

ABSTRACT

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CONTEMPORARY CHRONICLES OF
VIOLENCE IN THE AMERICAS

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This dissertation analyzes the works of contemporary artists from the Americas who produce representations of urban violence through multi-media chronicles. The chroniclers studied are the Chilean Pedro Lemebel, the Brazilians Paulo Lins, Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, and the U.S. Latinos Joseph Rodríguez, Rubén Martínez, and Luis Rodríguez. The texts produced by these artists not only represent and explain contemporary *geographies of violence* but also become *geographies of violence* that audiences need to learn to inhabit and traverse. This dissertation addresses how the chronicle, in particular, articulates violence, identifies the advantages of using this genre to represent urban violence, considers how existing *geographies of violence* are distributed within the city and discusses how relevant the notion of space is to both their material development and manifestation and their symbolic presence through the chronicle.

The comparative textual analysis of the selected chronicles demonstrates how violence is understood and represented by contemporary artists with different backgrounds and exposes the differences and similarities of their representations. Reading these chronicles comparatively enables the consideration of a variety of different media through which violence is expressed in order to determine how the choices made by the artists affect the reception of their works. Such analysis allows an in-depth study of what these artists do with the genre of the chronicle: first, how having chosen the chronicle affects their particular renditions of violence; second, how the chronicle as a genre is affected by the specific content of urban violence; and, ultimately, how the chronicle is redefined by specific aesthetic manipulations.

Finally, because each of the chronicles selected for this study engages in translation practices, either as translators of their own work or as translators of other artists' work, this dissertation considers how their representations of urban violence are affected when they "travel" across a variety of media— that is, not only how the choice of media shapes these artists' representation of urban violence and their manipulation of the chronicle but also how their translation or transference from one medium to another impacts on their original representation of violence.

GEOGRAPHIES OF VIOLENCE:
CONTEMPORARY CHRONICLES OF VIOLENCE IN THE AMERICAS

By

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Dedication

To my parents, Cristina Trivisonno and Roberto Beroiz. Mom, you have sparked my passion for learning and teaching through your own performance as an educator and your unconditional generosity. Dad, your professional dedication and integrity have been and will always be my model to follow. Both of you have taught me to be enthusiastic and responsible about my choices and actions, to do what I love, and to love what I do.

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Geographies of Violence: Contemporary Chronicles of Violence in the Americas

Introduction

Today [...] it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world. Edward Soja

A photograph of a young man teaching his baby girl to hold a gun in the living room of their home. A movie scene of a *favela* gang member ordering a child to kill another child. A narrative of a group of school boys beating their homosexual classmate at recess. A newspaper article about deadly warfare between drug-dealing gangs. The image of a bloody victim lying on the pavement of a dark neighborhood corner after a drive-by shooting. The detailed description of a rape carried out with a tree branch. It might be only at this last episode that readers become aware of the fact that they are in the presence of violence.

Contemporary citizens have become so accustomed to everyday representations of violence that, in many cases, they watch them without reaction or as entertainment. This is partly the consequence of an over-saturation that has resulted from the media – newspapers, TV shows, newscasts, films, literature, music and radio programs— constantly “bombarding” audiences with information and imagery about violent events.

Urban subjects live immersed and, at times, unconsciously participate in and are exposed to an all-encompassing “culture of violence.”¹ Violence is a phenomenon that “travels” across spaces, in both physical and discursive forms, and affects all members and institutions of society in multiple ways. Because violence has permeated and become predominant in both the symbolic and the physical realms, every urban subject is turned into a potential “victim.” However, some citizens are never victims of violence in a literal sense. Instead, the most privileged experience and understand violence merely through its multiple representations. To many, violence comes already processed and deconstructed by the media. Therefore, it is crucial to address the conjunction between violence and representation and the possible effects of this conjunction.

This study analyzes the works of contemporary artists who produce representations of urban violence through multi-media chronicles. Because the chronicle stands at the intersection of journalism and fiction, history and anthropology, testimony and reportage, and, comments on events as they are happening, it becomes a suitable genre for the discussion and representation of contemporary violence as it travels across the various material and symbolic spaces of the city. The chronicle’s hybridity and immediacy, which derive from the chronicler’s mobility around the city, transform it into an ever-changing and most adequate means for discussing contemporary forms of urban violence and their impact on different sectors of the metropolis.

The chroniclers studied in this dissertation are the Chilean Pedro Lemebel, the Brazilians Paulo Lins, Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, and the U.S. Latinos Joseph Rodríguez, Rubén Martínez, and Luis Rodríguez. The narratives produced by these artists not only represent and explain contemporary *geographies of violence* but also become *geographies of violence* that readers, viewers, or listeners need to learn to inhabit and traverse. Because this study concentrates on the analysis of urban *chronicles of violence*, it addresses how the chronicle in particular articulates violence and identifies the advantages of using this genre to represent urban violence. In addition, because this dissertation focuses on representations of *urban violence*, it considers how existing *geographies of violence* are distributed within the city and how relevant the notion of space is to both their material development and manifestation and their symbolic presence through the chronicle.

The comparative textual analysis of these artists demonstrates how violence is understood and represented by contemporary artists with very different backgrounds and exposes the differences and similarities of their representations. On the one hand, reading these chroniclers comparatively enables the consideration of a variety of different media through which violence is expressed in order to determine how the choices made by the artists affect the reception of their works. In this specific case, such analysis allows an in-depth study of what these artists do with the genre of the chronicle: first, how having chosen the chronicle affects their particular renditions of violence; second, how the chronicle as a genre is affected by the specific content of urban violence; and, finally, how the chronicle is redefined by specific aesthetic manipulations.

On the other hand, my reading of these contemporary chroniclers of the Americas addresses questions of translation. Regarding content, how translatable is the term *geographies of violence* when there is a shift of location: does the term mean the same in the *favela*, in the *barrio*, and in the streets of Santiago?; does it mean the same among *favelados*, Latino gangs, and the Chilean middle and upper classes? This last question is particularly complex and includes other issues such as how conscious each of these groups is of the facts that they live and participate in a *geography of violence* and that, either directly or indirectly, they engage, both materially or symbolically, in the production of such violence.

Regarding form, this dissertation considers how the representations of the *geographies of violence* rendered by these chroniclers are affected when they “travel” across a variety of media— that is, not only how the choice of media affects these artists’ representation of urban violence and their manipulation of the chronicle but also how their translation from one medium to another affects their original representation of violence. In a sense, each of the chroniclers selected for this study engages in translation practices, either as translators of their own work or as translators of other artists’ work.

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter, “Chronicle Writing in the Americas,” explores the history of the chronicle as it developed in the Americas since the times of its so-called discovery. This chapter delineates the connections between writing and violence within the changing contexts of conquest, representation and exploitation. Intricate connections between violence, movement, and representation have characterized the history of the Americas, best described as

an assemblage of diverse *geographies of violence*. Of particular interest to this first chapter are the roles that the chronicle played in the justification of the violence executed by the colonizers. Not only did the chronicle justify violence through the creation of hierarchies and the “othering” of the natives, but it also became a space to produce epistemic violence by speaking *for* those being colonized, by “owning” them discursively—that is, by determining how to represent them.

This first chapter also defines the chronicle against the *testimonio*, another genre that particularly explores the intersections between violence and representation and with which the chronicle shares a number of characteristics. It is imperative, however, to determine the differences between both genres because, even though they are both literary formations that developed in America as a consequence of and a response to violent practices during the colonization of “the foreign,” each uniquely represents that violence.

The chapters that follow provide analyses of each of the contemporary chroniclers chosen. The second chapter, “*Cidade de Deus: Godless Experiences in a Hellish Geography*,” studies Lins’ *Cidade de Deus (City of God)* (2002), Meirelles and Lund’s film version also entitled *Cidade de Deus*, and the television production *Cidade dos Homens*, a series of nine episodes produced by these three artists in collaboration with a team of directors and script writers that aired in Brazil in 2003-2004. All these artistic renditions of life in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro demonstrate how the city generates spaces where violent practices can develop unchecked and where, consequently, violence becomes the main means of experiencing reality. Each

of these artists' depictions of a violent culture that has developed as a consequence of economic deprivation and political indifference is accurate, critical, and challenging.

The third chapter, "Images that Say, Words that Show: Chronicles of Gang Violence in East L.A.," focuses on Joseph Rodríguez's photo-narrative *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* (1998) and Rubén Martínez's chronicle collection *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City and Beyond* (1992). These two artists chronicle both violent practices among Latino gangs in East L.A. and the tragic consequences of those practices. However, the narratives of both Martínez and Rodríguez do not limit themselves to merely representing instances of violence among Latino gangs. In addition, their work seeks to locate that violence by exposing the cultural and social violence of a discriminatory system that marginalizes and stigmatizes the foreigner or outsider. Thus, these chronicles stop at the subjects, both perpetrators and victims of daily violence, to uncover their humanity and dreams, their frustrations and hopes.

Chapter four, "'Scarred' Realities, Hidden 'Pearls': Pedro Lemebel's Chronicles of Urban Anger," analyzes Lemebel's collections of written and radio chronicles. The fact that Lemebel has become a central figure in Santiago's cultural life is indeed relevant in order to fully understand the impact of his work. Ironic and humane, resentful and unforgiving, Lemebel's chronicles critique the hypocritical behavior of middle and upper classes, the dangers of forgetting the crimes of a recent military dictatorship, and the social violence practiced by and inflicted upon those who have been marginalized by the neo-liberal system in place.

Finally, chapter five, “Conclusions: *Morphologies of Fear, Chronicles of Violence*,” engages the previous chapters in dialogue in order to bring together, in a concise manner, an overview of how these multi-media narratives intersect and diverge. Reviewing how these chroniclers can be read comparatively provides new insight into how their choice to represent violence in specific ways and through alternative media has affected their renderings, their work’s reception, and its impact.

There are six fundamental reasons why my dissertation concentrates on this particular group of chroniclers. First, each of these artists produces their chronicles about urban violence from within very specific urban locations in the Americas— Santiago de Chile, Rio de Janeiro, and Los Angeles respectively— and, of course, in specific locations within those cities. Thus, the comparative analysis of their work provides further insight into the connections between geographical location, political and cultural policies, and urban violence.

Second, all these chroniclers represent violence from “the other side,” from the perspective of the cities’ marginal and underrepresented sectors—in terms of both material space and population. These artists’ work both challenges and disrupts the traditionally accepted association marginal-victimizer in different ways. In each of these artists’ texts the division between victims and victimizers becomes blurred. While some of these chroniclers project how those who inflict violence are also its victims, others expose the hypocrisy of a system that is violent at its core and manipulates violence for the benefit of a few. These narratives show that violence is not only appropriated and implemented by gangs and criminals but also by governments, the media, and the upper and middle classes.

Third, all of these artists work in the production of multi-media chronicles. Lemebel's collections are compilations of the chronicles written for his radio program *Cancionero*, aired on *Radio Tierra*, a feminist station in Santiago, Chile. The Brazilian writer Lins has not only cooperated with the production of Meirelles and Lund's film version of his book but also participated with them, and others, in the writing and direction of *Cidade dos Homens*. Martínez and J. Rodríguez worked together in the production of their two respective collections – *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* and *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City and Beyond*—that combine graphic with written chronicles.

Fourth, because of their particular national, political, economic and social locations, each of these chroniclers represents violence from a very different perspective. As an open homosexual and a central figure in Chilean culture today, Lemebel writes chronicles that provide audiences with an in-depth understanding of gay life as well as with a blunt critique of middle and upper class practices in Chile. Lins, who grew up in poverty in the *favelas*, uses his outsider resources to represent the experience and knowledge of the insider. Finally, Martínez and Rodríguez articulate the voice of both first generation U.S. Latinos and recent immigrants, particularly those living in the *barrios* of East Los Angeles.²

Fifth, with the exception of Lund, all of the artists to be discussed are male and the majority of the chronicles analyzed are rendered through a male gaze. In addition, most of these narratives center on violence perpetrated by and against males. In fact, in many of these chronicles the masculine is determined by and developed through violent confrontation and behavior. Even Lemebel, who utilizes his chronicles to both

challenge standard definitions of manhood and redefine the masculine, shows the inevitable associations between masculinity, as traditionally understood, and the execution of violence in urban spaces. In the larger sense, my dissertation considers the chronicles as gendering forms and studies the effects of “gendering” on the narratives themselves. Lund’s participation in the whole production of *Cidade de Deus* will also be addressed in order to determine the extent to which gender affected the final outcome of this production.

Finally, each of these artists has chosen a marked postmodern aesthetic to render their representations. The work of each one appears as a compilation of separate vignettes that are episodic and extremely fragmentary. Moreover, the texts are also very hybrid in nature. Not only do these writers’ chronicles travel from one medium to another but they also emerge from a combination of a variety of media. Thus, as the analysis of these chronicles will show, some written narratives have a visual nature to them, some oral narratives involve reading and music, and some graphic narratives rely heavily on captions and text. To conclude, although each of the chronicles are part of collections, it is also necessary to “read” the separate narratives in conversation with each other because once understood together the chronicles gain new, sometimes even contradictory, meanings.

The choice of the term *geographies of violence*, with its obvious emphasis on space, is key to this study for a number of reasons. First, violence is always positioned and always emerges from somewhere. During a violent act there is always a party that inflicts violence and a party to whom it is directed and, consequently, reacts, either passively or actively, to such violence.³ Whether physical or epistemic,

structural or interpersonal, historical or current, violence inevitably involves a certain type of movement or “migration.”⁴ This is why, in any study that addresses representations of violence, there is a need to assess from whom those representations are coming, the reasons behind those representations, and to whom they are being addressed. In addition, it is necessary to consider how “fixed” or “changing” these representations are according to the ideological or cultural structures that determine them. In other words, enunciation always has a source and a destination; discourse is always “located” and, consequently, inevitably “tainted.”⁵

However, although violence will always inevitably involve some sort of movement, it may originally be the consequence of a *lack* of movement; it may come as a result of the impossibility to “leave” one space or “social location.” For instance, it has been proven that people living in the slums or disadvantaged neighborhoods of large urban spaces tend to be more violent or experience more violence than the rest of the population who lives in middle or upper class neighborhoods (Rotker 2000 11). Many times this violence is the manifestation of resentment or the reaction to unfair discriminatory policies practiced against the people living in these areas. In these cases, it is the individual’s economic location within the system that determines the violent action they will experience or exercise. In other cases, the “lack” of movement is the direct result of racial or sexual difference. The discrimination against specific groups that are seen as “racially inferior” or “sexually deviant” may lead to violence either against these groups or originating in these groups.

In any case, it is a question of “space” and the ability or disability to move between spaces that gives origin to urban violence. As Michael Keith and Steve Pile argue, space needs to be recognized

as an active constitutive component of hegemonic power [...]. It tells you where you are and it puts you there [...]. The problem is this: where do we want to be and how do we want to get there? What kind of political spaces are there to be occupied? (in Kaplan 147).

Keith and Pile address a crucial issue when they ask what sort of social and economic spaces are available for economically or culturally disadvantaged groups. Doreen Massey claims that “most of us are consigned to positions that we would wish to resist, shift, and reconfigure” (in Kaplan 154). However, not everybody can do something about their respective location. Access to material means as well as to specific cultural or political structures determines the subject’s possibility of “movement” or “stagnation” within the system.

Another reason why the term *geographies of violence* is central to this discussion relates to my decision to focus on *contemporary* representations of violence.

Arguments that space has become *contemporary* life’s organizing principle abound.

The argument that contemporary culture, economy, and politics rely on space has been at the center of a number of theories by well-known critics, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, John Berger, Kevin Robins and David Morley, among them.

In “Reflections on the Politics of Space,” Lefebvre claims that

space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. Space and the political organization of

space express social relationships but also react upon them” (31).

This key idea introduced by Lefebvre becomes, according to Edward Soja, the “fundamental premise of the socio-spatial dialectic: that social and spatial relations are dialectically and inter-active interdependent, that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent” (1989 81).

Foucault also refers to the centrality of space in the structuring of our experiences and the distribution of power. In “Of Other Spaces” Foucault affirms that the present epoch

will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed [...] when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (22).

Berger agrees with these two critics but places special emphasis on the positioning of the subject in relation to space. Berger argues that modern society requires its members to employ other “ways of seeing”:

We can no longer depend on a story-line unfolding sequentially, an ever-accumulating history marching straight forward in plot and denouement, for too much is [...] continually traversing the story-line laterally [...]. Simultaneities intervene, extending our point of view outward in an infinite number of lines connecting the subject to a whole world of comparable instances (in Soja 1989 22-3).

Finally, more recently, Robins and Morley have made reference to the “spatialization in postmodernity that creates networks, communities, and identities” (in Kaplan 157). These two critics argue that “new technologies not only make a new relationship between time and space but between place and space [...], more and more people are connected electronically than by conventional geographic proximity” (in Kaplan 158). Today, communities “constituted by World Wide Web sites, for example, or by television or radio transmissions are increasingly vital locales”(in Kaplan 158). Robins and Morley assert that space has stopped to be defined in terms of physical boundaries. *Traveling* information is constantly creating new “spaces” that result from the establishment of global communities that have developed through people’s interaction with the media.

