zenith. The enhancement of the PN on the part of spies who listened intently to "subversives" in areas throughout Guatemala City, hoping to catch wind of anyone who promoted democracy, was accompanied by special operations units and Death Squads. With this under consideration, a mandate by the PDH, set in motion by the ombudsman Sergio Morales, "included securing evidence related to human rights abuses and conducting investigations accordingly," and unarmed PDH members "were

sent back to secure the archives against any attempts to enter the site or remove documents until the PDH could take custody of them" (Weld 33).

In other words, the PDH, which had been established in 1985, not only made the Project possible but also, in Morales's view, saved the AHPN from getting lost (Weld 35). Although "[v]ery was known of the National Police—its structures, modes of operation, or forms of organization" (Weld 35), we do know that their succeeding PNC officials often referred to the AHPN as "el basurero" [the dump], where high-ranking superiors often sent lower-ranking workers as punishment, and where Ana Corado was sent to burn records with strict orders to withhold information from the human rights workers of the PDH (Weld 35). Corado's refusal to abide by the PNC's guidelines belies the fact that the PN, its predecessor, was closely allied with dictatorships and elites united in their control over poor and working class citizens, both of which directed the PN "to suppress not only organized resistance but any and all forms of oppositional thinking, eventually using it [the PN and the AHPN] to help execute the Cold War counterinsurgency campaign" (Weld 1). The police papers reveal that, aside from such diverse crimes as human trafficking and baby snatching for illegal international adoptions, illegal possession of weapons, and forced disappearance, the PN also represented the iron hand behind numerous war crimes that it recorded, among them the torture of people labeled "dissidents" at La Isla, in an area known as the Laberinto [labyrinth], which features cramped, windowless rooms. This space has proven to be especially challenging for some of the Project workers, who found themselves imagining the atrocities that took place there due to "grisly images of decomposing cadavers, many exhibiting signs of violence or

torture," which appeared on numerous soiled notecards (Weld 161, 164). These Project workers, or "wartime activists," so-called because many of them uncovered information about crimes against classmates and family members, "in peacetime labored for justice [and] bore a double burden. Not only were these individuals themselves victims, having lost family or friends to state repression and revolutionary campaigns, but they continually relived past experiences while *performing contemporary memory labor*" (163, my emphasis), which is the term that Weld employs to describe the labor of the Project workers.

The performance of contemporary memory labor was challenged by "arson attempts and death threats that periodically reminded the volunteers of the real risks still faced in Guatemala by those seeking to understand the war's history" (Weld 3). As Weld remarks, "[s]tate security forces and their representatives played down the discovery [of the AHPN]" (35). Just as the PNC officials referred to the AHPN as a dump, documents in Guatemala have often been regarded as "basura—trash to be eliminated, not resources to be protected" (51), as evidenced by the fact that state institutions failed to share their records with the General Archive of Central America (AGCA), also in Guatemala City, whose city block is shared by public restrooms and corners where men regularly urinate in public, with the idea that the AGCA is a site of excretion (50-1). Likewise, as Guatemala City gradually became more systemically violent during the war, the operations of the PN became more clandestine and sophisticated. Yet, it is also important to note that the AHPN—and, indeed, the Guatemalan Civil War—did not emerge in a vacuum. In the broader context of Latin America, Jean Franco comments on how the Cold War in the

region transformed it into “a battlefield of another kind as both the United States and the Soviet Union carried out covert activities to influence the hearts and minds of Latin Americans” (2). This meant that, as we saw with the 1954 CIA-financed invasion of Guatemala City described in the previous chapter, to use Franco’s words, “anticommunism became an alibi for slaughter, torture, and censorship—often in the name of ‘stability’ in opposition to ‘chaos’” (23). In the same vein, one of Weld’s most important observations is that, with time, the AHPN began to function as “another front in the Cold War” (15). She writes, “[i]n the Guatemalan case, the conditions and contingencies of how these archives came to be both an implement of wartime social control *and* a site of postconflict empowerment tell us not only about the country’s history but more broadly about the conduct of the Cold War in Latin America” (15, emphasis in the original text).

Elsewhere in Latin America, other archival fronts in the Cold War are in Argentina and Paraguay, to name two examples where, indeed, due to the intervention of citizens, the archives have transformed from wartime social control to postconflict empowerment. In the Argentine case, the records of the Intelligence Directorate of the Buenos Aires Police were used in the country’s judicial process in the late 1990s. Afterward, they were transferred to the Argentine Memory Commission and opened to the public in 2001 to provide a record of crimes under the dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla from 1976-81. As a result, the Argentine state ordered the use of police records in judicial proceedings. This example from Argentina contrasts sharply with Guatemala, where the government kept

the AHPN secret from truth commission investigators.[36] In Paraguay, the Archives of Terror, which consist of 600,000 pages of documents with information about the murderous practices of dictator Alfredo Stroessner from 1954 to 1989, were discovered by the lawyer Martín Almada and judge José Augustín Fernández in a police station on the outskirts of the capital city of Asunción. Although voluminous, the documents were made publicly available in a single room of Asunción's Palace of Justice, in a similar way that the National Archives of Lithuania and Ukraine, both part of the former USSR, are held (Weld 42).

Outside the Global South, but deeply anchored in Cold War politics, political scientist A. James McAdams examines the Stasi records of former East Germany, noting that the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] handled the offenses of the GDR [Germany Democratic Republic] "with a breadth of approaches and an almost religious devotion to thoroughness that was unmatched by any other country at the time" (1). Crimes orchestrated by the SED [Socialist Unity Party of Germany], such as the shooting of would-be escapees at the Berlin Wall, and the murder of political opponents by the Stasi [Ministry of State Security] were eclipsed by "a host of lesser offenses," such as judicial corruption, espionage, and electoral fraud (2). Contrary to the Guatemalan case,

[36] Carlos Aguirre and Javier Villa-Flores expand on the idea of state complicity in the clandestine nature of its own archives: "Following official injunctions, administrative offices were expected to transfer records to national archives periodically, but not all departments complied; others, of a more secret nature, were not available to citizens because of strategic reasons. This is the case of police and military archives, which became essential tools of surveillance and repression during an unprecedented era of state terror in the second half of the twentieth century. With the transition to democracy, some of these records have been finally made available for public scrutiny or discovered by chance as in the cases of Guatemala, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and other nations, although in some cases they have been kept outside the direct administrative control of the National Archives" (133).

demonstrators who entered the central headquarters of the Ministry of State Security in Berlin in January 1990 were granted permission by the police to enter the Stasi central offices, "apparently so they could destroy incriminating documents" (58). What happened instead was a dissenting East German group several hundred strong, in possession "of personal dossiers and records that the ministry's agents had compiled over four decades of dictatorship," whose hallmark had been its former ability to conceal its activities behind secret walls (58). Elsewhere in Europe, NATO spokeswoman and media coordinator Oana Lungescu writes of the Departmental Securității Statului, or Securitate, the secret police agency of the Socialist Republic of Romania, a soviet-aligned state. Like in the case of the AHPN in Guatemala, anyone suspected of opposing the Romanian government in the 1980s was archived with obsessive detail in the Securitate. In Lungsecu's case, she found traces of herself in the archives, where she had been documented for her international experience in the United Kingdom to study English language and literature, with detailed information about her whereabouts over the years, which, in some cases, had been provided by informants as young as ten years old. Lungescu also read about her own trips to the British Council in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, complete with license plates of cars in which she had traveled on numerous occasions (Lungescu, n.p.).

Further afield, other archives in countries such as those of the former USSR, South Africa, the Khmer Rouge Records of Cambodia, and Brazil and Uruguay in the Latin American case, shed more light on the types of records linked with global geopolitical tension in the 1980s (Weld 17). In her reflections on the place of Guatemala in this

transnational geopolitical landscape, Susanne Jonas explains how the country's internal armed conflicts can be understood as "a 'Cold War civil war' insofar as it was ideologically, politically, and militarily part of the US Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union and communist forces (real or labeled as such) in the Third World" (17). She reminds us how the Reagan administration (1981-89) supported Guatemala's development as "the first modern counterinsurgency army of Latin America," under US tutelage, which to this day signals that the US "is the superpower that retains significant influence" in Guatemala (17, 119). Just as the PN officials of the AHPN took orders from such figures as Gérman Chupina Barahona and Efraín Ríos Montt, the US government sought to carefully regulate its own interests in Guatemalan territory, particularly as it related to capitalist land development and the perceived threat of communism (199). Jonas explains

> [f]rom 1966 to 1968, the United States became directly involved in counterinsurgency operations in order to keep Guatemala from becoming a 'second Cuba'—a danger that appeared very real to both the US and Guatemalan governments during the 1960s. The United States sent hundreds of Green Berets to Guatemala and played a crucial role in 'professionalizing', training, and reorganizing what it viewed as an inefficient army. (120)

Weld expands on this timeframe and the political climate of the time, adding "[o]ver the course of the Cold War and beyond, well more than a hundred thousand Latin Americans were made to enter the netherworld of forced disappearance," represented by corpses of opposing citizens of Pinochet's Chile that were dumped in the Atacama Desert and

Argentine subjects against Videla's military junta who were brought onto airplanes, drugged by medical professionals, and dropped into the Atlantic by the thousands (n.p.). In other words, as Cold War politics began to have more power in Latin America, the influence of United States and the socioeconomic structures aligned with the superpower at the center of the East-West/capitalism-communism confrontation also expanded in the region. Hence, the Guatemalan AHPN and all the crimes documented and executed there are but one of a few lights in "a distant satellite image at night" of the Americas, which, far from diminishing the AHPN's global reach, would correspond to other traces of the Cold War dotted across the Western Hemisphere (Weld, n.p.). By the same token, just as the archive in the Cold War era is associated with the sustainability of power, the legitimacy of the peripheral network city relies on the centrality of the government and its role in record-keeping on a national level.

2.2. The AHPN as Material Site of Trauma and Center of State Power

While the Cold War era can help us to further contend that the archive is the nucleus of the peripheral network city, I first illustrate in this section the interrelated characteristics of the AHPN and Guatemala City vis-à-vis emergent research methods in the humanities. I understand both the AHPN and the peripheral network city to be systems and places to be interpreted and embodied based in part on my own empirical research in Guatemala City in Summer 2015. The empirical research that I conducted mostly at the AHPN, and the AGCA, and other sites, falls into the category of what Castillo and Puri would classify as "fieldwork in the humanities." Although "fieldwork" is

an epistemology and methodology traditional to anthropology, on-site research clarifies how violence is dispersed across the postwar Guatemalan cityscape. In the introduction to *Theorizing Fieldwork in the Humanities: Methods, Reflections, and Approaches to the Global South* (2016), Castillo and Puri demonstrate how fieldwork in/on the Global South has been undertaken by academics other than anthropologists in recent years. The two cultural critics shed light on the benefits of fieldwork in the humanities, some of which include "gratitude for the richness of ongoing relationships forged in the field, the possibility of collaborative work, invigoration by the felt connection of academia with the world outside it, a sense of our writing as part of a larger shared project, and intense pleasure at the conjunction of sensory and intellectual cognition" (2). Resonating with the "felt connection of academia with the world outside it," Castillo and Puri affirm that, unlike paradigms of postcolonialism or decoloniality, the conceptualization of the Global South has a life outside academia. Furthermore, "it [the Global South] signals the particular transnational reorganization of a still unequal world after the end of the Cold War and after the faltering of anticolonial nationalisms" (6), thus it represents a suitable geographic location for new frames of analysis for the aftermath of conflicts rooted in anti-communist sentiments in the Americas.

In their further review of the intersections between anthropology and literature/cultural studies in the Global South, Castillo and Puri emphasize the following:

> both disciplines explore the embeddedness of everyday life in larger social structures and the embodied experience of macro-events. Both also pay attention to the singularities that escape (or are sacrificed to) systemic

> analysis; they are finely attuned to the static of the local that disturbs the frequencies of the global and betrays the blind spots of a many a macro-narrative (8).

Furthermore, although anthropology "routinely dialogue[s] with a wide cross section of people rather than only experts and elites" (9), literature and cultural studies scholarship is just beginning to do so across the Global South due to emergent dialogues between cultural critics and non-experts, showing how, significantly, fieldwork "shift[s] the humanities' medium of encounter" (5). With this shifted medium of encounter, the cultural critic finds her or himself navigating "a cultural space dense with meanings [...] to register its resistances, debates, and active subjectivities" (12). In her single-authored chapter in *Theorizing Fieldwork*, Puri further illustrates this concept "by reading literary and extraliterary landscape in Grenada *alongside each other* as sites of memory" (32, emphasis in the original text). This scholar manifests that the shifted mediums of encounter in her work yielded new forms of engagement with Caribbean cultural criticism during her research stays in Grenada. For Puri, fieldwork has allowed her project to "become one of witnessing: to study the visual traces of the [Grenada] Revolution [1979] in the landscape; to study the agonic silences, both state- and self-imposed; to locate fragments of memory, to listen for its murmuring; and to contribute to the creation of spaces for public speech on the topic" (32-3). In one example of the visual traces of the Grenada Revolution in the landscape, Puri observes abandoned Cubana de Aviación and Aeroflot planes, pointing out that the aircrafts, left as debris, "are in fact the very antithesis of official commemoration" (33). With both aircrafts partially submerged in

overgrowth, Puri sees the Cuban plane as the embodiment of residual memory and the relationship of the Grenada Revolution to the rest of the Caribbean (34). In another example of a shifted medium of encounter in cultural criticism on the Global South, Rashmi Sadana writes of her experiences on the metro in New Delhi, referring to the Indian megacity as "both a place to be and a research problem" (151). For Sadana, the notion of fieldwork in non-anthropological disciplines constitutes, in addition to something akin to participant observation, "the physical, emotional, and intellectual immersion in people's lives through sets of encounters in a place or set of places," which, in turn, "not only enables certain kinds of research but defines the research problem anew" (151). In both the Grenadian and Indian examples I cite here, Puri and Sadana situate their personal experiences of physical movement through spaces of memory at the center of their academic work in the humanities.

Like Rashmi Sadana in New Delhi, I see the peripheral network city as a place to be and a research problem. Further exploration of urban space on the part of cultural critics is illustrative of this position. Closer at hand, in the context of Latin American Cultural Studies, Rebecca Atencio uses her visit to a prison cell of the former police station in São Paulo, Brazil as a point of departure to analyze spaces of memory. In her visit to the public memorial, which is significant in that it was one of the first Brazilian state-sponsored sites of memory, Atencio is attuned to the fact that the new memorial was once the space where security agents imprisoned suspected "subversives" during the military dictatorship from 1964-85. Like the AHPN, torture also took place at this site in São Paulo, yet Atencio confronts the possibility that she is "a belated witness to the

crimes against humanity perpetrated here and a real-time witness of how the dictatorship is remembered in Brazil" (99). Noting how she was the only visitor at the site on a Saturday, Atencio keenly observes even the most seemingly trivial details of the scene, such as the smell of fresh paint in the cell. For Atencio, her observations constitute "the cosmetic retouching, if not the outright suppression of memory, which has literally been covered up with a coat of neutral-colored paint. The presence of the guard rope, albeit a temporary measure while the paint dries, serves to impose further distance, as if to prevent the visitor from getting too close to the past" (100). Likewise, the new name for the former prison warrants our attention, which is now called the Memorial da Liberdade [Freedom Memorial] as opposed to the previous Memorial do Cárcere [Prison Memorial]. Certainly, Atencio concludes, the Memorial da Liberdade nomenclature has a lot to say about transformative politics of memory in Brazil. Indeed, the title of her book chapter, "From Torture Center to Stage and Site of Memory," is deeply suggestive of symbolic transformations of sites in the Brazilian megacity. For his part, Michael Lazzara suggests that the memory politics to which Atencio alludes, in turn, underscore "sites in which to symbolically mete out delayed transnational justice that never materialized in reality" (22). The "delayed transnational justice" can materialize in the form of cultural production that is produced in response to a lack of state intervention with respect to the preservation of historical memory. According to Lazzara, memory "is not just a subject matter for scholars to study or even a duty for postconflict societies, but a *right* to which citizens are entitled: a right that implies truth, access to information, transparency, justice-seeking, and accountability" (25-6, emphasis in the original text). As Atencio's

observations show, it is precisely the encounter with a cultural space dense with meanings that allows us to interpret memory anew, with residual memories of Cold War politics in the Global South serving as raw material for spatial analysis.

Thus, with the important lessons from *Theorizing Fieldwork* in mind and following Atencio's lead in the Latin American context, I permit myself personal anecdotes to help illustrate the AHPN as a material site of trauma, center of state power, and nucleus of the peripheral network city. I first arrived in Guatemala City for academic purposes at the end of June 2015 at a time of political volatility when, indeed, I was set on immersing myself in the material memories of war in the Guatemalan capital.[37] Having read about the discovery of the AHPN since the Project's inception via Google News searches, I was eager to arrive at the location in Zone 6, and although I could not discern it at the time, my "medium of encounter" would deepen as my endeavors in cultural criticism took a decidedly ethnographic turn. I first arrived at the AHPN on 30 June 2015, having taken a cab driven by my friend Leonel, one of my Guatemalan *taxistas de confianza*, from my family's home in Zone 18. After a short drive across the Puente Belice, we arrived in Zone 6, an otherwise nondescript expanse of fast food restaurants, small family businesses with mundane goods, a raucous marketplace, and red municipal buses filled over capacity trundling along the sides of cracked, gridlocked roads, leaving puffs of black smoke in their wake. To avoid the traffic and crowdedness of the buses, some individuals opt to ride in *tuk-tuks*, the cycle rickshaws originating in Southeast Asia and now common all

[37] On 4 July 2015, I took part in a political manifestation with Guatemalan writer Maya Chinchilla and several thousand other demonstrators, calling for the resignation of then-President Otto Pérez Molina for his involvement in La Línea corruption ring.

over the Global South. I observed that many of the buildings have cracks in their façades and small sinkholes on the sidewalks and in the road are cordoned off by yellow tape.[38] The center of the peripheral network city was overcrowded, polluted, and deeply impacted by naturally-occurring seismic movement, as elsewhere in urban Guatemala. Yet, its Zone 6 location stands out because of its proximity to the Historic Center.

Once at the AHPN, one immediately notices the concrete walls, more than six feet high, around the parameters of the site, which sits adjacent to the current headquarters of the PNC. The main entrance is flanked by a makeshift eatery with walls and a ceiling of tarp where police officers eat *shucos* [Guatemalan hotdogs] and drink lukewarm sodas. The man preparing food over an open grill uses a palm leaf to swat flies away from the sugary drinks on the table, which supports a large stack of tortillas and condiments for the hotdogs. As he prepares food, the man also attempts to entertain his children and shield them from frequent rain showers that interrupt the noonday heat. Their reflections appear in the pools of water dispersed in potholes on the street, which is what immediately captures one's attention above all. Painted in uppercase black letters against a white backdrop is the name address of the AHPN: ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO DE LA POLICÍA NACIONAL AVENIDA LA PEDRERA 10-00, ZONA 6.[39] The address is significant because the name of the avenue, Pedrera, translates to "quarry" in English, giving us the

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[38] I have always thought that the yellow tape around sinkholes in Guatemala City eerily mirrors the same tape around deadly crime scenes, signifying that both events jeopardize the wellbeing of postwar Guatemalan urbanites.

[39] Guatemala City addresses operate on the grid system, with avenidas [avenues] running north to south and calles [streets] run east to west, often numbered. The addresses specify street first, then the corresponding cross street (the nearest avenida), and the Zone number.

image of a large, deep pit where materials are held and extracted; the location establishes eerie parallels with the immense paperwork of the AHPN. My observations also take in the high walls with barbed wire around the parameters of the AHPN, which create a notion of partitions: clear, physical divisions between the compound and the rest of Zone 6 and the peripheral network city. At the same time, the barbed wire is reminiscent of the walls around private homes and gated communities found throughout postwar Guatemala City to deter criminals. I interpret the barbed wire as both an indication that the AHPN has much in common with other spaces in Guatemala City and that it serves as a reminder of the fear generated by the police papers, which continues to be generated by present-day crime statistics.

As one crosses the main entrance of the grounds of the AHPN, the artwork on the interior of the wall stands out. I later learned from Luisa Fernanda Rivas Pérez, a worker at the AHPN, that the artwork was painted by some of the first Project workers at the site. Their paintings on the wall present a cosmetic retouching of prior events illustrated by brightly-colored murals. One such mural depicts a helicopter that appears to hover over the Guatemalan highlands during the war (Figure 2.1, p. 98). The words "desarrollo comunitario" [community development] seem to challenge the flying war icon, hinting at the unification of the Maya peasants of the internal armed conflicts. Beside this scene is a woman in despair, who holds her arms out in a gesture of anguish above the skeleton of what we can presume to be a family member who has been killed. The skeleton still has organs intact, which are leaving the body in a symbolic movement toward snakes on the grass, one of which has the words "que se vaya el dolor" [may the pain go away] painted

on its body. Simultaneously, a child cries beside the woman saying "¡no más!" [no more]. As if in unison with this statement, pieces of paper (what we might call "paper cadavers" in reference to Weld's book) fly upwards from the skeleton's bent leg, sending a dozen papers into the air, some of which take on the form of paper cranes. Other pieces of paper come together to form the words "memoria" [memory] and "vida" [life], with three children of different skin colors raising their arms above an ornate quetzal, the national bird, suggesting multiethnic unity. The mural is a complex illustration of the war, showing its movement from the countryside to Guatemala City. The memory and life generated from the AHPN paperwork shows the importance of this site in the construction of historical, residual memories in the peripheral network city. The flight of the paperwork signifies that the residual memories of the peripheral network city resonate well beyond its borders. Another, more sinister piece of art, from which the helicopter of the previous image seems to emerge, shows a map of Guatemala in flames with skull faces in tears exhibiting stunned grief (Figure 2.2, p. 99). Within the topographies of the Guatemala map are army men aiming their guns at the homes of Maya peasants, whose roofs in flames extend to the entire country, as implicated by the map. Above crosses on the tombstones of fallen Guatemalan citizens, we see words painted in yellow, superimposed across the map: "oprimidos por el peso del fusil" [oppressed by the weight of the rifle], which highlights the cultural significance of weaponry in the country. This map is contrasted by another, more hopeful map to the left, which shows Guatemala superimposed instead by the blue and white stripes of the national flag, a rainbow beneath the sun, a brightly-colored bird, and children's

handprints in blue, green, red, and yellow paint. Above this Guatemala map, in the same colors as the handprints, are the words: “Señor, hazme un joven que llueve amor donde haya Dios” [Father, make me someone young that spreads love where God is].

Figure 2.1: AHPN, multiethnic unity mural. July 2017. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Figure 2.2: AHPN, war and postwar Guatemala mural. July 2017. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

These images are accompanied by at least a dozen more around the walls of the AHPN. In tune with the implications that waves of justice are born in the wake of the AHPN's public opening, several more images tie into the hope generated by the extensive police papers. One such compelling image shows twenty-eight skulls in the dirt, eclipsed by a rainbow (Figure 2.3, p. 101). In red, the words that accompany the scene convey the following message: "de mis huesos nacerán las flores de libertad indiscutiblemente" [from my bones, indisputably, the flowers of freedom will bloom], with a large flower erupting from the soil flanked by two crosses. The words "familias, diario, militar" [families, daily, military] above the rightmost skulls indicate the interrelatedness of citizens and the state. Opportunities for further deliberation are to be found in two other murals, one of which shows boxes of AHPN documents as they had been found in July 2005, with a plant cropping up out of one of the boxes (Figure 2.4, p. 101). Multicolored paperwork from the

boxes, perhaps referencing the plant and animal life that had naturally created the AHPN's own mini ecosystem before the Project workers began sifting through the documents, converges to make the dress of Lady Justice. Rather than a sword to complement the balance to depict the personification of judicial systems, the Guatemalan rendering of Lady Justice holds an archival document, as if to say that, indeed, the flowers of freedom will bloom with the help of the AHPN. A similar image shows a skull spitting out archival documents, some of them forming into birds around a massive piece of corn beside a Mayan temple, suggesting that the AHPN will become as iconic as the Mayan temple in contemporary Guatemalan culture (Figure 2.5, p. 102). These artworks, aside from depicting the AHPN as a monument to those who lost their lives in the Guatemalan Civil War, juxtapose fear and insecurity with hopes for a brighter future and support Briggitine French's position that "collective memories are semiotic sites—simultaneously discursive and spatial—of ongoing debate and contestation" (343). While on the one hand, the gestures toward peace in a violent city reveals a site that covers a wide field of crimes, at the same time the physical space allows us to understand the prominent place of the AHPN in the peripheral network city: past and present social problems of the Guatemalan capital, as well as artistic-cultural resistance to these developments, are magnified here.

Figure 2.3: AHPN, flower mural. "From my bones, indisputably, the flowers of freedom will bloom." July 2017. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Figure 2.4: AHPN, A Guatemalan rendition of Lady Justice. July 2017. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Figure 2.5: AHPN, document mural. July 2017. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Once inside the AHPN, one notices the secretary's desk with a sign-in sheet for visitors who come from institutions in Guatemala and other countries such as Belgium, Canada, Germany, and the United States. Visitors sign in and store their backpacks and other personal belongings in a locker behind the secretary's desk, often uncertain of exactly what type of research to undertake here other than speaking with people who can talk about the AHPN and its history.[40] However, one can soon ascertain that, like the peripheral network city, the AHPN is indeed a research problem and a place to be. Aside

[40] Here, I particularly recall the first page of Castillo and Puri's edited volume, where the two cultural critics write "[a] number of years ago, a comparative literature graduate student came to Debra's office in Cornell University to inquire about possibilities for funding fieldwork she hoped to pursue in Mexico. When asked what specifically she wanted to do there, she said 'Honestly, what I really need to do is breathe the air and eat the food.' Debra told her she needed a more compelling academic justification in order to satisfy the evaluators" (1). Although Castillo and Puri acknowledge that the student's statement is under-theorized, they nevertheless use it as a point of departure for their book to discuss how fieldwork in the humanities has become "an indispensable tool, one that has transformed the practice, goals, and conclusions of our scholarship" (2).

from the artwork on the walls around the site, the embodiment of memory is acutely apparent at the AHPN museum, located directly opposite the secretary's desk. The words "el papel de la memoria" [the role of memory] are written in big letters in a font reminiscent of a typewriter alongside silhouettes of archival workers with stacks of papers along the wall. A woman's image is immediately to the right, with what appears to be her testimony superimposed across her face. The wall, which is only connected to the rest of the AHPN entrance on one side, further imposes partitions where past and present converge. Once inside the museum, on the other side of the wall, enlarged fingerprints come into focus, along with an old typewriter and several displays, one of which shows an image of what the AHPN looked like in July 2005 with paperwork in disarray on the ground to imitate the original chaos of the scene. Also in this space is a reproduction of the makeshift workstations that the Project workers created to carefully examine the police papers with three cutouts of people in protective clothing (Figure 2.6, p. 104). Two filing cabinets in the back insinuate that the Project workers are already in the process of cataloguing the papers in a more organized fashion. A floor lamp illuminates a hand-drawn picture of the PN vehicles, which seem to slowly disintegrate into the brown paper, denoting the overgrowth of the site upon its discovery. Both scenes simultaneously ignite the "sensory and intellectual cognition" to which Castillo and Puri allude. Likewise, the mural art on the walls around the AHPN and this museum constitute, to revisit Puri's words once more, "the very antithesis of official commemoration" (33). In this space, any visitor to the AHPN is both located within fragments of memory and fully immersed in multiple sets of encounters. On the one hand, I am struck by what I perceive to be the

multiple memorials within the AHPN, which itself could be understood as a memorial, that exists in artistic and architectural form to help us remember the pain that Guatemalan citizens continue to endure in the postwar era. Project workers at the AHPN still experience a variety of emotions as they read the documents: “the pride and excitement of finding a document of real importance, the anger and sadness provoked by nonstop reading about violence and vice, the boredom and frustration of long days spent sifting through bureaucratic minutiae” (Weld 21).

Figure 2.6: AHPN, museum. July 2017. Photos by Andrew Bentley.

Although the existence of the museum and its images could encourage us to think that the activities at the AHPN have occurred in the past, Weld points out that it continues to present “a challenging environment for many reasons, not the least of which being that it remains an active police base” (22). This critic notes that the sounds of gunshots at the adjacent firing range on the same city block often interrupt would-be researchers and visitors. I would also suggest that the sounds add to the overall tension one experiences when entering the spaces of memory at the AHPN, an idea supported by Weld’s assertion that “the tensions of the Project’s workplace” (22) are still felt today. She also writes of pauses in her audio recordings during her interviews with Project workers,

which occur intermittently "when interviewees would see an officer walk by or thought one was within earshot. The interviews were thus conditioned by the same sense of unease and instability pervading *both everyday life in Guatemala City* and these amateur historians' particular line of work" (22, my emphasis). In a similar fashion to Weld, I have taken notice of the similarities between the AHPN and the peripheral network city, both of which have been transformed in postwar Guatemala due to citizen and state involvement and exist in/as history. In this sense, my reading of the AHPN resonates with Ann Stoler's invitation to see the archive-as-subject as opposed to archive-as-source, as sites of "knowledge production, as monuments of states, as well as sites of state ethnography" (90).