All of these critics stress the current value of network, understood as the distribution and connection of sources and people in space and across locations. They understand space as a *dynamic* variable. Through their analysis of the primacy of space in the birth, development, and establishment of contemporary global communities, they challenge previous notions that understood time as *fluid* and space as *static*.

The chroniclers chosen for this study also do such thing. They all describe and “create” space through their narratives. They all prove that space is affected by and has an effect on those who inhabit it. Each of these artists engages in a discussion of the intersections of different sorts of spaces: geographical, symbolic, and cultural.

They all produce fragmentary narratives whose many parts speak to each other and against each other.

Finally, the term *geographies of violence* is appropriate to this discussion because of the multi-media nature of the chronicles being analyzed. As previously stated, this study concentrates on artists who have chosen to work the chronicle in all its possible versions: graphic, written, and oral. This fact relates to space in its more “formal” or “symbolic” sense. Analyzing how these chronicles’ representations of violence in urban spaces are affected partly by their transference from one medium to the other and partly by the collaboration among various media that produces them becomes central to their understanding. Focusing on both how form and content determine each other and how the medium chosen impacts the type of representation produced and its reception is fundamental to evaluate the effectiveness of each of these chronicles of violence.

Discussing how violence originates from and can be practiced through representation and the effects that such representation has on everyday social and cultural behavior is central to find viable ways of preventing it. Understanding how and by whom different types of violence get to be exercised is also of particular relevance for a project at whose core is the analysis of a variety of its representations. The comparative analysis of these contemporary chroniclers opens the door to the answering of key questions regarding the connections between violence, representation, and power.

Regarding content: how is violence defined?, and what types of violence are represented? When analyzing any violent act or its representation there are a number

of variables that should be considered: its *formal structure* – whether this violence is a means to an end or an end in itself, its *personal factor* – the character of whom is producing the violent act, its *enabling context*— those circumstances that facilitate the making of the violent act, and its *ideological endorsement*— the values and reasons that justify and give meaning to the violent (Piper 27).

Regarding aesthetics, how does the choice of medium affect the way violence is represented and understood?, and what are the stylistic devices and the type of rhetoric chosen to represent it? Regarding viewpoint, how does one write about violence and its perpetrators without producing at the same time a moment of *epistemic violence*?, how does the writer’s location within the system affect his exposure to and consequent representation of violence?, is it possible to write about violence from the perspective of those who produce it?, is it ethical to do so?, and, what is the effect of exposing audiences to such a perspective?

Finally, regarding reception, do descriptions of violence ensure its continuity by shaping the sensibilities of those who will either endorse or commit future acts of terror?—that is, to what extent can one write about violence without perpetuating it?—, does excessive exposure to violence produce a numbing effect?, and how do representations of violence affect audiences’ understanding of and attitude to it?

This study attempts an answer to these questions through the analysis of the contemporary chronicles chosen. By addressing the conjunction of violence and representation, the comparative reading of the chronicles selected in this study enables the consideration of how contemporary artists living in urban clusters textualize the problem of violence in the city, how their representations have affected

and currently affect their audiences' perception of and relation to practices of violence, and, whether these representations attempt to subvert existing structures of inequality and oppression that cause violent behavior and thought. Literature and art are means through which change can be produced and social conditions improved. Therefore this project intends to reflect on how these cultural manifestations help not only in the representation of everyday life but also in their critique of existing structures of power that might be prompting violent behavior or thought.

Chapter 1: Chronicle Writing in the Americas

I- From Colonial Epistemic Violence to Twentieth Century Hybrid Formations

Blatant colonialism mutilates you without pretense: it forbids you to talk, it forbids you to act, it forbids you to exist. Invisible colonialism, however, convinces you that serfdom is your destiny and impotence is your nature: it convinces you that it's not possible to speak, not possible to act, not possible to exist.

Eduardo Galeano

An overview of the history of the chronicle in the Americas proves that the genre has always been intrinsically related to both violent practices and the representation of violence. The chronicle first arrived in this continent in the fifteenth century as a result of discovery and colonization, two of the most violent events in the history of the world. In the hands of the colonizers, the chronicle became an instrument that allowed Europe to make sense of the “new” from the standpoint of the “known.” However, the chronicle did more than merely report the facts involved in the colonial project; it also classified, named, and silenced in arbitrary and violent ways.

In 1571, King Philip II instituted the position of *cronista mayor* in Spanish America. The *cronista mayor* was charged with the writing of the official history of the New World. The *cédula*, creating the position of the *cronista cosmógrafo* stated that the “individual holding the post should [...] keep the cosmographical charts of the New World, keep strict account of the geographical location of the various parts of the realms, and keep records of eclipses and other natural phenomena” (González Echevarría 62). In addition, the document claimed that, since it was necessary to

preserve “the memory of the deeds that are significant and worthy of recollection,” the *cronista* should write the general history of the Indies

with as much precision and truthfulness as possible. He should write about the customs, rituals and myths of the people that are known through description, histories, and other accounts [...]. Said history should be his possession (“Código de leyes y ordenanzas para la gobernación de las Indias y buen tratamiento y conservación de los indios (1571). In *Colección de Documentos Inéditos*, Vol. XVI, p. 458) (González Echevarría 63).

Colonial chroniclers produced historical discourse that attempted to capture the very moments of the colonizing process. In fact, the chronicler became a sort of hero who, “in search of knowledge of nature and of himself,” left the world known to him and underwent a number of “trials” for the sake of finding such knowledge (González Echevarría 107). The *cronista* needed to record details of his contact with alternative types of knowledge and lifestyles that would allow him and his nation to grasp the meanings and practices of the “new.” Therefore, colonial chronicles, like many other colonial writings, grew out of the encounter with the “Other.”

But this writing about the “Other” was neither innocent nor objective. Instead, the chronicle became a powerful tool of domination, control, and abuse. It resided at the intersection of writing, movement, and violence. Christopher Columbus’s *Diario*, Hernán Cortés’s *Cartas de Relación*, and Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*, to mention only a few, not only told the events involved in the colonizing process but also “had in common the control of property through representation” (Jara 15). These writings were utilized to physically and culturally “appropriate” the new continent and its inhabitants.

Thus, as José Rabasa explains, the concept of writing violence in America comprises both the representation of massacres, tortures, rapes, and other forms of material terror as well as categories and concepts informing the representation of territories for conquest, the definition of Indian cultures as inferior, and the constitution of colonized subjectivities (22).

Rabasa adds that both meanings are related because the new regime of law imposed by the colonial powers “interpellated Indians by constituting them as inferior humans destined to serve [...]; violence, force, or power (was) integral to the law and not simply an external instrument for its enforcement” (22). It was writing what codified “legal categories such as criminals, insurgents, deviants and insubordinates” and, consequently, “legitimized violence against these groups” (22). As a result, even though the language of violence was “increasingly rarefied in the Spanish Crown’s new legal codes that prescribed peaceful colonization,” it was “effected on a symbolic level”(7).

One of the ways through which the colonial chronicle practiced violence on a symbolic level was by producing a narrative which, instead of attempting to reflect as accurately as possible the New World, “recreated” it according to European preconceptions and expectations. Although colonial chroniclers were asked to write “general history, with as much precision and truthfulness as possible,” political, and economic constraints forced them to do otherwise.

Historical writing during the conquest was mediated by very powerful institutions, the *Royal Council of the Indies* among them, that were part of “an overarching ideological construct [...] erected to justify and ratify” territorial rights

(González Echevarría 60). Consequently, most of the New World chronicles could be called “allegorical” in the sense that they were written “in the service of compulsive powers” and “drew moral implications from historical facts or reduced historical events to the status of manifestations of moral forces presumed to direct the universe”(Adorno 1986 4). Symbolic violence was exercised when colonial chroniclers described the Amerindian cultures as “non-cultures” in an attempt to establish a hierarchy that presented the European culture as superior and, consequently, ready to absorb or impose itself on other peoples and spaces.⁶

However, not all colonial chroniclers followed the strict rules and restrictions set up. Some avoided the violent “recreation and subordination” of the natives’ culture and made the effort to describe it objectively. For example, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación* (1542) was a chronicle that lacked “the conventionally heroic, with reminiscences of the popular romances we find in other(s). Instead, we meet someone self-effacing, a direct observer offering precise yet full information” (in González-Berry 1989 18) Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s experiences in the new continent, particularly his perception of New Mexico as a culture superior to others he had previously encountered, allowed him to produce a chronicle that was more “more interested in the people than the land and its resources” (in González-Berry 1989 18).⁷

Nevertheless, in spite of his attempt to render an objective description of the cultures he interacted with, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was still positioned, like the other colonizers, as an outsider who looked at these cultures from a European standpoint. The viewpoint of the “Other” began to be revealed, thus exposing and challenging the symbolic violence of previous colonial chronicles, when the

“Creoles” and native Indians from America started writing their own chronicles about the discovery and settlement of the new continent. The chronicles written by the natives became interesting examples of the hybridity resulting from the contact between the colonizer and the colonized cultures. The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Comentarios Reales* (1606) and *Historia del Perú* (1617) and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s *Primer Coronica y Buen Gobierno* (1615) seemed to be the first two well-known narratives written from “the other side.” Garcilaso and Guaman Poma were to represent the first attempt to question the colonizers’ official discourse.

In *Comentarios Reales* and *Historia General del Perú*, Garcilaso developed “a sort of generational testimony of fables and legends” (Jara 29). His discourse assumed “the characteristics of an anti-language that opposed the official history as barbaric and tyrannical while preserving for Spain the niceties of civilization, virtue, and victory” (Jara 29). Son to the *conquistador* Garcilaso de la Vega and the Indian princess Palla (renamed Isabel Chimpu Ocllo) and having learned the art of writing from his father, Garcilaso developed a narrative that tried to balance his critique of colonizing practices in the New World with his admiration for his “mother country,” Spain.⁸

As a result of his hybrid subjectivity, Garcilaso was forced to begin his account from a “position of nonidentity” (Rabasa 213). He had to challenge the fact that at the time there was no place for an Indian author. In order to establish authorial presence Garcilaso “drew on images, topoi, and rationales from the European storehouse of poetic, political, and historical motifs” (Rabasa 213). However, he intelligently deconstructed his rendition of an Indian monologue “by indicating that Indians speak

collectively [...] thereby exposing the violence the conventions of Romance exert on indigenous narrative styles” (Rabasa 13). In addition, he constantly emphasized his position as “witness” to the events he was narrating. His ability to witness was relevant because it was different from that of the *Conquistadores*: Garcilaso was able to move back and forth between the Amerindian and the Colonial worlds in order to record the daily happenings.⁹

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s chronicle differs from Garcilaso’s in its non-compromising nature. Even though Garcilaso accepted the fact that the conquest of América was in part a tragedy, his narrative tended to provide an idealized version of history that celebrated the exchange and consequent hybridization of the cultures that came in contact as a result of the discovery. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini explain that while the Inca recuperated the “Indian traditions from a Hispanic point of view” Guaman Poma de Ayala produced a type of affirmative anti-discourse that focused on the vision of the vanquished (30). With *Primer Coronica y Buen Gobierno*, Guaman Poma de Ayala, who claimed to be a descendant of the Incas and the Yarowilcas, undertook the writing of a counter-narrative that tried to interpret the conqueror in his own language and blamed him for exploiting the Andean natives for his exclusive benefit (30).

Not only was *Primer Coronica y Buen Gobierno* anti-European in content. Guaman Poma de Ayala also used his chronicle to challenge European writing conventions. Although he incorporated in his narrative some European literary modes and Western Christian iconographic traditions, he also managed to include Indian pictographic forms and Quechua writing. Like the Inca Garcilaso, Guaman Poma had

access to both worlds: he was an insider to the Indian culture but understood the ways of the European. Unlike the Inca, he chose to reflect that dual access not only through content but also through form. His narrative incorporated the oral tradition of his people and the written accounts of Spanish historians; it was informed not only by his experience as a colonized native but also “by a European philosophy of conquest that allowed him to express his views in a way that was intelligible and acceptable to outsiders” (Adorno 1986 13).

Like the Inca Garcilaso, Guaman Poma understood the potential power of the written word in colonial societies. He, however, used that written word to criticize the unfair policies of the mother colony. His chronicle— more than a thousand pages long— attempted two main purposes: “to give the king an account of ancient Andean history from the beginning of time through the reign of the Inkas and to inform the monarch about the deepening crisis in Andean society that was a result of Spanish colonization” (Adorno 2001 15). Guaman Poma made use of the chronicle to officially denounce the violence executed on his native fellows.¹⁰

The Inca Garcilaso’s and Guaman Poma’s narratives become clear illustrations of how Western systems of writing and discursive genres were appropriated, adapted, and used by Amerindians in order to sustain their own cultural traditions and make visible the violence, both physical and symbolic, that the process of colonization inflicted on their peoples and land. Although they had to elaborate their critiques within the universal parameters of colonial discourse, Garcilaso and Guaman Poma were able to use the master’s weapon against himself. The same system of representation that had been used to justify and produce violence against the natives

of America was now being produced to critique and expose such violence. These new perspectives shook those representative patterns imposed by the colonizing powers and introduced “movement” by deconstructing previously enforced stereotypes or discourses.¹¹

Nevertheless, in spite of their differences, the chronicles written by both *conquistadores* and Amerindians utilized a discourse of similar characteristics: all chronicles were detailed reports that provided both anthropological and historical overviews of the cultures being described; all included extended descriptions; and all were addressed to foreign audiences, the European people, with the intention of helping them understand and visualize the characteristics of the “new.” The fact that the audience was foreign to the new realities and people being described is relevant because it determined the type of discourse used and the content selected.

The colonial chronicle fit into the larger category known as “travel literature” that developed as a result of the discovery and conquest of America. When referring to the period between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, some theorists use the term “chronicle” to talk about writings of a partly historical and a partly legal nature. In addition, chronicles at this time included information about natural phenomena and social practices. In fact, in some studies the terms *crónica*, *relación*, and *historia* are used interchangeably proving that differences among some of the genres classified under “travel literature” were not that easy to establish.

However, once in the eighteenth century, what differentiated the chronicle from the “travelogue” was that the latter was more scientific than legal-oriented and did not have to be necessarily written by appointed *cronistas*. By the mid-nineteenth century,

the colonial chronicle had evolved into a genre clearly different from any others. In fact, the chronicle acquired a new meaning and came to serve a new function in America. The mid-nineteenth century chronicle developed as a modern genre that emerged from the intersection of journalism, literature and philology. As a consequence, its rhetoric, audience, and medium changed.

The American modernist¹² chronicle resulted from the “translation” of the French and English sketches of life and manners.¹³ The modernist chronicle was introduced in the American market as a kind of archeology of the present “dedicated to the small facts and whose purpose was not to inform but to amuse” (Rotker 2000 47). According to Antonio Leal Castro, this new kind of chronicle needed to respond to two conditions: it had to be easy to read and it had to interest the reader. In order to be easy to read, the chronicle required a type of fluid and unsophisticated prose. In order to attract the reader’s interest, it had to address a variety of current themes (Rotker 2000 38).

Its readability, fluidity, and variety could be claimed to be a result of the times. The modernist chronicle developed at a time when everything was fleeting and changes were sudden. In fact, Susana Rotker claims that, as a cultural practice, the genre revealed “a deep epistemological fissure. Not only did doubt occupy the center of thought, but temporality invaded everything like a dizzy spell” (61). Thus, the Mexican Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, the Cuban José Martí, and other modernist writers producing narratives during their times, understood the chronicle as a discursive space from where to comment on their unstable reality.

However, in spite of its entertaining goal, the development of the modernist chronicle became closely associated— as it had been the case with its colonial antecedent— with the practice of violence and its representation. These Spanish American modernists took the writing of chronicles beyond the purpose of mere entertainment. They challenged the modernist motto of “art for art’s sake” and used their narratives to produce a critique of existing and problematic social and political structures. What enabled them to do so through the chronicle were the changes underwent by the genre as a result of a new type of journalistic discourse that developed between the 1880s and the 1930s.

During post-independence times, America was still a territory of “pervasive and extreme violence in the everyday contact among people divided by social class, ethnic backgrounds, political views and access to privileges” (Verdesio 28). After independence, social and political violence became an “endemic and permanent feature of the pattern of nation-building in Latin America and the conflicts generated by this process” (Kruij 3). The nation-building process involved three kinds of violence: the “violence related to maintaining the traditional rural and oligarchic social order”; the “violence related to the problem of the modernization of the state and the incorporation of the masses in politics”; and, finally, the “violence related to the difficulties of consolidating democratic stability, economic progress and social inclusion” (Kruijt 3). The process of modernization, characterized by the transition from agricultural societies to predominantly urban nation-states, “typically involved violent forms of elimination and re-accommodation of social classes” (Kruijt 4).

Struggles between “regional caudillos, political factions, insurgent groups and contending elites and classes” were everywhere to be seen (Kruijt 3).

As a consequence, from the post-independence period through the 1880s, journalism was directly linked to and manipulated by the landed gentry and the cultured bourgeoisie, who used it to put forward their economic and political agendas and keep social hierarchies in place (Rotker 2000 31). However, around the 1880s, spearheaded by newspapers in the United States and Great Britain, journalism started to transform itself into a mass phenomenon and a moneymaking enterprise. As a result of this, the Spanish American press ceased to merely spread state discourse and began to propagate more independent ideas (Rotker 2000 32).

This “democratization of the press” deeply affected the nature of the chronicle because, at the time, chronicles were mostly published in newspapers. Thus, the modernist chronicle quickly turned into a “critical posture toward institutional power and the bourgeoisie” (Rotker 2000 83). While it chose its topics among contemporary issues such as those related to the city, the culture of industrialized countries, the effects of progress, and international politics, many chroniclers, as for example Martí, appropriated it to criticize the “arrogance of the metropolitan centers,” the “contempt for native traditions,” the “excessive attention and veneration of Western cultural traditions,” and the “marginalization of and hostility toward indigenous groups” (Verdesio 38). Thus, the chronicle started to lay bare the violence immanent to the rising and practices of the new nation-state and the urban centers in America.

But the purpose of this new modernist chronicle was not only to produce an alternative ideology and expose the inequalities of the existing power structure.

Modernists also used it as “a laboratory of modernist style,” imbuing it with a specific literary flavor. Rotker claims that the chronicle was the place where modernist writing was born and transformed, developing “a diffusion of a sensibility” and a way of understanding literature that “had to do with beauty, with the conscious selection of language, with the use of sensory images and symbols, with the mixture of what is foreign and what is local, of styles, of genres, of arts”(2000 40). Thus, although the modernist chronicle was intended to be a discourse that represented the everyday and contested some of the state’s discourses, its writers experimented with techniques such as the poeticization of the real, fictionalization, analogy, and symbolism.

Although previously most modernists had affirmed that journalism was incompatible with literature as art (González 1993 18), this notion began to be challenged by “the avant-garde writers of the early 1920s who [...] produced an implicit critique of the empiricist and utilitarian nature of journalism”(González 1993 18). They achieved this by adopting and adapting numerous aspects of journalistic discourse—the use of collage-like techniques among them—into their fiction (González 1993 18). In turn, the journalistic chronicle was affected by fiction and, by the turn of the twentieth century, it started to present a specific rhetoric that broke most of the rules of traditional journalism. The influence of the modern Latin American novel and, in some cases, of North American New Journalism—practiced by Capote, Wolfe, Vidal, Mailer and others—transformed the chronicle into “a critical counterpoint to other more ‘standard’ journalistic writing precisely at its own cultural location” (Corona 129).

During the experimental phase of the 1960s, New Journalists revolutionized journalistic discourse up to its very core. First, new journalists ignored chronological order and the duty to answer the six basic questions “who?,” “what?,” “when?,” “where?,” “how?” and “why?,” two basic premises of every journalistic piece up to the time. Second, new journalists believed that “conventional reporting only made the subjects seem stranger” and “rejected conventional journalism’s assumed perspective of ‘objectivity’ and its reliance on official, often concealed sources” (Hellmann 1981 3). The voice of new journalists was subjective as they recorded their personal reaction to the people and events they wrote about.

Third, new journalists used their imagination and fictional craft to reflect on the reality described, to construct meaning (Hellmann 8). In a work of new journalism, form was as important as content. In fact, many times, the ultimate aim of the new journalist was to produce a “work of art.” Thus, unlike traditional journalism, which depended heavily on its referentiality to an outside reality, these new pieces tended to be heavily “self-referential, often including reflections on the activity of writing itself” (in Rotker 2000 83).

Fourth, new journalists tended to concentrate on those subjects and personalities unfamiliar to their middle-class readers. The American Tom Wolfe, for example, usually wrote about stock-car racers, topless dancers, California surfers, the Mafiosi, or members of teenaged subcultures, “often relating to new and emerging patterns of social organization that deviate from the mainstream culture”(Hollowell 40). Thus, new journalists became “transcultural interpreters” who, through their writings, brought their audiences closer to “foreign” worlds. ¹⁴

Finally, new journalists produced a rhetoric characterized by a marked orality. They attempted to approach their subjects as “involved participants” so as to be able to understand their position or participation in the events. As a consequence, their pieces ended up incorporating a variety of new voices and thresholds of language. Thus, New Journalism brought about the development of a genre through which factual subject matter was rendered in experimental aesthetic forms. The result was the creation of a hybrid form that combined fictional techniques with the detailed observation of reality in an attempt to explore public matters.

The journalists and fiction writers who produced chronicles during the 1960s and 1970s – particularly those living in Mexico and the United States— moved around their city to tell stories of what they witnessed. Their objective was to expose their audiences to the multiple worlds of the metropolis through a genre that combined its descriptive forms with both a critical viewpoint and a highly experimental aesthetic manipulation of subject matter. In order to do so, they traveled spaces inhabited by urban groups of different cultural, social, and economic background. This movement allowed chronicle writers the exposure to very varied and current realities.

The analysis of how the chronicle was affected by the changes originated by the Modernist Movement and New Journalism in America is relevant not only because it outlines and explains the changes the genre underwent between the times of the conquest and the 1970s, but also because it proves that, throughout its various stages, the genre was always closely associated to and determined by movement and violence. The changes generated by the influence of the conventions of New Journalism were, in part, originated by a new postmodern conception of reality that

started to be prominent near the end of the 1960s. This new “postmodern condition” led to the development of the chronicle as audiences understand of it today.

II- Modern “Exiles” vs. “Postmodern Tourists:” Representations of the Urban Experience in the Late Twentieth Century

To be sure, these ‘life-stories have a geography too; they have milieux, immediate locales, provocative emplacements which affect thought and action. **Edward Soja**

Since the 1970s, the impact of a predominant postmodern aesthetic has allowed artists to employ their chronicles to re-define the urban geographies described. The contemporary chronicle does more than merely reflect the complex realities of urban experience. In many cases, contemporary chronicles attempt a displacement of official discourses by centering those marginal voices and spaces that have been, both materially and symbolically, ignored or silenced. The chroniclers considered in this study are good examples of those who have chosen to use their narratives to comment on the political, economic, social, and physical violence immanent to the contemporary urban space in order to explain and challenge the city’s institutional and structural organization.

At first sight, the contemporary chronicle appears to share a number of traits with its modernist predecessor. To begin with, both reflect some of the anthropological nature of their colonial antecedent. However, as it has already been argued, the modernist and the contemporary chronicler do not merely provide detailed

descriptions of what they witness but also use their narratives to criticize those social and economic conditions they live in and to comment on situations in which they participate.

Secondly, both forms work their rhetoric spatially: they tend to break with temporal lines by imposing synchronicity; they employ inter-textuality, fragmentation, stream of consciousness, juxtaposition, and flashback. This is partly a result of social and technological changes happening at the time of their respective origins. In *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja claims that the 1850s and the 1970s are major points of crisis in social, economic, and political practices that have led to “transitions in industrialization, the circulation of information, money and goods, and the production of systems of meaning and representation” (77). Soja suggests that those two points in time challenge the understanding of space as “inert” and “undynamic” and time as “fluid” and “dialectical” (77). The modernist and the contemporary chronicle try to represent alternative realities happening at the same time in different spaces.

Thirdly, both the modernist and the contemporary chronicles are mostly urban. Their writers “travel” the city, explore it, in order to represent the everyday, the circumstantial. The result is narratives that are mobile, flexible, and irregular in nature. The city becomes the perfect source for the chronicle’s content. Its size, the abundance of stimuli, and the ways space is organized along the lines of cultural and economic difference within its limits, all contribute to the creation of a genre that requires a wandering subject as its author. Rossana Reguillo explains that “[t]he practitioner of the chronicle accepts a nomadic destiny, renounces the certainty of a

place of their own, and finds instead places of exclusion and domination along their itinerary” (in Corona 54).¹⁵

In fact, it could be claimed that the modernist and the contemporary chroniclers are re-embodiments or re-creations of their precursor, the *flâneur*, a chronicler in his own ways. Both urbanization and modernity provided these chroniclers with the grounds with which to produce their narratives. They all walked and walk the city in search for their topics. As Elizabeth Wilson explains, “the *flâneur* could exist only in the great city, the metropolis, since provincial towns would afford too restricted a stage for his strolling and too narrow a field for his observations” (94). Thus, Wilson adds, “in literature, the *flâneur* was represented as an archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere” (93).¹⁶

However, in spite of these apparent similarities between the contemporary chronicle and its modernist antecedent, there are key differences that make the former a much more disruptive and critical genre. First, even though both concentrate on the effects of progress, contemporary chronicles contain commentaries and observations different from those presented by modernist ones. This difference results mostly from the changes that technology has undergone during the second half of the twentieth century.

Starting in the 1950s, rapid technological developments have led to the inevitable economic, political and cultural marginalization of those without access to those developments. Particularly over the last three decades, an increasingly growing globalized culture has affected the ways subjects perceive the world and themselves. As a result, chronicles today concentrate specially on the consequences of those

cultural continuities and transformations resulting from economic and political globalization, the influence of the mass media and a predominantly visual culture, and the processes through which those on the margins get to be either segregated or acculturated by the center.

Secondly, in spite of the fact that the contemporary chronicler shares with the modernist chronicler, the *flâneur* and his colonial counterpart the “investiture of the intellectual and that of the man or woman of action (because) his or her actual word carries the weight of authority and evidence” (Corona 144), the former is a different sort of intellectual. Colonial chroniclers were literate representatives of the motherland but they cannot necessarily be considered ‘intellectuals’ as the term is used nowadays. The *conquistadores* were primarily “men of action”— this meaning “physical action” such as traveling, fighting against and conquering the natives, or governing the new colonies— who used their chronicles to prove and justify such action.¹⁷

On the contrary, the *flâneur*, the modernist and the contemporary chronicler are mostly intellectuals who attempt to represent their everyday reality in their artistic production. Their “action” is, in most cases, their writing. They all seek to bring about change with their narratives. Their chronicles are written for a number of different purposes: they may be informative, reformist, didactic or analytical. They are always critical because they attempt, as Linda Egan explains, to “inform, analyze, and comment in order to dramatize a need for action or change. [They are] not content only to point out negatives; they want also to indicate ways to move in more positive directions” (in Corona 115).

There is, however, one fundamental difference between the *flâneur* and the modernist chronicler, on the one hand, and the contemporary chronicler, on the other. Contemporary chroniclers seem to be more aware of the need to write from a different perspective, to allow those on the margins, either economically or culturally, to voice their demands. In other words, they try to *speak less* and *listen more*. They make an effort to somewhat “abandon” their privileged position; it is through the demands of those they include in their narratives that their exploration of other realities gets to be realized.

Although these three types of chroniclers observe and name what they witness in order to render it intelligible to their audiences and attempt to challenge official discourses through their writing, they do so in very different ways. The *flâneur* and the modernist chronicler were still trapped in the binary *intellectual/ other*; they were constantly stressing and marking the distance between their art and their art’s subjects and audiences. Instead, the contemporary one makes a postmodern move in an attempt to “erase” such a distance by questioning his own location, making his audiences become aware of their own, and, consequently, disrupting arbitrary hierarchies. The contemporary chronicler does not name those inhabiting different spaces “Other” or “inferior” but depicts them as merely “different.” Some of these artists, Lins and Rodríguez among them, even dare to dominate their writings with the viewpoint of those “different,” consequently producing a displacement of the “norm” to the margins.

This new attitude towards the “foreign” or the “unknown” to the center that breaks down traditional hierarchical binaries is a consequence of a new way of

traveling the city. While *flâneurs* spent a lot of their time at establishments “frequented by actors, writers, journalists, and painters— that is their interests were predominantly aesthetic—” and turned into the “ultimate ironic, detached observer, skimming across the surface of the city and tasting all its pleasures with curiosity and interest” (Wilson 94, 97), contemporary chroniclers make an effort to travel the most underprivileged spaces of the city in order to represent their dynamics. Thus, their narratives are far from being “predominantly aesthetic” practices and also become strong political statements. Instead of walking the city as “solitary onlookers” and “detached observers,” contemporary chroniclers make an effort to interact with the realities they are registering.

Flâneurs, modernist chroniclers and contemporary chroniclers are *travelers*¹⁸ that perceive the city differently. They become “urban tourists” interested in dissimilar goals and outcomes. The *flâneur* and the modernist chronicler resemble the kind of tourist described by Paul Fussell in his text *Abroad*. This tourist – whose motives are rarely open revealed— wants to “raise social status at home,” “realize fantasies of exotic freedom” and, most importantly, “derive secret pleasure from posing momentarily as a member of a social class superior to one’s own” playing the role of “shopper” and spender whose life becomes significant only when able to choose what to see, what to buy, and what to photograph (in Kaplan 54).

These chroniclers’ detachment from their subjects derives in narratives very much aware of and determined by the cultural differences that separate the writer and his or her subjects. These chroniclers become “shoppers” of “difference” but without necessarily attempting to understand or accept this “difference.” In fact, although

these chroniclers walk the city as *tourists*, at some points, they even become *exiles* to their own culture. As Kaplan explains, detachment becomes the precondition for these modernists' creativity. Disaffection and/or alienation become their rite of passage for serious work: "The modernist seeks to recreate the effect of statelessness-whether or not the writer is, literally, in exile" (36).

Contemporary chroniclers, on the other hand, become the kind of tourist described by Dean McCannell. McCannell presents a tourist who shares a "deep involvement with cultures and society" and hopes "to surpass the superficialities of tourism to achieve a more profound appreciation" of them (in Kaplan 59).

Contemporary chroniclers do not want to be or feel exiled. They seek to interact with their subjects because they are aware that, as Homi Bhabha claims, "otherness" or the "different" is no longer a distant space but the very center of their "own" culture (148).

As a consequence, their narratives allude "metaphorically to an internal movement, a displacement through the cracks that separates and unites difference in a globalized culture" (Corona 2002 57). The contemporary urban chronicle "narrates the many cities that exist within one city" by representing "worlds that may occupy the same spatial plane, but whose different temporalities make them strangers to each other" and, consequently, opens "other means of communication between dialects and rituals that make up the diverse social therapy" (in Corona 57). Contemporary chroniclers represent the city as a "transgressive space, which dislocates established frontiers and forces apparent opposites together" (Wilson 109). Their narratives either

expose how those borders are produced or become a means of breaking down the arbitrary ideologies that created those borders in the first place.

Another important difference between *flâneurs* and the modernist chronicler, on the one hand, and the contemporary chronicler, on the other, is that the former, like their colonial predecessors, were almost exclusively male. In fact, as the French term indicates, the *flâneur* was conceived as a gendered concept. The *flâneur* was always a man, his “freedom to wander at will through the city was essentially a masculine freedom” (Wilson 98). Instead, nowadays, the city is also being explored and written about by women who, by creating their narratives through a female “gaze,” produce representations of the urban with a feminine voice.¹⁹

Finally, the contemporary chronicle differs from its previous versions in its marked postmodern aesthetic that places strong emphasis on fragmentation and hybridity. The fact that the city is its main source has prompted the contemporary chronicle’s employment of this particular kind of aesthetic. As Wilson explains, the city allows chroniclers to brush against strangers and observe bits of the stories these men and women carry with them without ever learning their conclusion. Therefore, “life ceases to form itself into epic or narrative, becoming instead a short story, dreamlike, insubstantial or ambiguous”(107).

Although a city composed of strangers and diverse stories was also the source that inspired the modernist chronicle, its contemporary version has succeeded at representing change at a larger scope or with a broader perspective. One example of this is the contemporary chronicle’s inclusion of diverse registers of spoken language. The sophistication of the intellectual’s writing that characterized the modernist

chronicle has been replaced by a combination of the writer's voice and the voices of those who do not write for a living but share the urban environment with the writer, among them the illiterate, the children, the young, the old, the handicapped, the poor, and the criminal. In some cases, the writer himself, as the analysis of Paulo Lins' narrative will show, has been one of those voices before moving into the sphere of the literary.

In addition, a new developing "culture of image and sound" has led to the transition of contemporary chronicles from the page to other alternative sources. While modernist chronicles were mostly distributed through newspapers and magazines, contemporary ones are many times released through TV and radio programs, films and photography, thus bridging the gap between written representation and the visual arts. This change of medium has collaborated with the contemporary chronicle's becoming even more immediate, fragmented, and representative than the modernist type. Even those chroniclers who are not working across these varied media have come to recognize the need to modify their narratives in order to meet the expectations of an audience accustomed to an MTV reality characterized by the overwhelming and constant shifting of imagery and sound.

However, the fact that contemporary chroniclers who work across a variety of media experiment with postmodern aesthetic should not mislead the audience into believing that their intention is mere experimentation with a lack in critical views. This is the main argument that those "uncomfortable" with the postmodern condition tend to present. Fredric Jameson, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard, among others, characterize the postmodern as a stage in which the dominance of appearance,

an overwhelming lack of depth, the absence of ideology, and the penetration of aesthetics into everyday life, reign.²⁰

According to these critics, the lack of a center and the apparent “death of the subject” suggest that there is no space for politics any longer. For Jameson, the modern “alienation” of the citizen subject has gotten displaced by its postmodern “fragmentation” (63). This fragmentation also implies the end of personal style or newness. As a consequence, all becomes pastiche or the appropriation of past ideas and images. Because aesthetic production has become integrated in commodity production, not even art can act as an instrument for social criticism and change. The postmodern “text,” which “proceeds by differentiation rather than unification,”(31) lacks the necessary wholeness to become political.