My subsequent visits to the AHPN provided the remarkable privilege of speaking more with Enmy Moran, who worked on the digitization of the AHPN with documents classified in the computer database according to special criteria. Herbert Caceres and Luisa Fernandez Rivas Pérez provided information about the recent history of the Project. With these informal conversations, I became even further convinced of the AHPN's prominence as a material site of trauma. It is important to note, however, that more artistic-cultural responses to the AHPN lie beyond its institutionalized confines. Just as Puri reads Grenada's literary and extraliterary landscape alongside each other as sites of memory, Caruth convincingly argues in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) that through the notion of trauma, we can understand a history no longer based on straightforward models of experience and rather on an observation of delayed responses and other "intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 11). The notion of trauma reveals that

a history that defies our initial understanding comes to light when we attempt to make ethical and representational sense of traumatic events. Caruth identifies trauma as an experience so painful that the mind is unable to cognitively grasp it and direct access to traumatic memories are not possible without causing great distress to the person(s) directly or indirectly affected by traumatic events. It is precisely the cognitive reasoning with a traumatic event that makes it traumatic in the first place and "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 9). For her, memories of trauma do not emerge consciously and only come to the fore after we (anthropologists, cultural critics, crime scene investigators, journalists, police officers, and so on) attempt to directly access traumatic events for our own academic or professional purposes. Moreover, in her reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), the scholar suggests that written texts do not merely serve the purpose of encountering traces of trauma but also that texts themselves constitute other sites of trauma aside from physical spaces, precisely because of our attempts to directly access the events through the written word. These texts are deeply entrenched in ethical and political dilemmas that the observer or reader must negotiate through her or his relation to the site of trauma. In other words, trauma is an attempt "to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4). The AHPN is a site of trauma because it resists simple comprehension and, at least initially, signifies our mind's inability to fully comprehend

the war events that it encapsulates. Following this logic, the murals around the parameters of the AHPN, the museum at the site, and Project workstations "are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it" (4). In this sense, urban Guatemalans have forged multiple material spaces of trauma from which to denounce the internal armed conflicts at the AHPN, just as they have done elsewhere in the peripheral network city on the sides of buildings and municipal buses, on the face of billboards, and in political manifestations.

However, it is important to note that Guatemalans have also forged discursive spaces of trauma from which to denounce the past. In *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013), Caruth further explores the notion of trauma with a look more focused on the written text. In her words, "the question of creativity—as a creativity arising in the context of trauma—is bound up with the question of truth. Rather than providing an affective response to trauma, the life drive can be understood as providing another means of bearing witness" (96). In relation to the archive, she posits that "[t]he encounter with the archive is thus an act of interpretation that appears like a return, but it is also an event that partially represses, as it pass on, the inscriptions it encounters; that passes on not only an impression but also, somewhat different, its repression" (78). Psychoanalysis, which is bound to the archive and trauma because it "'installs *itself*' at the heart of the dig" (77), that is, the archaeological project of uncovering an object and the archival task of reading inscriptions, also runs the risk of repressing again what has already been inscribed. In other words, psychoanalysis, and indeed trauma, is a "witness to the strange notion of a *memory* that *erases*" (78, emphasis in the original), which, for Caruth, is at the

heart of Derrida's notion of archive fever. "Repetition compulsion" may take place when institutional mechanisms reformulate "very specific and historically situated archival discover[ies]" (78), which in turn can lead to "self-erasing inscriptions of history. Traumatic memory thus totters between remembrance and erasure, producing a history that is, in its very events, a kind of inscription of the past; but also a history constituted by the erasure of its traces" (78-9). Certainly, in the case of the AHPN, certain memories have been privileged over others and the mere fact that the Álvaro Arzú administration denied the existence of the AHPN has allowed all Guatemalans to bear witness to post-truth erasure set forth by the state. While I am apprised of the fact that self-erasing inscriptions of history surround the state power associated with the AHPN as a material site of trauma, which is also evident elsewhere in the peripheral network city, cultural production shows us a new kind of language that has much to tell about means of bearing witness at the AHPN and its felt traces beyond its Zone 6 parameters.

2.3. *El material humano* as Discursive Site of Trauma and Literary Representation of the AHPN

The means of bearing witness that Caruth describes is especially apparent in the autofiction *El material humano*, published by Rodrigo Rey Rosa four years after the humanitarian discovery of the AHPN.[41] Just as there is "an entanglement of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* with its own urgent historical context" (Caruth 12), there are palpable

[41] I use the term "autofiction" after the French critical theorist and novelist Serge Doubrovsky who coined the term in reference to his own fictionalized autobiography *Fils* (1977). According to Elizabeth Jones, he provides "a fictional framework for his memories [...] to engage with his unconscious and to prolong his experience of psychoanalysis through his writing" (3).

reverberations between the trauma at the AHPN and Rey Rosa's literary response to the site. Likewise, in the case of Atencio's identification of the links between "institutional mechanisms and cultural production" (5) in the case of contemporary Brazilian literature, we can perceive the same developments in Guatemala as people attempt to make sense of the AHPN. To contrast slightly with Caruth, Atencio proposes a system she calls the "cycles of cultural memory," which are made up of several important elements and developments, chiefly the "*imaginary linkage* between the cultural work (or works) and an institutional mechanism. The general public comes to associate the two events, and to think of them as a pairing" (6, emphasis in the original text). According to the scholar of Brazil, the cycles of cultural memory also shed light on the process of *leveraging*, which occurs when "[c]ertain people and groups actively take advantage of the imaginary linkage to promote a chosen agenda. They appreciate the connection, and they work to make it meaningful" (6). Herein lies the repetition compulsion that Caruth discusses. The main participants in leveraging, says Atencio, "might be the architects of executors of the institutional initiative, the creators of the cultural work, third-party social actors, or—as is most often the case—a combination of the three [...] the resulting friction is often productive, spurring activity and dialogue as well as generation or reactivating other memories" (7). The fourth phase of the cycles of memory through institutional and artistic-cultural means happens when "the original cultural work helps foster new initiatives for continued cultural memory work, whether by serving as a model for others to follow, breaking a taboo, inspiring adaptation to another medium, or otherwise opening up a space—discursive, physical, or both" (7). Although this gaze focuses on

Brazil, the same outlook can be transposed to the installation of the AHPN as a space of remembrance and source of literary imagination for Rey Rosa's novel. *El material humano* is not only a literary reconstruction of the AHPN with a main character that embodies the author's lived experiences in the Project, but also serves as a springboard for examining the centrality of the AHPN in the peripheral network city as a discursive site of trauma.

The autofictional qualities of *El material humano* coupled with its intertextual relationship with Borges (and, indeed, the intertextuality between the AHPN and other sites of trauma in postwar Guatemala) and other important literary figures are at the center of criticism produced in response to Rey Rosa's novel in both English and Spanish.[42] These features, in addition to the links the novel establishes between ethics and the law, have led it to be recognized as a significant postwar Guatemalan narrative by several critics in the nearly ten years since its publication. The publications of Mónica Abizúrez Gil, Nanci Buiza, Sergio Coto-Rivel, Alexandra Ortiz Wallner, Yansi Pérez, and Julio Quintero have reminded us of the novel's tendency to highlight the dominance of historical memory at the AHPN. The premise of this valuable scholarship is that the archive is at the center of Rodrigo's conundrum as he develops from a man who simply

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[42] Rodrigo Rey Rosa was born on 4 November 1958 into a middle-class family in Guatemala City. In childhood, he traveled to Mexico and throughout Central America and later traveled through Europe and the United States as an adult. He also attended the School of Visual Arts in New York and summer writing workshops in Tangier, Morocco, led by US American author Paul Bowles, whom he references throughout *El material humano*. Alexandra Ortiz Wallner opines that Rey Rosa is one of the most unique voices in Hispanophone literature, noting how he is often categorized with other novelists such as the Chilean author Roberto Bolaño and Horacio Castellanos Moya of El Salvador. She further comments "there is no doubt that Rey Rosa's literary relation with the North American author, traveler, and composer Paul Bowles (1910-99) is a counterpart to his previously mentioned ongoing dialogue with Borges" (137). Having won the Miguel Ángel Asturias National Book Award in 2004, Rey Rosa in turn used his financial earnings to establish and fund the B'atz' Indigenous Literature Award to promote literature in the original Maya language and in Spanish translation (138-9).

visited the AHPN to fill a void of boredom to someone deeply invested in the new turns of historical memory that are unearthed at the site. Abizúrez Gil claims that the archive of Rey Rosa's novel is "un lugar de caos y peligro que dificulta diálogos entre clases sociales e ideológicas distintas alrededor de la elaboración de una memoria histórica del conflicto armado" [a place of chaos and danger that hinders dialogues between different social and ideological classes centered on the elaboration of a historical memory of the armed conflict] (19). Of interest to Abizúrez Gil is the symbolic construction of the AHPN in *El material humano* and the fact that the AHPN is a conflictive space where the construction of collective memory is disputed by all who encounter the space. She reiterates the well-established fact that the AHPN constitutes "lugares empíricamente localizables en donde se entrecruzan distintos tiempos históricos y experiencias, tanto personales como colectivos, provenientes de distintas localidades" [empirically locatable places where different historical times and experiences, both personal and collective from different localities, intersect] (6). Secondly, the AHPN "escapa a la condición puramente material para conformar espacios imaginados en donde las disciplinas filosóficas y sociales han representado la vinculación intrínseca entre origen, poder y conocimiento" [escapes the purely material condition to form imaginary spaces where the philosophical and social disciplines have represented the intrinsic link between origin, power, and knowledge] (6). The archive embodies discursive authority, which, beyond its global reach in Cold War politics, also deviates from the norm in the Central American region, where "tradición archivística" [archival tradition] has not yet reached the same level of maturity as elsewhere in the spheres of high culture in "subhegemonic" Latin American countries

such as Mexico or Argentina, to reuse Arias's term that denotes Latin American countries, while still marginal to the United States, still exert economic power over smaller countries of the region (8, 17). Furthermore, the human qualities of the AHPN are embodied by the author-protagonist Rodrigo, whose involvement in the archival Project betrays the authoritarianism once associated with the physical and mental reclusion of the space.

Likewise, Sergio Coto-Rivel reads the AHPN of *El material humano* not only as a discourse but also as materiality. The "textual labyrinth" of the AHPN, says Coto-Rivel, allows us to confront "las funciones de la textualidad literaria, más allá de clasificaciones y fronteras definidas" [the functions of literary textuality, beyond defined classifications and boundaries] (4). That is, the AHPN aims to create boundaries between its Zone 6 location and the vastness of the peripheral network city, as we see with the cement walls topped with barbed wire that enclose it. For Coto-Rivel, the literary reconstruction of the AHPN showcases the traditional conceptualization of the archive as a historical document, but also as a space, "the archive[s]," that takes on the same name (7). As Coto-Rivel puts it, "[l]os archivos como la representación de un lugar determinado, de un espacio distinto, comienzan a tener un peso en la opinión pública" [the archives, as the representation of a specific place, of a different space, begin to have weight in the public opinion] (8), with the materialization of the rescued documents serving as a springboard for human rights activism. For his part, Julio Quintero sees the PN as "un instrumento privilegiado para analizar los medios concretos de consolidación del poder absoluto del Estado" [a privileged instrument to analyze the concrete means of consolidating the

absolute power of the State] (4). Like Coto-Rivel, Quintero interprets the literary AHPN as a multifaceted endeavor, where “the archive” takes on the role of a “forma de registro, escritura [y], en última instancia, poder sobre los cuerpos y capacidad de asentar cada gesto y cada rasgo para interpretarlo más tarde mediante un examen” [form of record, writing {and}, ultimately, power over bodies and the ability to set each gesture and feature to be interpreted later by an examination] (6). Quintero reads *El material humano* as a text that fictionalizes the archive as a “símbolo de seguimiento, control y producción de saber sobre los cuerpos” [symbol of tracking, control, and production of knowledge about bodies] (7), which implies that, despite the advances made by the Project, the AHPN still exerts control over knowledge production as it pertains to the traces of human matter catalogued at the site’s digital and physical repositories. With this control over knowledge production in mind, Alexandra Ortiz Wallner identifies the figure of the archive as “una profunda reflexión sobre la biopolítica del Estado guatemalteco” [a deep reflection about the biopolitics of the Guatemalan State] (129). In the mind of Ortiz Wallner, the AHPN is precisely what produces political relations and ideologies of space in Guatemalan social space and “the archive” doubles as both an institution and a concept of critical thought in Rey Rosa’s novel. The archive is not only a concrete space but also a method that permits access to the raw material of cultural memories. This dynamic repository of knowledge converges in the logics of information, systematization, and preservation of political regimes and the act of crossing into the AHPN signifies entrance to a space of power (129-30).

Salvadoran intellectuals Nanci Buiza and Yansi Pérez grapple with the novel's narratives of social justice without losing sight of the archive as both an institution and a concept. For Buiza, "Rey Rosa's novel problematizes the ethical implications of probing into a once-secret police archive that brings into the present the sufferings of the past" (58). With a focus on the notebook that Rodrigo keeps throughout the novel to chronicle his observations in the AHPN, Buiza engages in a careful observation of Rodrigo's obsession with the archive's stories, which, as the reader learns, are complemented by the memory of his mother's kidnapping nearly thirty years prior. In Buiza's words

> [t]he archive thus represents an unexpected and forceful entry of the past into the present. It is no longer a mere interest or source for literary inspiration, but has instead become the nexus of a restless past that is freighted with ominous demands on the present. The trauma-ridden history of Guatemala reveals itself to be erratic and circuitous: it springs forward and backward, intrudes uninvitedly, reverses its motion, and drags the unsuspecting individual toward its unredeemed suffering. (69)

Yet, as she also points out, in most respects Rodrigo was merely embarking on an intellectual and emotional journey in the AHPN, which challenges his assumptions about Guatemalan history and politics and the nature of morality (58-9). Buiza also makes clear that *El material humano* is not only concerned with "historical truth but on the large, more redemptive truth of the human predicament" (59), which is precisely what allows us to place the material and spatial discursivity of the AHPN in the broader context of postwar Guatemala City. She also emphasizes Rodrigo's interest in the Gabinete de

Identificación, an investigative unit of the AHPN that took note of the precise locations where crimes took place, examinations of dust and used guns, and the identification of bodies with photographs and digital fingerprints post-mortem. As Buiza so elegantly puts it, "*El material humano* jettisons standard novelistic protocol," since it is an amalgam of Rodrigo's research notes and observations of the file cards of the Gabinente, his reflections after he spends more time at the AHPN, interjections of his personal and professional life, newspaper articles, and literary quotes from Miguel Ángel Asturias, Jorge Luis Borges, and non-Latin American authors such as Voltaire (60). While noting that Rodrigo uses the word "labyrinthine" to describe the complexity of the AHPN, Buiza observes that "this haphazard commingling of the historical, the personal, the political, and literary, has the effect of blurring the line between reality and fiction. More importantly, the fact that these domains are kept diffuse and juxtaposed, rather than integrated into a coherent narrative, enables *El material humano* to give truthful expression to the complex human reality of the archive" (60-1). Furthermore, by centering on the AHPN, "*El material humano* remains grounded in ethical questions of how the past is remembered and constructed, and to what ends" (Buiza 62). Human rights culture "envelopes the archive project" (61), an enterprise shared by other gestures toward social justice elsewhere in Guatemala City today.

Yansi Pérez's study of *El material humano* supports Buiza's view that ethics are at the forefront of the novel. In her article entitled "Crónica de una muerte anunciada: el crimen y el trauma en *El material humano*, de Rodrigo Rey Rosa" [Chronicle of a Death Foretold: Crime and Trauma in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *El material humano*] (2014), Pérez

diverts slightly to recall the now infamous case of the lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg, who in 2009 recorded the announcement of his own death, which he alleged would be at the hands of then-President Álvaro Colom. Afterward, a friend of Rosenberg's uploaded the video to the internet four days before the lawyer was shot dead while on a bike ride in Zone 14 of Guatemala City; the video was then disseminated at Rosenberg's funeral. It was later found that Rosenberg arranged his own murder, which an article from *The Guardian* christens "Guatemala's YouTube Murder," orchestrated as a radical attempt to oust the president (Franklin, n.p.). According to Pérez, because of Rosenberg's death, "relatos del crimen" [crime stories] can be based on real or fictional(ized) events. Pérez then poses a series of questions, one of which outwardly asks about the importance of the archive, which she understands as a place where origin(s) and mandates converge.

As Pérez also observes, the Rosenberg case assumes a double corruption of the archive, noting

> Del archivo policial por la ficción, las marañas y las intrigas que empañan a la que se suponía que era la más irrefutable de las pruebas. Y del archivo de la historia, de la tradición, por el carácter bastardo, apócrifo, manipulador que le impone a la figura del 'Yo acuso' que se colocaba en el origen de la del intelectual moderno, aquel que se inventó a sí mismo desafiando al poder.
>
> [From the police archive to the fiction, the tangles and intrigues that tarnish what was supposed to be the most irrefutable of tests. And from the archive of history, of tradition, by the bastard, apocryphal, manipulative

> character that imposes on the figure of 'I accuse' that was placed at the origin of that of the modern intellectual, the one who invented himself in defiance of power]. (23)

In other words, the Rosenberg case demonstrates that archives and police reports are avenues for the construction of crime narratives whereas crime reports work with hard facts and across fictional narratives in the Guatemalan case. The "material humano" [human matter] from which Rey Rosa's novel takes its name, Pérez reminds us, comes from a 1945 memorial written by Benedicto Tun, the founder of the Gabiente de Identificación. Complimentary to Buiza, Pérez sheds light on the ethics of archival work at the AHPN, noting that the "human matter" at the site is precisely what enters the police quarters day by day in the form of notecards, which were used for the identification of people. In Pérez's viewpoint

> El Gabinete es el umbral del archivo; lugar donde la carne se encuentra con la letra, la materia prima humana se enfrenta al código penal, se le abre un expediente a la conducta clasificada como criminal. Allí el poder produce su memoria, su récord de culpas y de potenciales castigos. Pero el Gabinete también es un dispositivo heurístico y epistemológico.
>
> [The Gabinete {Cabinet} is the threshold of the archive; the place where the flesh meets the letter, the raw human material faces the criminal code, where a file is opened to the conduct classified as criminal. There the power produces its memory, its records of faults and potential punishments. But the Cabinet is also a heuristic and epistemological device]. (25)

To add to this, the AHPN found in the pages of *El material humano* is entered by way of Rodrigo's notes about the site: his journals and his booklets with heterogeneous notes allow the reader to enter the AHPN of state power (25). In other words, following Pérez's keen observations, Rodrigo has his own process of "archiving" information garnered from the AHPN. The raw material, the "human matter," is what constructs the novel, or that which has been archived according to "códigos novelísticos" [novelistic codes] of Rodrigo's own invention (25). Certainly, the observations from within the AHPN are complimented by his interactions with people in other parts of Guatemala City.

Pérez alludes to the relationship between the AHPN and other parts of Guatemala City when she maintains that,

> El total caos clasificatorio de este archivo jurídico se iguala en proporción a la extensión del aparato represivo por todas las capas de la sociedad. El propio carácter caótico de este archivo parece justificar la extensión y la magnitud del aparato represivo. La aleatoriedad de ese sistema clasificatorio parece reforzar el carácter monolítico de su sistema normativo.
> [The total classifying chaos of this legal archive is proportionally equated to the extension of the repressive apparatus throughout all layers of society. The very chaotic nature of this archive seems to justify the extent and magnitude of the repressive apparatus. The randomness of this classification system seems to reinforce the monolithic character of its normative system]. (26-7)

The same could be said of the repressive apparatus that touches all residents of the peripheral network city, which extends from the most elite zones with gated communities to squatter settlements that barely have electricity. In this sense, Pérez's scholarship is of utmost importance to the present study. Despite the copious cultural criticism produced in response to *El material humano*, there are few references to the relationship of the significance of the AHPN in Guatemala City, other than Pérez's allusion I cite above. Therefore, with an eye to these critiques, especially those of Yansi Pérez, my analysis of *El material humano* will serve to elucidate archetypal forms of the urban violence within the space of the AHPN. At the same time, my analysis hinges on the archive as it is articulated in the violent spaces of postwar Guatemala City to further understand the intrinsic relationship between state power and capital cities. Moreover, I draw attention to the archive as a strategy for representing the peripheral network city—that is, how both the AHPN and the Guatemalan capital are constructed as the spaces where powers and counter-powers encounter one another—ultimately to show how *El material humano* helps to construct this fluidity, visible from the perspective of the author-protagonist.

In my analysis of *El material humano*, I closely follow the literary interpretations of Pérez. She asks, "¿qué relación existe entre la necesidad de tener un documento, un expediente, una ficha para cada muerto, para todos los muertos de la historia, y el exterminio masivo, los genocidios que convirtieron al siglo XX en el más sangriento de toda la historia humana?" [what relationship exists between the need to have a document, a file, a file for each dead person, for all the dead of history, and mass extermination, the genocides that turned the 20th century into the bloodiest of all human history?] (24). She

reminds us how Rey Rosa's novel begins in the *Arkhe*, where origins and the law (as well as power) meet and, as noted by previous scholarship, Rodrigo's literary alter ego arrives at the AHPN with the confession that La Isla is a form of entertainment. This confession strikes me as significant not only for the way it conveys Rodrigo's feelings but also how he reveals that the AHPN is embedded within the peripheral network city, and vice versa. Rodrigo declares "después de aquella visita inicial las circunstancias y el ambiente del Archivo de La Isla habían comenzado a parecerme noveloscos, y acaso aun novelables. Una especie de *microcaos* cuya relación podría servir de coda para la singular danza macabra de nuestro último siglo" [after that initial visit, the circumstances and environment of the Archive of La Isla had begun to seem novel-like to me, and perhaps even novel-able. A kind of *microchaos* whose relationship could serve as coda for the singular dance of death of our last century] (14, emphasis in the original). As I have noted elsewhere, "[b]y conceptualizing the AHPN as a 'microcaos,' Rodrigo, through the prefix *micro*, implies that the site is a fragment of a much broader space and that other parts of the city replicate the AHPN's characteristics" (Bentley 15). The second half of the word, *caos*, speaks to the state of confusion felt by Rodrigo and other Project workers in the labyrinthine depths of the AHPN, but which can also be felt elsewhere in the peripheral network city as people traverse the zones steeped in systemic violence. It is as if Rodrigo is acknowledging that traces of the AHPN are to be found in Guatemala City and that the systemic violence of Guatemala City jibes with the contours of the AHPN.

Despite this *microcaos* and Rodrigo's alleged boredom, he tells us that "mi intención era conocer los casos de intelectuales y artistas que fueron objeto de

investigación policíaca" [my intention was to know the cases of intellectuals and artists who were the object of police investigation] (12), which has much to tell about the sympathy he feels for the Guatemalan intellectuals who came before him, much as the Project workers empathize with their human rights activist predecessors. Curiously, for Rodrigo's own security, he was asked to avoid cases before 1970, which is the same year that Benedicto Tun retired as the founder of the Gabinete (13). Even though the limitations of Rodrigo's dive into the AHPN are unclear to him, he remains determined to make sense of the space and examines cases from the before and during the war era. The *microcaos* of Rodrigo's imagination becomes more apparent as he spends more time at the AHPN. In his personal notebook where he writes down his observations at the site, Rodrigo lists "political crimes," such as that of Ramírez Cotón, catalogued in the AHPN for providing links between Guatemalan communists at home and in exile in Mexico (22), Fausto Díaz Paredes, recorded in 1972 for robbery and murder (23), García Soto Gonzalo, booked for his curfew violation in 1960 (23), a tendency to keep guns on the part of María Luisa Guidel López (23) and the unlawful presence of a fifteen-year-old minor at a brothel in 1952 (27). Perhaps one of the most interesting documentations of human matter in the AHPN is that of the Honduran Dolores Novales, recorded in 1955 for her desire to abandon her profession as a prostitute in favor of a more honorable lifestyle (33). Rodrigo quickly discerns an obsession with these crimes, many of which predate the Guatemalan Civil War and chronicle episodes of urban violence as well as more trivial crimes, and he enthusiastically discusses his findings with other archivists-in-training. While these detailed notecards note how urban violence is the backbone of numerous crimes recorded

in the Gabinete, Project workers also begin to occupy Guatemalan urban space by way of a series of lectures offered by Dr. Gustavo Novales (curiously with the same surname as the Honduran woman mentioned above), who studies the sociology of violence. In one of these lectures, offered in Ciudad Vieja of the Sacatepéquez department adjacent to Guatemala City, Dr. Novales describes how he became interested in the sociology of violence after his own kidnapping and torture in the 1970s, which resulted in the death of his parents who did not survive their own experience with torture. Dr. Novales reminds the attendees of his lecture, Rodrigo among them, about the state terror and revolutionary violence that makes up state violence in Guatemala today, noting that "[s]ólo el ser humano puede ser violento" [only human beings can be violent] (43). Dr. Novales then tells attendees that every act of violence is an act of power, whereas not every act of power is violent, concluding that "[u]n estado débil necesita ejercer el terror" [a week state needs to exercise terror] (44). In this case, the material space of trauma at the AHPN is symbolically extended further beyond the westernmost edge of Antigua, even beyond the peripheral network city, to show that its reach is felt by the interior of the country, just as much as the capital.

Rodrigo keeps Dr. Novales's lesson in mind as he returns to the AHPN, where we see that his enthusiasm morphs into paranoia after two months of constantly reading about crimes, as evidenced by a phone conversation with his girlfriend wherein he has the sensation that someone is listening and hangs up for fear of the potential interception (68). Rodrigo knows that La Isla was another front in the Guatemalan Civil War and begins to slip into a state of disorientation that seems to coincide with Kirsten Weld's

position that postwar Guatemala is "a state of purgatory: neither in open conflict, nor truly at peace" (122). Her assertion can be felt on a smaller scale within the AHPN where, although the PN no longer operates, the site of trauma exhibited by the human rights murals and Rodrigo's own narratives emphasize that it is the artistic-cultural production, and not the state-governed institution of the AHPN itself, that depicts hopeful manifestations of peace despite all evidence to the contrary. Rodrigo tries to fight his mounting disorientation by breaking away from the AHPN to visit the General Archive of Central America (AGCA), yet he ultimately searches for library materials about previous work that the PN had conducted while it was in operation (65). His seduction for crime narratives is further demonstrated by his visit the following week to the Guatemalan Library of Congress, where he reads of violent crimes such as one where a man of Chinese origin was castrated and had his throat cut in his bed in 1935, and another where a man raped and strangled twelve "niños blancos" [white children], between the ages of ten and sixteen, on the outskirts of Guatemala City. The man of Kaqchikel Maya origin, identified as José María Miculax Bux, was later shot as punishment and his skull was kept as an object of study in the School of Criminology at the Universidad de San Carlos (67). Even though he feels the aftereffects of spending prolonged periods of time at the AHPN, Rodrigo seems desperate to find traces of it elsewhere in postwar Guatemala City. This endeavor proves to be full of paradoxes because his involvement with the Project and crime documentation in the AHPN and elsewhere are interrupted by feelings of paranoia, particularly when he is on the phone with his girlfriend (68). The novel further becomes a site of trauma when Rodrigo reveals that his mother's own archival footprint lies within

the depths of the AHPN, which serves as plausible evidence of her 1981 kidnapping over a period of five months before her release a few days before Christmas of said year (89-90). Here, it becomes evident that the motivation for Rodrigo's integration into the Project is not merely to combat boredom as his original account suggests and his obsession with crimes is more legitimized. Yet, even his forays into the AHPN are placed in jeopardy when the discursive site of trauma produced by Rodrigo's narrative takes an environmental turn, a frequent occurrence in the seismically active peripheral network city.

As I have argued elsewhere, Rodrigo's journey in the AHPN is characterized by "the taxing nature of the documents, traumatic side effects, Rodrigo's fears of constant surveillance, recurring dreams that occur throughout the novel, a growing mistrust in Guatemala City's security, and the possibility that Guatemala's dark past has been reduced to minutiae" (Bentley 15). In a key episode of *El material humano*, Rodrigo recounts newspaper articles that could have been published in *Prensa Libre* or any number of other Guatemalan newspapers, which is worth citing in full:

> Hace dos días –leo en los periódicos de hoy– se produjo un vasto hundimiento de tierra en la Zona 6, donde se encuentra el Archivo. 'Tres personas por lo menos fueron tragadas por la tierra y unas 300 tuvieron que desalojar sus viviendas. En las últimas horas, más vecinos tuvieron que abandonar sus casas al oír que el suelo retumbaba.' Aparentemente "el hoyo de San Antonio', una especie de cenote que tiene un diámetro de cincuenta metros por sesenta de profundidad, pone el peligro no sólo las casas

circundantes, sino también las instalaciones donde se encuentra el Archivo, del que dista sólo ciento ochenta y cinco metros. Ayer –dice la prensa– los directores del Proyecto de Recuperación del Archivo discutían la inminente movilización de los documentos para ponerlos a salvo.

[Two days ago—I read in today's newspapers—there was a vast collapse of land in Zone 6, where the Archive is located. 'At least three people were swallowed by the earth and about 300 had to abandon their homes upon hearing that the ground rumbled.' Apparently, 'the hole of San Antonio,' a kind of sinkhole that has a diameter of fifty meters across and sixty meters deep, endangers not only the surrounding houses, but also the facilities where the Archive is located, which is located only one hundred and eighty-five meters away. Yesterday—says the press—the directors of the Archive Recovery Project discussed the imminent mobilization of the documents to keep them safe]. (71)

The Zone 6 sinkhole was a real-life event in the peripheral network city, adding an environmental element that deepens the identity of the Guatemalan capital as a violent urban space. As Weld makes clear, the sinkhole, in proximity to the AHPN, meant that in addition to the material and discursive trauma at the site, Project workers also began to fear environmental perils not only at the site but also in the city as it began to present "unforeseen hazards, now including the possibility that the ground might simply disappear beneath them [the Project workers]" (Weld 45-6). Weld also ponders the fact

that the AHPN could have completely vanished not even two years after the Project was established:

> In February 2007, a hundred-foot-deep sinkhole, resembling the crater an asteroid might pound into the earth, tore open Guatemala City's Zone 6. The result of poor plumbing infrastructure, the yawning sinkhole just around the corner from the archives devoured an entire city block and several area residents overnight. It could easily have taken the precious police papers along with it. (20)

The sinkhole forced people to consider the possibility of natural earthly movements in Zone 6 as the sustainability of urbanization was compromised. It was later found that a combination of a pipe burst due to poor plumbing infrastructure and torrential rain were the cause of the 2007 sinkhole ("Hole opens", n.p.). As I have previously reflected, "[t]he poor plumbing infrastructure mimics the neglect associated with the poor placement of the police papers, while the rain emphasizes Zone 6's identity as a subtropical habitat" (Bentley 17). Further sinkholes in 2011, 2014, and 2015, the last of which was in Zone 6, pinpoint the reality that "[t]he near fatal loss of the AHPN and the apertures on the earth's surface remind us of the volatile topography that cause certain zones to feel more vulnerable in a city that is already dangerous" (Bentley 18). In this sense, Rodrigo's preoccupation with the AHPN, the uncertainty of the future of the Project, and the nonguaranteed survival of the police documents, mirrors the anxiety felt by residents of the peripheral network city. Thus, the AHPN embodies the peripheral network city and represents its most potent vulnerabilities. After Rodrigo reads about the sinkhole, he later

comes across articles about the AHPN in the *New York Times* and *The Guardian*, representing its global reach. *The Guardian* article states, in English

> The Archive sits in a former police base in Guatemala City, ringed by razor wire and 24-hour armed guard. We were allowed access on condition we did not identify any of the 100 investigators working here… The person in overall charge of the Procurator's inquiry says there is psychological pressure on these workers, who know their lives may be at risk due to the political sensitivity of their work. He has received numerous death threats. 'There are some extremely unhappy people in the higher echelons of government and the army' —he says—. And people still go missing here in Guatemala. (78)

Rodrigo posits that the "unhappy people" to which this fragment of *The Guardian* article refers hope that the Zone 6 sinkhole also swallows the AHPN in some form. It is evident that, for Rodrigo, "unhappy people" could very well constitute figures such as former Presidents Efraín Ríos Montt or Álvaro Arzú, the latter of whom, I reiterate, initially denied the existence of the AHPN.[43] He could also refer to the oligarchic elite of the peripheral network city, who, incidentally, correspond to the PN officials in control of a major part of the city's history.