An in-depth reading of the contemporary chronicles chosen for this study serves to prove exactly the opposite. Each of these chronicles uses a postmodern aesthetic with the intention of breaking the “dominant monolith” in their respective locations. Their goal is to establish a “space” where those who are usually ignored become visible and audible. The postmodern allows these chroniclers to authorize and legitimize a discourse that challenges “the monopoly of a single speaking voice in order to break the silence of persons, situations, and spaces normally condemned to the obscurity of speechlessness” by “recuperating the voice and the gaze of liminal characters” (in Corona 56).²¹

This review of the history of the chronicle in America, the comparative study of the differences and similarities between modernist and contemporary chronicles, and the references to the influence of a postmodern aesthetic on current artistic and cultural manifestations, all serve a number of key purposes. First, they show how the chronicle, in each stage of its development, has derived from the intersections

between space and movement. Such intersections are the product of the chroniclers' traveling and their interaction with the subjects they encounter. In colonial times, the *cronista* traveled the new land, many times already inhabited by natives, to describe it. The colonial chronicle was used to justify the application of violence to the places and peoples the *conquistadores* visited. Nowadays, the chronicler travels the urban territory to describe its many events and citizens not to justify violence but to expose how contemporary social and political institutions live, react to, and, many times, manipulate it. Consequently, to explore the formal changes the genre has undergone is indeed relevant because they have affected not only the type of content and the viewpoints the chronicle incorporates but also the type of representation that results from those incorporations.

Second, this review and comparative study prove that the chronicle, in all its different manifestations— the colonial, the modernist, and the contemporary—, is a genre suitable for the representation of a variety of “geographies,” and, as a consequence, becomes a “geography,” both material and symbolic, that the reader needs to visualize and travel through. The case of the chronicles chosen for this study is particularly interesting because they are all compilations of numerous chronicles. Once compiled, the geography, or geographies, described by each of the chronicles forms a network of interconnected spaces with interrelated characters. Each chronicle gets new meanings once “read” in conjunction with the others that precede and follow it.

III- The Testimonio and the Contemporary Chronicle: Genres that Voice Realities

We need to think time 'otherwise' and to think that which we were 'obliged' to forget by the pedagogic colonial and national narratives. **Gustavo Verdesio**

Finally, the last section of this chapter elaborates on the differences between the contemporary chronicle and the *testimonio* in order to justify the unique characteristics of the former as far as representations of violence are concerned. If contemporary chronicles, and particularly those considered in this study, get their postmodern nature from their multi-vocal discourse— giving voice to others than the intellectuals— and represent a variety of urban *geographies of violence* in an attempt to expose their impact on the most socially or economically disadvantaged, how is this genre different from the *testimonios* that have been produced since the 1960s in America?

Due to its political and representative nature, the *testimonio* has become, particularly in the American academic environment, one of the most discussed genres. Describing its characteristics has become one of the main challenges the literary and theory critics interested in defining this genre have had to face. In fact, the *testimonio* and the chronicle share a number of evident similarities.

To begin with, both genres result from the conflation of literature and history, literature and society, and literature and popular culture. Critics such as Pamela Smorlakoff talk of the chronicle and the *testimonio* as examples of a new type of literary production defined as “socio-literature” (108). Smorlakoff’s term emphasizes

these two genres' anthropological nature: they both include descriptions of everyday social, economic, political, and cultural practices in distinct communal spaces.

However, there are two characteristics that distinguish them from the anthropological document. First, instead of objective representations of a community's practices, the chronicle and the *testimonio* are subjective renderings affected by both their narrators' location in class, race, sexuality, and national background, and their narrators' interaction with the subjects of their narratives. Second, while anthropologists tend to describe, in as much detail as possible, what they witness, chroniclers and the *testimonialistas* taint their narratives with their personal opinion and commentary.

A second similarity between the contemporary chronicle and the *testimonio* is that they both try to incorporate the voices of those groups usually ignored or marginalized as a result of discriminatory practices. This results, many times, in the telling of stories from the "other side," the side of those who have never been given a chance to voice their stories. As Reguillo explains, the chronicle

isn't satisfied with the enumeration of facts, but rather it looks to tell its stories with the kind of description that only takes on density when told from the inside [...]. But perhaps, more than its confrontation with a linear and domineering discourse, what is really invasive about the chronicle is its employment of other forms of listening (in Corona 56).

The *testimonio*, like the contemporary chronicle, represents realities "from the inside," produces a "confrontation with a linear and domineering discourse," and employs "other forms of listening."

Third, and precisely because the chronicler and the *testimonialista* “listen” to what others have to say in order to bring it to the page, their narratives rely heavily on orality. The oral aura about contemporary chronicles and *testimonios* derives from the fact that they both make it a point to record the many registers of language their writers encounter.²² Both genres attempt to capture the different manifestations of oral communication and, consequently, challenge the supremacy of the written word. In general, the collection of these registers results from the collaboration between either the chronicler and their subjects or the *testimonialista* and the *testimoniante*. The production of both genres demands the participation of a witness/participant, in charge of writing down the testimonies, and a subject or subjects, determined to share their living experiences with the writer.²³

Fourth, both genres are characterized by an urgency in the nature of their telling. This is so because they both have a tendency to address both problematic and current collective situations. Contemporary chronicles and *testimonios* tend to include stories that cannot wait to be told, either because they portray a situation involving repression, exploitation, subalternity or simply survival— as is usually the case with the *testimonio*— or because the event or social situation they are describing is happening and has meaning at the time it is happening— as is most times the case with the contemporary chronicle.

Fifth, because both genres represent real life people in real life situations, they both have the effect of making public the private (Yúdice 222). Bringing the everyday experiences of the anonymous many to the page is a way of giving relevance to what is usually ignored or perceived as irrelevant. Thus, these two genres succeed in

challenging the status quo by including in their narratives the stories of those who would not normally be considered “literature material” and events which, because of their normalcy or common nature, do not tend to catch the readers’ attention.

Finally, the contemporary chronicle and the *testimonio* share similar processes of compilation and editing. Since they both rely on interaction for their construction, the editing procedure may result in possible distortion or misrepresentation.

Misrepresentation can be the consequence not only of the misunderstanding of those collecting the stories to be printed but also of the misguided reception of an audience not knowledgeable enough to grasp the fact that the subjects who are voicing their realities do not necessarily stand for the whole group they are said to represent.

In spite of their apparent similarities, the *testimonio* and the contemporary chronicle differ in a number of ways. Regarding their semi-anthropological nature, *testimonios*, as for example *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, “by” Rigoberta Menchu, or *Andean Lives: Gregorio Condori Mamani and Asunta Quispe Huaman*, “by” Mamani and Huaman, tend to include a more extensive and detailed description of everyday life practices and traditions than contemporary chronicles do. This happens, in part, because unlike *testimonios* which tend to cover long time frames, contemporary chronicles usually concentrate on a moment or specific event.

In reference to their multivocality, what differentiates the contemporary chronicle from the *testimonio* is that the former does not exclusively focus on the situation of those considered to be powerless or marginal. Some chroniclers, Pedro Lemebel among them, focus many of their narratives on the practices of the middle or upper

classes. Chroniclers publishing in newspapers or magazines may also write about specific cultural developments or social issues that have no connection whatsoever to those on the margins.²⁴

The question of authorship, related to the discussion of the oral nature of these two genres, is also an important marker of difference between the contemporary chronicle and the *testimonio*. In the case of the *testimonio*, the exchange between narrator and writer produces a “dialogic” subject because there is no one author who could claim ownership of the text. John Beverly states that in the *testimonio* there is an “erasure of the function and thus also of the textual presence of the author [...]; the author has been replaced by the function of a ‘compiler’ or ‘activator’”(1989 77). The editor or compiler of the *testimonio*, usually an intellectual, journalist, writer or anthropologist, works with the narrator, who is “the real protagonist or witness of the events she or he recounts”(1989 70). This happens mainly because the narrator of the *testimonio* is usually “either functionally illiterate, or if literate, not a professional writer” or in a position of power to have his story published (1989 71).²⁵

The contemporary chronicle, on the other hand, does not tend to originate out of the agreement between an illiterate or powerless subject and a writer fulfilling the function of mere compiler or editor. Although sometimes contemporary chronicles develop out of the conscious exchange of information between their writers and subjects, most times chroniclers get the material for their writing by listening to and observing those around them, and, without letting them know that they will become their chronicles’ protagonists. As a consequence, unlike *testimonios*’ subjects, about whom there is usually information regarding their personal history, relations, position

within his or her community, and current situation—,chronicles' subjects tend to be anonymous or simply names with an unknown background. In addition, the contemporary chronicle is many times rendered in third person.

Discussing the ways in which the contemporary chronicle and the *testimonio* originate is indeed relevant to the examination of the aesthetic quality of their narratives, another variable that differentiates the two genres. The question of whether or not the *testimonio* should display any signs of the manipulation of literary mechanisms has been at the center of many of the debates concerning this genre.²⁶ Some critics seem unwilling to consider the possibility of reconciling the *testimonio*'s documentary nature with the rhetoric employed in other literary renditions of a more fictional or symbolic character. Others have simply chosen to ignore the stylistic nature of this genre when discussing it. This is partly due to the fact that the *testimonio* has mostly been tackled as a text that is intended to raise awareness about the extreme situations of those experiencing inequality or discrimination. The emphasis has been on **what** the *testimonio* has to say, thus disregarding **how** it is being said. The fact that the *testimonio* has been listed together with other types of testimonial writing under the category of *literature of resistance* speaks for itself. It is as if analyzing the rhetorical quality of the *testimonio* would weaken its intended political impact.

Chronicles usually display examples of pastiche, montage, the use of humor, various viewpoints, and the inclusion of elements characteristic of other genres such as the short story, the novel, or the newspaper article. Chroniclers may also choose to render their writings with a sarcastic or ironic tone, or to fictionalize an event or story

taken from real life. However, the fact that the chronicler experiments with rhetoric and style has never been questioned or challenged.

The reasons behind such a different reaction might be related to the issue of authenticity and, consequently, credibility. As it has already been said, the *testimonio* is produced out of an exchange between a member of an oppressed community, usually illiterate, and a compiler, usually an intellectual. There is urgency so events or opinions need to be shared in a matter-of-fact manner, in a straightforward and clear style. If there were any signs of purposeful experimentation with the aesthetic quality of the narrative, the audience would doubt its source, thus rendering the narrative useless.²⁷

The chronicle, on the other hand, is generally produced by a well-established writer or journalist. Consequently, the audience expects its narrative to display a variety of literary techniques or strategies. In addition, even though many times contemporary chronicles are written with the purpose of critiquing and raising awareness, their urgency is of a different kind. They need to be released quickly not necessarily to speed up the resolution of a conflict but so as not to lose the interest of an audience waiting to read about contemporary issues. Although their contents might be effective in involving institutions in the improvement of certain disadvantaged groups, their intention, unlike the *testimonio*, is not to develop solidarity movements or call the attention of human rights' organizations.

Finally, both genres differ in their intended audiences. *Testimonios* are usually produced with the intention to reach organizations or groups willing to intervene in order to improve the *testimonialistas'* and their communities' situation. Once

released, many *testimonios* have also entered academia and are being studied or taught at different universities. However, it is rare audiences outside academia would be inclined to read such narratives if they had the option to choose. Instead, contemporary chronicles, whether released individually or as collections, reach wider audiences. Their variety and shortness attract those readers who are not academically interested in them or may not have the time or willingness to indulge in such long, intense narratives as *testimonios*.

Neither the *testimonio* nor the contemporary chronicle intends to merely represent; they both act as means of resistance to those discourses and institutions in power. Consequently, they both challenge those “master narratives” that silence difference in their attempt to homogenize reality under the experience of the privileged few. In that sense, they are both means through which violence is represented and exposed. However, due to its briefness and the variety it allows, the chronicle represents violence in a much more fragmentary and decentered way. In addition, the chronicle allows a better understanding of the connections between violence, space and representation. Because urban chroniclers walk the city, they are exposed to violence in different locations and as experienced by different subjects.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how movement and violence have intersected in the development of the chronicle and how that intersection has been reflected through form and rhetoric. An analysis of the development of the chronicle proves that movement is not only a characteristic of its contents but also an aspect of its formal

nature. Rhetorically, the chronicle incorporates elements from fiction, journalism, and other disciplines. These borrowings allow it to appear in a variety of different formats and styles. From its status as *historical-anthropological discourse* during colonial times to its transitioning into *journalistic discourse* as a space for stylistic experimentation, for both American modernists at the turn of the twentieth century and U.S. New Journalists during the 1960s, and, finally, to its current presence as a *hybrid discourse* that lies in the borderline between literary and testimonial writing, sociology and anthropology, fiction and fact, the chronicle has fulfilled the function of rendering the new and current to its various audiences.

The process of hybridization that resulted from the encounter between European and Amerindian cultures, the inevitable postmodern aesthetic that developed from it, and the ideological constructs that guided the American movements for independence, all collaborated in producing a new and very different genre known today as the contemporary chronicle. The genre developed from an ideologically static means for the production of *epistemic violence* and the justification of physical violence and unfair appropriation and conquest into a fluid multi-media source through which contemporary artists and journalists address and try to make sense of current realities.

The analysis of the effects of the intersections of movement, violence, and representation is at the core of the chapters that follow. Each of these chapters examines texts that stand as contemporary examples of the conjunction of representation with violence in order to understand how written, oral, and graphic chronicles make sense of and transcribe the phenomenon of urban violence. Each of

these chroniclers reflects on the existence of *geographies of violence* and uses their narratives to explain how central the notion of space is to the subjects' exposure to and processing of the violence they experience. In fact, each of the coming chapters becomes a *geography of violence*, a geography that is both physical and symbolic and includes artists and their audiences, the local and the global, the center and the margins, the self and the other.

Chapter 2: Cidade de Deus: Godless Experiences in a Hellish Geography

'In City of God if you run away, they get you. And if you stay, they get you too' **Busca-Pé (Meirelles 2002)**

Introduction

Poesia, minha tia, ilumine as certezas dos homens e os tons de minhas palavras. É que arrisco a prosa mesmo com balas atravessando os fonemas. É o verbo, aquele que é maior que o seu tamanho, que diz, faz e acontece. Aquí ele cambaleia baleado. Dito por bocas sem dentes nos conchavos de becos, nas decisões de morte [...]. A palavra nasce no pensamento [...] e às vezes essa magia nosora não salta à boca porque é engolida a seco. Massacrada no estômago com arroz e feijão a quase-palavra é defecada ao invés de falada. Falha a fala. Fala a bala (Lins 21).

With these lines the Brazilian writer Paulo Lins condenses the themes and tone of *Cidade de Deus (City of God)* (1997), his almost 400-page tale of violence and terror in the “City of God”²⁸ – one of the most dangerous *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro.²⁹ Based on actual events and people known by Lins through his personal experiences as a child growing up in a *favela* and a number of interviews he carried out for anthropological research, *Cidade de Deus* introduces its audience to the origins, increase, and impact of an escalating violence— from petty thievery to a massive war among drug dealers— which ends up affecting every one of these marginal urban territory’s inhabitants.

Although previously classified as *autobiographical memoir*, *romance*, *testimonial novel*, and *semi-fictional documentary*, this chapter discusses Lins' *Cidade de Deus* and its film version, also entitled *Cidade de Deus* and adapted to the big screen by Brazilian directors Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, as compilations of *contemporary chronicles*. Through a comprehensive and comparative reading of the two versions, this chapter analyzes how Lins, Meirelles and Lund use the chronicle to both represent and “recreate” the *favela* as a *geography of urban violence*. This comparative reading discusses how these contemporary artists' decision to use the chronicle has resulted in an episodic and fragmentary representation that attempts to map the violent realities of the *favela*. Their focus on the simultaneity of violent events occurring at different venues in the *favela* serves to represent and prove how violence has saturated the existence of the *favelados* transforming their territory into a geography, rather than a chronology, regulated by vengeance and fear.

In addition, this comparative reading considers how the transference, or translation, from a written to a visual media has affected, both thematically and rhetorically, Lins' rendition of urban violence in the *favela*. As regards content, the translation of his text into film has demanded—due to time constraints and commercial demands— the exclusion of many of its sections and characters, the reconstruction of the episodes translated, and the re-definition of the narrative viewpoint. While Meirelles and Lund's decision to omit a large number of episodes has led to their rendition of a much less fragmentary narrative, their translation of the

episodes selected and the change in narrator have both led to a much less explicit or graphic rendering of violence.

As regards form, this comparative reading shows that while Lins constructs a “poetics of violence” which, contradictory at its core but effective in its impact, enables him to describe the most brutal acts in the most lyrical manner, Meirelles and Lund have opted for a more colloquial rhetoric to represent violence. The reason for such a choice relates to questions of audience and narrator and affects the type of representation of violence the directors produced. Their choice of a colloquial discourse makes sense considering that the directors decided to render the story from one of the *favelados*’ viewpoint, Busca-Pé, instead of from an omniscient narrator and that they produced *Cidade de Deus* with a large audience in mind. Their use of a more colloquial rhetoric results in a representation that “sounds” more aggressive and violent than Lins’ without being so. In the end, Lins’ “poetics of violence” shows more violence than Meirelles and Lund’s very graphic depiction.

In addition, as far as structure is concerned, Meirelles and Lund have constructed a much more temporal and less spatial narrative than Lins. Although the directors have kept the chronicle nature of Lins’ narrative, their version of *Cidade de Deus* is more chronological and relies more heavily on flashbacks than on spatial montages. Consequently, their representation of urban violence concentrates more on the ways violence has been transformed throughout time than on the ways it impacts spatially on the explored community at a given moment. Emphasizing the temporal over the spatial has resulted in a representation that focuses on how urban violence contributes to the physical and emotional deterioration of each of the characters, the city among

them, individually rather than on how violence impacts different sectors of the *favela* on an everyday basis. Thus, analyzing how Meirelles and Lund re-create or modify Lins' rhetorical and aesthetic devices in their translation of *Cidade de Deus* serves to explain the ways in which the choice of media has both affected these artists' representation of urban violence and altered the genre through which they have framed such representation.

To complement and contribute to the analysis of *Cidade de Deus*, this chapter includes a section about *Cidade dos Homens (City of Men)* — a TV series of nine independent episodes also directed by Meirelles and Lund, in collaboration with Lins and a team of other script writers and artists, released by Globo in 2003-2004. *Cidade dos Homens* tackles the phenomenon of contemporary life in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro through the eyes of Acerola and Laranjinha, two adolescent *favelados* who try to make ends meet without getting involved in the violence that permanently surrounds and tempts them.

Like *Cidade de Deus*, *Cidade dos Homens* operates through a fragmentary, chronicle-type narrative. However, as this study will show, because the episodes have been filmed more in the form of mini-documentaries— with hand-held cameras that move “untidily” as they follow the characters around the *favela* and the apparent absence of excessive aesthetic manipulation — *Cidade dos Homens* renders violence through a format that is more typical of Cinema Novo as opposed to the Hollywood format that has been appropriated for the shooting of *Cidade de Deus*.

Because of the manner in which it has been shot, *Cidade dos Homens* contributes to the discussion that originates this dissertation pertaining the relation between

space, violence, and representation. The television episodes show the *favela* against the territorial and economic background of middle and upper class Rio and, as a consequence, their discussion enables the identification of the “silences” in *Cidade de Deus* and the re-evaluation of its representation of the violent nature of *favela* life. Moreover, a reference to *Cidade dos Homens* facilitates the discussion regarding the current commodification and consequent manipulation of violence and its media representations. It helps to address not only the role violence plays as a product of mass consumption but also how its massive consumption has led to its inevitable normalization and trivialization.

The analysis of *Cidade de Deus* provided in this chapter shows how its many episodes or narratives, in spite of their interaction with and explicit reference to each other, are articulated, structured, and rendered as independent chronicles that narrate specific moments of urban life in the *favela*. Like the typical contemporary chronicle, each of these narratives stands at the intersection of journalism and fiction, history and anthropology, and testimony and reporting. In addition, they are all delivered by a narrator who behaves like the typical chronicler, or postmodern *flâneur*, who “travels” space, in this case the *favela*, in order to represent the circumstantial happenings that his wandering enables him to witness and, in some cases, participate in. In fact, it is precisely because they are narrated by a chronicler who moves around space that these narratives all work their rhetoric *spatially*. This is reinforced by the fact that the compilation of chronicles in *Cidade de Deus* has enabled Lins, Meirelles and Lund to treat “time” in *spatial* terms by breaking with simple chronological lines

and, instead, imposing synchronicity through the use of fragmentation, juxtaposition, digression, and inter-textuality.

What is innovative and valid about the representations of urban violence that Lins, Meirelles, and Lund have constructed is that the artists have chosen to show *favela* violence from the inside out. The *favela*, like the city, becomes the perfect source for a chronicler who aims to represent the many varieties of what seems “unrepresentable” violence; brutal acts succeed one another and are simultaneous with each other. Audiences access violence through the viewpoint of those who perpetrate it or suffer as its indiscriminate victims. By presenting the *favela* from its inhabitants’ viewpoint, these contemporary chroniclers allow those living on the margins, culturally, politically and economically speaking, to voice their stories of urban violence through image and text.³⁰

The reality of *favela* life fits perfectly into political scientist Guillermo O’Donnell’s theory about the existence of “a color-coded geographically oriented conception” of democratic practices in countries such as Argentina and Brazil. O’Donnell denotes three color zones according to the amount of state presence: *blue zones*— that have the highest degree of state presence, effective bureaucracy, and a well-functioning legal system—, *green zones*— “with a high degree of territorial penetration and a lower presence of the state in functional and class terms”—, and *brown zones*— with very little state presence and an almost absent legal system (1369). *Cidade de Deus* concentrates exclusively on those *brown zones* that the privileged citizens of the city want to ignore.³¹ These representations focus on the violence that exists within the *favela* limits and prove how violence results from a

“politics of space,” determined partly by state policies and partly by the media, that brings up the further marginalization of specific sectors of the urban population.

Poverty, moral and spiritual deterioration, out-of-control shootings, fear, suffering, and death become the everyday protagonists of the chronicles compiled in *Cidade de Deus*; chronicles that render stories too terrifying to be true but too real to be dismissed. Amateur thieves, addicts, dealers, murderers, pre-adolescent criminals, transsexuals, and corrupt police populate the pages of a text that – in both its versions— chronicles the history of the “City of God,” a geography whose essence is violence. Through this text, Lins, Meirelles and Lund address two interrelated questions regarding the phenomenon of urban violence: how to narrate violence and, in turn, how violence affects the characteristics of narration.

These contemporary Brazilian artists make urban violence aesthetically appealing while presenting it as real and tangible as it gets. Their representations map violence on Brazilian territory exposing their audiences to the intersection of the social and cultural systems operating in urban material and symbolic spaces that provoke such violence. Consequently, these narratives also intervene as critiques to the pressures of economic progress and global arrangements that turn citizens into aggressors and foster dangerous individualism. A discussion of these texts permits addressing what type of *geographies of violence* the chronicle format allows these authors to construct and how their decision to represent violence has determined their manipulation of the genre. “Falha a fala. Fala a bala” reads the epigraph to Lins’ *Cidade de Deus*. When the word has been rendered useless and powerless— in the absence of the word— the

subjects of the *geography of violence* described by Lins, Meirelles, and Lund interact through bullets, the only violent phonemes that can guarantee their survival.

I- *Cidade de Deus*: Violent Spaces, Fearful Conditions

The “City of God” Lins, Meirelles and Lund describe is no safe heaven for anybody. Death is present at every corner and the fight for survival ends up justifying any means. Lins’ choice of the title is paradoxical at its core because it not only has a material referent, the *favela* named “City of God” located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, but also brings reminiscences of St. Augustine’s *City of God*. In this original version, St. Augustine (353-430) establishes the differences between the “City of Men,” corrupted and carnal, and the “City of God,” sinless and spiritual.³² What makes Lins’ choice of a title paradoxical is that the “City of God” he describes in his narrative fits St. Augustine’s description of the “City of Men” but taken to its worst scenario possible.

However, unlike St. Augustine, Lins, Meirelles and Lund avoid passing judgment on the indecent and brutal actions they represent in their texts. Instead, they use their narratives as mirrors of a reality that needs to be known and understood as it is. At first sight, the *favela* described by *Cidade de Deus* appears to be a “pathological disorderly agglomeration” of unemployed loafers, abandoned women and children, thieves, drunks, drug dealers, criminals, and prostitutes used to live without piped water, sewage systems, garbage collection, and other basic urban services (Perlman 15). In the “City of God,” poverty leads to violence, violence to fear, fear to

impotence, and back to violence again. In this “marginal” world, there are no rules, just cruelty; there are no ethics, just self preservation; there is no justice, just revenge.

Right from the beginning of the narrative, Lins introduces his audience to the realities of *favela* violence.³³ Two *favela* adolescents, Barbantinho and Busca-Pé, are peacefully smoking marijuana at the side of a river when they suddenly realize that the water is turning red (11). Soon after that, dead bodies start coming down the current. In a tone both lyrical and rhythmic, the narrator juxtaposes colorful descriptions of the natural and the human, life and death, the local and the global:

A vermelhidão precedera um corpo humano morto. O cinza daquele dia intensificou-se de maneira apreensiva. Vermelhidão esparramando-se na correnteza, mais um cadáver. As nuvens apagaram as montanhas por completo. Vermelhidão, outro presunto brotou na curva do rio. A chuva fina virou tempestade. Vermelhidão, novamente seguida de defunto. Sangue diluindo-se em água podre acompanhado de mais um corpo trajando calça Lee, tênis Adidas e sanguessugas sugando o líquido encarnada e ainda quente [...]. Era a guerra que navegava em sua primeira premissa (13-4).

The emphasis on the color “red,” achieved through poetic repetition, becomes a foreshadowing of the bloody scenes that will dominate the pages to come. In addition, the irony implicit in the juxtaposition of nature— “sangue diluindo-se em água” –and brands—“calça Lee, tênis Adidas”— enables Lins to do both introduce the theme of consumption and start to explicitly establish the direct connection between the desire to possess and the exercise of material violence in the *favela*.

After this disturbing opening scene, the narrative flashes back to the origins of the “City of God.” The *favela* is described through its citizens, who bring with them:

dias para se ir à luta, soco antigo para ser descontado, restos de raiva de tiros, noites para velar cadáveres, resquícios de enchentes [...], vermes velhos em barrigas infantis, revólveres, fome, traição, mortes [...], pobreza para querer enriquecer, olhos para nunca ver, nunca dizer, nunca olhos e peito para encarar a vida, despitar a morte, rejuvenescer a raiva, ensanguentar destinos, fazer a guerra e para ser tatuado [...], ventres abertos, dentes cariados, catacumbas incrustadas nos cérebros, cemitérios clandestinos (16-17).

The lyrical tone of this long enumeration has the effect of softening the brutality of its content. Lins’ many chronicles describe a space in which the absence of violence is unthinkable. By the end of *Cidade de Deus* the audience has been exposed to so many episodes of violence that their memories of non-violence have almost completely vanished.

Lins’ narrative pays equal attention to space and subjects. Almost every character’s personal history is introduced through flashbacks. In fact, flashbacks become the main structuring device for the compilation of these urban chronicles of violence. With a few exceptions, characters are introduced while taking part in criminal or violent action. After that, the narrative flashes back to their childhood in an attempt to explain the reasons behind the violence they are exercising. The use of flashbacks enables Lins to fragment the narration— his narrator moves from one temporal and spatial geography to another— and, consequently, present the personal history of his characters in an episodic instead of in a chronological manner. This

fragmentation also serves to both reflect and stress the disruptive lives the *favelados* experience due to their permanent exposure to violence.

The flashbacks used to incorporate references to the childhood of Inferninho, Pará, and Pelé— three popular thugs in the “City of God”— are good examples of how, by looking at their past, audiences might be able to understand how a background of poverty and family dysfunction can push *favelados* into crime. Absent fathers, drugs, prostitution, exposure to everyday abuse, all lead these kids into resentment, frustration, and consequent brutal behavior.³⁴ In a world of no fairy tales, children grow up surrounded by crime and are told stories of robberies and shootings. They know that crime brings money and power faster than anything else. Honesty does not seem to pay. The *favela* is a geography in which values get to be redefined.

In fact, within the *favela*, violence becomes the means to all ends: it guarantees prestige and leadership, secures economic prosperity, and determines self-preservation.³⁵ Inho, later on renamed Zé Miúdo, is probably the greatest manipulator of violence in Lins’ text. Drugs and weapons transform him into the “owner” of the “City of God.” Lins creates a character that is highly aware of the politics behind the organization of urban space and the distribution of power. Inho knows how to appropriate and control space through the use of violence.

Violence is also exercised to dominate the domestic space. In those cases, violence becomes the way to vengeance. Interestingly, some of the most violent moments described in *Cidade de Deus* happen because of its perpetrators’ need to satisfy personal revenge. For example, very near the beginning of the narrative the narrator provides a detailed description of a man dismembering his baby son because

he believes his wife has been cheating on him. The dismemberment is rendered in an extremely graphic manner. After putting the baby on a kitchen table and securing his right arm, the father starts cutting the baby's forearm as the baby

revirava-se. Teve de colocar o joelho esquerdo sobre seu tronco. As lágrimas da criança saíam como se quisessem levar as retinas, num choro sobre-humano. O espírito do assassino travava uma luta [...]. Sentia o prazer da vingança [...]. Teve dificuldade em atravessar o osso, apanhou o materlo embaixo da pia da cozinha e, com duas marteladas na faca, concluiu a primeira cena daquele ato. O braço decepado não saltou da mesa, ficou ali aos olhos do vingador. A criança esperneava o tanto que podia, seu choro era uma oração sem sujeito e sem um Deus para ouvir [...]. Cortava o outro braço devagar [...]. Teve a ideia de não se utilizar mais do martelo, a criança sofreria mais se cortasse a parte mais dura vagorosamente. O som da faca decepando o osso era uma melodia suave em seus ouvidos. O bebê estrebuchava com aquela morte lenta. As duas pernas foram cortadas com um pouco mais de trabalho e a ajuda do martelo. O assassino levou a faca um braço acima da cabeça para descê-la e dividir aquele coração indefeso [...]. Juntou as partes do corpo como quem monta um quebra-cabeça, colocou tudo numa caixa de sapato [...] (68-9).

It is worth quoting this scene at length because it shows how pain and pleasure intermingle in the everyday life of the *favela*. Lins renders this brutal act in the most detailed manner possible. He produces, like a camera, close-ups of each and every moment of it. He strategically intermingles descriptions of action and feeling and action and thought, thus providing the passage with a rhythm of its own.

Instances of domestic violence abound: a man buries his wife and lover alive (112), a woman drops boiling water on her still-sleeping husband (247), an angry man rapes his pregnant ex-girlfriend (289). Violence in the streets permeates the homes of the *favelados* and yet, with every new representation of violence, Lins keeps surprising his audience. Just when they think they have seen it all, readers are exposed to another unimaginable moment of brutality. The rape described on page 289 serves to illustrate this. After forcing his victim to have oral and anal sex with his gang members, the rapist beats her almost to death and

[p]endurou-se no maior galho que poderia quebrar, forçou-o para baixo, desceu, forçou-o para cima, com os olhos rasos de vingança. A sua força não daria para arrebendar aquele galho, mas acrescida de sua fúria foi fácil.

Enfiou-o em seguida, na vagina da grávida (288-9).

The violence employed is extreme but the narrator never turns around. He witnesses the rape and renders it in detail.

In each of these cases the bodies of the victims become *geographies of violence*, territories upon which violent action is carried out. The victimizers' bodies also turn into weapons of mass- destruction capable of exercising the most violent against the most innocent. Behind closed doors violence escalates to the unlimited. The home is transformed into a destructive space where each domestic tool has the potential of becoming the most dangerous and damaging implement. While out in the streets – the public *geographies of violence* of the *favela*—there are laws that determine the limits of violence, at home rules are non-existent. Premeditated violence turns its perpetrators into machines of destruction void of any morality or compassion.

However, while in the domestic sphere violence can remain “hidden” or “untold,” in the streets it must be advertised if it is to be effective. Exercising violence guarantees one’s acceptance into the gang and, because the *favela* is ruled by its gangs, violence is allowed to be used only when beneficial to the drug business or if needed to secure leadership. Numerous depictions of such “allowed violence” are scattered throughout the text as audiences witness how gang leaders execute each other in brutal ways— the most well-known form the “soviet attack,” in which “a quadrilha toda se posicionava ao redor do corpo e atirava duas vezes simultaneamente”(329). Like the instances of domestic violence included, executions are described to the detail:

Biscoitinho pediu o fuzil a Miúdo, colocou o cano dentro da boca do menino e disparou oito vezes, movimentando em círculo o cano do fuzil para ele nunca mais xingar a sua mãe. Depois Toco Preto esfaqueou seu corpo para ele também nunca mais deixar de obedecer a ordem sua. O corpo do menino era somente um amontoado de sangue (324).

The narrative also contemplates what happens after the killings. Lins never “leaves” his characters at the time of their execution. Instead, the chronicler carefully describes how the rest of the community, most of the times the victims’ families or friends, reacts to the crimes perpetrated. For example, after the assassination of the child above included, the narrator shifts the narrative focus to the victim’s mother who is described

tentando juntar sua cabeça distribuída pelo chão [...]. Um pedaço de cabeça num lado da viela, um dos olhos solto, intato, como se estivesse olhando para

ele, pequenos pedaços ensanguentados espalhados, e somente a parte de baixo do rosto presa ao pescoço (324).

The chronicler also shows his audience what is simultaneously happening in other areas of the “City of God,”

o clima era de festa: apenas uma baixa. Biscoitinho contava com orgulho como a cabeça de Filé com Fritas foi se esfacelando. Miúdo o elogiava, pagava cerveja para ele, abraçava-o, dizia que ele era o cara mais responsa da quadrilha, no intuito de incentivar os teleguiados (324).