In one of the final episodes of *El material humano*, Rodrigo meets with Gabinete founder Benedicto Tun for an interview. Tun, who appears to be uninterested in meeting

[43] Both Ríos Montt and Arzú passed away in April 2018 of heart attacks, Ríos Montt on the first of the month at the age of 91 and Arzú on 27 April at the age of 72 during a game of golf in Guatemala City.

with the author-protagonist, tells him that he does not have much time, juxtaposed by memories of crime that come to him at random, among them "el caso de la casa #38" [the case of house number 38], where two elderly women were robbed and killed by the intruders, one of whom was the grandson of one of the women. Tun recalls "en ese tiempo, cuando la ciudad era muy pequeña todavía, una manera de investigar en uso era mandar agentes a beber a las cantinas, usted sabe" [at that time, when the city was still very small, one way to investigate was to send agents to drink at bars, you know] (162). Before the exponential growth of Guatemala City, Tun suggests, everyone knew each other and anything that was overheard in a bar could serve as a clue to solve urban crimes (162). From my point of view, this statement also signifies that obsessions with urban crimes have been integral parts of Guatemalan culture long before Rodrigo entered the AHPN. Rather than feeling a sense of comfort with this news, Rodrigo asks himself "si en realidad he jugado con fuego al querer escribir acerca del Archivo" [if, in reality, I have played with fire upon wanting to write about the Archive] (169). Just as in Cathy Caruth's manifesto that events are traumatic precisely because of "our mind's inability to comprehend it" (6), Rodrigo, too, finds himself questioning the validity of his involvement with the Project, since "trauma narratives [do] not simply represent the violence of a collision but also conveys the impact of its very incomprehensibility" (Caruth 6). At the end of *El material humano*, the violence of the AHPN is still not fully known to Rodrigo. What is more, we can confidently discern the AHPN and *El material humano* as sites of trauma because they do not, to cite Caruth again, "offer an escape from reality" (7). Rather, the AHPN and the writing of *El material humano* repeatedly attest to

their endless impact on Rodrigo's life; he cannot escape from the perils of the peripheral network city within the AHPN nor do traces of the AHPN in *El material humano* evade the systemic violence of peripheral network city, past or present. Like Yansi Pérez before me, I concur that *El material humano* represents "una de las mejores novelas políticas que se hayan escrito en Centroamérica" [one of the best political novels ever written in Central America] (30), because of its encounter with the Arkhe that renders the novel palpable in postwar Guatemala City, where the archive is revealed to be the guardian of state power and, as Pérez puts it, "la memoria de la máquina del Estado" [the memory of the State machine] (25). Rodrigo's "desplazamiento" [displacement] to the AHPN is possible because of its shared qualities with the primary administrative status of the peripheral network city. These qualities are what renders it such an important piece of literature in postwar Guatemala.

2.4. The Place of the Archive in the Peripheral Network City

Weld's interpretation of the AHPN project as "a site of postconflict empowerment" (3) merits our attention in the broader context of the peripheral network city because we can also read Rey Rosa's novel as an example of postconflict empowerment. At the same time, Weld asserts, "documents, archives, and historical knowledge are more than just the building blocks of politics—they are themselves *sites* of contemporary political struggle" (3, my emphasis). Throughout the novel, Rodrigo struggles with his inability to escape the tangible effects of trauma and urban violence, either at the AHPN or elsewhere in Guatemala City. Despite these caveats, it is evident that the AHPN remains a source for

postconflict empowerment through the murals on the walls that seek to replicate the boundaries created by the zone system, the museum at the AHPN, and *El material humano*, which, while undoubtedly forcing us to encounter trauma, also allow us to see the truths of postwar Guatemala City as they are told by citizens of the state. Viewed in this context, the archive becomes the focal point of peripheral network city, a process aided by the citizen involvement in alternate forms of truth telling that defies the epistemological anxiety, trauma, and violence that still exists in the power that has been exercised in the *arkheion*. As Derrida suggests, the archive encapsulates "all the ways and means of state power; Power itself, perhaps, rather than those quietly folded and filed documents that we think provide the mere and incomplete records of some of its inaugural moments" (6). In other words, the archive suffuses the peripheral network city but only insofar as the state involvement contributes to its existence as a site and a practice. It is the citizen involvement that clashes with cultural, political, and socioeconomic forms of state power as they are felt at the AHPN and in the peripheral network city, with their own forms of the administration of *their* truths.

As Taylor comments, the *Arkhe* (archive) also implies the beginning of state power, which is certainly true in the Guatemalan case. However, she also says that "[w]hat makes an object archival is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis. Another myth is that the archive resists change, corruptibility, and political manipulation. Individual things—books, DNA evidence, photo ids—might mysteriously appear in or disappear from the archive" (19). This is evident in the AHPN; even the digitization by the Project workers could be understood as a form of

manipulation of the original practices that were set in motion by the PN systematization. In tune with this statement, Stoler writes that archives "covey the rough interior ridges of governance and disruptions to the deceptive clarify of its madness" (2). Although she writes from the context of colonial Indonesia, the treatment of archives "as restless realignments and readjustments of people and the beliefs to which they were tethered, as spaces in which the senses and the affective course through the seeming abstractions of political rationalities" (33), is particularly helpful for my decipherment of the AHPN's epistemological anxiety as that which fuels peace-driven citizens such as the Project workers to reimagine the peripheral network city anew. Yet, as Taylor warns us, the archive is closely bound up with the embodied practice of the repertoire, which, to repeat, "enacts embodied memory performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (20). Certainly, it can be argued that embodied memory performances have already taken place at the AHPN in the form of computerized documentation and the artwork at the site.

Additionally, when we pause to reflect once again on the sinkholes throughout the peripheral network city, and specifically the one that occurred precariously close to the AHPN, it is possible to view the site as potentially ephemeral. What is more, on 13 August 2018, Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst of U.S. policy in Latin America at the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., published an article entitled "Guatemala Police Archive under Threat," wherein she describes the recent government crackdown on the AHPN. It is fair to say that the AHPN is under crisis, writes Doyle, because

> its director Gustavo Meoño Brenner was abruptly removed in one of a series of recent actions orchestrated by the Guatemalan government and a United Nations office. The actions also place the AHPN's remaining staff of more than fifty people on temporary contract, and transferred the oversight for the repository from the country's national archives, where it has functioned since 2009, to the Ministry of Culture and Sports. (Doyle, n.p.)

Meoño learned of his removal on 3 August 2018, "when a convoy of government vehicles pulled up in front of the Police Archive, and officials from the Culture ministry and the Guatemalan office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) entered, demanding that he leave" (Doyle, n.p.). What makes this ouster more disturbing is the fact that no reason was given for Meoño's removal from office, with no evaluations of his performance as director to justify the sudden departure. The move certainly jeopardizes the future of the AHPN, even though most of its documents are now digitized. Doyle's article is accompanied by a petition to support the AHPN and was soon followed by an official statement by the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which calls for the reinstatement of all workers who had been removed, with a guarantee of the "inviolabilidad de la información contenida en el AHPN y la preservación estricta de su colección de documentos" [inviolability of the information contained in the AHPN and the strict preservation of its collection of documents] (LASA, n.p.).

We are thus faced with the possibility that the placement of the AHPN documents could change with time, as could the physical epicenter of the peripheral network city. The next chapter expounds on the ephemeral nature of citizen involvement in Zone 1,

which has historically been more accepted as the center of Guatemala City. While not altogether removed from the sphere of the archive, the repertoire nevertheless deepens our understanding of citizen and state involvement. When practitioners use the streets and sidewalks of the Guatemalan capital as raw material to enact creative interventions in Guatemala's memory politics, they offer a formidable addition to our reading of written or even artistic texts to understand the nuances of the peripheral network city through the lens of alternative modes of knowledge transmission.

Chapter Three

Embodied Practice: Record Keeping Beyond the Police Papers

The historian Heather Vrana writes that "[t]o simply walk in Guatemala City today is to brush past lives shaped by war" (238-9). Before I read those words in her 2017 publication, I had already been trying to confront the place of war in Guatemala City streets during my fieldwork. Research in Guatemala City contrasts with most visitors who tend to leave the peripheral network city after clearing customs at La Aurora International Airport to visit more touristic sites such as colonial Antigua or the Western Highlands. Yet archival workers and volunteers, museum curators, and artists have much to tell about the country and the capital's place within it. As I describe in the previous chapter, traces of the recent past are to be found in the digitized documents of the AHPN, at the site's museum, and represented through the art on the walls around it. The AHPN museum is vital to understanding not only the police papers but also the fact that their information resonates with other parts of Guatemala City where the recent past is embedded within the urban milieu. In leaving the theoretical nucleus of the peripheral network city to explore other parts of the Guatemalan capital, I have observed how citizens seek to make sense of the internal armed conflicts and their aftermath with further art installations (which have become more common in recent years), performances, and the use of the city space as raw material to openly talk about urban violence with billboards, makeshift memorials, and even the backs of municipal buses serving as surfaces on which descriptions of violence, particularly disappearance, are inscribed. Thus, questions of disappearances continue uninterrupted to this day, with

hotlines that people can call to gather information about missing loved ones. Some performances that I have observed, such as those by Garifuna peoples who dance and sing in the Parque Central in their native language, do not outwardly discuss violence, but rather demonstrate the internal displacement and new waves of migration that have been generated by the Guatemalan Civil War. In any event, Guatemalan citizens in the second decade of the twenty-first century are generating creative ways through which to engage with urban space and make sense of the continued impacts of the internal armed conflicts.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on the importance of the archive and its centrality to the peripheral network city, in this chapter I shift my focus to what Taylor describes as the repertoire, that inventory of nonreproducible knowledge, to understand how urban Guatemalan citizens counter the forces of state power. Building on the archival framework of the peripheral network city, this chapter moves the analysis from Zone 6 to Zone 1, which is more commonly perceived as the literal and figurative center of Guatemala City (and, indeed, of modern Guatemala). This chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of the repertoire and its relation to the archive to situate it in the peripheral network city, particularly those aspects that are linked with citizen involvement and creative attempts to counter state power and violence. Next, it surveys the performances of Regina José Galindo, which rely on both the archive and the repertoire in Guatemala City and around the world, as well as recent critical commentary generated by Latin American cultural critics Kaitlin Murphy and Doris Sommer. These scholars discuss visual and performative strategies as a means of citizen intervention in

the wake of conflicts. Departing from Taylor's conceptualization of the repertoire, I examine her other criticism, in addition to that of Vincent Druliolle, to briefly talk about H.I.J.O.S., the Argentine human rights organization composed of children of disappeared persons, which serves as inspiration for the Guatemalan group of the same name. A brief discussion of the history of H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala accompanies my analysis of the performative placement of photographs of disappeared persons in the Historic Center of Guatemala City. This, I argue, allows the children of the disappeared (and their family members) to occupy the peripheral network city by denouncing war crimes. The discourses of state-sponsored violence in the H.I.J.O.S. photographic narratives (often with messages in graffiti from the perspective of the victims) allow war victims to acquire agency in the present and occupy city space where they were once forgotten. This chapter's conclusion argues that the repertoire, as a main pillar of the peripheral network city along with the archive, can be understood as a means of contemporary sociopolitical intervention in postwar Guatemala. In other words, citizens are acting out against state power in the Historic Center of the peripheral network city in Zone 1 to counter its symbolic and systematic nucleus at the AHPN in Zone 6. Simultaneously, the H.I.J.O.S. photographs demonstrate how the *repertoire* adds another layer to the peripheral network city by exposing the reciprocal interplays between the state-controlled *archive* and citizen-driven *embodied practice*.

Inscriptions of the past spill beyond the parameters of the AHPN (and the place of the archive) where the police papers are codified, digitized, and stored vis-à-vis the performative use of city walls and streets as raw material for enacting memories of past

crimes of forced disappearance that have written discourses of violence in the peripheral network city. At the same time, as the title of this chapter implies, embodied practice also empowers citizens to keep a record of and recount *their* memories, and not only the ones controlled by the state in the archive, through the strategic use of the violence spaces of the peripheral network city. By including the repertoire as another defining feature of the peripheral network city, the goal of this chapter is to underscore the role of citizens in affirming their right to urban space and its history by cutting across the urban sprawl to envision it anew through cultural production.

3.1. Performing the Past in Postwar Guatemala

In his seminal book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), the Haitian anthropologist Michel Rolph-Troulliot questions the place and meaning of silences in history. He writes

> Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. There is no perfect closure of any event, however one chooses to define the boundaries of that event. Thus whatever becomes fact does so within its own inborn absences, specific to its production. In other words, the very mechanisms that make any historical recording possible also ensure that historical facts are not created equal. (49)

I contemplate what these words mean for the Guatemalan state, which has strategically manipulated and erased information from the public eye. I also recall Rolph-Troulliot's other important declaration that "[h]istory does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it in their own hands" (153). Over the years, I have learned that in Guatemala silences are broken and, indeed, citizens do take the making of history in their own hands in surprising ways, as demonstrated for example at the Museo de los Mártires [Martyr Museum] located in Zone 2. Its exact location on 1ª Calle is significant because it is directly adjacent to the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala [Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, or FAFG], an autonomous NGO, which in recent years has had a transformative role in uncovering data through the exhumations of clandestine mass graves all over the country. Immediately at the entrance of the museum, a hallway is visible, leading to the FAFG where people were at work. A poster on the wall reads "¿Dónde están? Los desparecidos" [Where are they? The Disappeared] with the phone number of the FAFG that people can call for help on locating disappeared family members. The heads of four disappeared people with completely blank faces accompanies these messages, as if to indicate that they have not yet been reunited with their family members. Even more jarring, however, is the main room of the museum, where one of the walls is completely covered by an image of the *Diario Militar* [*Military Logbook*], which Doyle describes as "a logbook that documented the capture and in many cases the execution of 183 people. Essentially, this was an army record of the disappeared" (*La*

ciencia contra la tiranía).[44] Doyle, who searches for traces of the disappeared in secret government documents as part of her work as director of the Guatemala Documentation Project of the National Security Archive, reads the *Diario Militar* as "a book of ghosts," which began to reveal itself to her over time. A name and photograph identifies each of the 183 victims, in some cases with the reason for their capture and date of disappearance. As a predecessor to the AHPN in 1999, the logbook also became a vital resource for the forensic anthropologists at the FAFG DNA laboratory who in turn used Emphasis, the same software used to identify victims at Ground Zero of the World Trade Center in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, to help reunite family members with the remains of their loved ones and have a proper burial after decades of uncertainty.

Amancio Villatoro, the founder of the Union of the Adams Chicklet Factory, is one of the most well-known people to be recorded in the *Diario Militar*. According to the logbook, he was disappeared on 30 January 1984 and killed on 30 March of the same year. As with some people recorded at the AHPN, he had been captured by state forces, this time the military, for his dissent against unfavorable workplace conditions. One of Villatoro's sons, Samuel, provided DNA samples, which the forensic anthropologists of the FAFG linked with Amancio. What is more, they identified his exact body as one of

[44] In a similar fashion as Doyle, Vrana discusses the *Diario Militar* as "a document that seemed to provide unassailable evidence of the military's involvement in kidnappings, torture, and murders of political dissenters [...] In it, Estrada Illesca's identification photograph appeared alongside that of 182 other people who had been disappeared by the National Police. Its pages are a sort of inventory of counterinsurgency tactics in Guatemala between 1983 and 1985, a damning artifact of Mejía Victores's professionalization of the military and police forces and expanded urban counterinsurgency" (236). Vrana's use of the word "inventory" helps us conceive the *Diario Militar* within the framework of the archive and the repertoire, for the enduring photographic materials, and the embodied knowledge of the visuals that bridge the activities of the PN from the AHPN to the Museo de los Mártires and beyond to the streets of the peripheral network city.

those that had been recovered at a gravesite within a military base several years prior. Villatoro's other son, Néstor, who was inspired by his father to work as a union leader at a company in the United States, has been a driving force of the Museo de los Mártires by sharing the family's experience with visitors and allowing his father's remains to be on display. Indeed, the other room of the museum houses Villatoro's body and some of his personal belongings, which, for his family, represents an attempt to bring him back into existence and ensure that he never fully disappears again (Figure 3.1, p. 141). I contemplated Villatoro's exhumed remains and some of the details from the *Diario Militar* and found the museum to be an extremely moving place, if not nearly on the same scale as the AHPN. Salomon told me that the museum is in danger of closing, as it relies completely on donations from visitors to remain afloat showing how, like the AHPN, the Museo de los Mártires has a potentially limited lifespan. Yet, at the same time the museum's ability to preserve memory and denounce war crimes by the military should not be understated. If the AHPN represented paper cadavers and human matter, so, too, did the Museo de los Mártires, although the second site is far less known and there were no other visitors aside from myself on that day. Salomon left me his cell phone number since he was not permanently at the site, encouraging me to call if I wanted to visit again for another tour, which I did on one occasion with a friend whose friends and family members had been forcibly disappeared at the hands of the military in Alta Verapaz. On this second occasion, Salomon invited me to join him in giving the tour of the museum, allowing me to reconsider its complex pathos and my place within it.

Figure 3.1: Museo de los Mártires, exhumed remains of Amancio Villatoro. Note the flowers left by his family members and the pants on the wall, which he was wearing when he was forcibly disappeared by the military. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Upon leaving the Museo de los Mártires in Zone 2, the Historic Center in Zone 1, and more specifically the Kaji Tulam Museum, is located a short walk away. A walk down the entire length of the Sexta Avenida, perhaps the most well-known avenue in Guatemala City for its complex history during the internal armed conflicts that I mentioned in Chapter 1, invites us to think of how the experiences of urban violence described at the Museo de los Mártires or the AHPN are palpable elsewhere in the peripheral network city, and how traces of these sites inhabit public space. Strategically placed on the Sexta Avenida leading toward the former presidential palace, el Palacio Nacional de la Cultura, are photographs of people that have been affixed to the façades of

buildings. Some of them appear to have no direct affiliation with any humanitarian groups of people, such as one photocopied picture of a man's cédula—an identification card with information equivalent to a Social Security number in the United States—that had been simply taped to the side of a building. A handwritten note reads: "CUIDADO! LADRON! AVISE A LA POLICÍA!" [Warning! Thief! Tell the police!]. Aside from a portrait, the photocopied personal identification card has everything from the person's identification number, full name, date of birth, and signature. This form of vigilantism is common throughout Guatemala and not so much as a cause for alarm but rather an opportunity to understand one way that citizens take the law into their own hands throughout Latin America.

Further along the Sexta Avenida, as one gets closer to the former presidential palace, one notices black and white portraits: photographs of disappeared persons that the H.I.J.O.S., their surviving sons and daughters, have placed in some of the most heavily-trafficked areas of the capital. One such cluster of photos appears around a message that has been stenciled on the side of a building that reads: "LA MEMORIA REBELDE NO SE DEJA DOMESTICAR POR UNA TRANSICIÓN HEGEMÓNICA. Mi apellido: OFENDIDO Mi nombre: HUMILLADO Mi estado civil: LA REBELDÍA" [REBEL MEMORY DOES NOT LET ITSELF BE DOMESTICATED BY A HEGEMONIC TRANSITION. My last name: OFFENDED My first name: HUMILIATED My marital status: REBELLIOUSNESS]. The iconic template of H.I.J.O.S. photographs is present in each of these images, which reads as follows: the words "¿DÓNDE ESTÁN? [WHERE ARE THEY?] appear in all caps above the photograph of the individual with their full name

directly below, as well as the name of the H.I.J.O.S. organization. Some haphazardly sprayed graffiti appears around the photographs to draw more attention to them. It is significant that the narrative attached to the photographs is written in the first person plural point of view, as if to speak collectively on behalf of all the people who were disappeared (Figure 3.2, p. 144). The collective name and marital status also seems to unite the victims and suggests that they would take part in human rights initiatives if they were still alive today. Further down the avenue, another group of much smaller photographs but with the names still present beneath the portraits, is huddled around a brief prayer, which begins "Empapelar. Es Con Usted Señor no importa que sea su pared no me importa Cuantas (sic) veces Arranque sus fotografías Las Voy a Volver a pegar" [Wallpaper. It is with you, Lord, [that] it does not matter if this is your wall I do not care how many times the photographs are taken down, I will paste them to the wall again]. In this case, the victims speak directly to God and inform him of their return to His walls with the help of loved ones, should they disappear again. These direct refusals to accept complete disappearance, just as with Amancio Villatoro's body in the Museo de los Mártires, are what I find most striking (Figure 3.3, p. 145).

Figure 3.2: Photos of disappeared persons. The accompanying messages preserve their memories in the cityscape. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

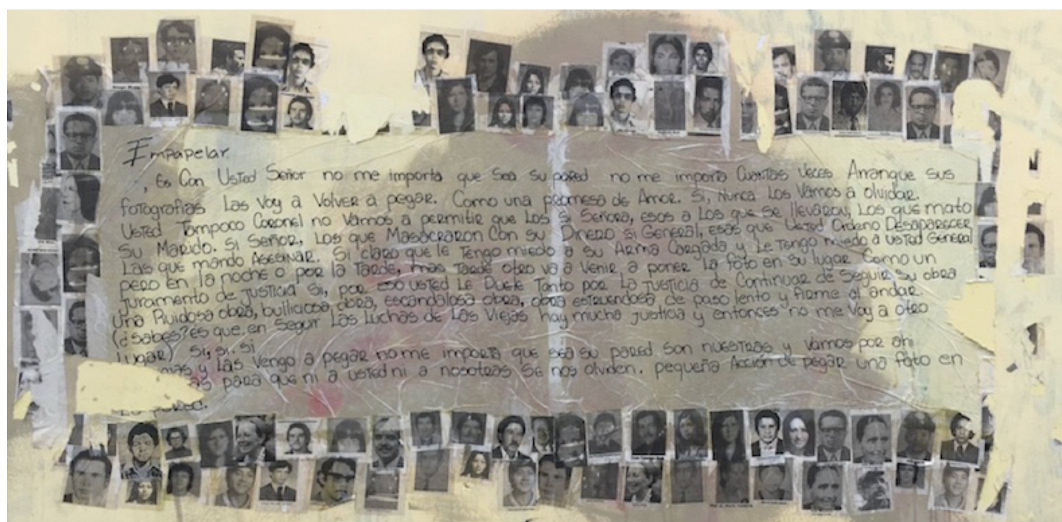

Figure 3.3: Photos of disappeared persons with a message to God. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

These images are significant not only for their content but also for their strategic placement on one of the most important avenues in the entire peripheral network city.

Although content wise, they appear to belong to the archive, their occupation of public space is reminiscent of the repertoire, which is another major contributing factor to the humanistic (re)construction of postwar Guatemala City. As Taylor reminds us, while the objects in the archive are "supposedly stable," the repertoire requires that people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge; human presence and participation is essential (20). The "supposed" stability of the archive is exemplified by the precariousness of the AHPN in Guatemala, both in terms of the natural environment and postwar political interventions. The repertoire is that which, contrasting with the archive, "allows for an alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact and invites a remapping of the Americas, this time by following traditions of embodied practice" (Taylor 20). However, it is also important to point out the similarities between the archive and the repertoire, which Taylor understands through the process of mediation. She posits, "[t]he process of selection, memorialization, or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness" (20-21). Thus, as with archives, embodied and performed acts also record and generate knowledge, although under different circumstances insofar that the archive correlates to hegemonic power and the repertoire provides the anti-hegemonic challenge (Taylor 22).

What is more, as we have also seen with the AHPN, the archive includes written texts but is not limited to them. The repertoire, on the other hand, contains visual and verbal performances, with its own methodologies for storage and dissemination, which do

not primarily rely on written texts, as is the case with the archive (24). Whereas the archive is "stored" on notecards in state-controlled buildings, the repertoire finds itself occupying the public sphere through the human participation to which Taylor alludes. Whereas the documentation provided by the AHPN (or the *Diario Militar* for that matter) operates according to its own rhetoric, that which belongs to the repertoire "makes visible an entire spectrum of attitudes and values. The multicodedness of these practices transmits as many layers of meaning as there are spectators, participants, and witnesses" (Taylor 49). Therefore, the photographs on the Sexta Avenida of the peripheral network city impact the ways we interact with it: casual tourists or missionaries with no knowledge of Guatemalan culture, history, or politics may see the images and their written messages as an eye-sore on the face of buildings; as a cultural critic and teacher, I see the images in an entire different light as a way to understand how citizens push back against state violence and participate in the reconstruction of urban space as part of the national narrative; those who have lost loved ones in the Guatemalan Civil War, as some of my own family members have, see the images differently in the sense that they open up old wounds from the past and speak to the perpetual grey areas of the disappeared, neither here nor there; the H.I.J.O.S. members who put up the photographs performed the memories of family members who are unable to occupy the city space on their own and see their mission as that which is resolutely committed to social and political justice.

As Taylor puts it, "[b]y emphasizing the public, rather than private, repercussions or traumatic violence and loss, social actors turn persona pain into the engine for cultural change" (168). The most dominant characteristics of the repertoire—its reliance, parallels,

and digressions to/from the archive, the participation of people in the reproduction of knowledge, alternative perspectives on history, the rejection of hegemonic discourse, and the myriad ways to interpret its knowledge transmission—are what interest us in relation to the peripheral network city. Certainly, the citizen involvement that shapes urban imaginaries is at the forefront of this important observation. The partitions of the peripheral network city also merit our attention in relation to the repertoire. Indeed, economic partitions are visible in the neoliberal restructuring of urban space and elite enclaves that contrast sharply with squatter settlements. Partitions are also inherent to the urban Guatemalan experience through the zone system. Yet they also exist as the repertoire creates rifts in the knowledge transmission, depending upon who is a spectator of embodied practice.

Furthermore, both the prominence of the repertoire in contemporary Guatemalan culture and its intersections with the archive is explored through the work of performance artist Regina José Galindo, who, working primarily in the Historic Center, helps us situate this theoretical interrelatedness in the peripheral network city. In perhaps what is her most celebrated performance, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* [*Who Can Erase the Traces?*] (2003), José Galindo walks barefoot through the streets of Guatemala City's Historic Center, from the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura to the National Court, carrying a basin filled with human blood into which she periodically dips her feet. The trail of footprints visualizes her reaction to the news that former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt had been permitted to run for president despite constitutional prohibitions which, in theory, are supposed to prevent this lamentable development. In this work, the line

between Galindo's body as object and subject (akin to Taylor's view of the archive as an object of historical records) was so subtle that the blood covering her feet appeared to be her own; she embodied the war's victims, taking their blood as hers and appropriating their suffering. José Galindo refers to a broad spectrum of violent acts by acting violently against her own body in other performances. In addition to a fight against political crimes, José Galindo's body as a canvas also presents a formidable display of the systematic oppression against women still pervasive in Guatemalan societies. The 2005 performance *Perra* [*Bitch*] showcases how José Galindo carves the derogatory term into her thigh, the same word that has often been carved on the bodies of feminicide victims in Guatemala City.[45] As Taylor also observes,

> although she [José Galindo] uses her art to call attention to the violence that surrounds us, she does not consider herself an activist [...] Her art challenges those who say that artists should limit themselves to their own context (for ethical reasons), that they should avoid the political to maintain their aesthetic integrity, and that they need to see results from their work in order to remain committed to it. (Taylor Ch. 7 Locations 1521-25)

While the fact that José Galindo does not consider herself an artist-activist is certainly striking, it is important to note that the act of painful inscription of the word onto the bare female body forces the spectators, ourselves, to consider the physical pain inflicted

[45] For an intimate look at feminicides in Guatemala City (that is, murders of women primarily based on their gender), see the documentary *Killer's Paradise* (2002).

upon women daily through a sense of shared vulnerability in the face of violent corporal acts, which, like archives, leave their physical and metaphorical traces long after the painful execution. The observer's empathy for the physical pain experienced by José Galindo forces us to consider the sociopolitical context to which the performer belongs. It also helps us see how the archive and the repertoire are present in Guatemala City today.

In another performance, *279 Golpes* [*279 Blows*], José Galindo is hidden from view as she apparently strikes herself nearly three-hundred times. As Emilia Barbosa tells us, "*279 Golpes* was a performance that formed part of the 51st Venetian Art Biennale. It was a sound performance and the 279 blows that Galindo inflicts on herself represent the number of murdered women in Guatemala in a period from 1 January to 9 June 2005" (59-60). While the performance fosters a communal gathering to make sense of corporal violence against Guatemalan women, José Galindo was never visible to spectators in the performance as she struck herself with a whip whose sounds were amplified along with her moans of pain (60). Barbosa writes, "[i]n *279 Golpes*, Galindo provides a shared collective space for producing an anti-scenario, rewriting history altogether" (60). The fact that spectators never bear witness to José Galindo's arrival or departure from the cubicle where she inflicts pain on herself means that their experience is manipulated; they are not granted the opportunity for, as Barbosa puts it, "feasting on the victim's suffering. It is an ethical decision to stop the appropriation of the bodies and identities of the victims of feminicide by the media and by society at large" (60). In this sense, while "Galindo's clever manipulation of violence representation in *279 Golpes* is an example of the way performative body talk can deconstruct the voyeuristic media-mediated gaze on

violence in the Guatemalan context" (Barbosa 62-3), we can also establish parallels with the manipulative power of the archive, particularly at the AHPN, where hegemonic narratives are out of the citizen's control. The repertoire, in this case exemplified by José Galindo's performances, is that which "reveal[s] what is normally hidden by fear and suspicion" (Barbosa 63). Barbosa concludes that "[b]ody art experimentation with self-inflicted pain and suffering typically tells a provocative tale in which the vices and perspectives of the private sphere are materially reinforced in the public eye" (66). In my view, José Galindo accomplishes this goal in all three of her performances mentioned here. Although, to reiterate, José Galindo does not perceive herself as an artist-activist, her performances are nevertheless crucial in understanding embodied practice and alternative knowledge transmission in postwar Guatemala.

I return to the H.I.J.O.S. photographs I observed as I walked through the peripheral network city from the Museo de los Mártires to the Historic Center. Undoubtedly, they play a pivotal role in how citizens emerge from the margins of society to tell their truths, make political statements, and impact the socioeconomic divisions of the Guatemalan capital. Aside from thinking of these photos and their commonalities with the AHPN documents or *Diario Militar* at the Museo de los Mártires, I also contemplate the traits they share with other performative acts in Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America, some of which have received much critical attention. Performative acts in urban Latin America, I argue—with "performative" understood in a broad sense, whether artistic or through everyday life enactments—are integral to understanding the region's cultures. This is hardly a new concept and need not wait for

formally-trained anthropologists to uncover through long-term participant observation. Take for example Doris Sommer's frequent references to the tenure of the mathematician Antanas Mockus as mayor of Bogotá, Colombia in the mid-1990s, a period when the State Department cited the Colombian capital alongside Lagos, Nigeria as two locales that were "too troubled to traffic in tourism" (1). In her book, *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (2006), Sommer explains that cultural agency constitutes "a range of social contributions through creative practices" (1). Sommer also makes the important assertion that "[i]nstead of tracing familiar routes from inequalities back to power, where movement gets stuck and protestors feel paralyzed, cultural agency pushes the tangents of daily practices to multiply creative engagements with power and to get some wiggle room" (19-20).[46] By "wiggle room," she refers to the means through which citizen's voices are heard. As a testament to the ways in which Mayor Mockus was "[u]sing culture as a wedge to open up the civil conditions necessary for decent politics" (Sommer 2), he hired pantomime artists to replace corrupt traffic cops in the center of Bogotá, who used red lights and crosswalks as props for public performance art. The pantomime artists also used laminated cards with either thumbs-up or thumbs-down visuals to either reward law-abiding drivers or denounce traffic violations. Other civic projects included new art programs in schools and monthly closures of streets, opening them to artists and bicyclists and encouraging Colombian urbanites to reoccupy the city streets they had

[46] Arias further reflects this sentiment by remarking, "*Cultural agency* is a term that calls attention to the ways that subjects, often peripheral or subaltern, empower themselves through cultural practices" (167, emphasis in the original). In what could very well be a reading of H.I.J.O.S. and other humanitarian groups (and not the Maya more generally as Arias does in his writing), he further contends that "[t]oday, individuals and even groups adopt multiple identities to survive and to empower themselves" (167).

once abandoned. Sommer notes that by 2003, which marks the end of Mockus's term, the homicide rate had fallen by sixty-five percent in comparison to when he took office, demonstrating the profound impacts of cultural agency on Colombian society (2). In a later publication, *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* (2014), Sommer contends that "[w]hether or not a work of art intends to change behaviors, its effect is provocative. Art reframes relationships and releases raw feelings that rub against convention" (50). It is precisely the friction caused by raw feelings that rub against convention that are of interest to the present study because, from my vantage point, Sommer's astute remark equates to the relation between citizens and the Latin American State.

The feelings elicited by both art and embodied practice are further explored in Kaitlin Murphy's superb book, *Mapping Memory: Visuality, Affect, and Embodied Politics in the Americas* (2018). Whereas Sommer speaks in a broad sense about creative practices employed by citizens to generate social contributions, Murphy goes a step further and originates the term "memory mapping," which she conceives as "the aesthetic process of representing the affective, sensorial, polyvocal, and temporally layered relationship between past and present, anchored within the specificities of place" (10). She adds:

> Memory mapping works to develop affective, visual maps of the relations between bodies, memories, lived experience, and the mnemonic potency of physical objects and spaces. In so doing, memory mapping projects produce new temporal and spatial arrangements of knowledge and memory in the present that function as a counterpractice to the official narratives that

> often neglect or designate as transgressive certain memories or experiences. (10)

It is apparent here that there are shared traits between memory mapping and the repertoire, though I would argue that the latter places less emphasis on physical spaces. Murphy is concerned with how visual works and performances "create a context for publics to *see* and *feel* past and present injustices" (8, emphasis in the original). For Murphy, memory mapping "provides a conceptual lens through which to ask what it means to live among the ruins of history" (86). With a focus on the relationship between bodies, memories, and physical spaces, I would argue that memory mapping is a heavily nuanced form of cultural agency and provides a theoretical apparatus that is in conversation with the contours of the repertoire. The "ruins of history," as Murphy puts it, have much to tell about how memory is felt and represented and how, like the objects of the repertoire, it functions as an alternative strategy for political intervention. Echoing Taylor, she declares

> it is possible for an object to perform, to be both 'of' and excessive to the archive, to be both fixed and live. Visual texts may be of the archive, but their performative effects occur not in the archive but beyond it, through their circulation and dialectical engagement with the world. Visual texts such as film and photography participate in a network of body-to-body affective transfer, wherein the visual text is both medium and method of transfer. Ultimately, if the meaning of images comes from how they are

mobilized, how and under what conditions they are seen, and how they are perceived, then images complete themselves through performance. (16-17)

Thus, like the repertoire, "[m]emory mapping is an artistic or curatorial practice" (119), which is concerned with performative visual mappings of the past and present. At the same time, memory mapping encapsulates both the archive and the repertoire because its performative nature at times relies on archival documents and thinking. The meanings prescribed to images and their mobilization, of course, are reliant on the role of citizens in space and place-making. While the archive, to revisit Taylor's ideas, relates to "enduring materials"—texts, documents, and buildings—the repertoire's embodied practice and knowledge has more to do with spoken language, movement, images, and performances. To clarify, performance is not so much a type or variety of the repertoire but rather it is situated in its epistemological framework, just as a police document from the AHPN belongs to the archive, for example.[47] Cultural agency and memory mapping help us arrive at these conclusions and both conceptualizations are also useful because they help us understand how my observations of the repertoire in Guatemala City have repercussions elsewhere in Latin America. The past is creatively performed in the peripheral network city but certainly in ways that are not unique within its boundaries.

[47] According to Peggy Phelan, a forerunner of Performance Studies as we understand the field today, "[p]erformance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology" (146). It is in this sense that performance relates so well to the nonreproducible knowledge of the repertoire and the explanation demonstrates how "performance" and "the repertoire" are not synonyms.

3.2. The Sons and Daughters of the Disappeared and Transnational Justice

H.I.J.O.S. photographs exemplify the fact that walls of buildings are part of the repertoire insofar as we understand the repertoire as an inventoried strategy that citizens use to push against dominant state discourses. The repertoire, as with cultural agency and memory mapping, also has an active role in the creation of places that are charged with historical and political meaning. Whereas performance, an element of the repertoire, implies a designated place or rehearsal, this is certainly not always the case. As Bertie Ferdman points out, "[o]ver the past decade, there has been a surge in the use of nontheatre spaces for performance: from empty garages and automobiles, to underground tunnels, cafes, lakes, empty pools, private apartments, boats, and abandoned warehouses—the list is practically endless" (4). Nontheatre spaces for performance are precisely what I observed on the Sexta Avenida while walking through the Historic Center of the peripheral network city. The ghostly photographs seemed like they could have originated in either the AHPN or the *Diario Militar*. Just as the AHPN and the Museo de los Mártires have deep connections with the Guatemalan Civil War and Cold War Politics in the Global South, so, too do the H.I.J.O.S. photographs, whose histories have much to tell us not only about the meaningful change produced by cultural enactments but also the place of embodied practice in the spatial and imagined constructions of the peripheral network city. In turn, connections between the peripheral network city and other Latin American urban areas, particularly those in the Southern Cone, are also discernable here.

In his important reflections on memory as a source (and not merely a result) of history in the Southern Cone, Emilio Crenzel comments

> [i]n the mid-1990s […] memory emerged, along with truth and justice, on the agendas of human rights organizations and other civil society actors as a goal in its own right. This was the result of various factors: the realization that with the passing of generations there was a pressing need to convey an understanding of these violent pasts to younger generations; the 'confessions' made by several perpetrators in Argentina and Uruguay regarding their involvement in the repression; and the emergence in both countries of H.I.J.O.S., an organization grouping sons and daughters of disappeared persons, former political prisoners, and exiles. These young adults, in their attempt to reconstruct their parents' public and private histories, proposed new narrative and interpretative approaches to the past. In Chile's case, the process was further triggered by Pinochet's London arrest in 1998. (5)

With memory (or "right to memory," as Michael Lazzara might say) serving as a goal to rebuild Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan societies, came the emergence of humanitarian groups in the region, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Writing more specifically on Buenos Aires, Vincent Druliolle emphasizes that "[i]n societies like Argentina, the past left wounds, political projects, and other traces as ghostly presences

in the urban landscape that some groups want to bring back to light (and life)" (35).[48] Like my approach with the peripheral network city, Druliolle places these initiatives in a framework he calls "micro-memory projects," which, aside from the goal of turning places into sites of memory, are "a way of fighting the dictatorship's legacy of terror, of reconstructing communities, and of fostering Argentine society's appropriation of memory and its construction" (33). Undoubtedly, the goals of micro-memory projects extend beyond Buenos Aires, with other urban Latin American citizens prioritizing the act of remembering as a deeply politicized practice. In Druliolle's view, the neighborhoods of Buenos Aires "appropriate and perform the task of remembering themselves" (25), which is set in motion by people's involvements in micro-memory projects in the city. Consequently, in the Argentine capital, "urban space is turned into a public sphere as a participatory, visual, and discursive battleground in which debate about the past and the interpolation of Argentine society is not always carried out through rational argumentation and in which, ultimately, the better arguments win the day—the idealized model of the public sphere postulated by deliberative democrats" (35). As a later publication of Druliolle's shows, the "idealized model of the public sphere" was

[48] As I have previously discussed, the Southern Cone asserts more dominance in the field of Latin American Cultural Studies, especially in relation to studies of memory. In her reflections on the post-dictatorship era of the Southern Cone, Ana Ros reminds us that "[w]e never remember in isolation; the act of remembering is always social in character. However, this does not necessarily mean that collective memory is a reality shared by a society as a whole" (7). She adds: "[a]ctors relate to the past in different ways, partly because they have specific and often conflicting interests. The group narrative supported by the most powerful institutions, especially those of the state, shapes the collective present and future according to the interests of one group and against the interests of the other groups. For instance, in Chile, the transitional government did not prosecute the military's human rights violations, thereby creating a context of impunity at the expense of victims' interests. The political and legal response to the dictatorial crimes shapes ways of remembering" (7).

set forth by a particular micro-memory project, which belongs to a plethora of other groups associated with the Argentine human rights movement. H.I.J.O.S. Argentina are children of the disappeared who came of age in the mid-1990s and in adulthood have gotten involved in the struggle for justice, memory, and truth. Druliolle writes that the Argentine children of the disappeared got together for the first time at a commemoration that had been organized in memory for their parents at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at Universidad de La Plata in 1994 (264). By the following year, H.I.J.O.S. had formed in Córdoba, Argentina as a way for the children of the disappeared to come together beyond small informal meetings to openly discuss their experiences. Currently, H.I.J.O.S. is comprised of children of the disappeared and others who share their political beliefs.

In contrast with the famous Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, who are the mothers of the disappeared during Argentina's military dictatorship (1976-83), the H.I.J.O.S. acknowledge that their family members have passed away.[49] Yet at the same time, the

[49] Much has been written on the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo. Franco notes that the Madres, "not only gathered together in a public space but used their marginalized position to reclaim the *polis*. They created an Antigone space in which the rights (and rites) of kinship were given precedence over the discourse of the state. For though the military were secretly torturing and killing women and children, as well as male militants, in their public rhetoric they represented themselves as protectors of the family of the nation and ridiculed the demonstrating mothers as 'locas' (mad-women) who were outside the family of the nation. A few old women raving about their children in the name of motherhood hardly seemed much of a threat" (67). Franco also mentions how the Madres "turned the city into a theater in which the entire population was obliged to become spectators, making public both their children's disappearance and the disappearance of the public sphere itself. In doing so, they drew attention to the very anomaly of women's presence in the symbolic center of the nation, Plaza de Mayo" (67). With more emphasis on the photos of their disappeared children that the Madres carry in the plaza, Taylor calls our attention to how "[t]he photos paraded by the Madres, for example, are powerful evocations of their loved ones that, arguably, inadvertently hide the very violence they aim to reveal. The smiling, forever youthful faces communicate an image of personal wholeness and integrity that elides the decomposed 'real' bodies" (142).

Argentine H.I.J.O.S. frequently take part in demonstrations to commemorate the military coup in collaboration with the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, student associations from universities across Argentina, unions, and other political members of the Argentine Left (Druliolle 265). Druliolle further outlines their activities, which center on the objective "to rejuvenate the practices and discourses of the Argentina human rights movement through which the demand for memory, truth, and justice is expressed" (266). In their efforts to make the impunity of the past visible in Argentine society, the H.I.J.O.S., alongside the Grupo de Arte Callejero [Street Art Group of Buenos Aires] invented the *escrache*, a much-documented form of public demonstration, which Druliolle describes thus:

> The population is invited to join the *escrache* to show its rejection of impunity and to repudiate these criminals. H.I.J.O.S. developed its strategy to make impunity and its consequences visible with a group of artists called Grupo de Arte Callejero (Street Art Group). They have used some symbols of daily life and its codes to highlight what it conceals. For example, they have designed traffic signs based on the yellow rhombus used for warnings to signal that a murderer lives in the neighborhood. The reality of impunity is reinserted through conventional symbols in the routine of daily life to challenge its sense of normalcy and to suggest that impunity and the presence of criminals in neighborhoods is the concealed reality of postauthoritarian Argentina (266).

The “conventional symbols” by use of the traffic signs provide an anti-hegemonic way of thinking about impunity in Argentina today. In other words, the H.I.J.O.S. have constructed their own way of visually denouncing ongoing violence in their neighborhoods where official discourses, in their view, have been insufficient. Aside from their lively *escraches*, the symbols of daily life that the H.I.J.O.S. highlight how they use cultural production as a mechanism for “(re-)constructing democracy in the aftermath of mass violence” (Druliolle 261), which, aside from making their memories visible to the public, also helps regulate social relations between human rights activists and the city space they inhabit. Thus, the Argentine H.I.J.O.S. not only work to preserve the memories of their disappeared parents, but they also work to ensure that impunity does not reign in contemporary Argentine society. As Taylor’s writings also make clear,

> the desaparecidos (the disappeared) are, by definition, always already the object of representation. The flesh-and-blood victims, forcefully absented from the sociopolitical crisis that created them, left no bodies […] The reality of their ordeal becomes unreal to us through the very process of trying to illuminate it. How to think about those bodies that we know exist(ed) but that have vanished into thin air?” (*Disappearing Acts* 140)

In other words, the victims of Argentina’s military dictatorship reappear in the public sphere as pure representation, whether through photography, political demonstrations, or the *escraches*, which involve the H.I.J.O.S’s carnival-like protests in front of perpetrator’s homes, places of work, or clandestine torture centers (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 164). To be clear: while the H.I.J.O.S. consider their family members to be “the

disappeared," they were "subversives" in the eyes of the military government for the ways in which they (artists, university professors, students, journalists, militants, or trade unionists) spoke out against violence against members of the Left.

The descriptions of the Argentine H.I.J.O.S. by Druliolle and Taylor provide a point of entry into a discussion of the Guatemalan H.I.J.O.S. In a crucial historiographical account, Vrana in her book *This City Belongs to You: A History of Student Activism in Guatemala, 1944-1996* (2017), reveals that H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala formed after Wendy Méndez, a war orphan, returned to the country from Canadian exile.[50] Immediately thereafter, she began contacting other children whose parents had been killed and the group's first march was held on Guatemalan Army Day, 30 June 1999 (236). Perhaps not coincidentally, this was the same year that the *Diario Militar* was handed over to Kate Doyle of the National Security Archive. Like their Argentine counterparts before them, the members of H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala stage *escraches* in front of homes and businesses associated with war criminals. As in Buenos Aires, the *escraches* in Guatemala City seek to shame the perpetrators of violence to ensure that they do not live in impunity with the use of chants, photographs, and political messages. Vrana further provides us with a glimpse of how H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala has developed over the years. She writes: "[f]rom the beginning, its [H.I.J.O.S.'s] aims were to support individuals returning from exile, search for answers about the disappearance of their family members, spread their own unofficial

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[50] Another recent book that examines youth culture more generally in Guatemala, especially in relation to systems of education, is Michelle Bellino's fascinating publication *Youth in Postwar Guatemala: Education and Civic Identity in Transition* (2017). Seemingly in unison with Vrana, Bellino tells us "state fragility conveys to young people that the state is unwilling or unable to protect and provide for them or uphold their basic rights" (205).

account of history, reclaim militancy of their ancestors, and promote community action to demand justice and end impunity" (236). Aside from the *escraches* inspired by their Argentine counterparts, another hallmark of H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala is their use of political graffiti, as Vrana puts it, "in key locations in Guatemala City's Centro Histórico" (236), an observation that I have shared with her since I started visiting Guatemala for research purposes. However, Vrana also notably points out that, aside with the parallels between the H.I.J.O.S. groups in both Argentina and Guatemala, the Guatemalan group also establishes parallels with San Carlistas, the colloquial name for the students of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala [USAC], which, as a group, "used student nationalism to wave culture war over historical memory" (3). As the Guatemalan Civil War progressed and San Carlistas began disappearing for their vehement opposition to the various governments of that period, USAC, as with the AHPN, became a state apparatus. A driving force of the H.I.J.O.S., as with the revolutionary lineage of the San Carlistas, has always been the idea that young people are responsible for Guatemala's future (Vrana 237).

Like in the case of the San Carlistas, the H.I.J.O.S. place the preservation of historical memory at the core of their work to reimagine the relationship between individuals and the state. As the state proved itself to be murderous against those associated with Guatemalan universities (especially USAC), the "San Carlistas opened up social, cultural, and sometimes even physical spaces for other youths and youth groups to use to contest and occasionally participate within the state. In protests on La Sexta and graffiti throughout the capital's historic center, H.I.J.O.S. continues this work" (238).

With the use of the identification photographs that H.I.J.O.S. have repeatedly Xeroxed and pasted onto walls "to haunt pedestrians on their daily routes" (240), the ghostly images of the parents whose children have mostly outgrown them serve to reinsert citizens of the Left back into the postwar Guatemalan urban imaginary. The first person plural and graffiti messages declare that the disappeared will always be present in the Historic Center, both in a rejection of state power and to ensure that disappearances have no fertile ground in the Guatemalan capital, or elsewhere in the country. Just as "H.I.J.O.S. are the inheritors of the political culture written in blood by San Carlistas" (239), they also constitute, to quote Vrana again, "the generative and diffuse future, the seed that multiples across Guatemala City's streets, walls, highways, and into the countryside. The punctuation that pierces the group's name invokes the bullet holes in the bodies of their parents and family members; it may also invoke this persistent seed. H.I.J.O.S. insist on the imperative to remember and remain provoked" (239-40). In this insightful analysis, Vrana asserts that the mission of the H.I.J.O.S. not only exists in the peripheral network city but also helps build it. Their photographs, which are pervasive throughout the Historic Center, make sure that the disappeared are a now a defining feature of Zone 1 in the postwar era. The punctuation marks of the name H.I.J.O.S., indeed, unite and divide the sons and daughters of the disappeared with each other and their deceased relatives. They also simultaneously create divisions and unifications with the group, the peripheral network city, and their San Carlista and Argentine H.I.J.O.S. predecessors through discursive and punctual means; wherever the name "H.I.J.O.S." is inscribed on a building or elsewhere in Guatemala City, the reader either immediately

distinguishes “hijos” [children], or an erroneous acronym that does not equate to the full name of the group, the Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Oblivion and Silence. That H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala has much in common with the group in Argentina and the San Carlistas says much about its links to the culture, history, and politics of Latin America as a whole.

3.3. From the Archive to the Repertoire: H.I.J.O.S. Photographs and the Writing on the Wall

Vrana declares that the H.I.J.O.S. photographs, murals, graffiti, and stenciled messages on walls in the Historic Center of Guatemala City serve as strategies employed by the group “to challenge local, governmental, and international power and to reclaim moral authority for the guerrilla and reformist left” (240). As I reflect further upon this statement, I recall three other H.I.J.O.S. photographs and murals I saw in July 2016. The first one, like the three that opened this chapter, is located on the Sexta Avenida, five blocks north of the Parque Central diagonal from the office of AVANCSO. It is a powerful image: on a wall of a building, strategically at the corner of 3ª Calle and Sexta Avenida, is a row of individual photos, which immediately grabs our attention because of the vibrantly-colored paper on which they are printed and text that accompanies them; directly to the left-most of these photos is the message “EJÉRCITO ASESINO” [ASSASSIN ARMY] and below is the spray-painted message “SIN JUSTICIA NO HAY PAZ” [WITHOUT JUSTICE, THERE IS NO PEACE]; the middle of the row of photos is divided by a cluster of more photos , which have been cut around the head shapes of the victims, united around a beating, gold heart. The row of photos is significant because each 8 ½ x 11” sheet of

photocopied paper is devoted to one victim apiece. We know that the pictures were placed on the wall by the H.I.J.O.S. because the text identifies them at the bottom of the page. The top of one of the pictures reads: "¿Dónde están? 45.000 detenidos desparaceidos" [Where are they? 45,000 disappeared detainees]. The paper gives further detailed information about Capitán Lázaro, full name Víctor Manuel Hernández Polanco, of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres [Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP], which commanded much support amongst indigenous peoples during the internal armed conflicts and whose ideologies borrowed from communism, Marxism, and Guevarism.[51] Capitán Lázaro had overseen a military unit of the EGP before being captured by the National Army alongside other revolutionary militants who fought against economic exclusion and racial discrimination. A second paper directly beside Capitán Lázaro's portrait bears the same "Where are they?" question and identifies Otto René Estrada Illescas, a USAC economics student part of the executive committee of Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios [Association of University Students, AEU] and a labor union at the university. He was kidnapped while leaving work by plainly-clothed men. Chillingly, the text also reveals that his name appeared in the *Diario Militar*, identifying 1 August

[51] Weld explains, "as U.S. assistance flowed into military and police coffers, unrest over successive regimes' crusades against not just the tiny Marxist left but also unions, universities, churches, peasant cooperatives, and journalists exploded into rebellion during the 1960s and 1970s" (8). She goes on to tell us that the EGP was part of a broader network of three other insurgent groups, which also consisted of the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), the Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), and the Guatemalan Workers' Party (PGT). As Weld puts it, these four groups "attempted to mobilize first urban and then mass rural support for revolution against an increasingly murderous state" (8). Ultimately, Weld concludes, "[t]hese groups, and anyone deemed to be their allies—trade unionists, students, Mayas—were deemed 'internal enemies' and became the targets of a coordinated counterinsurgency effort on the part of the military, police, and paramilitary death squads, with the country's elites using Cold War rhetoric to justify a full-spectrum campaign against any form of democratic opening" (9). Interestingly, after the 1976 earthquake leveled much of Guatemala City, the EGP was not hesitant to point out that the seismic event disproportionately affected poor Guatemalans, calling for mass action on the part of the state (124).

1980 as his assassination date with other student leaders. His body never reappeared. Another image shows the heavily photocopied portrait of Otto René Castillo, a law student and poet who was burned alive in Zacapa in 1967. The text above his portrait reads: "Vamos patria a caminar, yo te acompaño" [we'll go, fatherland, to walk, I'll accompany you], which implies that the fatherland—modern Guatemala—lies beyond the ruins of war and postwar as an alternative future.

"Wall tags raise hackles about invisibility" (50), writes Sommer. In the examples of the H.I.J.O.S. photographs I have just described, the disappeared become visible again, showing how their children strategically use their portraits to participate in the reproduction of knowledge, in this case related to war and impunity.[52] The portraits and spray-painted messages also play a major role in imbuing the Sexta Avenida with meaning, making its already history-drenched past even more poignant. The "assassin army" message in red and black denotes the darkness and bloodshed associated with the army's mission in Guatemala. The bright colors of the row of photos with the portraits of Capitán Lázaro and his kin suggests that their lives were vibrant and impactful of Guatemalan society, that is to say these urban Guatemalans who were not part of elitist circles. The text above Lázaro and Estrada Illescas's portraits—where are they?—suggests that, as disappeared persons whose bodies have never materialized, they occupy a

[52] In Diane Nelson's words, "[t]he deep, affecting bond of an imagined community needs more support than military parades and shopping trips to Miami. The national body image needs a relation with sincerity, with moral rectitude, and with the ardor and mystery of home" (101). In other words, with a pivotal reference to Benedict Anderson's seminal book, Nelson comments on the necessity of the citizen—all citizens—in building a modern nation. Her references to shopping trips to Miami means that nation-building and the construction of national identity should not simply be an elitist enterprise. The reproduction of knowledge should be collective endeavor rooted in culture, which, in the case of Guatemala and other countries of the Global South, is imbued with the consequences of war.

perpetual grey area between life and death; their lives are accentuated by the fact that they died at young ages at the hands of the army. Given René Castillo's poetic past, the postscript of his portrait implies that he wrote it, inviting us as passersby to help him find the Guatemala of the future where disappearance no longer writes violence into the culture of urban space. The cluster of photos around a golden heart signifies that the victims' hearts beat in unison in eternal rest; perhaps not H.I.J.O.S., they are hermanos/as [siblings], united by the common knowledge systems in which they were erased and then re-inscribed in the postwar Guatemalan urban imaginary. It is significant that the rightmost portraits at the corner of the 3ª Calle and Sexta Avenida have been partially stripped away. Whether the elements, splashed puddles from passing vehicles, vandals, or persons associated with the Right were responsible for the damaged portraits is insignificant; what matters here is that the disappeared were symbolically disappeared once again in an attempt to erase the role of their portraits to provide an alternative perspective on history in urban space. The concluding message, "without justice, there is no peace," serves as a warning that resonates with this preoccupation (Figure 3.4, p. 168).

Figure 3.4: H.I.J.O.S mural at the corner of 3ª Calle and Sexta Avenida. Zone 1, Guatemala City. July 2016. Photos by Andrew Bentley.

In her copious accounting of the legacy of the disappeared in Guatemala today, Nelson insists that "[t]he number of war dead keeps growing, along with the backlog in unexhumed mass graves. And new corpses are added from a different war, the tolls taken by unemployed armed men, poverty, drug trafficking, kidnapping, armed robbery,

femicide, gang initiations, and political assassinations. Guatemala's murder rate is now equal to the worst years of war" (10). Indeed, the "war dead" are growing in the era of drug- and gang-related violence and other tangible avenues for impunity such as home invasions, emboldened armed robberies in broad daylight, and the skyrocketing murder of public transportation drivers, namely bus drivers, in Guatemala City in the twenty-first century. In her recent work, which focuses on the strategies employed by math and numbers in the continued state violence of postwar Guatemala, Nelson concludes that these new actors who write violence into the culture are part of a broader framework characterized by "the everyday calculations of a world in which the military state's relation to territory, borders, and the profits to be made off various circulations were part of the infrastructure by the late 1960s and by the ease with which narco-money can buy elections, mocking divisions between the state and organized crime" (10). The H.I.J.O.S. photographs, too, mock the partitions between the state and organized crime, both uniting these entities in the public sphere and rejecting the hegemonic discourse that has made their interrelatedness possible. At the same time, the multiple ways to interpret the knowledge transmission elicited by the H.I.J.O.S. photographs are part of the infrastructure of the repertoire, and, in turn, of the peripheral network city.

This perspective is further epitomized on the walls directly across from Proyecto Poporopo, a bohemian tapas and bar restaurant located on the 4ª calle, one street away from the previously-studied images. In one of these murals, we see an image pasted together by twenty-four 8 ½ x 11" sheets of printer paper, which converge to form the image of a mass grave exhumation. The text above the cadavers reads: "El rostro del

GENOCIDIO" [the face of GENOCIDE], and the text below provides the following message: "Exhumación ZONA MILITAR DE COBÂN 2012 Han sido encontradas más de 385 osamentas entre niños, niñas, hombres y mujeres ancianos pertenecientes a un grupo étnico, con los ojos vendados y manos amarradas hacia atrás. ¿… y a pesar de esto, AUN NIEGAN EL GENOCIDIO?" [Exhumation Cobán Military Zone 2012 More than 385 skeletons, among them children and the elderly belonging to the same ethnic group, blindfolded and with their hands tied behind their backs…and despite this, THE GENOCIDE IS STILL DENIED?]. The other computer-generated text on the side of the exhumation identifies the mural as material of the Comunidades de Población en Resistencia [Communities of Population in Resistance], of which H.I.J.O.S. is a member.[53] One of the spray-painted messages outside the frame of the Xeroxed grave site reads: "Sí hubo genocidio" [yes, there was a genocide], which became a catchphrase and social media hashtag associated with the hopeful conviction of Efraín Ríos Mott in 2013.[54] The

[53] In July 2015, under the umbrella name the Communities of Population in Resistance, a photo exhibition was set up directly upon the façade of the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura directly under a white banner that read "¡Hagamos la Revolución!" [Let's make the revolution!]. Framed pictures depicted such war scenes as groups of kaibiles, a special operations wing of the Armed Forces of Guatemala whose name derives from Mam, a Maya wedding with kaibiles on the sidelines, the bloody murder of suspected guerrilleros in the Quiché department in 1982, and a helicopter landing in front of the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura where a dozen or so passersby like myself stood to look at the photographs. At the end of the row of photographs was a handwritten sign that said "El gobierno corrupto es la causa de la pobreza del pueblo y es la razón de las desgracias sociales. #somospueblo" [The corrupt government is the cause of the country's poverty and is the cause of social misfortunes]. A painted quetzal appears to wrap its wings around Canadian mining machinery, calling attention to the extractivism that takes place in Guatemala and other Central American countries today.