The numerous descriptions of executions and of the community’s reactions to them become a narrative of their own within the larger context of the text. They help the chronicler to map the *favela* as a *material geography of violence* that cries, facilitates, and, sometimes, even celebrates crime. Lins spreads these descriptions all through the narrative to establish rhythm and to develop on the theme of violence by means of repetition with variation. His audience witnesses numerous crimes but at no point are two of them rendered alike. Due to the fact that narratives are brief and the chronicler is moving around the *favela*, he is able to register the many possibilities of violent action without becoming monotonous. He can stress the overwhelming presence of violence without falling into the trap of sounding repetitive.

Nevertheless, *Cidade de Deus* does not concentrate merely on the violent side of gangs. Lins also includes countless examples of how Miúdo and his gang administer justice in the *favela*.³⁶ Although crime is established as their organizing principle, Miúdo and other gang leaders serve their community by offering them protection against unnecessary aggression. For instance, in probably one of the cruelest episodes

of this text, Miúdo “teaches justice” to a group of young boys who have been assaulting the *favelados*:

surgiu Biscoitinho com dois meninos amarrados numa corda. Vez por outra dava coronhadas em suas cabeças já ensanguentadas [...]. ‘Não pode roubar ônibus da favela! A genta já tinha falado! Vai passar no corredor polones!’ Os quadrilheiros formaram uma fila dupla, obrigaram os ladrões a passarem três vezes entre eles, dando-lhes coronhas sem nenhuma piedade. Bigolinha, de nove anos, desmaiou. Miúdo [...] dando gargalhadas, descarregou sua pistola nove milímetros no corpo de menino. Deu ordem para Camundongo Russo atirar no pé do outro ladrão; depois, pegou outro revólver, apontou para o menino e mandou que fosse embora sem olhar para trás, do contrário morreria (244).

Lins constructs this scene in an interesting manner. After describing how Miúdo and his men torture and shoot some of the children, he shifts the narrative’s viewpoint to that of the child that Miúdo has already set free:

O menino saiu capengando [...]. Se saísse vivo daquela, nunca mais roubaria dentro da favela [...]. Colocou o rosto na quina do prédio para ver se ninguém o estava seguindo e recebeu um tiro no centro da testa detonado por Miúdo (244).

After this, because the child has already been killed, the narrative shifts back to Miúdo’s viewpoint:

E como se nada tivesse acontecido continuou a conversar com os quadrilheiros, sem olhar para Pardalzinho, que o chamava de maluco como os olhos cheios

d' água. Dois dias depois, um jornal trazia a foto dos meninos mortos dizendo que havia sido um crime bárbaro (245).

The transition in viewpoint from victimizer to victim and back to victimizer forces the audience to shift perspectives and locate themselves simultaneously at different locations. It enables the audience not only to verify that every victimizer can become a victim at any time but also to “walk” the *favela* streets in the *favelados*' shoes. Lins constructs the passage in spatial terms, as a chronicler who moves in order to register every simultaneous detail of the action witnessed. Again, because the action involves torturing and killing, the space created in the narrative is one defined by violence.

Lins' *Cidade de Deus* proves that Miúdo's justice system proves ineffective in the long run. Everyday shootings between the police and *favela* criminals claim all sorts of victims. The *favela* offers no safe “free zones” for its many inhabitants. There are numerous examples of this in this text— a man shaking “a cabeça duma criança forçando-a a voltar à vida sem sucesso: uma rajada cortou-lhe o peito, esburacou seu pulmão”(139) and a mother incapable of protecting her baby girl from a gunshot to her head (342) are just two of them.

Reality shows that violence cannot be that easily manipulated to fit one's own objectives. Once out there it may affect anyone at any time. Even those who attempt to control it, lose hold of it. Lins uses Pardalzinho's assassination to prove this. Pardalzinho is a relevant character in this tale of violence because he acts as a sort of pacifier all throughout. However, ironically enough, Pardalzinho's pacifying effect on Miúdo becomes the most evident when he is gone from the narrative. His sudden

assassination leaves Miúdo with no one to control his violent impulses. Resentment and anger at the loss of his best friend lead the gang member to act even against his own rules. Immediately after Pardalzinho's death, Miúdo rapes Zé Bonito's girlfriend and kills Zé Bonito's grandfather. Miúdo has broken his own rule of not inflicting violence against those *favelados* who are not involved in criminal life and, once that rule is broken, violence has no limits whatsoever.

Miúdo's conscious deceiving of the *favelados*' trust obliges those non-violent subjects to get involved in violence. Bonito is the prime example of this. He stands to prove what the system can do to the individual. Soon he realizes that in the *favela*, as Inferninho claims at one point, "O negócio era matar antes de morrer" (133). After the death and rape of his loved ones, Bonito joins Cenoura— Miúdo's most important rival— and a personal matter turns into a war of mass destruction. And it is here that the confrontation between both gangs goes beyond any imaginable limits. Once the inter-gang battle begins, the geography of the *favela* is forced to accommodate it. The material violence exercised during the confrontation has a profound impact on both the territorial division of the "City of God" and its inhabitants' lifestyles.

The last section of *Cidade de Deus* portrays opposite gangs shooting each other in open fire. Soon any excuse is good for joining the war:

Os irmãos de Cabelo Calmo engrossaram a quadrilha da Treze, assim como os irmãos menores de Bonito engrossaram a sua quadrilha. Irmãos, primos, tios e toda sorte de parentes, e também os amigos dos quadrilheiros, entravam para essa ou aquela quadrilha porque se sentiam na obrigação de vingar o estupro, o assalto, o roubo ou qualquer outra ofensa e para isso tornavam-se soldados

(350).

Armed confrontations last longer every time and having the means to purchase the most powerful gun becomes the key to remaining in power. His position threatened and his best friend gone, Miúdo stops trusting his own men and orders them to execute each other. At the end all comradeship is gone; it is a battle of individuals against each other.

In “Youth Crime in Sao Paulo: Myths, Images, and Facts,” sociologist Sérgio Adorno states that the attraction that young inhabitants of low-income housing or the slums in Rio de Janeiro feel towards organized crime, and particularly drug trafficking,

is not a reaction to a world of social injustices and moral degradation, or to the shrinking opportunities offered by the formal job market. On the contrary, it is a response to that which is offered by consumer society and the possibilities for affirming a masculine identity associated with honor and virility in an era characterized by the restriction and reduction of the options for personal choice. (in Rotker 2002 113).

Adorno’s claims that violence in the *favela* results from the need to affirm masculinity and the desire to participate actively in consumer society are very well illustrated by *Cidade de Deus*. Lins’ text portrays a world in which manhood is defined by men’s capacity to be violent or perform traditional “macho” activities, “‘Meu irmão, eu fumo, eu cheiro, desde nenenzim que peço esmola, já limpei vidro de carro, já trabalhei de engraxate, já matei, já roubei [...]. Não sou criança não. Sou

sujeito homem!”(318). In Lins’ text it is the violent males who make decisions and ultimately have the power to control the *favela*.

With a few exceptions, the feminine has almost no voice in this “city” of male maneuverings and aggressive interaction. Very few scenes concentrate on the female characters and very few of these characters are seen producing any action of significance, most times because they are aware that action may develop into a lack of personal safety or the deaths of their loved ones. Women populate the narrative to cry over their dead sons’ bodies, beg their husbands to get away from crime, or become objects of sexual desire,³⁷ but never participate in or directly benefit from violence.³⁸

Violence also becomes a means of participating in consumption. The young *favelados* of the “City of God” are aware of the fact that material possessions bring status.³⁹ The fact that, according to anthropologist and cultural studies scholar Néstor García Canclini, “identities depend on what one owns or is capable of attaining”(2000 16) is indeed very problematic for those living in need because, most of the times, those items that could gain them prestige are out of reach in their marginal community:

O legal era comprar as marcas esportivas, mas eram muito caras, e, talvez por isso, as mais bonitas. Sonhavam com riqueza, e a riqueza era morar na beira da praia, ter samambaia na sala, vestir-se de grifes e ter um carro com vidro ray-ban, pneus tala larga- sem faltar o cadrom para a máquina ficar com barulho responsao-, ter um cachorro de raça para passear na praia pela manhã e à tarde, comprar logo de uma vez uns três quilos de maconha para não precisar ficar

indo à boca-de-fumo toda hora. Se fossem ricos, só comprariam skates importados, bicicletas Caloi 10 e relógios a prova d'água, dançariam nas melhores pistas e só comeriam mulheres gostosas (153).

Consuming what the middle and upper classes possess might enable these young *favelados* to live among “pessoas de rostos límpidos por não conviverem cara a cara com a morte” (271), in a safe space— a non-violent geography— where citizens enjoy life without constantly worrying about the possibility of death. However, *Cidade de Deus* proves that the *favelados*' attempt to become active consumers has a negative effect on both themselves and their community. To become consumers a large number of young *favelados* gets involved in criminal activities and, consequently, ends up consuming drugs and weapons. Lins' text proves that marginal populations are not necessarily brought into the modern economy through consumption. On the contrary, because consumption leads to violence, it produces the further marginalization of the *favelado* population. In addition, as Adorno claims, the need for consumption translates itself into an explosion of individualism that fosters the divisions among the *favelados* themselves prompting further violence.

Lins also utilizes the topic of consumption to comment on racial politics in Brazil. The access to consumption not only determines the possibility of belonging to different geographical spaces within the city but also reflects the social violence implicit in racial privilege. Lins' text proves that race determines access to consumption and that the *favelados*' awareness of that provokes much of the resentment that leads to violent behavior. Thus, while *Inferninho* expresses his “vontade de matar toda aquela gente branca, que tinha telefone, carro, geladeira,

comia boa comida, não morava em barraco sem água e sem privada”(23), Grande, another *favela* criminal,

matava policiais por achar a raça a mais filha-da-puta de todas, essa raça que serve aos brancos, essa raça de pobre que defende os direitos dos ricos. Tinha prazer em matar branco, porque o branco tinha roubado seus antepassados da África para trabalhar de graça, o branco criou a favela e botou o negro para habitá-la, o branco criou a polícia para bater, prender e matar o negro. Tudo, tudo que era bom era dos brancos. O presidente da República era branco, o médico era branco, os patrões eram brancos, o-vovô-viu-a-uva do livro de leitura da escola era branco, os ricos eram brancos, as bonecas eram brancas e a porra desses crioulos que viravam polícia ou que iam para o Exército tinha mais era que morrer igual a todos os brancos do mundo (175-6).

With this quote Lins is able to summarize how race has very much determined the urban distribution of space in contemporary Brazil. Historical violence, exercised physically and symbolically against the African slaves, has led to present political, social, and economic violence against many of those who have descended from slaves. Consequently, violence in the *favela* also becomes a means of publicly protesting the injustices of the present system.

Finally, Lins discusses the connection between *favela* violence and the media—which becomes one more protagonist in *Cidade de Deus*—proving that the “culture of violence” promoted by television, films, and newspapers “feeds into popular imaginings and behavior in everyday life” (Rotker 2002 4). In Lins’ text, the media promotes violent action by setting examples for the *favelados* to follow. For instance,

the chronicler describes how a group of gang members enjoys being persecuted because “depois contariam aos amigos todos os detalhes da fuga. Lembravam-se de Bonanza, Buffalo Bill, Zorro. De quando em vez, zigzagueavam como os heróis da televisão”(57). In another instance, the chronicler compares the confrontation between Miúdo and Bonito to “um filme de guerra. Eles eram os americanos, e os inimigos, alemães” (322).

In addition to imitating the violence they have learned from the media, these young *favelados* are eager to appear in the news and committing the most violent crime is a sure means of getting their attention:

Na verdade todos se orgulhavam de ver o motel estampado na primeira página. Sentiam-se importantes, respeitados pelos outros bandidos do conjunto, das outras favelas, pois não era para qualquer bandidinho ter seus feitos estampados na primeira página dum jornal, e, também, se dessem o azar de ir presos, seriam considerados na cadeia por terem realizado un assalto de grande porte (76).

The media attention guarantees status and safety in the *favela* and in jail. As the war between rival gangs intensifies, Miúdo becomes obsessed with appearing in Rio’s most popularly read newspapers: “Miúdo, ao saber que seu nome estava nos jornais, ficou tão entusiasmado que, a partir daí, pedia para Camundongo Russo, o único alfabetizado da quadrilha, ler os jornais todas as manhãs” (325). As Paulo Ribeiro claims, “desta forma, os grupos sociais são silenciados e, pior, são transformados em consumidores seriais- em simulacros de suas próprias expressões” (132).

It is interesting to see how the media very much determines action and inaction in the “City of God.” Criminals decide to hide if the newspapers follow them too closely:

Sandro Cenoura mandou todo mundo se entocar [...]. A polícia estava dando em cima, os jornais todos os dias faziam matéria sobre Cidade de Deus, seu nome sempre vinha estampado na primeira página (358).

Newspapers provide useful information that criminals can use to their own benefit:

esses veículos eram rica fonte de informação. Por eles, sabia-se das suspeitas policiais e suas formas de enfrentamento. Não havia termometro melhor para avaliar quanto a imprensa e a polícia sabiam (331).

Police action is also influenced by what the media says. At one point, Belzebu, one of the most feared police officers in the “City of God,” decides that he needs to “prender Ferroada, era isso o que teria que fazer, porque ele era o bandido mais procurado do Grande Rio, os jornais mencionavam seu nome quase todos os dias” (167).

Thus, the media becomes a parallel space to the *favela*, a *symbolic geography of violence* in itself, where violent action is represented and from where violent behavior develops. The media is also a space that links the *favela* to the “outside world.”

Newspapers describe the “City of God” as the most dangerous place in Rio de Janeiro:

A rotina atroz dos combates passou a povoar as páginas policiais e a amedrontar os alheios, só informados pelos noticiários. As edições se esgotavam ainda cedo, a audiência dos telejornais e dos programas especializados no tema subiram muito na favela (331).

The media follows the action as the conflict becomes more violent and “depois de um mês, os jornais diziam que o número de mortes em Cidade de Deus era maior do que o da Guerra das Malvinas no mesmo espaço de tempo”(356).

In this sense, the fact that it is through the media that the outside and inside of the *favela* know about each other proves anthropologist Jesús Martín-Barbero’s theory that although news move more fluidly between different sectors of the population, there is less actual communication between them: there is an “erosion of sociability—not of society in terms of institutions, but of *sociability*, that is, the sense of daily social relationships” (in Rotker 2002 30). The media and other official discourses contribute to a configuration of urban imaginaries, particularly that of fear in this case, that promote stereotypes that prevent social contact between the *favelados* and the rest of society.

However, the media also becomes the means through which the *favelados* can urge the government to take action in order to stop the violence around them:

Os familiares dos teleguiados mortos ligavam para os jornais com o propósito de a imprensa pressionar o governo para dar um fim à guerra, que durava dois anos, já que as queixas feitas à policia não surtiam efeito, pois a maioria dos quadrilheiros havia sido presa, só que depois eram quase todos soltos mediante suborno de Miúdo (369).

In a system in which the police are not to be trusted, the media become a critical member of the penal system by both publicly exposing those responsible for the crimes committed and demanding action.

In fact, a lot of the violence generated inside the “City of God” comes from the police in charge of the area. Lins has stated that

[o] que mais provoca a violência são os confrontos com a polícia. Isso se dá por causa da falta de uma política que treine e eduque a polícia, que é do mesmo extrato social dos bandidos. A vida tanto do policial como do bandido é muito angustiante (Chagas).

Lins’ *Cidade de Deus* includes a vast number of examples in which the police act brutally, beyond the limits of the law. In one of the scenes, Belzebu mercilessly executes two gang members from behind:

o policial e o sargento entreolharam-se. Combinaram tudo ali sem fazer uso de palavra. O primeiro tiro da pistola calibre 45 do sargento atravessou a mão esquerda de Pelé e alojou-se em sua nuca. A rajada da metralhadora de Belzebu rasgou o corpo de Pará. Um pequeno grupo de pessoas tentou socorrê-los, porém Belzebu proibiu com outra rajada de metralhadora, desta vez para o alto. Aproximou-se dos corpos e desfechou os tiros de misericórdia (94).

Pelé and Pará are sacrificed like animals, the witnesses unable to help them. Lins also includes scenes that show how the police benefit from the drug business by supplying weapons and ammunition to the gangs.

A corrupt police is responsible for the development of a corrupt jail system that teaches many of its inmates to behave violently. Within prison walls guardians rape their inmates (231), inmates learn criminal strategies (344), the innocent become guilty (232), and the guilty are set free by means of bribes or because they know how

to handle the system (235). The audience of Lins' text witnesses how the police collaborate in the criminalization of the poor. Jails become institutional *geographies of violence* where bodies are tortured and an alternative system of violence is established and learned.

Lins is successful at depicting how violence originates from and permeates every sector of Brazilian society. By concentrating on how the pressures of a consumer society, the media, and the justice system also collaborate in the "promotion" and development of violent acts, Lins proves that the *favela* is not a self-generating *geography of violence* but a result of a socio-economic system that discriminates against specific sectors of the population. *Cidade de Deus* shows that it is not always that easy to determine who is to blame for originating and executing urban violence.

The use of the chronicle enables Lins to discuss how a variety of urban phenomena influences and determines the practice of violence in the *favela*. The chronicler juxtaposes episodes of violence in the *favela* with episodes of violence in jail and the media coverage and exploitation of those episodes in order to reflect on how they relate to and affect each other. Using the chronicle also enables Lins to represent the overwhelming presence of violence in its many different manifestations. The writer registers a wide range of violent events and reactions proving how common a practice violence is among the *favelados*.