[54] Efraín Ríos Montt was not granted amnesty from genocide charges and his first trial for the death of over 1,700 Ixil Mayas began on 19 March 2013. After a series of political maneuvers to clear Ríos Montt of his chargers, he was sentenced to 80 years in prison after being found guilty of crimes against humanity on 10 May 2013. However, the Constitutional Court of Guatemala overturned the ruling ten days later and Ríos Montt was never incarcerated before his death in April 2018. In an impassioned article for *InSight Crime*, Steven Dudley contends that, due to the fact he never served time in jail for war crimes, "Ríos Montt won the war in Guatemala" (2018, n.p.).

other spray-painted message reads, simply, "violencia sexual," [sexual violence], telling us that some victims of the Cobán Military Zone were victims of rape before they were murdered (Figure 3.5, p. 171).

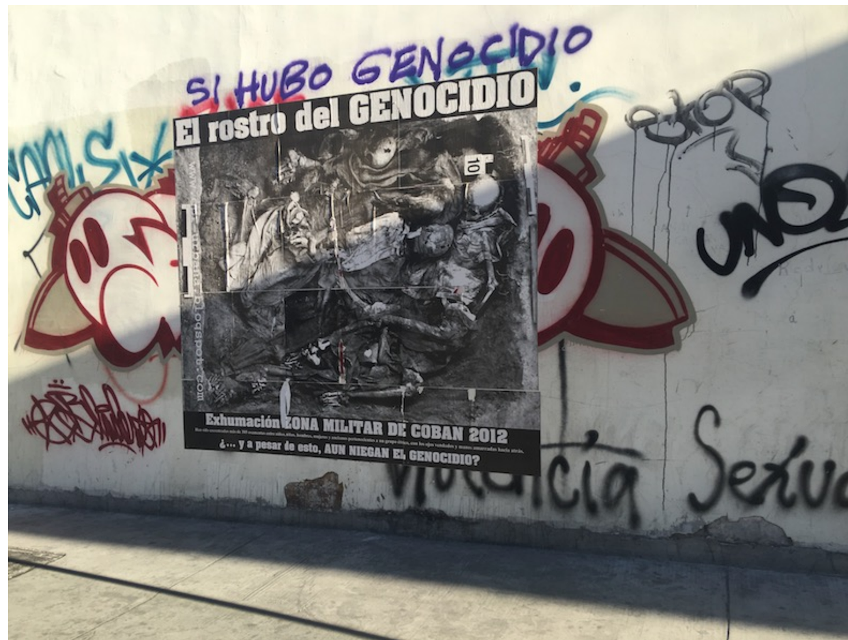

Figure 3.5: H.I.J.O.S. mural on 4ª Calle, "The Face of Genocide." Zone 1, Guatemala City. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Another cluster of photos is divided by two payphones, with the words "¿dónde están?" [where are they?] inviting the public to consider the fate of the disappeared. The placement of this mural around the now archaic payphones is not accidental; it posits that, while the ghostly portraits and the H.I.J.O.S. biographies communicate alternative histories, at the same time we cannot communicate directly with the disappeared. True, payphones are prevalent in the peripheral network city but the conversations are abruptly cut off if the caller does not keep inserting more coins into the receiver at a rapid pace. While some of these portraits bear the usual H.I.J.O.S. biographies, others simply have blank faces, whose details have been faded by the sunlight, above sky blue stripes,

curiously with the same hue as the Guatemalan flag. Some of these two-hued pictures seem to have been deliberately and violently stripped from the wall, embodying the violence against those who denounced war crimes in postwar Guatemala. Aside from the payphone, another image, which appears as a meta painting of the 4ª calle within the mural, hovers above the two clusters of portraits, with the message: "un día ya no tendré miedo de andar por la calle, ya no tendré miedo de morir por tu machismo #vivasnosqueremos" [one day, I will no longer be afraid to walk through the street, I will no longer be afraid to die because of your machismo #wewantthemalive].[55] These words appear to be pasted onto the street, as if the H.I.J.O.S. narratives are taking over the peripheral network city, with a popular social movement and hashtag prevalent in human rights movements all over Latin America. The O's of the hashtagged statement are formed as female symbols while a receding figure, presumed to be a woman, is making her way into the night. To her left appears to be a wall plastered with H.I.J.O.S. photographs in the same mural to which this self-referential image belongs. This self portrait of sorts forces us to put ourselves in the woman's place, such that we are not afraid to walk through the peripheral network city and listen to its histories that have been generated by the embodied practice, which keeps records of people beyond those that exist in the confines of the AHPN or *Diario Militar* (Figure 3.6, p. 173). Two final H.I.J.O.S. murals, which I photographed on my first research trip to Guatemala before I

[55] Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become powerful platforms for social justice advocacy worldwide. Hashtags, as those mentioned above, are user-generated tags that use the pound sign before a word or cluster of words written as one, as for example in #wewantthemalive. When clicked, hashtags allow other users to easily navigate to other messages or photos with the same theme or content and establish dialogue with people who have the same interests.

theorized the peripheral network city in July 2015, more strategically place photographs in a rectangular formation. One mural has the spray-painted question, "¿dónde están?," now such a familiar aspect of H.I.J.O.S. rhetoric, whereas another is even more sinister, asking "¿cuántos años más de impunidad?" [how many more years of impunity?], with what appears to be two large graffiti swastikas directly above some of the portraits, likening with Guatemalan Civil War with the atrocities of the Holocaust, and thus implying the global reach of state terror beyond the peripheral network city and, more generally, Latin America (Figure 3.7, p.174).

Figure 3.6: H.I.J.O.S mural on 4ª Calle. Zone 1, Guatemala City. July 2016. Photo by Andrew Bentley.

Figure 3.7: <u>H.I.J.O.S. mural, Zone 1, “How many more years of impunity?”</u> Hallmark questions of the organization spray-painted above their respective murals. Zone 1, Guatemala City. Photos by Andrew Bentley.

The H.I.J.O.S. photographs permit the children of the disappeared to declare their autonomy from the Guatemalan State while at the same time constructing the city space in a way that is representative of their narratives and preoccupations. I hesitate to write that the photographs allow the H.I.J.O.S. to manifest *autonomy* from the violent

Guatemalan State because their very existence is undergirded by violence that is written, literally and figuratively, into the environs of the peripheral network city. However, it is fair to say that the H.I.J.O.S. interact with policies adopted by the Guatemalan state insofar as they communicate with state entities such as the army. The H.I.J.O.S. photographs, like materials belonging to the archive, are located on "enduring materials," to reuse Taylor's terminology, which are the buildings that serve as surfaces on which messages are inscribed. Similarly, the H.I.J.O.S. photographs, much like AHPN documents or the information in the *Diario Militar*, are selected, classified, and presented. Yet there is no arguing the ephemeral nature of the H.I.J.O.S. photographs, as evidenced by some that have been either completely or partially stripped away over the years. They are part of an inventory of photographs dispersed throughout the Historic Center of the peripheral network city, which allows for both individual and collective agency for both the people in the portraits and their living relatives who placed them on buildings for people to discover. The living relatives participated in the alternative mode of knowledge transmission by providing facts about the nature of individual forced disappearance cases in ways that the state neglected to publicly provide. As a nonverbal practice, the placement of H.I.J.O.S. photographs is a quintessential example of the repertoire's inventory, because, to use Taylor's quote again, "[t]he repertoire allows for an alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact and invites a remapping of the Americas, this time by following traditions of embodied practice" (20). I further contend that the H.I.J.O.S. photographs of the peripheral network city are performative in both the artistic sense, due to their clusters of murals, messages, and

spray-painted messages, and the everyday place-making sense because they disseminate information and reconfigure how people interact with urban space; they are part of the culture in postwar Guatemala today.

Aside from the position of the H.I.J.O.S. photographs in the repertoire, the portraits and messages are also deeply representative of the importance of memory. To repeat Murphy's position that "memory mapping projects produce new temporal and spatial arrangements of knowledge and memory in the present that function as a counterpractice to the official narratives that often neglect or designate as transgressive certain memories or experiences" (10), thus shows how the H.I.J.O.S. photographs reshape the relationship between people and public space, while at the same time favoring memories that serve as a counterpractice to narratives that have been privileged by the state. In other words, the H.I.J.O.S. photographs ensure that memory is a quotidian practice that shapes the peripheral network city such that memory functions as a politically-informed way to curate the Guatemalan capital. Rebecca Atencio, in her analysis of the Memorial da Liberdade [Freedom Memorial] in São Paulo, writes that "[t]he memorial also represents a dialogue in which state and ex-prisoners, speaking in unison, engage the public" (118). She reflects on the ways in which the public interact with a corridor of four prison cells where political prisoners were tortured "to get a sense of the historical context of the space" (118), which is associated with human rights crimes and (hopefully) the visitor's newfound unconditional defense of human rights in Brazil. I would argue that the H.I.J.O.S. photographs in Guatemala City, too, urge a commitment to social justice to all observers. Memories of past atrocities can certainly be brought forth

by both the archive and the repertoire, especially as both entities are accessible to large amounts of people.[56] As a counterpractice to written state narratives, the H.I.J.O.S. photographs digress from the AHPN and *Diario Militar* by granting citizens the opportunity to participate in a cultural practice to create "sites in which to symbolically mete out a delayed transnational justice that never materialized in reality" (Atencio 22). The notion of transnational justice, of course, is exemplified in the fact that there are multiple H.I.J.O.S. groups across Latin America with similar objectives, although I would argue that they have the strongest role in the production of urban space in the Guatemalan context, where the photographs have a stronger tendency to remain inscribed in the cityscape after a political manifestation.

Furthermore, the role of H.I.J.O.S. portraits and messages in conceiving the peripheral network city exemplifies David Harvey's position that

> [t]he right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city [...] [i]t is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (2008, n.p.)

[56] As Michael Lazzara cautions, "we must not lose sight of the fact that memory in Latin America arose, first and foremost, out of political activism and struggle, and only later (or perhaps somewhat simultaneously) became a banner for academics who were themselves activists who chose to act in solidarity with the political projects of those who most suffered the atrocities of dictatorship" (16).

Thus, the rejection of hegemonic discourse means that the H.I.J.O.S. are not only exerting their right to denounce war crimes and preserve the memories of their family members, but also their right to exert impactful change in the city. The murals and messages throughout the Historic Center underscore collective power that transforms Guatemalan urbanization through the action of remaking cities and subaltern subjectivities. In response to Harvey, I would affirm that the H.I.J.O.S. photographs, either the ones belonging to the repertoire of the peripheral network city or elsewhere in Latin America, illustrate that the freedom to remake cities has *not* been neglected by urban citizens. In addition, Gabriela Nouzeilles cautions us not to lose sight of "the matter of spectatorship and the ethics of seeing" (713). Her research on Latin American photography evidences how "[t]he referents of photographic images are to be found not in the images themselves but in the discourses that influence the way the images are read" (714). In the Guatemalan case, the discourses correlate to the messages, be they photocopied or spray-painted, that accompany the portraits of disappeared persons. The ethics of seeing, of course, relate to our responsibility as spectators to grapple with these images of people frozen in time while at the same time keeping apprised of their sociohistorical context. As Jean Franco puts it, "the disappearance of a son or daughter, a father or spouse, meant months and years of agonizing loss. This was a triple deprivation—of a body, of mourning, and of a burial" (192-3). Franco has chosen the title "The Ghostly Arts" for her chapter on photography in *Cruel Modernity*, which she explains thus: "[i]n the absence of their narratives, photographs, films, and art installations are ghostly hauntings. The silence of

the disappeared is absolute" (195).[57] To counter this notion slightly in consideration of photographs in the context of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and H.I.J.O.S. Argentina, Taylor writes that pictures made by cameras serve "to reappear those who have been erased from history itself" (169).

I unite these four thinkers here because I believe that their observations highlight the most significant impacts of the H.I.J.O.S. photographs in Guatemala City by placing emphasis on reshaping urbanization and remaking the urban imaginary, our roles (as both the producers and observers of alternative knowledge transmission) in the ethical ways of enacting memory, while at the same time remembering the losses that the H.I.J.O.S. are attempting to memorialize. Although I have acknowledged the artistic value of the graffiti that accompanies some H.I.J.O.S. murals, I am hesitant to refer to them as artistic installations for fear of aestheticizing representations of state violence. Instead, I offer the suggestion that the H.I.J.O.S. photographs reflect the logic of the repertoire insofar as they invite spectators to imagine themselves in a transformed social setting where the very ideas of memory and violence are imbued in the urban space and culture of postwar Guatemala. In turn, our perceptions of Guatemala are constructed, rehearsed, and repeated in the meaning-making of the peripheral network city, as the children of the

[57] Arias provides a fascinating reading of Franco's theoretical trajectory in her most well-known publications, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* (2002) and *Cruel Modernity* (2013). Arias observes that "Franco happened to be uncannily positioned to undergo, however briefly, life as an other—that is, to experience the daily ordeals typically endured by the subalternized and racialized populations of the world" (702). He refers, of course, to Franco's time in Guatemala in 1954. In her quest to understand the Guatemalan coup through its cultural production, as Arias puts it, "Franco did not separate the cultural world from the political and social spheres, as most Anglo-American literary critics focusing on Latin America did in the late 1950s" (Arias 702). This dissertation (and particularly this chapter) follow Franco's lead, in tune with the approaches of her academic work that she began half a century ago.

disappeared come into direct contact with each other, other Guatemalan urbanites, scholar activists such as myself, and their own political histories to restructure the Guatemalan capital as a social imaginary.

3.4. The Role of the Repertoire in the Peripheral Network City

Vis-à-vis the H.I.J.O.S. photographs and the ways we can interact with them, I argue that the repertoire is a poignant aspect of postwar Guatemalan culture, history, and politics. If we remember, to paraphrase Taylor, that not all citizens arrive at culture through literary interventions (xviii, 27), then we can certainly interpret the H.I.J.O.S. photographs as epistemological tools (cultural agency, memory mapping, or meaning-making, whether we follow Sommer, Murphy, or Taylor), which allow urban Guatemala to take on meaning through the paradigm of the peripheral network city, strongly supporting Taylor's view that "[e]very performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere" (27). Embodied practice also allows us to understand the peripheral network city, or any plethora of other Latin American urban environments, in ways that are not, to borrow from Taylor once more, "reducible to language" (28), with "language" understood here as the rhetoric of neoliberal models of social organization employed by the Guatemalan state, which I explore in the next chapter. In the case of the H.I.J.O.S. murals, the "scenario," as Taylor would call it, is that which frames and activates social dramas with a palpable encounter with the armed conflicts (and potential resolutions) simultaneously at work. Yet we must also consider the embodiment of all social actors here, which could include those who partially rip or dismantle some of the

murals, as seen in some of the examples I have analyzed. If observers fail to interpret the social construction of disappeared persons in the postwar era, then a discernable distance exists between the photographs and their intended audience, which I understand as the Guatemalan public. The potential roadblocks notwithstanding, I maintain that the H.I.J.O.S. murals dotted throughout the Historic Center of the peripheral network city (likely ephemeral) serve as an invitation for us to reenact more just futures in which the most potent aspects of the Guatemalan Civil War—disappearance and genocide—while still indelibly ingrained in the country's history, will eventually cease to exist. While there is no denying the potential that the portraits and spray-painted messages could indeed "disappear" like the victims they attempt to honor, their recorded temporary existence, which could eventually find its way into an archive, nevertheless affirms a history that the state has attempted to obscure or delay.

Franco would agree; writing about the interpretative power of photography, she declares: "memory is not a holdall that can be drawn on as needed but constantly has to be reconstructed from fragments and fortuitous remains. Memory of atrocity is not simply available but is constituted post hoc with the aim not only of clarifying the fate of the disappeared but of documenting a crime. And it is always fragile" (203). While, in a ghostly fashion, the portraits of the disappeared are in a place "that the living cannot occupy" (201), says Franco, they allow us to become connected with a past—the past of the Other—that we may not fully know otherwise. The fragments of memory are the H.I.J.O.S. murals and its fortuitous remains are the pictures that have been painted over or violently removed from the façades of buildings. Just as the Madres de la Plaza de

Mayo in Argentina and the Families of the Disappeared in Chile "created a new form of opposition, one that relied on this ghostly presence" (Franco 201), I would argue that the H.I.J.O.S. of the Guatemalan context not only create a new form of opposition but also a new way of interacting with the city. That is not to say that this is not a reality with the Argentine and Chilean counterparts that Franco mentions, but rather the prolonged length of the Guatemalan Civil War in comparison with the dictatorships of the Southern Cone warrants a distinctive urban legacy. The complexities of the repertoire's ephemerality further places emphasis on the urgency of Harvey's statement that "[w]e live in an era when ideals of human rights have moved centre stage both politically and ethically" (2008, n.p.). It is perhaps through the embodied practice which moves citizen place-making and record keeping beyond the police papers that constitutes a more humanistic role in the fabric of the peripheral network city than the archive, though the state continues to pursue its own agendas as I explore in the next chapter on necropolitics.

As a concluding thought, I think back to 27 June and 4 July 2015, a time when I took part in activities that could also be labeled as examples of embodied practice, such as the 15th annual Guatemala City Pride Parade and political manifestations. This event called for the ouster or resignation of then-president Otto Pérez Molina and Vice President Roxana Baldetti on corruption allegations. Surely, many verbal and nonverbal methods of message transmission were at play in these examples. In the case of the pride parade, strolls down the same Sexta Avenida where the end of the war was celebrated and some H.I.J.O.S. photographs are currently plastered, the main drag leading to the Palacio

Nacional de la Cultura—a pinnacle of modern Guatemala—is reconfigured with a determinedly queer tone and the peripheral network city is temporarily imagined as an LGBTQ-friendly space. The rainbow flags that intermingled with Guatemalan flags and political messages in favor of Pérez Molina's ouster are "archival" materials that ultimately became instrumental in a live event, defying the archive's ability to capture the political manifestation as it happened. Guatemalan compatriots participated in candle lighting and singing the national anthem around H.I.J.O.S. messages pasted to the ground by the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura. Although I could not conceive it at the time, we were effectively employing political agency as a strategy for (at least temporarily) reconfiguring the Historic Center of the peripheral network city. We embodied citizen involvement in more humanistic urbanization. The ensuing newspaper articles about the event that coincided on U.S. Independence Day, of course, soon became part of the archive, with all printed news articles housed in the confines of the national newspaper library of the AGCA across the square.

In this chapter, I have focused on the relationship between social justice-oriented Guatemalan citizens and the transformation of the cityscape, from which we still have a lot to learn. The H.I.J.O.S. murals and messages allow us to attend to a piece of Guatemalan history that continues to shape the creative core of the peripheral network city without losing sight of the institutional mechanisms set in motion by the archive. In the next chapter, I shift my attention to consider the contrasting role of the state in the organization of (and interactions between) citizens of the peripheral network city, while at the same time showing how state involvement materially works to reconfigure the

Guatemalan capital. While bearing witness to H.I.J.O.S. photographs undoubtedly entails political responsibilities, the repertoire, despite some of its advantages over the archive, does not fully overpower violence. Rather, it depicts and writes violence into the peripheral network city, which, despite all attempts to expunge violence from the national psyche, remains a firmly-anchored power structure insofar as the state attempts to exert control over its citizens.

Chapter Four

Reproducing War: Systemic Violence and Necropolitics in the Urban Milieu

At first glance, it may seem that the act of writing violence into the structure of the peripheral network city undermines the humanitarian goal of preventing past atrocities from repeating in the present day. On the one hand, even as the war recedes further into the past, the preservation of state terror memories ensures that violence is still a central factor in contemporary Guatemalan thought. Yet, it is precisely the act of remembering and understanding violence that will allow for future generations, as Levenson puts it, to "push against the grain of despondency and they delineate the possibility, once again, of a different Guatemala, with new lines" (144). As I reflect on Levenson's words, I also recall the enormous obstacles that will continue to render it extremely challenging to expel lingering notions of despondency from the national psyche. An ethnographic interview between Levenson and psychiatrist Rodolfo Kepfer in a correctional facility in the Guatemala City suburb of San José Pinula, reveals the latter's belief that, "[t]he mareros' thinking is military thinking that is always *reproducing war*, they live in war with the logic of war, thinking of the enemy's attack. [They live within] a militarized culture of obedience, discipline and the fulfillment of orders and missions" (77, my emphasis). The psychiatrist refers here to the young, murderous gang members so prevalent in the peripheral network city and elsewhere in Central America that operate "with a true globalizing vision that has made it as emblematic of a regional power as

TACA Airlines" (220), to use Arias's words.[58] While this chapter is neither about gang members nor masculinity, a brief approximation toward gang violence is essential to understand further elements of the peripheral network city that make it, as Weld provocatively says, "a difficult place to live, much less love" (2011, n.p.). Both the archive and the repertoire represent how state power necessitates citizen involvement in the public sphere. Yet, the public sphere is still dominated by new structures of state power in postwar Guatemala, especially as such structures continue to create partitions in the peripheral network city beyond the long-systematized zone system. While the very notion of the peripheral network city denotes physical edges, the theoretical paradigm could also emphasize symbolic ones that continue to reorient spaces and state-citizen reactions with them.

Herein lies a paradox central to the peripheral network city: in the attempts to push back against postconflict urban violence—whether at the AHPN, the Museo de los Mártires, or the Historic Center—urban citizens are, on the one hand, manifesting their rejection of violence as integral to Guatemalan culture, while at the same time their constant references to violence ensure that it continues to shape how we imagine the Guatemalan capital as a social imaginary. Thus, this chapter aims to formulate a more sophisticated notion of violence in Guatemala today for, as Professor Joseba Gabilondo once pointed out to me in a personal communication, it is not enough to say that

[58] Here, Arias references the former El Salvador-based airline company whose Spanish acronym meant Central American Air Transport, with additional regional hubs in Costa Rica and Peru. The airline merged with the Colombian company Avianca in 2013. I would argue that the current emblematic Central American regional air company is Copa Airlines, the flag carrier of Panama, with destinations in more than thirty countries in the Americas and Europe.

Guatemala is a "dangerous" or "violent" country. Nevertheless, these categories are often employed in cultural criticism as I have done thus far, in sensationalist popular media headlines, through yellow tape in luxury mall storefront windows, and in the Crime and Public Safety Reports generated by the United States Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security.[59] Indeed, just as the young gang members are "reproducing war," so are the very structures of the peripheral network city that contribute to its design and the performance of everyday life practices, as for instance in the upscale areas that resemble the megacity with the high-end international hotel and restaurant chains of Zona Viva in Zone 10, to name one example. The megaslum, too, underscores warlike tension, as demonstrated in the makeshift shantytowns precariously dispersed throughout the zones and on the rolling hills that divide them.

I begin with these brief incursions as a point of departure for the main issues at hand in this chapter: systemic violence and necropolitics at the heart of further state-citizen relations and the reconfiguration of Guatemalan urban space. As I indicate in Chapter One when I first outlined these terms, I borrow them from Slavoj Žižek and Achille Mbembe respectively, whose work have had a profound impact on how we envision human relations with each other and their surroundings in the Global South. Furthermore, systemic violence and necropolitics not only allow us to further understand

[59] The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security publishes annual Crime and Safety Reports for every country in the world, which are often updated more than once a year. Among the highlights are sections on the overall crime and safety situation, common crime threats, special areas of concern, and specific incidents reported to the U.S. Embassy of the country in question. As the 2019 Crime and Safety Report for Guatemala indicates: "Crime in Guatemala generally stems from widespread corruption, an inadequate justice system, and the prevalence of both gang and narco activity across the country [...] No area in Guatemala is immune to crime, including the most popular tourist destinations such as Antigua and Tikal" (*Guatemala 2019 Crime & Safety Report*).

state-citizen relations and the paradoxical megacity and megaslum characteristics of the peripheral network city, but also to the notions of "danger," "fear," and "violence" in a much more theoretically sound way. Of course, one could easily argue that the entire previous chapters could be reconceived through the lens of necropolitics, especially insofar as we envision Guatemala City as a series of "death-worlds," where humans are marked for/by death (Mbembe 40). Yet, as my further cultural criticism will show, necropolitics is far more suited for the analysis of the megacity and megaslum aspects of the peripheral network city, as opposed to the archive and the repertoire. It is an appropriate way to close the dissertation in that it helps us further establish commonalities between the peripheral network city and other similarly-sized and divided urban areas in Central and Latin America and elsewhere in the Global South.

In this chapter, then, I follow Levenson's interview with Kepfer and concur that, indeed, both the Guatemalan state and its citizens are "reproducing war," and sometimes in an even more accessible fashion than the models provided by either the archive or the repertoire. To demonstrate this, I begin with an explanation of both systemic violence and necropolitics to serve as a point of departure for how I envision these concepts as the remaining two pillars of the peripheral network city. I explain how, through an analysis of systemic violence and necropolitics in the Guatemalan context, we can understand how the state continues to exert control over its citizens by effectively reproducing war in the urban milieu. Beyond the material dimensions of the peripheral network city, I follow novelist Javier Payeras's own cultural criticism of Guatemala City: "[c]uriosamente esta no es una ciudad de edificios, se trata de una ciudad de personas. Más que personas,

personajes. Cada silueta tiene una característica. Cada peatón es un libro abierto" [curiously, this is not a city of buildings, but rather it is a city of people. More than people, characters. Each silhouette has a characteristic. Each pedestrian is an open book] (45). Therefore, through a close reading of the collection of short stories *perZONA* (2014) by Juan Pensamiento Velasco and Javier Payeras's novel *Ruido de fondo* [*Background Noise*] (2006), I intertwine systemic violence and necropolitics into the conceptualization of the peripheral network city by focusing on how the literary characters of these texts, whether in economically advanced areas reminiscent of the megacity, or impoverished areas in tune with Mike Davis's ideas pertaining to the megaslum, write violence into both the rich and poor areas of the Guatemalan capital. By reproducing war to create a prolonged climate of insecurity, these texts demonstrate that, while the state apparatus remains at the forefront of the construction of space and everyday life, citizens are taking note in ways that will render them more visible in the urban milieus of the future.

4.1. The Periphery of the Periphery: Systemic Violence

Notably, I began this chapter by stating that it is not about gang violence or masculinity, although either of these subjects have been the objects of other studies. Certainly, the peripheral network city could also be read vis-à-vis gang violence, masculinity, or even the armed security guard industry and gated communities, the latter of which would be especially helpful as we consider the role of partitions in this theoretical concept. While these very specific elements of everyday life in postwar Guatemala City are not the focus of this chapter, I do believe it is important to briefly

examine them to further support the theorization of city spaces, particularly as we continue to rethink the notion of the periphery, which takes on multiple meanings. In the conclusion to an interview, Arias comments that "if a Maya who wants to migrate to the U.S. wants to cross the border from Guatemala to Mexico, he or she will encounter the same difficulties and obstacles from the Mexican authorities at the border that a Mexican might encounter crossing the border into the US, so that creates a double sense of marginality—you are not even Mexican, you are lesser than Mexican" (*YouTube* 2008). In more general terms, outside of indigenous subjectivities and in consideration of all those belonging to present-day Guatemala, the idea of a perpetual peripheral cultural/literary/geopolitical position is certainly not new, as I have conveyed from the outset of the present study. In comparison with Mexican or Brazilian writers and scholars, whose literature and cultural criticism have gained much more currency and visibility in Latin American Cultural Studies, to quote the Arias interview once more, "a Guatemalan writer always begs the question 'and what is that country? Where is it?'" (*YouTube* 2008). I delve into this interview to further underscore the fact that Guatemala's "peripheral" nature is an inherent quality of the country, even in comparison with other parts of Latin America. Even in Central America, one could easily argue that Guatemala is peripheral to Costa Rica due to the latter's higher GDP, stronger economy, demilitarization since 1948 that contrasts sharply with the militarization of essentially everything, and much lower homicide rates.[60]

[60] According to the most recent updates from the CIA World Factbook, Costa Rica had an unemployment rate of 8.1%, with 21.7% of the population living below the poverty line by the end of 2017. In the same period, Guatemala's unemployment rate was 2.3% but with a total of 59.3% of the population living below

Yet, the peripheral network city—peripheral to Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, but not necessarily to San José—remains the largest city in Central America by far in terms of both land and population, which surpasses the entire populations of Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama.[61] Beyond socioeconomically-marked geographic edges between Guatemala and other countries, however, these divisions are also painfully visible in the peripheral network city's zone layout and even within certain zones such as Zone 18, which aside from being made entirely of a series of megaslums each with their own neighborhoods, it is common to see satellite dishes and cell phone towers amongst the sprawling urban decay. These disparities are found elsewhere in Latin America and across the Global South, as Mike Davis readily reminds us. In *Planet of Slums* (2006), Davis refers to "urbanization without industrialization," a process that is traceable across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia, such that it is inherent with the growth of cities in the Global South in this century. Furthermore, the size of a city's economy, Davis tells us, often has very little to do with the city's population, as evidenced by the fact that a comparatively much smaller city in the Global North such as Boston has more economic significance than the Nigerian megacity Lagos, to use two of his examples (loc. 188 of 5818). More surprisingly, according to Davis, "[s]ince 1970, slum growth

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the poverty line. In Costa Rica, there are no regular military forces and in Guatemala the military is made up of three main branches: The National Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. While Costa Rica is an increasingly common destination for nationals of other Latin American countries claiming asylum, especially Nicaraguans and Venezuelans considering their current political crises, Guatemala claims more than 240,000 internally displaced persons, not even accounting for those in the diaspora.

[61] With a population of 17.2 million, Guatemala has the largest population of any Central American country by far, with more than 5.4 million people in the capital alone; Belize has a population of 385,000 according to the most recent numbers provided by the CIA World Factbook; Costa Rica's population is 5 million; Panama has a total population of 3.8 million.

everywhere in the South has outpaced [overall] urbanization *per se*" (loc. 238 of 5818). This means that much city growth in the Global South has been in the megaslums or shantytowns within them, which largely lack basic utilities and adequate transport, a phenomenon that extends far beyond impoverished areas of Latin America.

Davis concludes that there were most likely 200,000 slums on earth at the time his book on the subject was released nearly fifteen years ago, some of which in India have populations of more than one million people, accounting for "megaslums" that all but swallow up the urban periphery in heaping piles of trash and pollution (loc. 491 of 5818). This phenomenon is also seen in the Brazilian favelas of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and in the peripheral network city, where Zone 18 is home to 40% of the capital's population (Kail n.p.). Perhaps one of the most important points of Davis's study is the fact that: "[e]verywhere in the Third World, housing choice is a hard calculus of confusing trade-offs [...] For some people, including many pavement-dwellers, a location near a job—say, in a produce market or train station—is even more important than a roof. For others, free or nearly free land is worth epic commutes from the edge to the center" (loc. 513 of 5818). I single-out the importance of this passage, because residents of Zone 18, for example, exchange extremely low rent costs for daily commutes of two hours or more each day from the megaslum to megacity areas. The organization of slum inhabitants and the control of their movements is a common practice of everyday life across Latin America, as evidenced in Davis's text. The logics that govern the Guatemalan urban milieu, characterized by rapidly-growing urbanization without industrialization as described by Davis, are further dominated, in my point of view, by systemic violence.

Systemic violence, as defined by Žižek, "is experienced as such against the background a non-violent zero level. It is seen as perturbation of the 'normal', peaceful state of things" (2). Contrasting sharply with subjective violence, more visible because it is exercised as crime or terror from "a clearly identifiable agent" (1), says Žižek, as well as objective violence, manifested in hate speech and discrimination (2), systemic violence is inherently bound to "catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (2). Žižek likens systemic violence to "something like the notorious 'dark matter' of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be 'irrational' explosions of subjective violence" (2). In other words, although we must differentiate economically- and politically-charged systemic violence from its counterparts, that does not mean that the crime and terror associated with subjective violence and racism and hate speech of objective violence are altogether irrelevant for our understanding of systemic violence. Žižek further presents us with the idea that systemic violence is necessary for "such a comfortable life" [of elite populations] to be possible: "[w]e're talking here of the violence inherent to a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence" (9). In other words, subjective violence, as pervasive as it may be in a society, is more difficult to discern than the outward displays of crime such as a gunpoint robbery or racism as seen, for example, in the divisions between South African townships and the more economically advanced parts of cities such as Cape Town or Johannesburg.

The “comfortable life” of elite populations, seemingly untouched by systemic violence, nevertheless factors into the equation. Drawing on a Lacanian conceptualization of the Real, Žižek observes that systemic violence is not necessarily rooted in “concrete individuals and their ‘evil’ intentions,” but rather “‘reality’ is the social reality of the actual people involved in interaction and in the productive processes, while the Real is the inexorable ‘abstract,’ spectral logic of capital that determines what goes on in social reality. One can experience this gap in a palpable way when one visits a country where life is obviously in shambles” (13). I would argue that this gap, which exposes the capitalist underbelly of systemic violence, is also visible when one makes a “charitable” donation or purchase, with “charity” understood in the Žižekian sense as “the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation. In a superego blackmail of gigantic proportions, the developed countries ‘help’ the underdeveloped with ad, credits, and so on, and thereby avoid the key issue, namely their complicity in and co-responsibility for the miserable situation of the underdeveloped” (22). Certainly, the complicity on the part of the United States in the Guatemalan armed conflicts and their aftermath has been explained already in the introduction of this study. Over the years, as Žižek would say, a “fake sense of urgency [...] pervades the left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence,” an urgency that was exploited by a Starbucks campaign in the early 2000s where posters implied that proceeds from each purchase would provide health care for children in Guatemala, a major source of their capital, further inferring the idea that, to quote Žižek’s interpretation, “for every cup you drink, you save a child’s life” (6). Tellingly, he offers this deterritorialized example of systemic violence that cuts across geographic Norths and

Souths, showing how, whereas subjective violence is more visible on a surface level (even, in the most extreme cases, distracting us from other forms of violence), systemic violence also plays a major role in reconstructing human relations with each other. Beyond the Starbucks example, in socioeconomic terms that leave an even deeper imprint on the social construction of the peripheral network city, we can understand, as Žižek does, that "[t]he fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided by the 'solipsistic' speculative dance of capital, which pursues its goal of profitability in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality" (12). Here, the cultural critic highlights the darker side of capitalistic thought, which tries to only operate under its own modifications. As he sees it, systemic violence can also be "inherent with the social conditions of global capitalism, which involve the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals" (14).

In a further examination that nods toward the excluded individuals of society, Žižek stresses the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, or that which "designates the regulation of the security and welfare of human lives as its primary goal" (40). Initially, it would seem that biopolitics could be the perfect accompaniment to systemic violence to think about the peripheral network city. However, I draw on several main ideas set forth by Žižek to deconstruct that idea. First, "a country where life is obviously in shambles," denotes a place where subjective and objective forms of violence have clearly taken shape alongside their systemic counterparts. Because of the monetary characteristics of systemic violence, it touches, to use Žižek's words once more, the "whole strata of the population," including, and perhaps especially, the excluded and dispensable individuals who are

automatically denied access to all aspects of global capitalism, chiefly economic gain. Yet, if we are to believe that systemic violence is more powerful than either subjective or objective violence in that it impacts the entire population, then it would be erroneous to say that certain "dispensable" individuals are completely cut off from the social conditions of global capitalism, particularly under the guise of neoliberalism. To further illustrate this point, Franco calls attention to

> the positive aspects of globalization—the transnational alliances of social groups, the multiplication of cultural cycles, the forging of new urban identities, the resources of technology, and unprecedented mobility—have erected a glossy façade on societies, but beneath this façade, cruelty formerly exercised by military governments is now exercised by powerful gangs responsible for a culture of fear and intimidation. (216)

Undoubtedly, subjective and objective violence could be bound up with the "positive aspects of globalization" that Franco mentions, and it is also true that systemic violence is that which exists "beneath this façade." Whereas urban elites in the peripheral network city try to disembed from public life, as their counterparts can do in Latin American megacities, they establish points of contact, whether they are aware or not, with systemic violence generated by the state that impacts life on either end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Yet, because of the neoliberal characteristics of systemic violence, the *excluded* and *dispensable* individuals as Žižek calls them, by virtue of how much their everyday lives are impacted by profitability based in indifference, unknowingly highlight not so much biopolitics, but rather another ideology: necropolitics.

4.2. Necropolitics and Necropower

Rather than focusing on the regulation of the welfare of human lives to understand how they are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge and power, necropolitics further compliments both systemic violence and the peripheral network city. Achille Mbembe indicates, "sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (11). The use of social and political power to determine how some people live/die is the central axis of necropolitical thought. Death here can be understood not only as the act of dying but also as surviving without living, or what popular culture might call "the living dead." Mbembe's term, which he himself has used to describe such locations as Bosnia, Rwanda, and the self-governing Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip, takes sovereignty as its focus. Mbembe understands sovereignty "as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself). The exercise of sovereignty, in turn, consists in society's capacity for self-regulation through recourse to institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary specifications" (13, emphasis in the original). Here, we can begin to see the qualities that sovereignty shares with systemic violence because systemic violence necessitates that the state sets its own (capitalistic, neoliberal) limits for its own development. In terms of necropolitics, Mbembe sees war as one of its main vehicles because it "is as much a means of achieving sovereignty as a way of exercising the right to kill. Imagining politics as a form of war, we must ask: What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?" (12). In attempt to answer his own question, the African thinker

situates the wounded or slain body within a framework characterized by "*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (14, emphasis in the original). Here we see the beginnings of the country where life is in shambles to which Žižek alludes, further illustrating how systemic violence and necropolitics can be read in unison.

To further problematize necropolitics, Mbembe tells us how "[w]ars of the globalization era [...] aim to force the enemy into submission regardless of the immediate consequences, side effects, and 'collateral damage' of the military actions. In this sense, contemporary wars are more reminiscent of the warfare strategy of the nomads than of the sedentary nations or the 'conquer-and-annex' territorial wars of modernity" (31). Recalling Kepfer's idea that various actors in Guatemalan society are reproducing war, we can understand postwar Guatemala as a globalized/systemically violent/necropolitical "war by other means," to reference the title of Carlota McAlister and Diane Nelson's 2013 volume.[62] Like in the postcolonial African nations to which Mbembe references, which "can no longer claim a monopoly on violence and on the means of coercion within their territory" (32), state power/sovereignty certainly *does* manifest itself through determining who may live or die and under what systemically violent circumstances revolving around global capital. However, some entities only partially connected with the state (or not connected at all, in the case of privatized companies) sometimes "claim the right to exercise violence or kill" (32), which, in the case of Guatemala most often materializes in

[62] The contributors to *War by Other Means* deconstruct the volume's title through the following topics: refugees, land reform, neoliberal economic restructuring, urban and rural gang violence, and indigenous and women's rights.

the form of gang violence or escalated domestic disputes, to name some prominent examples. Thus, what we are left with are war machines, as Mbembe would say, “made up of armed men that split up or merge with one another depending on the tasks to be carried out and the circumstances” (32), with “circumstances” understood in the Guatemalan context as the act of reproducing war across the peripheral network city.

Mbembe continues to make striking proposals when he suggests that the armed men with similar tasks in society may result in the following:

> The state may, of its own doing, transform itself into a war machine. It may moreover appropriate to itself an existing war machine or help to create one. War machines function by borrowing from regular armies while incorporating new elements well adapted to the principle of segmentation and deterritorialization. Regular armies, in turn, may readily appropriate some of the characteristics of war machines. (32)

While war machines have direct connections with transnational entities (i.e., global capital, neoliberalism, etc.), they also have a localized focus on “borrowing from regular armies. For example, army patrols are common in many parts of the peripheral network city, with “new elements”: cell phones, surveillance cameras, and new bus routes throughout the Guatemalan capital, many such bus routes complete with armed security guards on board to protect the drivers and passengers from gang extortion fees. In other words, the war machine, and, by default, necropolitics, has become a way to control how people live with ubiquitous references to potential death taking over all aspects of life. Mbembe further references enclave economies, which I observe throughout the

peripheral network city: “privileged spaces of war and death. War itself is fed by increased sales of the products extracted. New linkages have therefore emerged between war making, war machines, and resource extraction” (33). Reproduced Guatemalan Civil War is facilitated by neoliberal patterns of the movements of people and capital, with “sales of products extracted” visible in the drug trade, guns, and the “extraction” of armed security guards from the interior of the country to work in Guatemala City. The living dead (or dead living?) Guatemalan urbanites are made painfully aware that death still characterizes many aspects of their capital city, so much that they must “live with the impression of actually dying. Death itself must become awareness of the self at the very time that it does away with the conscious being” (Mbembe 38). The richness of this argument is underscored by the fact that, in the peripheral network city, one has constant references to their own “permanent condition of ‘being in pain’” (39): the gated community, military posts, buildings (such as those with the H.I.J.O.S. photographs), soldiers and security guards on street corners, buses with windows that have been sprayed with bullets, barbed wire even around the parameters of the AHPN, and the overall espoused normalcy that death dominates life.

As I referenced at the beginning of this chapter, necropolitics (or, more broadly, necropower), designates that “weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (40, emphasis in the original). Levenson further explains how necropolitics can be imagined in Guatemala, starting with the idea that youth were

once situated, as liberal revolutionaries of the 1800s and 1900s recognized them, as well as in the examples of the San Carlista university students associated with H.I.J.O.S., "in the vanguard of a modernity that would arise from within a city conceived as a beacon" (1). Yet now, more than two decades after the conclusion of the internal armed conflicts, war is reproduced such that "by 2000 Guatemala City was among the poorest and most dangerous cities on the continent and La Juventud had gone down the drain with it" (Levenson 2). Rather than representing hopeful tomorrows, youth have now come to be associated with "the radically dangerous present, chaos and death, an obstacle to the future instead of its herald" (2). Recognizing the role that youth have played in social and political protest, as I have, Levenson also does not shy away from the gangs that have come to represent one of the biggest threats to urban Guatemalan society today: they reproduce war by creating the notion of "a subjective 'us,' and everyone else, including the poor, constitutes 'them'" (3-4). The historian further argues that young gang members' "turn from life toward death is related to larger transformations that have taken place in a short period of time in Guatemala" (4). With a nod toward systemic violence, Levenson makes the case that gang members (in addition to other members of urban Guatemalan society), are "skilled entrepreneurs who use violence as a marketing strategy in a country in permanent economic crisis [...] One thing facilitates another: a weak economy and an inoperative legal system allow global organized crime to flourish and to incorporate mareros as cheap labor within a system of networks that employs down-and-out youth everywhere in the world, and keeps them that way by making sure they have little cash" (4). The weak economy and global organized crime to which

Levenson references undoubtedly factor in to the performance of everyday life practices in the peripheral network city, especially when we consider how the state intervenes to dictate how people die and live with omnipresent references to death.

Levenson delves into the violent lives of youth in postwar Guatemala "to argue that in many ways these young people's coexistence with violent death, including their own murders, is intimately related to what can be framed as the Guatemalan state's successful use of spectacular and reverberating necropolitics" (6). She goes on to explain how necropolitics has become a mechanism of state power in Guatemala over the years: "[s]tarting roughly in 1980 and into the mid 1990s, sovereignty rested on the absolute negation of life in order to put an end to over fifty years of unfinished history in which radical political movements had polarized Guatemala in a battle for its destiny" (6). With a reference to the state of constant pain that Mbembe describes, Levenson sees gang members as "a small painful intrusion that hurts and impairs," because they have, in her words, "crystallized necropolitics into what I call necroliving. In the city, the mareros control life through their power to take it away" (6). Necropolitics or "necroliving," to make use of Levenson's term, were once used exclusively as glaring examples of state sovereignty as shown in the following episode from the historian's fieldwork: "In the Maya highlands, the military had a strategy that was, to quote one army official's unknowingly perfect formulation of necropolitics, 'planned down to destroy every sign of life.' This intensified war's aim was, for once and for all, absolute annihilation of, rather than containment of, popular movements in both city and countryside" (33). It is important to note here that many Guatemalans could probably identify examples of

necropolitics either from the war or reproduced war today, although without being able to pinpoint necropolitics specifically. Necropolitics and necroliving now manifest in the forms of reproduced war as gang members (and any gun-wielding person for that matter) display their ability to end life, at all hours of the day. For many, murder is now the natural way die, as demonstrated by the most recent homicide statistics in Guatemala.[63] However, gang members sometimes undermine their own attempts to control life through death. As Levenson further tells us, "[i]mmersed in the legacy of political sovereignty through the manufacture of horrific deaths and surrounded by violent deaths, by murdering or by imagining death in their magical religious rites, gang members struggle to control death as well as life. Necroliving deracinates death" (6).

Furthermore, in *Mortal Doubt: Transnational Gangs and Social Order in Guatemala City* (2018), a recent study on the interwoven topics of death, gangs, and illicit economies, Anthony Fontes compellingly argues

> [t]hrust into the public imagination, the symbolic power of the marero fuses everyday violence taking place in gang territories and other insecure spaces to the making of social and political perspectives dating life across the city, the nation, and beyond. These brash vehicles of violence and emissaries of peacetime chaos have become absolutely essential to the making of a *certain kind of order*. Maras form a vital node, a flashpoint, in

[63] According to the Guatemala 2019 Crime and Public Safety Report, homicide rates reached an all-time high in 2009, with 45 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. The numbers have decreased to around 22 deaths per the same number of inhabitants by the end of 2018. Nevertheless, in 2018 "the police reported approximately 3,881 homicides, 4,246 aggravated assaults, and over 2,500 missing persons" (*Guatemala 2019 Crime & Safety Report)*.

> which overwhelming violence and fear circulating throughout the social body come into stark relief. (3, my emphasis)

This means that gang violence is not an entity all unto itself but rather situated within the social order, a notion that becomes more poignant if we consider "the social body," as Fontes puts it, as an alternative to "the peripheral network city." The human geographer goes on to affirm that "the maras are not the problem, and the problem does not begin or end with them. They have been forged through relationships of exchange that collapse the deceptive divides between the local and the global, the state and its underworld, the innocent and the guilty, and so forth" (3). In my point of view, the "certain kind of order," and "deceptive divides between the local and the global" to which Fontes alludes could be interpreted as systemic violence in the Žižekian sense, with "the state and its underworld" correlating with the necropolitical. As I have also progressively argued throughout this dissertation, Fontes tell us that "[t]oday, doubt about violence is still a basic fact of everyday life in Guatemala City" (6). Clearly, we need not turn to the gangs to understand this reality. The scholar continues

> However, something has changed radically. Violence and its suffering move through the social body in ways altogether different from civil war atrocities. The most obvious distinction is this: in place of silence, a dissonant chorus greets peacetime brutality, screaming accusation, seeking to blame, determined to name the source of so much murder and suffering. Each act of violence that infiltrates the public sphere is immediately

embroiled in the chaos of postwar political maneuvering for power and influence. (6)

Again, if we understand "the social body" as "the peripheral network city" for the purposes of this study, then certainly violence does move through it differently now in the postwar era than during the internal armed conflicts, with the archive and the repertoire serving as perfect examples to illustrate this point. The embroilment of postwar political maneuvering takes place both at the AHPN and in the embodied practice of H.I.J.O.S. photography placement, as well as throughout the neighborhoods of the urban Guatemalan social body. Yet, Fontes also adds a darker element to these postwar triumphs, which are felt in the systemically violent and necropolitical structures of the social body: "[f]or most residents of Guatemala City, however, the freedom of thought and expression they have gained does not appear as important as the sense of security they have lost" (6). This implies that most Guatemalans today would consider their capital city more dangerous than during the war years and that the freedom to read García Márquez's famed 1967 novel *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*], for example, offers little in the way of a consolation prize.[64]

[64] In his reflections upon fieldwork, Fontes writes, "[i]n Guatemala City, the collective experience of living with violent crime has given rise to a widespread nostalgia for what is remembered as the ordered violence of civil war. This nostalgia is certainly not universal. 'Things are certainly better now,' said Mario Polanco, longtime human rights activist and executive director of Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), when I asked him to compare the terror of the past with that of the present. 'Back then, you could be disappeared simply for owning a copy of Gabriel García Márquez's *100 Years of Solitude*. I had a copy that I would have to cover with newspaper so it wouldn't be seen on the bus. Now you have the freedom to think and say what you want'" (6). As Fontes also indicates, the freedom of thought and expression also comes at the same times as peacetime violence, which "has been freed from the narrow constraints of revolution and counterrevolution, making potential prey out of those who once imagined themselves safe, and every new murder becomes a hotbed for rumor and supposition, another reason to feel vulnerable" (7).

Feelings of a lost sense of security are due largely in part to the growing security guard industry in the peripheral network city today. To quote *Mortal Doubt* once more:

> [w]hile extortion has been the fastest growing illicit business since the end of the civil war, private security, its legal doppelgänger, is the region's number 1 growth industry. The maras' extortion profits are nothing compared to those reaped by private security. In 2005 Guatemala spent $574.3 million—approximately 1.8 percent of its gross domestic product—on private security. (160)

With clear nods to both systemic violence and necropolitics, the security guard industry as the "legal doppelgänger" to extortion permeates urban Guatemalan society, with "141 registered private security companies in Guatemala employing 48,240 guards, as well as 30,000-40,000 additional 'clandestine' private security guards working for illegal companies" (Fontes 160). Even though the government has attempted to regulate the industry for its probable ties to extrajudicial killings and kidnappings, these efforts have failed as the security guards present their own defiant challenge to state influence. As Sophie Esch further points out in *Modernity at Gunpoint: Firearms, Politics, and Culture in Mexico and Central America* (2018), "[i]n both Mexico and Central America, military spending is on the rise. As the Cold War confrontations fade into memory, the region still operates under the sign of the rifle" (14). She goes on to say

> [t]he citizen has become an entrepreneur, and the narco is a good market-citizen in the sense that he uses all the means—exercising violence and embodying other state functions—to make profit. In this conflict the rifle is,

> above all, a blurry sign. As such, it appears as a tool of violence and an artifact of a neoliberal conception of citizenship and modernity but more often as a prop. (28)

While Esch's discussion here centers on the drug dealer, her strong argument transcends both mareros and armed security guards in Guatemala, entrepreneurs of a new systemically violent and necropolitical order throughout the social body. The neoliberal aspects of such professions as extortion and surveillance of violent acts with a violent artifact (the gun) reverberate with my own observations of the modern megacity and impoverished megaslum characteristics of the peripheral network city.

In her own reflections on the security guard industry, Avery Dickens de Girón makes the important observation that armed guards operate throughout any commercial zone in Guatemala City at supermarkets, on the backside of delivery trucks, and in parking lots. In a highly ethnographic fashion, Dickens de Girón observes "[w]hether they [armed security guards] instill a sense of comfort or fear, the individuals behind the guns—most of them rural peasants—symbolize the unequal social and economic conditions in contemporary Guatemalan society" (103), further supporting my argument for the place of systemic violence in the structure of Guatemala City and, indeed, rural Guatemala. Noting that there are approximately 20,000 state-employed police officers throughout the entire country, Dickens de Girón demonstrates that they are far outnumbered by security guards who "seek work as security guards *por necesidad* (out of necessity), hinting at the structural conditions that require them to seek wage labor beyond their hometowns" (104). While these arguments serve to support the view that

neoliberalism has permeated every aspect of Guatemalan society (and blurred the urban-rural divide more specifically), they also show the ubiquitous nature of this profession and how its agents impact how we envisage Guatemalan *capital*, with "capital" here acknowledging both the peripheral network city itself and its socioeconomic dimensions. Whereas the armed security guard inhabits all levels of Guatemalan capital, even in those physical spaces that have undergone intense urban renewal projects for the elite populations, "the formulation of space in postwar Guatemala City through the language of economic development results in the exclusion of certain people and goods from supposedly public spaces—the privatization of public space" (Véliz and O'Neill 83), meaning that economic restructuring excludes certain classes and ethnicities. Given the multilayered dynamics in motion in the contemporary peripheral network city, the absence of state services creates, to use the words of Offit, O'Neill, and Thomas, "a pervasive condition of structural violence [that] puts already disadvantaged groups in Guatemala at greater risk of violent behavior and victimization" (13). Paradoxically, I would argue, gang members and armed security guards could fall under the category of "disadvantaged groups"; although they operate behind the rifle and "control life through their power to take it away," to repeat Levenson's words once more, their violent professions and the systems to which they belong also make their own lives more precarious.

To further see the influence of necropolitics beyond the borders of Guatemala, in support of linking the peripheral network city with the rest of the region, I turn to Francisco Ferrándiz and Antonius Robben's edited volume *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and*

Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights (2015), which is certainly a most welcome addition to the critical responses to Mbembe's theories in the context of Latin America. The two critics do well to caution us that, "[t]o be sure, necropolitics is a huge topic involving multiple modalities of power deployment over the production and management of dead bodies, while the concept itself is not beyond dispute for its tendency to naturalize sovereignty" (3). I would add that dead bodies are not the only ones to be controlled under necropolitical thinking, as my above discussion demonstrates. In the same volume and writing from the Guatemalan countryside, Richard Wilson argues that "regimes that massacre a civilian population as part of a widespread and systematic policy of terror create social disorder and disruption. Their methods generate physical and social entropy, with regard to both the bodies of victims and the body politic" (viii). While no doubt this is true, the "social *disorder*" brought forth by necropolitics during the Guatemalan Civil War has become normalized such that it is the new social order in the postwar years. Wilson goes on to tell us how "exhumations and DNA testing reassemble bodies and reattach names, and thereby are part of a wider collective process of memorializing the dead, reordering the social world, and reclaiming territory from military occupation" (viii), phenomena shared by both the archive and the repertoire, as well as gang members and security guards who for their parts reclaim territory for their own strategic use. Further work in the volume discusses necropolitics in the contexts of Chile and Peru, to name two examples.[65] By bringing a Latin American lens to bear on the

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[65] Antonius Robben writes how the Chilean state "deterritorialized repression" during the Pinochet dictatorship: "[i]f state sovereignty is defined in terms of necropower, or the power to rule over life and death in exceptional situations, then its counterpart is territoriality, or the absolute dominion over national

concept of necropolitics, the critics not only engage in South-South horizontalist thinking that rejects Eurocentric thinking so prevalent in the early development of Cultural Studies, but also problematize the Global South from a Latin American point of view, as other scholars such as Debra Castillo and Anne Garland Mahler have also done.[66]

Writing from the US-Mexico border zone, John Márquez adds another dimension to necropolitics in the Americans when he writes

> [t]here is, however, also much evidence suggesting that the death toll, in particular, has been premediated, that is, presupposed as a method of better deterring immigrants and enforcing immigration law. The logic in this presupposition has been that the more deadly the borderlands become, the

territory" (54, 55). In this sense, the Chilean army exercised necropower and territoriality by taking over all aspects of society with roadblocks, street patrols, and helicopter surveillance. For his part, Isaias Rojas-Perez writes that, in Peru, "death can be grounds for reconciliation and reconstitution of the political community in the aftermath of protracted armed conflict" (185). He reads the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission through the lenses of unknown and unacknowledged deaths to understand Peruvian responses to the "moral condition of possibility of the post-conflict political community" (186).

[66] In her co-edited volume with Kavita Panjabi, *Cartographies of Affect: Across Borders in South Asia and the Americas* (2011), Castillo explores South-South horizontalist relations between the partition of South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) and the the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which added 525,000 square miles to the United States, including all or parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, formerly of Mexico. Castillo and Panjabi establish a contemporary comparative gaze on partitioned India and the Americas through a critical examination of the South-North flow of either immigrants (partition) or refugees (U.S.-Mexico border zone). Castillo and Panjabi further remind us that "[m]ost Spanish speaking countries of the Western Hemisphere gained their independence from Spain in the early part of the nineteenth century, at about the same time that British began their incursions into India" (1). Garland Mahler, in *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (2018), posits that, aside from a valuable replacement for "Third World" in Cultural Studies, "Global South" is also employed in a postnational fashion "to address peoples negatively impacted by capitalist globalization" (6), meaning that there could be, for example, areas that are geographically part of the Global North but with cultural and socioeconomic qualities of the South, and vice versa. I propose that Guatemala City's Ciudad Cayalá is an example of "capitalism's externalities" and "subjugated peoples within the borders of wealthier countries" (6), to use Garland Mahler's words, constituting a North in the geographic South. Garland Mahler also asserts that this horizontalist approach to the Global South "is used to refer to the resistant imaginary of a transnational political subject that results from a shared experience of subjugation and also to a model for the comparative study of resistant cultural production" (6).

> more terror could function as a method to deter the rate through which immigrants from Latin America cross the border 'illegally.' (474)

These provocative arguments suggest that systemic violence can be premediated alongside and bound up with necropolitics to "exceed the legal rights of those who have been victimized" (Márquez 474). Death or perceived threats of death, aside from devaluing Latinx lives in this case, can act as deterrents for their arrival to the US-Mexico border. As the border studies criticism continues, "[t]his resultant condition of life devaluation, or expendability with legal impunity, is not a mere consequence of or a tool for broader plans for *economic exploitation*. By contrast, expendability represents a base or foundational effect of power through which plans for economic exploitation can be and have been instantiated" (476, my emphasis). Thus, from my viewpoint, systemic violence and necropolitics work together at the border zone in question to devalue certain lives as a form of sovereignty.[67] The very same phenomenon is experienced in the peripheral network city, whose spiral snail shell pattern pushes its systemically violent and necropolitical structures beyond its boundaries where urban renewal projects "restrict the flow of certain people and certain goods" (Véliz and O'Neill 85). Some such urban renewal projects, such as the gated Ciudad Cayalá which all but functions as its own wealthy megacity in Zone 15, aim at creating, to use Rodrigo Véliz and Kevin Lewis O'Neill's elegant phrasing, "public spaces in which all Guatemalans can embody (even if

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[67] As Ileana Rodríguez points out, "*Feminicido* in Ciudad Juárez (a Mexican border city opposite of El Paso, Texas) is a daunting marker of the shift from modern to postmodern forms of labor" (153), calling to mind how the assassination of women simply because they are women lies at the center of capitalist flows of precarious bodies. Although Ciudad Juárez has traditionally been the city from which cultural critics have come to understand feminicides, this extreme form of gendered violence has come to inhabit other urban areas of Latin America.

only for an afternoon) the flâneur of Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project" (85).[68] Yet, Ciudad Cayalá may be even more systemically violent than other parts of the peripheral network city out in the open because it flagrantly exposes the gaps between rich and poor Guatemalans, just as national border would do for Guatemalan migrants as they enter Mexico and the U.S. Both systemic violence and necropolitics often work in unison to restrict the flow of people through all-encompassing socioeconomic means and in ways that extend beyond the geopolitical boundaries of the peripheral network city and, indeed, Guatemala's national territory. The next section of this chapter situates systemic violence in the literary landscape provided by a sampling of recent cultural production.