Lins' main themes get thoroughly developed in Meirelles and Lund's translation of *Cidade de Deus* to the big screen.⁴⁰ In the film, violence in the *favela* also becomes both a means to improve one's status and to guarantee one's security and a response to brutal behavior executed upon the loved ones. Meirelles and Lund present

a portrayal of *favela* life very similar to Lins': the *favela* is depicted as a marginal space, lacking in services and sanitary conditions, ruled by gangs that both control and benefit from the drug business, abandoned by the state and the police— who also participate in the commercialization of weapons— and affected by the media— that covers its crimes without a true understanding of the reasons behind its everyday violence.

Like Lins, Meirelles and Lund make sure each of their characters has a different and clearly recognizable personality. At the end, characters are remembered as individuals and not as a “mass” of stereotypical *favelados*. Both versions, the written and the visual, create independent yet intersecting narrative spaces that collaborate in the construction of each of the characters. Focusing on the characters as individuals enables Lins, Meirelles and Lund to represent violence from simultaneous but different viewpoints, to visualize the various existing *geographies of violence* from alternative locations.⁴¹

Like in Lins' *Cidade de Deus*, in the film those who try to escape the violent geography of the *favela* never succeed. Instead, they are prevented from doing so by being mercilessly executed. *Cidade de Deus* proves Massey's claim, already considered in the first chapter of this dissertation, that “most of us are consigned to positions that we would wish to resist, shift, and reconfigure” (in Kaplan 154). Meirelles and Lund's film clearly states that access to material means, as well as to specific cultural or political structures, determines people's possibilities of “movement” or “stagnation” within the system.

Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* also emphasize, like Lins,' the role consumption plays in understanding much of the violence practiced in the *favela* circles. A number of scenes show Zé Pequeno and Pardalzinho wearing gold necklaces and watches, accumulating stolen electronics, riding motorbikes, and buying clothing of famous international brands. The most obvious of all is ultimately drug consumption that determines criminal hierarchies and redefines *favela* relationships and power structures.

Of equal relevance is the consumption of imagery, which is as constant and dangerous as the consumption of any other damaging product. Like in Lins' text, the media is a central presence in Meirelles and Lund's film. Finding one's name on the front page of the city newspapers or having Busca-Pé take photographs of the gang become fundamental happenings in the development of the final war between Zé Pequeno (Miúdo) and Mané Galinha (Bonito). The advantage that Meirelles and Lund have, however, is that they have been able to include film footage and photographs of real life *favelados* in order to reinforce the authenticity of their representation of violence. Seeing these visual documents at the end of the film awakens the audience to the fact that what they have seen is not a mere aesthetic product but a reality that needs to be acknowledged.

Meirelles and Lund's treatment of the female in the film is also similar to Lins.' Reviewers agree that one of the film's main flaws is its blatant disregard for its female characters. The directors who constantly use digressions to fill the audience on the back stories of the male characters use none for the female. The women in this film become objects of affection, lovers, mothers, benefactors, accomplices, but usually

disappear without a trace. Women come and go without a story of their own. Their story is only relevant in relation to that of their men.⁴²

It is indeed surprising that having been co-directed by Lund, a female artist, the film version of *Cidade de Deus* has stayed that loyal to Lins' as far as the treatment of gender is concerned. Considering the facts that, by the time she was asked to participate in the production of *Cidade de Deus*, Lund had already finished her "News from a Personal War"— a documentary on *favela* violence shot in 1998— and that the directors did modify Lins' text in various ways, it would have been interesting to see how developing some of the female characters to their fullest would have affected the final outcome of the representation of violence provided by the translation.

Finally, both Lins' and Meirelles and Lund's representations of violence in the *favela* show how violence can restructure space and redefine power relations within that space. As the war between Miúdo and Bonito intensifies, both "texts" describe how the "City of God" is divided into two sections:

Miúdo liberara os assaltos, estupros, pagamentos de pedágio e roubos na área do inimigo. Em contrapartida, mesmo Bonito desaprovando, seus quadrilheiros fizeram a mesma coisa. As duas regiões foram demarcadas; quem nunca se envolvera com a criminalidade estava sujeito a morrer sem saber, de uma hora para outra, só por morar nessa ou naquela região. Qualquer um poderia ter laços de parentesco e amizade com o inimigo, por isso não era conveniente permitir o livre trânsito dos moradores de uma área à outra. [...]. O armamento pesado adentrou na paisagem cotidiana dos habitantes locais. Os amigos não se procuravam mais, os parentes não se podiam visitar. Cada macaco no seu

galho. Era o que diziam (Lins 331-2).

Violence affects personal relationships and forces the *favela* inhabitants to restrict their movement to specific areas. The innocent become prisoners in their own city, subject to death and pain if they dare challenging the drug lords in war. Movement is controlled and censored even within each of the leaders' sections. Violence paralyzes the *favela*'s everyday activities:

As aulas nas escolas foram canceladas e ninguém saía para o trabalho. As mortes eram consecutivas [...]. Aos poucos, os pais, os últimos a saber que os filhos estavam na Guerra, foram tomando providências: mudavam-se, mandavam os filhos para a casa dos parentes longe da favela ou até mesmo levavam consigo os teleguiados para o trabalho quando não tinham outra opção (Lins 369).

Thus, *Cidade de Deus* proves Lefebvre's claim, also discussed in the first chapter, that "space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react upon them" (31). When *favela* space is redefined by violent conduct, alleys become death traps and open spaces dangerous shooting spots. The public space is banned to the *favela*'s inhabitants as they are forced to stay inside where safety is not guaranteed either.

What is particularly dangerous about this redistribution of the public space is the effect it has on the possibility to develop any sense of community. Psychologist Nancy Córdia explains:

As fear rises, people develop survival strategies that restrict interpersonal

contact. Families who do not have the means to leave isolate themselves, limit their contacts with the community, remove themselves from collective life, and confine themselves to their homes. The less contact there is between people, the greater the possibility of distrust (in Rotker 2002 163).

As a result, a community of fear is born in which, according to Ulrich Beck, “solidarity surges out of fear and is converted into political force” (in Rotker 2002 195). In *Cidade de Deus* the *favelados* leave their homes out of fear, follow orders out of fear, and even kill out of fear. Fear produces a volatile situation in which the lack of personal security prompts violent attitudes that otherwise would not have originated. Lins’ text and Meirelles and Lund’s film are inhabited by lonely characters who fight to merely survive the every day in a material *geography* that has them literally trapped.

Not only are the directors also “loyal” to the original version in their development of the main themes but also in their use of structural devices such as flashbacks or the organization of the narrative into sections. However, Meirelles and Lund’s version differs from Lins’ in the directors’ choice of narrator, their treatment of the theme of religion, their purposeful “silences”— exclusions of scenes included in the original version— and their re-writing of the conclusion, all of which ultimately affect their representation of violence because they have an impact on the characteristics of the *geography of violence* illustrated in the film.

To begin with, Meirelles and Lund choose to make Busca-Pé the narrator and one of the main characters of their version of *Cidade de Deus*. Busca-Pé, who provides unobtrusive voiceover and many times apologizes to the audience for getting ahead of

himself, becomes the hero of Meirelles and Lund's version. By the end of the film, and only armed with a professional camera, Busca-Pé becomes a sort of war correspondent who takes photographs of the *favelados* in the middle of open-fire confrontations. The camera transforms Busca-Pé into the chronicler of his community and it allows the young boy to show to the outside world a *favela* not known by or accessible to many.

While in Lins' text Busca-Pé is just a minor character who witnesses the violence in his community without significantly intervening, in the film he represents the possibility of hope, of living a decent life. Meirelles and Lund make Busca-Pé, the non-violent subject among a majority of violent ones, the hero of their extremely belligerent version. As film reviewer Joshua Tanzer claims, the fact that the hero is one of the "good guys" gives *Cidade de Deus* a complete different tone from other productions like *The Godfather* or *GoodFellas* because, this time, the audience is not meant to sympathize with the gangsters but, instead, to move with Busca-Pé (Rocket) among them (pars 8).

Busca-Pé's heroism lies in his capacity to retain his innocence and humanity intact, to stay non-violent, and, therefore, to define his manhood in other terms. He *chooses* not to inflict pain on others; he *chooses* to be loyal to his friends, and he *chooses* to work to make a living. He does not fight the *favela* criminals back and, at the end, when he has graphic proof of police corruption, he does not give the photographs to the authorities in order to protect himself from future most probable gang intimidation. He knows better than that. As Meirelles explains, Busca-Pé does

not need to be a hero, he just needs an opportunity to have a decent life and he gets that (2002).

Developing the character of Busca-Pé to its fullest extent and using him as the central chronicler of the events also enable Meirelles and Lund to stage the movie from his viewpoint, thus capturing “the atmosphere of apprehension and horror that envelops the City of God”(pars 10). Busca-Pé chronicles the events from the standpoint of the non-violent *favela* dwellers who know that when one of the drug lords is on the rampage, they need to keep quite and out of view in order to survive. It is somehow paradoxical, however, that Busca-Pé’s way out of the *favela* is his access to its everyday violence. He capitalizes on that violence. His photographs of gang members, dead bodies, and fire confrontations give him a job, a recognized name — at the end of the film Busca-Pé presents himself as “Wilson Rodríguez, photographer”— and the chance to develop his manhood both sexually— he loses his virginity to one of the newspaper’s reporters— and emotionally.⁴³

Busca-Pé acts as a “cultural translator” for the audience of this film. He is the one who explains how the drug business in the *favela* operates, how arrangements between drug dealers are made, and what the rules of interaction are. Meirelles and Lund have intelligently chosen for this role a character who is detached enough from the brutal crimes committed but close enough to understand how and why they happen. It becomes easier for the audience to identify and sympathize with a narrator who is both critical of the violence he records and eager to leave the violent geography of the *favela*.

The fact that Busca-Pé is the privileged narrator of the film is relevant to the discussion of *Cidade de Deus* as a collection of chronicles representing urban *geographies of violence* for two main reasons. On the one hand, his presence as a photographer enables the film to justify its incorporation of freeze shots and, consequently, establish two parallel spaces of violence: the spaces Busca-Pé occupies—which the film's cameras show as they follow him around the *favela*—and the spaces he chooses to record with his camera— shown through his camera lens.

On the other hand, having one main narrator and following him as he develops as a character provides the film with a more temporal and less spatial narrative when compared to Lins' original. Meirelles and Lund do rely on fragmentation and superimposition and do compile a selection of episodes to recreate the realities of *favela* life. However, having unified the narration through one main character provides their version with a more chronological structure: while in the film Busca-Pé's witnessing of violence is affected by his maturing into adulthood, in Lins' *Cidade de Deus*, the omniscient witnessing is not affected by the temporal variable. This enables the audience of Lins' version to concentrate more on the events and less on the narrator as a perceiver of the events. Thus, the rendition of violence seems more objective and detailed in Lins' than in Meirelles and Lund's version.

Secondly, an interesting modification Meirelles and Lund have introduced to their version of *Cidade de Deus* refers to their treatment of religion. Both versions include episodes that directly address the issue of religion in the *favela*. In Lins,' Tutuca makes a pact with the devil—

Olhou para o céu, depois para o chão, concluiu que Deus ficava muito longe [...]. Temia a ira de Deus, mas tinha vontade de conhecer o Diabo, faria um pacto com ele para ter tudo na Terra. Ao perceber a proximidade da morte, se arrependeria de todos os pecados, ganharia dos dois lados (26)

—, Inho’s and Bonito’s mothers pray to keep their children save (157, 327), Martelo converts to religion (128), and Antunes decides to leave punishment to God instead of taking justice into his own hands— “Aquela manhã para Antunes tinha o ar mais puro, manhã em que ele deixaria de lado a loucura da vingança. O Deus, todo-poderoso, se encarregaria de castigar Miúdo, quem era ele para fazer justiça se a justiça divina é mais forte?”(365).

In the film the conversion scene works much better than in Lins’ narrative mostly because the directors are able to juxtapose image and sound to create a combination of opposites. While Alicate, a thief escaping from the police, walks the streets of the “City of God,” a voiceover reads a passage from the Bible:

He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortune, in Him I will trust. Fear not the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor the destruction (2002).

The biblical passage is suddenly interrupted by a “Stop, motherfucker!” shouted by an officer pointing a gun. While Alicate ignores the call, the innocent man walking behind him gets scared and starts running. He is shot and killed by the police. The voice finishes the Bible passage, “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty,” as the camera follows Alicate from behind (2002).

Another interesting religious moment in the film, missing in Lins' text, is the meeting between Pequeno and a Candomble⁴⁴ priest. A highly-elaborated stylistic scene, this moment is key to Pequeno's transformation into the "drug lord" of the "City of God" he later on becomes. It is Lins' Tutuca's pact with the devil redone. It is dark, candles are everywhere, smoke comes from the joint the priest is smoking, the priest's laughter echoes in the distance. The priest tells Pequeno that "Exu-the-Devil is the light that shines through. It brought you here. Why remain in the City of God where God has forgotten you?" (2002). The question becomes central to the whole narrative indeed.

While the conversion scene enables Meirelles and Lund to produce the intersection of violence and the religious— to juxtapose the *favela* as a *material geography of violence* with the Bible as a *symbolic geography of non-violence*—, the Candomble scene incorporates a third world into the narrative: hell. After that scene, Pequeno becomes the devil incarnated. The "City of God" is transformed into a hellish space where only those capable of exercising violence can claim a place.

Thirdly, it is relevant to discuss how purposeful "silences" or omissions have affected Meirelles and Lund's translation of Lins' text as a whole. Considering those "silences" is pertinent because most of them are related to how Meirelles and Lund have chosen to represent violence in this film. One of the most interesting "silences" of the adapted version refers to an aesthetic choice on the part of the directors: instead of showing violence in graphic detail, Meirelles and Lund have opted for suggesting it. While in Lins there are detailed and very explicit descriptions of violent

happenings, the directors have argued that the main challenge of this film was to “show” a great war without “really showing” it (2002).

Thus, paradoxically, audiences are able to “see” more in Lins’ text – whose visual nature makes of it a very hybrid narrative—than in Meirelles and Lund’s film. For example, in most of the film’s scenes of inter-gang shootings the audience only hears the gunshots without seeing the blood. While in the film the camera shows the corpses after an inter-gang shooting, the audience never sees the victims suffering. This is possible and remains realistic because, in many occasions, the shootings are rendered through low-angle shots, with the camera facing the shooter instead of the victim. In addition, hand-held cameras move fast through alleys to show corpses lying on the pavement but never stop long enough to focus on their injuries.⁴⁵ Another clear example of the directors’ intention to “show without showing” is the scene in which Zé Pequeno rapes Mané Galinha’s girlfriend. Again, the scene shifts from a low-angle shot of Pequeno, as if seen from the victim’s position, in the process of raping the girl, to a close-up of Mané Galinha’s face pressed against the ground and listening powerlessly to his girlfriend’s shouts.

In addition to this choice, the directors have strategically excluded the most violent scenes in Lins’ text and “softened” the ones they chose to include. A good example of this “softening effect” is the scene in which Pequeno orders Steak com Fritas to kill one of the “Runts.” While in Lins two of the children are savagely killed, in the film, Pequeno lets one of the children go. The same “softening” effect takes place during Steak com Fritas’ execution scene. While Lins graphically describes

how Steak com Fritas' head is blown away by eight consecutive shots, Meirelles and Lund only show the corpse of the young boy lying on the pavement.

The exclusion of some of Lins' most violent scenes could be partly justified by the time constraints of a two-hour film.⁴⁶ Meirelles and Lund had to be selective of what scenes to show. Another plausible explanation for those exclusions could be the fact that by deciding to concentrate on Busca-Pé and his development as a character, the directors needed to balance violence and non-violence in order to prove that not all the *favelados* are potential "Zé Pequenos." However, why did the directors decide to "soften" the scenes they chose to include? And why exclude precisely the most violent ones? It might have been a question of how much Meirelles and Lund thought their audiences could handle. The "softening" effect might also have had to do with Meirelles and Lund's conscious attempt to avoid a spectacularization of violence.

However, although the *geography of violence* presented by Meirelles and Lund is less bloody and cruel than the one presented by Lins, it is equally dense and overwhelming. Because of the film's hectic pace and its many discursive digressions, mostly flashbacks, the cameras do not have time to stop and render violence in detail. However, at the end of the film, the audience has been "bombarded" with scenes of extreme aggression. Although Lins' version exposes the audience to more moments of violence than the film does, and, although Meirelles and Lund have edited the scenes in ways that represent violence in an in crescendo manner while in Lins' version the degree of violence is constant, the directors have successfully condensed a 400-page book into a two-hour film thus producing an effect of intense accumulation that emphasizes the effects of the violence represented.