4.3. *perZona*: Narrating a Systemically Violent Capital

Studies on the place of systemic violence or, even more generally, economic structures, as they are imagined by the contours of Latin American literature are certainly not new. For example, in the introduction to her book *Capital Fictions: The Literature of Latin America's Export Age* (2013), Ericka Beckman reminds us how Latin America is "a region whose role in the world economy was simultaneously generated by a larger system and circumscribed to a role within it" (xiv). She asks, "[h]ow might commodities and

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[68] Ciudad Cayalá, whose name means "paradise" in Kaqchikel, is a self-functioning private city for Guatemala City's wealthy, with restaurants, high-end boutiques, apartments, churches, and nightclubs within the confines of white stucco walls, with further construction presently underway. The constructers of Cayalá say that the independent city is the first such example of new urbanism in Guatemala and promote it as a more livable area of the Guatemalan capital in comparison with other areas. Yet, most Guatemalans feel that Cayalá is merely an illusion only available to the country's small elite population (*YouTube* 2013). For his part, Fontes describes Cayalá as "the shining white sanctuary of the Guatemala City elite. Perched in the hills above the city, Cayalá is a sprawling enclave community where the rich can live, work, eat, shop, and party without ever having to leave the whitewashed, Mediterranean-style complex" (245). I would further argue that Cayalá is situated as one of the most jarring examples of neoliberalism in Guatemala today and serves more to privatize and divide society rather than bring people together.

money *appear* in places whose economies are simultaneously driven by the global commodity order and, because nonindustrialized, seemingly anterior to it? What kinds of fictions and fetishes arise, and how can they be expressed" (xiv, emphasis in the original). In Beckman's case, she refers to fictions of and about capital—as understood through the factors of production and the elite populations that controlled them—in the late nineteenth century in Latin America. Yet, her inquiries are of value to the present study due to my focus on the fact that the peripheral network city, as well as the literature that describes it, is a social body generated by a larger (in this case, systemically violent) system and circumscribed to the role of mediating that systemic violence through the urban public and private spheres. Aside from the examples described thus far in this chapter, most notably through gang violence and the armed security guard industry, literature also plays a role in mediating systemic violence in the peripheral network city, as expressed through Juan Pensamiento Velasco's 2014 collection of short stories *perZONA*. First, it is noteworthy to mention that the title is a play on words, with the Spanish "persona" translating to "person" in English, but with a spelling that denotes the zonas [zones] that serve to create the peripheral network city's design. Automatically, then, the reader is oriented toward a special embodiment and even personification of Guatemala City, where innate human characteristics are ascribed to the different zones that divide it. At the same time, human beings are urbanized and made to fit within the mold of the socioeconomic structures that govern their everyday lives, further exemplified in the unique cover of the book (Figure 4.1, p. 214).

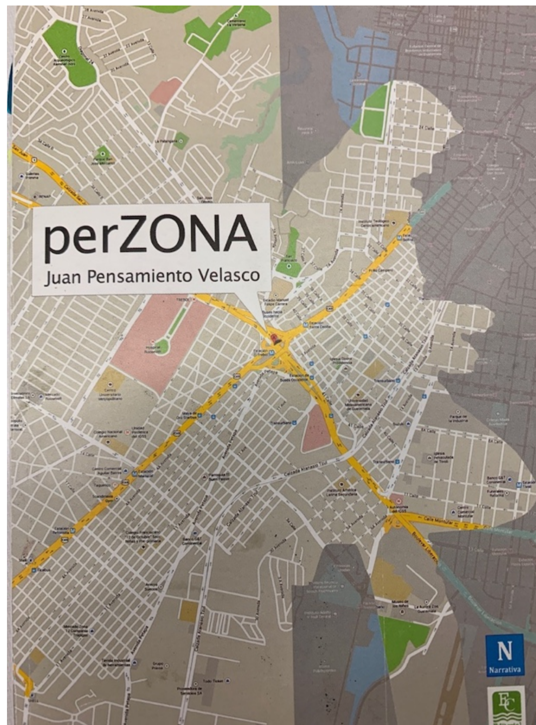

Figure 4.1: *perZONA* (2014).

The cover of *perZONA* shows us the title erupting from the Trébol, a clover highway that reorients traffic on the Pan-American Highway heading west from the peripheral network city toward Antigua. The outline of a human personifies the zone layout, while at the same time, in an artistic way, attempting to add humanistic value to the structures of this city. Yet there is only the outline of one person piercing the cityscape and they do not take up the whole cover, insinuating that such an endeavor would be immensely difficult. The artistic title also lends itself to the fact that Pensamiento Velasco is a visual artist and columnist for several Guatemalan newspapers, thus he is accustomed to the fact that words and images often dictate how written text is oriented. Having worked in different media outlets and public communication venues, most recently in cultural magazines and social networks, Pensamiento Velasco indicates in an interview for the *Los Angeles Times* that he set out to write *perZONA* to work

through “the idiosyncrasies of his city’s layout—about how the main landfill is in Zone 3, so close to the city center that even a simple rain sends plume of garbage odor wafting through much of the city” (Gerber, n.p.). Pensamiento Velasco also notes that Guatemala City is “quite strange,” regarding “the combination of the snail-like design and traffic can mean it takes an hour to drive between two places that sound close to each other—zones 10 and 11,” to name one example (Gerber, n.p.). Pensamiento Velasco also admitted that he set out to understand why Zone 20 does not exist within the city limits, learning from his discussions with other Guatemalan urbanites that Aguilar Batres picked a spot for Zone 20 that simply “landed beyond the city limits, so it got skipped over” (Gerber n.p.).

This engineering oddity notwithstanding, the resulting text of *perZONA* is a collection of short stories that attempt to chronicle everyday urban violence in Guatemala City, tracing the violence zone by zone. The narrative delivery and syntax of *perZONA* are striking: each story is narrated in third person point of view, though with different characters and socioeconomic classes represented throughout to account for differences amongst the zones. Each story is named simply for the zone it represents and I have selected to analyze the stories representing Zones 1, 6, and 10 for two reasons. First, Zones 1 (Historic Center) and 6 (AHPN) correspond with the zones explored thus far in the dissertation, which I have argued are most vital in understanding the peripheral network city. Thus, I have chosen to continue examining these two zones. I have added Zone 10 because it is the financial center of Guatemala and the most economically-advanced area of the whole country and serves to expose the characteristics of the Guatemalan capital that represent the megacity, which has thus far been unexplored in the present study.

In the first story in *perZONA*, “zonaUNO,” the narrative voice opens with an onomatopoeia [*trac, trac, puc, trac*…] that describes the clinking sound of an old woman’s head as it strikes the window of a moving bus. An observer of the scene, Joaquín, looks on with a sense of “ternura” [tenderness] as he takes in her muddied shoes and extremely tan, wrinkled skin. Joaquín deduces that, despite the woman’s age, she is still among the workforce and must be coming from her job. He is frustrated with the fact that, in his opinion, she is far too grandmotherly to still be working and finding herself “forzada a descansar en el hediondo encierro de esa camioneta empanada, infestada de gente húmeda” [forced to sleep in the smelly confinement of that sluggish bus, infested with sweaty people] (9). The potent sensory dimensions of Joaquín’s description inadvertently refer to the poverty associated with the “camionetas,” the term employed in Guatemala City for the overcrowded municipal buses, which are among the cheapest transportation options and typically taken up by the city’s poorest residents in their commutes. In other words, the socioeconomic status of the old woman, as well as Joaquín, have forced them into this potentially violent transport option. With growing concern for the woman’s well-being, Joaquín establishes that the woman’s slumber is due to pure exhaustion, rather than laziness. Reflecting upon this, Joaquín asks himself: “¿Dónde será su parada? […] ¿Y si se pasa? ¿Y si mejor la despierto?” [Where must her stop be? And if it passes? Maybe I better wake her up?] (9). Thinking better of this decision, Joaquín adjusts his tie and notes the sweat on his neck, which he seems to associate with his own poverty.

As the bus trundles on, the driver suddenly brakes as a car cuts him off in traffic. In that moment, the woman’s head clunks against Joaquín’s shoulder, which “se quedó

muy tieso al principio, sin saber qué hacer" [remained very stiff at first, not knowing what to do] (10). Aside from breathing heavily, the woman did not seem to acknowledge the abrupt brake, prompting Joaquín to instinctively embrace her tightly with his right arm, as if to protect her. In this intimate moment, Joaquín notes that the woman smells of beans and tortillas, suggesting that she sells these everyday Guatemalan foods for a living. The moment becomes even more intimate when Joaquín shuts his eyes and imagines the woman to be his own grandmother. Eventually, he falls asleep and when he wakes up the anonymous *abuela* is no longer on the bus. When we reconsider that *perZONA* is the embodiment of the peripheral network city, then we can deduce that Joaquín's embrace of the woman seeks to reserve, even for just a moment, the systemic violence at the core of the Guatemalan capital. Rather than be configured as a crime scene of gang extortion, the bus was a place where two perfect strangers could somehow protect one another, while at the same time achieving solidarity through shared socioeconomic status.

The short story about Zone 6, aptly named "zonaSEIS," takes on a different structure in that the main perspective is that of a woman. The story begins with a memory of subjective, not systemic violence. Martha, a woman living in Zone 6, recalls the last time Juan Manuel (who we can assume to be her partner) struck her, an act so severe that it prompted the neighbors to call the police when they overheard the extreme act of domestic violence. From Martha's point of view, the Guatemalan police "nunca entiende este tipo de cosas" [never understand this kind of thing], but nevertheless took Juan Manuel with them. Even though she still had a black eye that was swollen shut and a loose tooth three weeks after the incident, Martha chose not to further pursue the case

with the police, even as she continues to see Juan Manuel every time she looks at her own bruised reflection in the mirror. While subjective male-on-female violence is undoubtedly part of the structure of the peripheral network city, so, too is the systemic violence that undergirds this whole scenario: rather than seek legal, medical, or dental help, Martha convinces herself that Juan Manuel was "el único hombre suficientemente hombre para ponerla en su lugar, como se merece" [the only man who is man enough to put her in her place, as she deserves] (20). Hoping for Juan Manuel's quick return, Martha further conveys that "*esta vez sí voy a portarme bien*" [this time I am going to behave myself] (20, emphasis in the original). It is as if below the surface of this outwardly apparent subjective violence is a systemic violence that economically binds Martha to her abuser; without him, she would be alone and most likely without enough money to sustain herself. Therefore, her narrative exemplifies the precariousness of the systemic structures found within the same zone as the AHPN and its own secrets beneath the surface. It is noteworthy to mention here that, although Zone 6 represents a certain kind of epicenter of the peripheral network city due to the AHPN, it is still located in an impoverished area, further exemplifying the paradoxical nature of urban Guatemala.

In "zonaDIEZ," we are more blatantly within the socioeconomic structures of the peripheral network city, this time in the wealthiest part of the city (and, indeed, the country), where one easily finds chain hotels that charge more per night than the average Guatemalan's months' salary. The story tells us of a twenty-six-year-old woman with an extremely expensive purple handbag that matches perfectly with the rest of her designer outfit. From the handbag, she finds pills to take to help alleviate the pain brought on by

severe stomach pain, which, in turn, is caused by pills designed to help her lose weight. Aside from the Zone 10 location, the reader is immediately supplied with enough information to deduce that this woman is much wealthier than most Guatemalans and that she tries to use her socioeconomic status to forget about her surroundings, to no avail. The narrative voice tells us that the woman finds herself consuming a "cóctel matutino de pastillas" [morning cocktail of pills] (24), to target everything she does not like about her physical appearance. After downing this unorthodox cocktail of pills, the woman whose first name we never discover reflects upon the night before, a Wednesday. The night out convinced her that she hated women because "todas le tienen envidia (o despiertan su envidia, aunque esta noción se queda convenientemente escondida bajo la alfombra de sus ideas)" [they all envy her {or awaken her envy, although this notion remains conveniently hidden under the carpet of her ideas}] (24). Failing to resist the impulse to smoke, the woman pulls out a cigarette from her bag even though she is horrified at the idea of lighting up in the morning. She cannot fight the urge and the act makes her recall the previous night of smoking with her best friend, a gay man who eventually abandoned their night of merrymaking to go have a sexual encounter with another man in the bathroom of the apartment.

Reflecting upon this, the woman proudly recalls that she has only had sex with two men in her life, although she "nunca ha hecho el amor con ninguno" [has never made love with either of them] (24). Further contemplating her own sexual encounters with the cigarette still in her mouth, the woman remembers her ex-boyfriend and a married lover who, at the very least, gave her the thrill of breaking the rules. In the end, she decides,

these men fall into the category of ex-men: “ex papá, ex novio, ex amante…Futuro ex amigo” [ex-father, ex-boyfriend, ex-lover, future ex-friend] (25). The story ends with the woman pulling a mirror from her handbag and to harshly critique her own appearance, all down to the artificial Botox and liposuction, which she originally pursued to enhance her self-esteem. The story tells us that she, “[s]e mira en el espejo y no encentra nada. Ni lo que fue, ni lo que es, ni lo que quiere ser. Le da escalofrío una inexplicable sensación de encierro” [looks at herself in the mirror and does not find anything. Not what she was, what she is, or what she wants to be. An inexplicable feeling of confinement gives her the chills] (25). Resigned to the fact that she is trapped in a “cadena perpetua” [life imprisonment], the woman’s story trails off, revealing to us that despite her financial prowess and worldly possessions, the woman realizes she uses all of this in a feeble attempt to withdraw from the realities of the city around her. Because of the systemic violence inherent to the peripheral network city, she fixates on its agents. These agents include high-end amenities in parts of the Guatemalan capital that greatly resemble Miami, body alterations, and the men who embody different “perZONAs,” to play with Pensamiento Velasco’s title in a way to underscore that all the individual actors here are part of the social body of Guatemala City.

The peripheral network city, divided yet held together by its signature zones, is also notably defined by its inequalities, as evidenced here in the poor bus riders, poor woman encountering domestic violence, and a rich woman who has failed to find happiness despite all her attempts to buy her way into the capitalist machine. Ironically, it is perhaps the rich woman’s relationship with the city that most perfectly exemplifies

systemic violence, particularly as we recall Žižek's discussion of the "comfortable life" of elite members of society; they are likely the citizens who are most involved into the (re)production of systemic violence insofar as it systematically works to divide people based on socioeconomic means. The "perZONAs" in these cases, whether they are the personified zones or the urbanized humans, are distant from one another while at the same time bound together by the role of economic capital in determining social realities.

4.4. *Ruido de fondo*: Narrating Necropower

Leaving *perZONA* aside but still with an eye toward the structures of the peripheral network city, Javier Payeras's *Ruido de fondo* also merits our attention in terms of how the state-controlled urban space continues to both culturally mediate interactions between people as people, in turn, infiltrate the social body of the cityscape. First published in 2006 by the nephew of famed guerrilla leader and poet Mario Payeras, *Ruido de fondo*, like *El material humano*, is told from the point of view of the author, demonstrating how the autofiction genre has gained currency in the postwar generation. Payeras, himself a postmodern poet, narrator, and conceptual artist, has published opinion pieces in magazines, newspapers, and in numerous blogs about contemporary Guatemalan cultural topics. In addition, his recent *La región más invisible* [*The Most Invisible Region*] (2017) is a book of cultural criticism in which he examines the literature of his contemporaries, as well as reflections on Guatemalan society in a mixture of criticism and creative writing. Aside from *Ruido de fondo*, his 2009 novel *Días amarillos* [*Yellow Days*] also focuses on the theme of the negation of life, though I have chosen to

only include *Ruido de fondo* here because it dedicates more time to describing the urban imaginary. Certainly, that is not to say that we could not also read Payeras's work in the context of systemic violence or even neoliberalism, as I have done with *Días amarillos*.[69] Rather, I am suggesting here that necropolitics is more visible here as I interpret *Ruido de fondo* as a series of episodes with a complete indifference to or negation to life (or, at the very least, the acceptance of life where death and its power to take life away at any moment is close to the surface).

The small amount of criticism on the novel, however, does not focus on this topic. In his critique, Matthew Byrne focuses on what he perceives to be heterosexist and homophobic tendencies in Payeras's work through "defamatory portrayals of homosexuals and the policing of masculinity in Central American society to perpetuate and legitimize violence against the hatred of homosexuals" (11). From the beginning, Byrne declares that "the novel deals with the erasure of warm memories in a contemporary, postwar Guatemala," (14), which, while partially true because the main characters are blissfully ignorant to the war and its aftermath, is not altogether accurate in my view, as violent sequels to the war permeate the pages of the novel. Certainly, the author-protagonist whose name is never revealed (though I will henceforth refer to him as Javier after the author), makes keen observations of the ubiquitous references to death in the cityscape. He also gives hypersexual descriptions of Guatemala City streets,

[69] *Días amarillos* problematizes neoliberal paradigms in Guatemala City. From the beginning, the narrative voice also personifies death and tells us that it can commonly takes the form of a woman or transvestite. Yet these deaths (among others) described in the novel also serve the narrator-protagonist in his career as a journalist, ultimately benefitting his salary.

likening them to nude legs and open vaginas, noting how all the inhabitants are products of sex (*Ruido de fondo* 38). Hypersexual descriptions and tendencies on the part of literary Javier, as well as drug addiction, creates, to use Byrne's words "constant dissonance [that] desensitizes and normalizes the heterosexist norms of Central American society. Throughout Payeras's novel, homosexuality is only touched upon marginally, and when it is, it is labeled as an amoral choice" (15). Indeed, Javier's contemplation of his own sexuality merits our attention, as he declares that his ultraconservative family already considers him "una catástrofe" [a castrophe], with the idea that they would imagine him as a "traficante/homosexual/tocaniños" [trafficker/homosexual/molester] if he left home without marrying or finishing his studies (*Ruido de fondo* 22). In Byrne's view, "the protagonist subtly highlights the stereotypical associations of homosexuality by creating his own portmanteau word of '*traficante/homosexual/tocaniños*' and strategically placing *homosexual* at the center: the root of the worst deviations imaginable by a Guatemalan mother" (15). The assumption that a young man is perverse simply for being gay (or that he is gay if he leaves home before marriage or finishing his university studies) is at the root of a violent, heteropatriarchal mindset. Javier further problematizes this notion after he has his first sexual encounter with a friend's mother and contemplates that he might be gay (*Ruido de fondo* 30). To contrast with Byrne, I would argue that the inclusion of the possibility of a gay identity is still noteworthy because LGBTQ+ subjectivities have still not significantly developed in Guatemalan literature.[70]

[70] A noteworthy exception is Payeras's novel *Días amarillos* [*Yellow Days*] (2014), which, aside from its necropolitical fixation on death and dead bodies from the very first paragraph, also situates a gay man and his lover within the volatile Guatemalan cityscape. The man becomes pregnant and the narrative voice

For his part, Christian Kroll-Bryce reads *Ruido de fondo* alongside Horacio Castellanos Moya's *Insensatez* [*Senselessness*] (2004), a literary reconstruction of a writer employed by the Catholic Church to work on the REMHI report. He analyzes these novels through the analytical lens of melancholy, pain, and trauma, with interventions from such thinkers are Benjamin, Caruth, and Freud. With these insights in might, he reads *Ruido de fondo* in the following way:

> carece de trama, pues la narración misma consiste más en viñetas inconexas que presentan de manera fragmenta una especie de recuento crítico de los hechos. El narrador de la novela, un sujeto netamente urbano, desempleado y pasando por la 'crisis de los 30,' es un sujeto sumamente cínico, abyecto y abúlico.
> [it has no plot, since the narrative itself consists more of disconnected vignettes that present a kind of fragmentary account of the facts. The narrator of the novel, a purely urban subject, unemployed and going through a midlife crisis, is an extremely cynical subject, abject, and apathetic]. (110)

I agree with Kroll-Bryce in that the novel presents seemingly disconnected episodes of Javier's life that serve to tell us how he interacts with and perceives his place in the social body of the city. He lives in the city and for the city but not without critiquing much of its innate characteristics and making references to his age as he shares memories of growing

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proceeds to consider different gender roles and refer to the man with he/she pronouns. A baby shower is held for the man, organized by a community of transgender drag queens in the Historic Center.

up in wartime Guatemala City and how this continues to impact his interaction with the city today. As Kroll-Bryce also points out, "[a] lo largo de la novela, el protagonista hace también referencia tanto a episodios violentos como a relaciones y amistades fracasadas e inconsecuentes que no llevaron absolutamente a nada más que al reconocimiento de la imposibilidad de comunicación y entendimiento" [throughout the novel, the protagonist also makes reference to both violent episodes and failed and inconsequential relationships and friendships that led to nothing more than the recognition of the impossibility of communication and understanding] (110). For me, this signals subjectivities impacted by the dehumanizing elements of the death-worlds in which they inhabit.

Kroll-Bryce also offers the following suggestion to close his reading of the novel:

> lo que propone *Ruido de fondo* es la necesidad de reconocer, desde el punto de vista urbano y ladino, que la historia reciente de Guatemala, por más abyecta que sea, no es simplemente 'ruido de fondo' y que es necesario reflexionar críticamente sobre ella para abrir así la posibilidad a nuevas formas de entender y relacionarnos con ese pasado incómodo.
> [What *Ruido de fondo* proposes is the need to recognize, from the urban and Ladino point of view, that the recent history of Guatemala, however abject it may be, is not simply 'background noise' and that it is necessary to reflect critically on it to open the possibility of new ways of understanding and relating to that uncomfortable past]. (111)

Indeed, I would add that for many Guatemalans today, the recent past simply is "background noise," especially in consideration of recent presidents, Otto Pérez Molina among them, who have been accused of human rights abuses themselves. Yet, the "background noise" to keep referencing the English translation of Payeras's title, manifests itself in surprising ways, I would argue, through AHPN documents, photographs of disappeared persons, and cultural responses thereto, as well as references to imminent death found throughout the peripheral network city's perZONAs, or social bodies. This is evident even in the cover of Payeras's novel, where even such everyday images as the woman on an aguardiente bottle and the outlines of people on a pedestrian crossing sign show how different actors embody and inhabit the cityscape (Figure 4.2, p. 226).

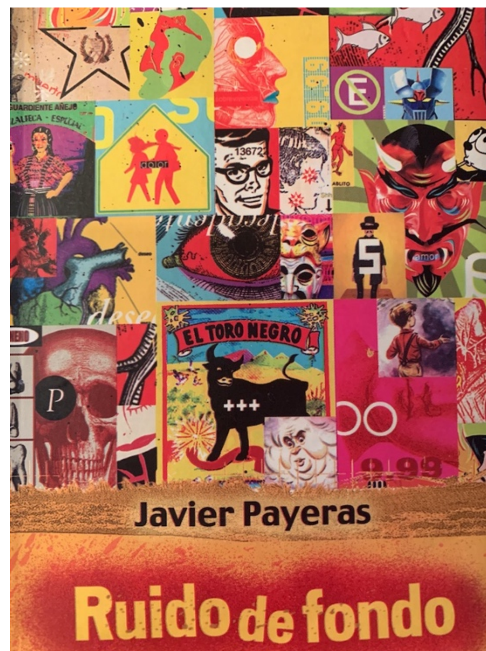

Figure 4.2: _Ruido de fondo_ (2006).

In my analysis of the novel, I focus on four chapters. I agree with Kroll-Bryce in that the novel's chapters seem like disjointed short stories but they are connected

through Javier's memories as he reconsiders how city life has evolved over the years. The beginning of the novel, in a chapter entitled "La política de la verdad" [The Politics of Truth] begins in a striking way: "[u]n rápido tour por el Centro Histórico: travestis, cocaína, niños de la calle, ladrones, violadores, hijos de violadores, putas, hijos de puta y policías—a veces todos ellos en la misma persona" [a quick tour through the Historic Center: transvestites, cocaine, street children, thieves, rapists, children of rapists, bitches, sons of bitches and police officers—sometimes all of them in the same person] (13). These people exist alongside other such everyday elements of the peripheral network city as cumbias emitting from within Chinese restaurants, yelling evangelical pastors, and taco stands. It is jarring that Javier situates such seemingly disparate inhabitants of the city; that a transvestite smoking cocaine could be a rapist born out of rape but also a police officer is an absurd proposition but one that nevertheless makes sense in Javier's conceptualization of his hometown. References to death are almost immediate: Javier tells us that he is suffering from "la crisis de los 30," [midlife crisis], which before took place at the age of fifty, but has somehow been lowered over the years due to the war. In Javier's view, thirty years old is already significantly old, especially for an alcoholic patriot such as himself (13). If thirty is already old or middle-aged, then the war's most potent aftereffects are that it has shortened life, even for people who have survived the worst of the conflicts. Death permeates life such that, if not violence, then alcoholism or even an encounter with an oddly juxtaposed police officer could take it away at any moment.

Javier continues: he detests the Guatemalan upper-class, which he sees as "la típica burguesía guatemalteca ignorante, vulgar, sin talento y sin criterio; sin nada más que sus

costumbres coloniales y provincianas" [the typical Guatemalan bourgeoisie—ignorant, vulgar, without talent and without criteria; with nothing more than their colonial and provincial customs] (15). It is as if life for them has already ended despite their financial prowess. The author-protagonist also notes that education in Guatemala is extremely corrupt, allowing him to register "en un colegio fantasma" [in a ghost school], implying that it is filled with dead people who manifest to the living, likening the school directors with lifeless people (16). Likewise, he speaks casually about how the Historic Center "hervía de violencia" [boiled with violence] (17), with classmates playing hooky to kill *breaks* (gang members) and carjack, not thinking twice of their actions. Life is undermined in every possible way as references to death permeate it even amongst the youngest members of society who terrorize rival gang members and people stopped at red lights with their ability to end life in a matter of seconds, such as in a carjacking at the hands of an army official's son (18).

In another reflection of the past tracing back to the early 1990s, Javier recalls a classmate, Elliot, who seems to be "mejor que yo en todas las cosas" [better than me at everything], demonstrated by the fact that the latter spends three hours at the gym daily and has frequent sexual encounters. Javier's hatred for Elliot increases when he finds out that his classmate regularly has Q1,000 ($130) in his wallet. The reason for Elliot's fortunes is simple: he was male prostitute who worked with high class middle-aged women, such as the wives of diplomats and army officials. As time went on and the narrative went back into the present, Javier encounters his former classmate again, this time "impecablemente vestido y acompañado de un chico rubio, con el pelo cortado muy a la moda y de

facciones marcadamente femeninas. Supe de lo que se trataba, pero no me incumbía" [impeccably dressed and accompanied by a blonde boy, with hair cut very fashionably and with markedly feminine features. I knew what was going on but it did not concern me] (48). Javier concludes his reflections on Elliot by saying that he encountered him again, more recently still, but without the same air of well-being, in the company of a much older man driving a BMW. Elliot died of AIDS, which was very "penoso" [painful] for Javier; although he detested his classmate at the time, his death still impacted him greatly. Elliot's former financial gains hardly meant anything because even that was not enough to save him in adulthood, suggesting that death is especially vicious to people who are most marginalized in society.

Two final episodes that I will examine here, "(V)ery (I)mportant (P)eople," and "Ciudad basurero" [Trash City], further show how death has the power to control anyone, no matter what their socioeconomic status. In ""(V)ery (I)mportant (P)eople," which the author has titled in English, the reader is immersed in the nightlife of the Zona Viva, the most upscale area of Zone 10, an area of the peripheral network city that is itself upscale. Well-dressed young people are out for a night of club-going, with many of them drunk as they pour from bars into the streets. Javier notes how one young man is denied entry to one of the clubs, not for his drunken state, but rather because of his athletic shoes that do not match the dress code for such an elite space. The young man retaliates by pulling up to the entrance of the club in a Toyota, blasting the radio to the delight of his drunken friends. Simultaneously, an exchange takes place in which a young man leaves the club with his girlfriend, closely followed by two security guards and a waiter. With the music

from the Toyota still playing full blast, the young man pulls a gun from inside his coat and throws bills on the ground in what seems to be a gesture of resignation to tip the disgruntled waiter. Once the waiter bends down to collect the bills, the young man with the gun fires three times, quickly disappearing into the night with his girlfriend and forcing all the other club-goers to rapidly disperse. The chapter ends with the following words: "[l]lega primero la ambulancia, luego el juez de paz a levantar el cadáver, los mirones regresan a la discoteca y la noche del viernes continua" [the ambulance arrives first, the justice of the peace to lift the corpse, the onlookers return to the nightclub, and the Friday night continues] (50). In this case, death has become such a normalized element of life that it does not cause any major disruptions. Aside from the people dispersing quickly after the shooting, the club is not abandoned for the evening and long-term panic does not ensue; it is as if death were so engrained in the cityscape that it hardly merited more than a brief, almost ritualistic reaction.

In "Ciudad basurero," the narrative voice of the author-protagonist describes his hometown thus: "La Ciudad de Guatemala es la Gran Puta, somos sus hijos; los hijos de la Gran Puta, ni más ni menos [...] El centro en su desnudez [...] La Sexta es una larga crónica, un enorme relato [...] La Zona 10 no tiene mierda, al menos en la calle. Allí se arruinan las calles, allí sí importa quién muere" [Guatemala City is the Great Whore, we are her children; the children of the Great Whore, neither more nor less [...] The center in its nakedness [...] The Sexta Avenida is a long chronicle, an enormous story [...] Zone 10 does not have shit, at least in the street. The streets are ruined there, there it does matter who dies] (52). Contrasting sharply with the preceding chapter on the Zone 10 nightclub,

this reflection suggests that zones throughout the city denote how important someone's life (and death) is and that someone's zone indicates how the public perceives life and death. This idea is further exemplified by the fact that

> [a]quí nadie vive en la misma Guatemala, cada quien tiene su país, su mundo. La gente del campo entre sus murallas; los empleados del banco que tienen que usar corbatas de poliéster y gafete; los evangélicos que cantan y cantan que Cristo está retrasado; los hombres de negocios que llenan los moteles el Día de la Secretaria; los poetas que lloran sobre su vómito. Esta ciudad es un enorme rombo enrojecido.
>
> [here nobody lives in the same Guatemala, everyone has their country, their world. The country people between their own walls; bank employees who must wear polyester ties and a badge; the evangelicals who sing and sing that Christ is late; businessmen who fill the motels on Secretary's Day; the poets who mourn over their vomit. This city is a huge red rhombus]. (52)

The "trash city," then, does not specifically relate to a garbage dump, but rather the state of the peripheral network city; everyone is clearly disjointed from one another by socioeconomic status and different roles they play in the capitalist social body. While the people from the countryside live within their own "walls," as if to reference their often-makeshift living situations, poets who "mourn over their vomit" could either be lamenting their literary failures or their urban surroundings. For everyone, though, the city is a huge red rhombus, which signals equal sides, some which are slanted, two with small angles and two with large ones. The residents or perZONAs of the city are bound

together by the death that predisposes life, while at the same time the incongruence of the social body is determined by the different characteristics of the zones and the subsequent ways death permeates life within them. Necropolitical structures, to use Levenson's words again, denote the state's "successful use of spectacular and reverberating necropolitics," to ensure people's coexistence with their own death. While this may seem to be a miserable existence, it is broken by Javier's resilience to the state structures that govern his life and his will to continue despite his mid-life crisis or memories of war.

4.5. The War Rages on in the Peripheral Network City

Guatemala City remains a systemically violent city with many of its warlike qualities. Taken together, the two texts examined in this chapter exemplify what Ana Patricia Rodríguez describes as postwar Central American literature that "shows signs of recent historical and discursive transformations" (197). Additionally, Rodríguez reminds us that much of the cultural production from this isthmus belongs to both Central American *and* Global South literary landscapes to create what she calls "a southern Central American imaginary," wherein individual countries constitute Central American subjectivities as well as a part of the larger South, which spans two-thirds of the earth's surface and has a population of 3.5 billion people. While "[m]any recent literary texts […] interrogate the effects of neoliberal politics and economies on the specific and diverse populations of the isthmus and offer critiques of the general South, including Central America" (197-8), it is also important to note, as Rodríguez does, that "all the countries of

Central America show the impact of similar economic, political, social, and cultural programs, which are implemented throughout the South" under neoliberal regimes (198). Certainly, aside from neoliberalism, systemic violence and necropolitics are also major factors in the construction of the southern Central American imaginary to which Rodríguez alludes, with "southern" understood here as a reference to violent policies and reforms found across the Global South. Following her reflections on the place of Central American literature in this broader landscape, we can concur that "the South might be understood as a location of cultures produced under the heavy strain of the expropriation and accumulation of capital in the northern regions of the world" (198). At the same time we acknowledge, as I have here in this chapter, that "heavy strains" also come from within the borders of countries in the South. The unequal distribution of wealth, while undoubtedly exacerbated by the influence of northern regions of the world, is also greatly tied together to the dominant discourses of death that continue to permeate Guatemalan society. The socioeconomic, violent, and necropolitical devastation that characterizes Guatemala today also falls into, as Rodríguez puts it, "the general condition of the South" (199).

Systemic violence and necropolitics dominate the postwar Guatemalan urban milieu and serve to further construct the peripheral network city, exacerbating the country's (and, indeed, the region's) identity as "a natural(ized) site of decomposition and underdevelopment" (Rodríguez 200). At the same time, they also point to the urgent need for regeneration within (re)construction of the cityscape, as the archive and the repertoire have shown us. While the underbelly of society is often grim and literature about it could

easily be characterized under the umbrella themes of depression, cynicism, resignation, and hopelessness, as other critics have done, it also serves as inspiration for citizens to rebuild their nation and reverse "the degradation of the South, as produced by northern agents" (200), to borrow from Rodríguez once more. Indeed, the Guatemalan peripheral network city is but one example of such urban models that belong to a wider social body cast across the Global South where citizens must constantly negotiate overwhelmingly violent daily struggles and their own efforts to confront, understand, and move past them, while in the process shifting the cartographies of the urban imaginary.

Conclusion

The Peripheral Network City in the New Millennium

In the first months of 2019, as I worked on the final stages of this dissertation, something astonishing happened in Guatemala: in a political climate reminiscent of the 2013 Ríos Montt trials and 2015 marches against Pérez Molina and Baldetti, and with the Central American exodus of asylum seekers at or beyond Tijuana, President Jimmy Morales cut ties between CICIG, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, and the United Nations. Whereas Morales cited that the CICIG has played a participatory role in illegal acts against the constitution and furthers the agenda of a capitalist state, the CICIG maintains that Morales himself violated the constitution and opened an investigation into his campaign financing from 2015. Protests ensued in the streets of Guatemala City. Anti-government sentiments were further exacerbated by the passing of Law 5377, which seeks to maintain the impunity of the military and perpetrators of crimes against humanity during the Guatemalan Civil War. In other words, Law 5377 represents a major reform to National Reconciliation and seeks to give amnesty to the perpetrators of state violence and the protests, which have been well-documented on social media with hashtags such as #impunidad, demonstrate the need for the military to be brought to justice.

The largest of these protests took place on 25 February 2019, which commemorates the National Day of Dignity of the victims of the internal armed conflicts. The date was doubly significant because it also happened to fall on the 20th anniversary of the CEH report (Abbot, n.p.). In the images of the protests that have surfaced from this date, I am

struck by how they incorporate all the major elements of the peripheral network city: the archive, the repertoire, necropolitics, and violence. An image posted on the Instagram page of the freelance photojournalist Cristina Chiquin (handle @cristinachiquin) exemplifies this: children of the disappeared, now with young children of their own, hold H.I.J.O.S. photographs near the presidential palace in Guatemala City. Another image shows Rigoberta Menchú in the same space holding a photograph of an exhumed body in one hand, a bouquet of flowers in the other. A final image shows two Maya women beneath rows of H.I.J.O.S. photos dangling from horizontal strings affixed to the pillars of the presidential palace. On Luis Echeverría's Instagram page (handle @_luis.echeverria), women march through the Historic Center with enlarged H.I.J.O.S. photographs attached to pieces of cardboard with string. The women hold the photographs up to obscure their faces, as if to take on the identities of the disappeared. The string suggests that the photographs may be eventually hung up to join the other H.I.J.O.S. photographs depicted in Chiquin's image of the palace.

In any event, these Instagram posts are significant in that they unite the principal foci of this dissertation through the archival photographic materials, embodied practice as displayed by the demonstrators' occupation of the Historic Center, necropolitics— in the sense that the death of the war victims is a clear depiction of both the state's sovereignty and the constant feeling of being in pain—and systemic violence as we reflect upon the socioeconomic properties that undergird these elements. The archive, repertoire, necropolitics, and violence interact with one another to shape Guatemala City, while at the same time institutional and artistic-cultural production of/in urban

Guatemala interface with these processes. As is now clear, the peripheral network city is still very much continuing to develop in Guatemalan society today.

This dissertation began as an exercise to bring into focus specific ways in which we can theorize and classify Guatemala City, while at the same time pushing past the boundaries of social geography to encompass Latin American Cultural Studies. In some of my earliest research as I tried to understand how to best conceptualize Guatemalan urban space, I relied heavily on the volume *Securing the City*, referenced throughout this work. In their introduction, Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit rightfully place emphasis on the difficulties of theorizing Guatemala City and categorizing it among broader discussions of cities in Latin America and the Global South. Certainly, neoliberalism continues to have an impact on the way Guatemala City is constructed and imagined. The three anthropologists affirm:

> Clusters of private condominiums cocooned by guns, dogs, and mercenaries now speckle Guatemala's highways, particularly between the capital and Antigua, one of Guatemala's storied tourist destinations. Fortified enclaves also segregate Guatemala City's more exclusive zones from the popular ones. [...] Once Guatemala City's seat of power and wealth, Zone 1 has now been abandoned by Guatemala's urban elite for peripheral zones largely built up over the past two decades, complete with fortified homes, upscale shopping malls, and private security forces. (15)

With emphasis on gated communities and peripheries, the scholars show how Guatemala City mirrors the Latin American megacities, notably in Brazil, where fortified enclaves

also transform urban space and culture in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Keeping in mind Gilbert's idea of a megacity first discussed in Chapter One, which has a population of more than 8 million in the city proper, the anthropologists make important distinctions between Guatemala City and megacities in subhegemonic Latin America:

> Despite similarities with the Brazilian case, Guatemala City is *not* a megacity. The capital's urban elite do not match in number or buying power those in São Paulo, Mexico City, or Mumbai. As Rodgers (2004:120) argues, *fortified enclaves* in mid-sized cities such as Managua or Guatemala City are not so much self-sufficient islands of refuge and privilege as they are *secure nodes in a network of protected spaces* through which the urban elite travel in their daily routines. (16, my emphasis)

Secure, privatized nodes, as well as insecure, poor nodes create networks of wealth (megacity) and poverty (megaslum) throughout Guatemala City, notably in the peripheries outside of the Historic Center in Zone 1, although the notion of the periphery can also denote Guatemala's status below the ranks of its "subhegemonic" Latin American neighbors such as Mexico, as Arias would say. In a final crucial observation, Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit recount how areas with limited or no security and limited resources are often in proximity to elite sanctuaries as the result of neoliberal responses to violence in Guatemala City, which "fuel the deterioration of living conditions for the urban poor and motivate against effective state responses" (16). Because "[m]uch of the city has simply fallen off the grid" (16), these asymmetrical realities are certainly not unique to the Guatemalan case but they have much to tell about how violence impacts the ways people

move through the capital. The slums of Guatemala City are just as networked as the elite enclaves as evidenced by the interactions of their inhabitants under neoliberalism, who tend to interact with people of the same socioeconomic classes.

Yet, as this study has shown, neoliberalism is not the only factor that impacts Guatemala City's real or imagined infrastructures. The article by anthropologist Dennis Rodgers, cited in the introduction to *Securing the City*, locates us in Managua, Nicaragua, which in addition to the notions of peripheries, nodes, and networks, allows us to continue pondering the extremities of Guatemala City and offer possibilities for defining it in the 21st century. At the very least, Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit tell us that Guatemala City is not, like its Brazilian counterparts, a Latin American megacity because of its smaller size, though they do not offer an alternative term to grapple with the extremities of the Guatemalan capital. In his observations of urban spaces in Managua, Rodgers acknowledges, in contrast to other cities in Latin America, the segregated enclaves of the elite largely "occur in relation to individual residences rather than whole neighborhoods" (120). The urban elites of Managua are unable to completely retreat from public space, or "disembed," to borrow sociologist Anthony Giddens's term, as they can do in Latin American megacities. The concentrations of individually fortified dwellings dotted throughout Managua mean that wealthy Nicaraguan urbanites must leave their enclosed, often heavily-protected homes to work and shop. Because segregation in Managua, like in Guatemala City, is spread out across the city, Rodgers argues that the elite population of the city lives in a "fortified network," that is, an area

> separate from the rest of the city and allows those within it to remain isolated from the high levels of urban crime and insecurity. At the same time, it is the interconnection of these privately protected spaces that constitutes them as a viable 'system' and it can be contended that the most critical element that has permitted the emergence of this 'fortified network' has been the development of a strategic set of well-maintained, well-lit, and fast-moving roads in Managua during the past half-decade. (120)

Unlike other Latin American megacities, Managua's "fortified network that extends across the face of the metropolis" (123) means that the new spatial order in the Nicaraguan capital does not equate to insular withdrawal from urban violence for the elite population. It is rather a constant negotiation for wealthier Nicaraguans who move in and out of their fortified networks, which offers temporary disconnection from the general fabric of the impoverished city.

Therefore, to continue the conversation set forth by the four scholars highlighted here, it is necessary to compensate for the lack of a theoretical terminology that encapsulates Guatemala City and the cultural production in and about Guatemala City. If we recall some pre-determined theoretical categories for other Global South cities, they all seem to be insufficient. Despite the emphasis on the periphery (i.e., outer limits or edges) of Guatemala City noted by Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit, and "the objective layout of oddly shaped and unevenly developed districts" (3) that Kruger emphasizes, Guatemala City is not an edgy city in the South African sense of the term because Kruger's notion of edginess is theorized in the post-apartheid environment. Violence in Johannesburg, like

the systematic separation of black and white South Africans, is also segregated, whereas in Guatemala City it permeates all levels of society on more profound levels, as shown in comparative statistics.[71] Neither is it a new city in the Asian sense of the term because, despite the impact of globalization and neoliberalism, "[i]nfrastructure deteriorates, the city has deindustrialized, and crime is everywhere, every day" (Levenson 25). Guatemala City could be considered a porous city or a specular city like Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Aires, but together, these terms fail to consider everyday violence and how people are affected by the violence. Even though Guatemala City operates under the same logic as the Latin American megacities of the subhegemonic nations, Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit tell us it is not a megacity because of its size under the population of 8 million. As Levenson postulates, "[i]t is easy to envision Guatemala City as a complete disaster, another rapidly decaying slum on the 'planet of slums'" ("Living Guatemala City" 25). Here, she references the work of urban theorist Mike Davis who, in *Planet of Slums* (2006), reflects upon the neoliberal structuring of wealth and poverty in the Global South city.

As previously noted, Davis assesses the systematic divisions of cities in the Global South as sites of analysis based on human activity over time. In his South-South horizontal approach to cities, Davis compensates for the fact that not all Global South cities are megacities due to their varying sizes. He offers a plethora of terms such as "urban-industrial megalopolises," "overurbanization," "city-ized towns," or "peri-urban

[71] See Nick Van Mead and Jo Blason's article in *The Guardian*, "The 10 world cities with the highest murder rates- in pictures" (2014).

areas," that is, rural areas that have rapidly urbanized in the last two decades (4, 5, 7, 10). A unifying characteristic of many Global South cities, however, despite their heterogeneous categorizations, is the overabundance of slums. As Davis proclaims:

> [c]ities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay. (19)

The large, haphazardly constructed, and overpopulated sites of pollution and excrement that Davis describes here constitute megaslums, which often intersect with more modern characteristics of the megacity all over the Global South and "arise when shantytowns and squatter communities merge in continuous belts of informal housing and poverty, usually on the urban periphery (26).[72] Davis also reminds us, in consideration of Rio de Janeiro's favelas and similar slums throughout the world that "the periphery is a highly-relative, time-specific term: today's urban edge, abutting fields, forest, or desert, may tomorrow become part of a dense metropolitan core" (37). This is the case in such seemingly

[72] Like J.T. Way, Levenson warns against categorizing Guatemala as an underdeveloped country. She uses the term "dumpy modernity" to discuss the contradictory ways that Guatemala has modernized in the 21st century. She explains: "Instead of cataloging Guatemala as a 'not yet' or developing country, we need to recognize it as a modern country, and its modernity is just what it is. The juxtaposition of old and new, the so-called traditional with the latest now 'modern,' the computers in homes without running water, the *huipil-clad* Maya girl who sells used clothes from the United States (that might have been originally *hecho en Guatemala*) in front of a shelter for street children sponsored by a Catholic center located in New York City; the sickly shoe-shine boy with fashionable sunglasses; the rip-off fashion jeans; and the Che T-Shirts that fill the street markets to the fascination of foreigners and nationals alike—all speak not only of poverty and creativity but also of a historically specific modern condition" (11-12, emphasis in the original).

disparate Global South megacities as Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, or Mumbai (37). Our perception of the periphery and expansion of the megaslum, in addition to the "fortified networks" of wealth in Global South cities means that, in contrast to Offit, O'Neill, and Thomas in the context of Guatemala City or Rodgers in nearby Managua, we must offer a term that reckons with poverty *as well as* wealth, the latter of which being the sole focus of the four anthropologists working on urban Central America. To reiterate, the ultramodern enclaves of the elite and impoverished slums are often adjacent in Guatemala City, an easily observable characteristic from airplanes, traffic-congested highways, and Google Maps. Hence, I move away from a look that strictly concentrates on either the fortified enclaves of elite citizens or megaslums, as previous Global South scholarship tends to favor one or the other.

To account for Guatemala City's heterogeneous layout as the result of uneven development of both poverty and wealth, and in consideration of the cultural production under examination in this dissertation, I offer the trope of the *peripheral network city*—a mid-sized, partitioned urban sprawl, shaped by the infrastructures of state power and citizen involvement, that possesses qualities of both the megacity and the megaslum—as a strategy to read the cultures of urban space in postwar Guatemala.[73] I do not wish to suggest that the term is unique to Guatemala and its cultural production, as I believe it describes other cities of the Global South, including some others nearby such as San

[73] In the case of Guatemala City, the urban sprawl is partitioned both culturally (through neoliberal restructuring of space and redistribution of populations in gated communities and urban renewal projects for elite populations) and geographically (through the volcanoes that separate the city from other parts of Guatemala and the forested ravines that act as natural barriers between some zones).

Salvador in El Salvador, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula in Honduras, and those further afield in other parts of Latin America like Guayaquil, Ecuador or, to a lesser extent, post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, Haiti.[74] I would argue that coastal African cities such as Cotonou, Benin and Lomé, Togo, and those inland such as Bamako, Mali and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, could also fit this category.

However, the categorization and conceptualization of the peripheral network city, I argue, are inherently Guatemalan. This argument rests in part on the city's zone layout, an idiosyncrasy that distinguishes Guatemala City from other peripheral network cities. The peripheral network city, by its definition, differentiates my approach from that of Guatemalanist scholars Thomas, O'Neill, and Offit, as well as the work on Nicaragua by Rodgers, who arguably have produced the most productive theorizations of Central American urban space to date. References to the peripheral network city are read in cultural production and found throughout archives, embodied practice, and in the ways people interact with one another (including how the state either interacts with or neglects its citizens). As a result, the peripheral network city is a condensed way to talk about the complex links between the megacity and the megaslum in Guatemala as well as subsequent theories of the archive, repertoire, necropolitics, and violence that allow us to

[74] In the case of San Pedro Sula, street art is a powerful mechanism of both the archive and the repertoire, as demonstrated by the YouTube video "Street Art to Save a Generation," which depicts how art transmits the feelings experienced by today's youth, allowing them to think collectively (*YouTube* 2015). For its part, Port-au-Prince is not as nearly as modernized as the other peripheral network cities of Latin America. However, the affluence of areas such as Pétionville displays, if not networks, at the very least icons of the megacity. This can be discerned through the neoliberal construction of the Marriott and other chain hotels that still sit amongst rubble nearly a decade after the 2010 earthquake, a glaring example of disaster capitalism, which took advantage of the shattered Haitian economy.

read Guatemala City not exclusively in the city space, as Offit, O'Neill, and Thomas have done, but also through cultural production.

Because I contend that the AHPN is the nucleus of the peripheral network city, it was necessary to start with the archive to further conceptualize postwar Guatemala City. Some of the most influential critics to speak of archives include Antoinette Burton, Ann Laura Stoler, Jacques Derrida, and Diana Taylor, just to name a few. In particular, a scholar whose work is key to understanding the centrality of the role of the state in the archive is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who adeptly shows us how the terminology—the archive—traces its roots to Greek philosophical thought. In a now well-known paper delivered at a conference on memory in London in 1994, Derrida calls attention to the term *Arkhe*, originating in Greek, which designates a place where things begin and power originates, already offering allusions to the seat of state power, the capital city. In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), Derrida further explains that to understand the archive, we must also focus on the origin of the word and its inherent applications. As in his London talk, he considers the Arkhe, which, he contends "coordinate[s] two principles in one [...] there where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological—but also the principle according to law" (9). In other words, in unison with the idea of commencement is the idea of power. In deducing what "the beginning of power," could mean for the archive, it is necessary to clarify that the English word "archive" derives from the Greek "*arkhe*," or the beginning, and *arkheion*, which directly refers "the residence of superior magistrates," or the dwelling of the Archon, "*where files are stored and controlled by state officials*" (9, my emphasis).

Derrida's emphasis on state power in relation to the archives immediately allows us to discern a direct relationship between archives (both the physical documents and the institutionalized areas where they are housed) and the location of the "residence of superior magistrates," in a country, which is the headquarters of state power: the capital city. In further consideration of the origins of state power and sites of practice, I argue that the archon or state magistrates in the Guatemalan context not only perpetuated a clear majority of war crimes with the economic support of the United States but also had (at least initially) complete control over the state police archives. By default, the headquarters of state power also spearheaded the beginning of the postwar era. In the specific case of the AHPN as the epicenter of thought in the peripheral network city, we observe a site of documenting information as well as a clandestine prison and torture chamber. It is in this sense that:

> the archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence. (Derrida 9-10)

Because the archons/document guardians/national police officers of the AHPN "have the power to interpret the archives," and therefore the documents "in effect state the law," we can also understand archives in the Guatemalan sense as those documents which divert

our attention to/from the origins of state power in Guatemala City *and* how this power has been maintained and organized over time, with the Guatemalan capital at the forefront of the archon's control over archival documents. Another key point of Derridian thought refers to the physical location or "domiciliation" of archives, that is, "the place where archives 'take place.' The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret" (10). In the Guatemalan case, the interstices between public and private have been policed by state agents who sometimes provide the false promise of revealing "the whole truth" about what has happened during times of insurgency but only insofar as the state is portrayed in such a way that it no longer misuses its power.

While it is true that the institutionalization of archival documents can help preserve them and make them available to larger audiences after careful mediation, Derrida is correct to point out that this maneuver does not necessarily correlate with—what I perceive to be—an overly naïve secret/nonsecret or truth/lies dichotomy, ideas that are overshadowed by the controllers of state power, the archons, who divert our attention away from control over the archives (or lack thereof in the Guatemalan case).[75] Derrida's accentuation of the origins, institutionalization, organization, and consignation of archives helps us understand how "the archives take place at the *place of originary and structural breakdown of said memory*. There is no archive without a place of consignation,

[75] Weld rightfully states that "important documents in Guatemala have a history of being treated as trash" (51), which is a form of state repression and continued control over the archives.

without a technique of repetition, and without certain exteriority. No archive *without outside*" (14, my emphasis). In Guatemala, the "originary and structural breakdown of said memory" took place at the AHPN, where 80 million documents were left to decay and succumb to the urban ecologies of moss, mildew, and bats that signaled a total lack of care on the part of the state.[76] This alone constitutes the beginning of power in the way Derrida understands it. The fact that there is "no archive without outside," means that the documents also rely on the people who inhabit them: the Guatemalan people who in one way or the other were archived during the war. Hence, the "outside" also relates to that which counters state-centric power. The "fever" aspect of Derrida's title references both the accounts of evil and structural power of the archives and the desire faced by some scholars when they exercise what historian Carolyn Steedman calls "protective custody" over the archives to fetishize their contents (3). The ensuing "disorder" results from the breakdown of the power associated with the archive, which again in the Guatemalan case, is displayed through the complete neglect of the AHPN from the part of the state, itself a way to wield power over citizens whose memories have been archived, therefore justifying the centrality of the archives in the peripheral network city.

On a similar note, historian Antoinette Burton, in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction, and the Writing of History* (2005) recalls the passion for origins and genealogies to which Derrida alludes and interprets archives as *sites of knowledge production* (2, my emphasis). Burton defines the archive as that which "comes into being *in and as history as a result of*

[76] For a further look at the urban ecologies that took control of the AHPN before its discovery, see Bentley 2017.

specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history" (6, my emphasis). The knowledge production of the archives clearly represents what Burton would see as the "outside," since this requires the rigorous participation of citizens outside the hierarchies of state power, as we see in the AHPN where city residents (professors, their students, human rights workers, and volunteers) seek to reclaim their right to power, which, aside from the ownership of archival documents, also denotes renewed dominance over the capital city as the center of state power. Without losing sight of this notion, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler, in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2009) declares that we should see archives "less as stories of colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories, as documents with itineraries of their own" (1). Avoiding a more traditional historiographic approach, which sometimes employs the *archives-as-things* paradigm, Stoler focuses on archives-as-process. Writing on colonial Indonesia, Stoler asserts that archives, "are *condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety* rather than [...] skewed and biased sources" (20).

She goes on to say, "these colonial archives [from the Netherlands Indies] were both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves" (20, my emphasis). Stoler's archives-as-process method looks beyond documents and documentations to understand the ways in which the archival process manifests itself beyond the modern confines of institutionalized spaces. The archives-as-process paradigm offers a possibility to see the "outside" that Derrida describes, once again, as that which relies on the mediation of citizens, allowing us to

transpose Stoler's work on colonial Indonesia to contemporary Guatemala or elsewhere in the Global South. Just as archives "are condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety," so, too, is the peripheral network city, where power relations are disputed through citizen's use of the archival site and its documents, as well as through cultural responses to urban violence in postwar Guatemala and the AHPN more specifically.

While the interventions of Derrida, Burton, and Stoler are indispensable for assessing the importance of the archive in the peripheral network city, it was necessary to include Latin American viewpoints to shift our focus to that region. In her landmark text, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), Taylor, as a scholar of Performance Studies, offers a new dichotomy to contrast with the secret/nonsecret and truth/lies models. Just as Derrida reminds us, Taylor restates how the meaning of "archive" traces its roots to Ancient Greek etymology, with the *arkhe* referring to a public building where things associated with the government are housed to sustain power. Taylor makes it clear that archives have historically been manipulated for political purposes and that archives do not resist change, noted by the potential disappearance of items within the archive such as DNA evidence or photographs, resonating with the manipulation to which Stoler also references.[77] In her article, entitled "Save As… Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies" (2010), Taylor concretely defines the archive as "simultaneously *an authorized place* (the physical or

[77] Stoler states, "[t]here are several myths attending the archive. One is that it is unmediated, that objects located there might mean something outside the framing of the archival impetus itself. What makes an object archival is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis. Another myth is that the archive resists change, corruptibility, and political manipulation. Individual things—books, DNA evidence, photo ids—might mysteriously appear in or disappear from the archive" (19).

digital site housing collections), a thing/object (or collection of things—the historical records and unique or representative objects marked for inclusion), *and a practice* (the logic of selection, organization, access, and preservation over time that deems certain objects 'archivable')" (4, my emphasis).

Furthermore, to contrast the systematic and symbolic confines of the archive, Taylor calls attention to her notion of what Derrida would call the "outside," that is, the repertoire or embodied practice, which "enacts embodied memory performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (20). Etymologically, the repertoire zeroes in on inventories and treasuries, allowing for renewed agency and requiring the presence of people (20). In a manner of comparison, "as opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning" (20). For Taylor, the "outside" deals with not only the participation of citizens but also their expressive behavior (performances), which, like archives, transmit knowledges and can counter state power, as we have seen in the H.I.J.O.S. photographs. The repertoire consolidates identities in society and functions as a series of "vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity" (2). In this sense, citizens enact memory to regain control over their centers of state power, allowing them to exist in a web of knowledge production among other urban inhabitants of the peripheral network city.

Taylor makes a striking connection between the archive and the repertoire in her discussion of both everyday and major world events. She reveals how the archival and the

embodied overlap to construct each other because "innumerable practices in the most literate societies require both an archival and an embodied dimension" (21). That is, an event such as a wedding requires both the signed marriage license and the ring (archive) and the performed utterance of "I do," (repertoire), but can end up back in the archive if the event is chronicled in a scrapbook. Likewise, when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he planted the U.S. flag (repertoire with a piece of archival material simultaneously), demonstrating how "materials from the archive shape embodied practice in innumerable ways, yet never totally dictate embodiment" (21). "Embodied practice," as Taylor maintains, "along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing," especially when we consider how "not everyone comes to 'culture' or modernity through writing" (3, xviii). As an inventory/treasury, the repertoire fits into this definition.

Taylor's assertions on the reciprocal interplays between the archive and the repertoire are important for my study of these phenomena in the cityscapes of postwar Guatemala. First, her emphasis on embodied practice is an important precursor to the relationship between the state and its citizens. The strength of *The Archive and the Repertoire* is that Taylor examines the archive and the repertoire as simultaneous developments. As a mechanism for sustaining state power, the archive, in relation to the repertoire, is part of a whole while the repertoire (H.I.J.O.S. photographs) accomplishes, from the position of mainstream citizens, what the archive (AHPN) cannot do on its own to reclaim possession of, in the context of my study, the peripheral network city. In other words, embodied practice seems to complete the process of information transmission in

ways that extend far beyond political power of the archons who live in the capital city to encompass agency of individuals within the state, who are found throughout the nodes of the peripheral network city and not solely in those parts of it that resemble the subhegemonic megacity or state power.

With this theoretical roadmap and contextualization in mind, as well as the archive's central role in the peripheral network city, I draw on the observations of Derrida, Burton, Stoler, and Taylor to define archives thus: *archives are sites and practices of systematization and administration that generate epistemological violence, existing in/as history as the result of cultural, political, and socioeconomic forms of state power*. I derive the "sites and practices of systematization and administration," from Taylor, who discusses archives as authorized places and the practice of access and preservation over time. The fact that the archive exists "in/as history" in cultural, political, and socioeconomic terms, is rooted in the thought of Burton, which sees archives as historical documents and producers of history, whereas the "epistemological anxiety" originates from Stoler, who seeks to understand how archives serve as sounding boards for knowledge production. Derrida is felt throughout this definition but especially at the end where I mention state power, a direct reference to control over urban citizens in the capital city. I argue that this concluding definition I provide allows us to understand both state power and the repertoire in postwar Guatemala by showing how the two relate to one another and continue to be developed across the systemically violent cityscape.

The city, and above all the capital city (and even more specifically the peripheral network city), like the archive, is governed under a charter mandated by the state and is

populated by people who carry out performative acts in relation to culture and violence in their everyday lives, spatial relationships, and cultural production. Public performance spectacles across many Latin American cities—political graffiti in La Paz, Bolivia during the 2003 gas war, children juggling at red lights for tips in Quito, Ecuador, and the crosswalk pantomime artists of mayor Antanas Mockus's Bogotá, Colombia in the mid 1990s, to name a few examples—undoubtedly link urban spaces with their citizens to showcase repertoires of embodied practices and knowledges, often accompanied by archival information such as picket signs with political messages, photos of forcibly disappeared relatives, or personal testimonials, to generate a new sense of urban identity and, as a result, transform memory into a cultural practice. While these efforts are undoubtedly laudatory, they still face the enormous obstacle of continued violence across the social body.

For better or for worse, situated very specifically in the United States during our own increasingly volatile political climate, as a contemporary Latin Americanist scholar who was born in Guatemala and raised as an adopted U.S. American, I am afforded a unique perspective on Guatemala that transcends the Global North and South. My objectives for this dissertation were to think about Guatemala City and its cultural production as well as the place of Guatemala within the field of Latin American Cultural Studies. Thus, this dissertation also reflects my efforts to understand both my country of origin and my place within it (and outside of it). I have attempted to explore how urban space is reshaped through the site of an archive, photographs and the different ways people use them to tell their truths, and recent literature that further expounds upon how

people interact with and embody the city they inhabit. Certainly, there is much that is unique to Guatemala. At the same time, elements of its culture—state-sanctioned violence, citizen responses to violence, and these reflections in the urban public sphere in the aftermath of violence—reach beyond its geopolitical borders. As Professor Douglas Noverr realized from the beginning of my research, I was not writing *about* the subject; rather, I was *writing* the subject by challenging the mainstream rejections of Guatemala and its own place within Latin American Cultural Studies, the U.S. academy, and our world more generally. In the process, I hope to have shown in this dissertation how to think about Guatemala in a way that helps us reconsider urban space and cultural production in Latin American and Global perspectives.

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