Such accumulation of violence is also achieved by focusing on the changes the “City of God”—as a material geography—has undergone throughout the decades. In Meirelles and Lund’s *Cidade de Deus* the *favela* as a material space participates directly in the articulation of violence. Its infrastructure motivates and enables its inhabitants to commit crimes, hides its criminals, gets re-articulated and re-organized through its inhabitants’ aggressive confrontations, and reflects the moral decay of its inhabitants. In the first phase, when the *favela* is getting populated, spaces are open—constructions are low—and houses look clean. There is control in the geography and an organized layout. However, as the narrative moves into the 1970s the “City of God” grows upwards, its bungalows living in the shadows of high multi-story buildings, its streets much narrower. Once into the 1980s, the *favela* has become a labyrinth from which escape is almost impossible. The 80s show a “City of God” with narrow alleys, dirty houses, starving dogs, and no possibility of looking at the horizon when the sun sets.⁴⁷

The *geography of violence* presented by the film is also different from Lins’ because it is mostly public and it does not leave the *favela*. While in Lins there are numerous scenes of domestic violence, in the film cameras do not go inside the homes of the *favelados*. Meirelles and Lund concentrate their focus on the streets, on the public. They describe a violence that everybody can see and a few can escape. The film also omits Lins’ prison scenes. The inclusion of these scenes allows Lins to illustrate how some of the violence in the *favelas* is inflicted by the system originally designed to stop it. Lins portrays prisons as mere extensions of the *geography of violence* of the *favela*.

Instead, in the film, the police are corrupt but not necessarily violent; they participate in the drug dealing business but do not beat or kill the suspects. Thus, while Lins shows that violence in the *favela* is just one example of the violence permeating the entire social context, Meirelles and Lund limit their rendition of violence exclusively to the “City of God,” a limitation that might be dangerous if appropriated to reinforce existing stereotypes that describe low-class citizens of color, particularly those living in the *favela*, as criminal and “uncivilized,” and render the geography of the *favela* as the only violent one.

Meirelles and Lund have also excluded Lins’ episodes that featured homosexuals or tackled racial issues. In the film, men are always shown in a position of power as far as their sexuality is concerned: they can be shot but never “penetrated” or raped. The same happens with the racial issue. While Lins makes sure that his critique of the Brazilian racial hierarchy is explicit and well-developed, in the film the references to race are subtle and scarce. For the most part, race becomes a silent matter in the film. For example, when “translating” the rape scene, Meirelles and Lund have chosen to use a mulatto instead of a blond. Thus, Meirelles and Lund make it look as if the rape were not caused by Pequeno’s desire of a “whiter” woman but by his unjustifiable impulse to make Mané Galinha suffer.

By silencing the homosexual and racial issues Meirelles and Lund avoid addressing how discrimination practiced among the *favelados* and against each other is also conducive to violent behavior. In addition, such omission restricts Meirelles and Lund’s representation of violence to the merely physical. In their version, violence is exclusively related to the need to possess material things and the power

that derives from it. Violence occupies a physical space; it can be seen and touched. On the contrary, some of Lins' characters act or react criminally as a result of practices of symbolic violence that provoke feelings of resentment or hatred.

To conclude, a key relevant change that needs to be discussed is the film's contradictory, bitter-sweet ending. The final shot of the film is a long take of the "Runts" as they plot to rule the "City of God" one day, much like Li'l Zé. Their conversation is tainted by violence. The young *favelados* enumerate their future victims in an extremely desensitized manner, as if killing were the equivalent of going to school or watching a movie.⁴⁸ The end sends the message that the chain of violence and poverty remains unbroken and unchallenged. Killing is the answer to any issue. However, Meirelles and Lund, who strategically make Busca-Pé walk past the "Runts" as they are entering one of the *favela* alleyways, end the film with Busca-Pé's voiceover comment: "I forgot to say. My name isn't Rocket anymore. I'm now Wilson Rodríguez, photographer" (2002). Busca-Pé's comment closes the film on a positive note. He is proof that it is possible to escape a life of crime and violence when there is enough determination to do so.

Lins also ends his text in a bitter-sweet manner. The last two consecutive episodes in his *Cidade de Deus* consist of two simultaneous scenes that center on how Miúdo is shot and dies and on the description of a New Year's Eve celebration taking place in the streets. However, unlike Meirelles and Lund, Lins does not connote the idea that there is still hope of getting out of the *favela*. In Lins' *favela*, murder and social life and death and fun intersect with each other all the time. The ending is no different. The cycle keeps being the same. There is violence interrupted by short, as

the briefness of the passage that describes the New Year's Eve's celebration suggests, non-violent moments.

Making Busca-Pé the main character of their adaptation enables Meirelles and Lund to end their version of *Cidade de Deus* more optimistically. Instead, Lins chooses to end the narrative with a focus on Miúdo. Consequently, both narratives “leave” the *favela*, the *geography of violence* they have represented, differently: while Lins' narrative stays in the *favela* witnessing one more episode of *favela* violence, Meirelles and Lund's narrative imaginatively follows Busca-Pé outside the *favela* where the possibility of non-violence is welcoming him to be something else.

II- *Cidade de Deus*: An Aesthetic of Violence

This section discusses the rhetorical and stylistic characteristics of Lins' *Cidade de Deus* and Meirelles and Lund's translation in order to evaluate how each of these artists use the format of the chronicle to represent the phenomenon of urban violence. Because both versions have organized the narrative by means of a very postmodern structure—they both use flashbacks, digressions, and multiple viewpoints—it is relevant to analyze the main rhetorical devices they use and the effects those devices have on the type of *geography of violence* they deliver. Due to the constant shift in space, pace, and time, the narratives that result are highly fragmentary. The audience gets the story of the “City of God” and its citizens through a compilation of scenes or episodes that describe simultaneous moments of *favela* life. Such a fragmentary nature is one of the reasons why reading them as contemporary chronicles is plausible.

The narration in both cases moves hectically both in time and space. To begin with, both texts introduce their characters through the use of flashbacks and digressions. Although in both cases the narratives follow the growth of the main characters from children to grown-up men, at certain times, they break off on tangents to add information or clarify a situation. The film uses sudden zoom shots, lightning-fast camera pans, overlaps, freeze frames, and abrupt cuts combined with slow motion moments, ultra-artsy dissolves, sudden jocular digressions, rewinding and fast-forwarding, particularly when Busca-Pé— who behaves as a distracted storyteller who forgets details, leaves descriptions inconclusive, and, every now and then, acknowledge his confusing digressions— introduces new characters.

Film critic Randal Johnson explains that the most recent productions of the Brazilian avant-garde have defined themselves in terms of refusal “of linear narrative, of closure [...], of conventional continuity” (327). As a consequence, their relation to the audience is “one of aggression, creating what Ismael Xavier has called a ‘festival of discomfort’” (327). Meirelles and Lund, like Lins, create a representation that refuses “linear narratives” and “conventional continuity.” However, their intention is not necessarily to create discomfort in the audience. Instead, their use of flashbacks enables the directors to force the audience to see how, many times, without the necessary background, unfair judgments are made. In addition, the inclusion of flashbacks guarantees that the various plot resolutions are clearly developed for the audience.

The experimentation with the use of viewpoint is another element that justifies the reading of *Cidade de Deus* as a compilation of contemporary urban chronicles. As

discussed in chapter one, contemporary chroniclers have a tendency to *speak less* and *listen more*. Nowadays, many chroniclers are aware of the need to allow those on the margins, either economically or culturally speaking, to voice their demands. Lins, Meirelles, and Lund structure and present their narratives exclusively from the *favelados'* viewpoint and, consequently, they succeed at “silencing” the outside of the *favela*—Brazil’s middle and upper classes living in privileged urban sectors. By focusing on the *favela* and its people, this group of Brazilian artists makes the margins into the center of their narrative. It is the material *geography of violence* of the *favela*, as opposed to the famous and well-known *touristic geography* of Rio de Janeiro, that their texts are interested in representing.

The narrator in Lins’ *Cidade de Deus* takes the audience through the *favela*’s streets and into its homes in order to describe *favela* life in its entirety. However, Lins avoids centralizing the narration through one narrative voice. The narrative shifts viewpoints constantly and this constant shifting creates the impression of movement though fragmentation. The text gets split up into separate chronicles of violence rendered through different views. However, it is the cumulative effect of these chronicles what truly allows the audience to understand how violence is exercised and lived in this geography characterized by extreme violence. In a postmodern move, Lins involves his audience in the construction of the narrative by indirectly asking them to relate and compare the many *favelados'* experiences and views.

Like Lins, Meirelles and Lund produce movement through their use of alternative points of view. Although Busca-Pé’s viewpoint is predominant, the directors do not

centralize all the narration through him. In fact, the film plays with the use of viewpoint even more than Lins' text does. Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* jumps around in time, frequently showing us the same scene from different perspectives. This looping, stuttering narrative style constantly forces us to reappraise characters and situations. Up until the end, we keep seeing new facets of characters we thought we knew (Harrison, par 14).

A good example of this experimentation with viewpoint is the apartment scene, during which Busca-Pé visits his friend Blacky to buy drugs for his friends. As Busca-Pé and Blacky are doing the transaction, Zé Pequeno and his gang knock on the door. The first time that the camera registers the event is inside the apartment and, consequently, the audience "sees" the scene from Blacky's and Busca-Pé's perspectives. The second time, the directors render the scene from outside the apartment, with a camera closely following Pequeno as he waits at the door. Meirelles and Lund make an art of the shift in viewpoint. They do not simply show the same scene from different angles and through the eyes of different characters but they also force their audience to see each new version differently. They achieve that by spreading the various perspectives of the same event throughout the narrative, instead of presenting them all together in a consecutive manner. Intersecting the different versions of the same scene with other scenes that provide additional information about characters or particular events, allows the audience a different understanding and, consequently, a different judgment, of what they have previously watched.

Meirelles and Lund also create the impression of alternative viewpoints through their organization of high-angle and low-angle shots. There is indeed an established

pattern to it: low-angle shots are usually used to frame crimes from the point of view of the victim, thus making the victimizer the focus of attention. These shots catch the criminal's facial expressions, which tend to reflect satisfaction at the infliction of pain. High-angle shots are used when "soviet-attack" killings take place or when gangs are moving through the *favela's* streets in the direction of new spaces where crimes will be committed. Meirelles and Lund take those high-angle shots as far away from their objects as possible, as if to give the impression that it is God who is looking through the camera. This allows them to avoid excessive morbid scenery and display the *favela* geography from far above. These aerial shots serve to present the city as a dehumanized geometry that destroys its apparently insignificant and expendable subjects.

The experimentation with shifts in viewpoint proves that the truth can never be known until all the voices involved have been heard. In *Cidade de Deus* the sophistication of the intellectual's writing that characterized the chronicle of the first decades of the twentieth century has been replaced by a combination of the writer's voice and the voices of those who do not write for a living but share the urban environment with the writer: the illiterate, the children, the young, the old, and the criminal. In this case, Lins, Meirelles and Lund produce a narrative that renders the *favelados'* many stories through highly complex aesthetic means.

Some critics believe that describing violence from the *favelados'* viewpoint can have dangerous consequences. Dereck Smith claims that Meirelles ends up exchanging our rational mindset with an irrational, detached and insensitive one. The violence becomes almost entertaining because death

has no meaning. This is all a game to them and hence a game to us since they are our eyes. The horror of their circumstances and the depravity of their existence fail to seem urgent and lack the emotional punch they should have because the film's only perspective is from people who think this is the norm (par 3).

It is not logical to claim that because the audience is able to see violence from its perpetrators' viewpoint they will fail to perceive it as brutal. Instead, this inside perspective allows the audience to understand the *favelados*' position a little better without ever abandoning their "safe" position of middle- or upper-class viewers. In addition, the audience's lack of reaction towards the violence witnessed may not necessarily have to do with the choice of viewpoint. As regular consumers of images, audiences are constantly exposed— through the news, advertising, film, and TV series— to representations of different sorts of violence. As a result of this saturated exposure to violence, audiences may either reject or enjoy it instead of reacting to it.

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In addition, some reviewers feel that both the use of flashbacks and the excessive fragmentation and speed with which the film has been edited are a drawback to the message Meirelles and Lund want to transmit. Because the pace is too quick and the film is too crowded, it is almost impossible to keep the various characters in focus or develop an emotional connection to them. Audiences remain detached, "looking at the big picture and its stylish presentation instead of seeing into the hearts and hurt of its subjects" (Overstreet, pars 9). The same argument could easily be articulated regarding Lins' *Cidade de Deus*: Lins' narrative also moves too much and includes

too many characters for the readers to be able to follow the many stories that take place or develop sympathy for the characters.

However, the fact that *Cidade de Deus* is an attempt to represent the many spaces of violence in the *favela* both explains and justifies the type of rhetoric and aesthetic chosen for its rendering. Lins, Meirelles and Lund have produced extremely fast-changing and multi-eventual/multi-character narratives because they attempt to reflect how permanent violence has transformed the life of *favela* citizens into an unpredictable continuum of aggressive experiences and inevitable human loss. In spite of its speed and fragmentation, the narrative, in both cases, still devotes enough time to develop the main protagonists of the story. Even the minor characters are developed enough to leave a significant mark after they are gone.

Shifts in viewpoint, excessive speed, and the manipulation of narrative distance are crucial tools for the audience's understanding of the *favela* space this group of Brazilian artists attempts to represent. Each of these aesthetic choices enables them to portray the "City of God" as a prison, with alleys that either lead to sure death or become the silent "witnesses" of inhuman crimes. There is, nevertheless, a crucial difference between Lins' text and Meirelles and Lund's film as far as the chronicle nature of their narratives is concerned. It could be argued that the film has more of a testimonial or documentary nature than Lins' text does. Although, like Lins, Meirelles and Lund work their rhetoric spatially by employing fragmentation, fast-forwarding and freeze shots, and they have structured the film so that simultaneous moments of violence intersect each other, their work makes a hardest attempt to establish a chronology that clearly follows the lives of Busca-Pé and Zé Pequeno in particular.

This happens because Meirelles and Lund have reduced Lins' hundreds of personal stories to a few crucial ones. Making Busca-Pé and Zé Pequeno the protagonists of their film has affected the characteristics of the narrative. Developing the film around these two characters has allowed Meirelles and Lund to "write" a sort of *Bildungsroman*, thus giving the film a more classical structure. Consequently, in spite of their use of a very "hectic" and postmodern aesthetic, Meirelles and Lund render a narrative that is quite linear. In spite of their use of multiple viewpoints, Busca-Pé ends up being the privileged chronicler of his community. The camera follows him as he walks the city, witnesses crimes, and uses his camera to register them. Unlike other contemporary chroniclers, who move freely in order to collect the information they need to produce their narratives, Busca-Pé's mobility is restricted by the violence around him.

Although Wilson claims, as stated in the first chapter, that the contemporary chronicler attempts to represent the city as he/she perceives it to be, a "transgressive space, which dislocates established frontiers and forces apparent opposites together" (109), Meirelles and Lund prove that sometimes frontiers are not that easy to dislocate and that certain opposites in the urban space are never forced to face each other. Although Busca-Pé's artistic ability enables him to move beyond the limits of the *favela*, his photographs are evidence that the majority of the *favelados* never have a chance to cross the social and economic frontiers imposed by the outside.

By making Busca-Pé the chronicler of this community Meirelles and Lund are able to produce, in terms of form, a meta-text: their film includes a camera within the camera. Thus, the audience is able to see the *favela* through a variety of lenses. A

meta-text is produced in terms of content as well: Busca-Pé makes choices of what he wants to photograph and creates a “geography of the shot” within the “geography of the *favela*” already presented by Meirelles and Lund. The close-ups of his camera in both the opening scene – when Pequeño orders him to photograph the gang right in the middle of the street— and the closing scene— in which “the last battle is shown largely through his viewfinder, a telling equation of photographic and military sightlines”(Paul Smith, par 7)— are good proof of this.⁵⁰

Another interesting scene that illustrates this is when Busca-Pé is brought into Pequeno’s place to photograph the gang. When he first enters the room and is given the camera, Busca-Pé looks terrified. He fearfully takes the photographs requested by Pequeno and the rest of the gang. However, as his ability to photograph gives him confidence, he starts giving orders to the gang so that they pose as he wants them to. Through the camera he is able to design and expose *geographies of violence* that he can construct and control. The camera becomes a weapon which “shoots” to empower him against those who can literally “shoot” him with their guns.

The inclusion of photography is also relevant because it adds to the documentary nature of this film. The directors also make use of hand held cameras to reinforce the effect of the improvised act, thus creating the illusion of documentary filming. In addition, as discussed above, the inclusion of documentary video footage— that replays the scene in which Mané Galinha is interviewed by the police outside the hospital right after one of the gangs’ armed confrontations has taken place—and the real-life pictures of some of the *favelados* characterized in the film in the credits at

the end, reflects “the brilliance of the film’s recreation of reality and the intractability of the problems it treats” (Smith 2003).

By emphasizing its documentary nature *Cidade de Deus* follows in the tradition of much of the most significant Brazilian cinema in its “imprecise border between documentary and fiction” (Johnson 335). However, Meirelles and Lund produce a mapping of their country that many in a position of privilege or power do not want to see. Their rendition of the “social and political context” of the *favela* world allows their national and international audiences to see a different Brazil and understand the rules by which the most underprivileged have to live.

The film also follows in the tradition of Brazilian *Cinema Novo* and *Underground Cinema*. In Cinema Novo directors “searched out the dark corners of Brazilian life—its *favelas* and its sertão—the places where Brazil’s social contradictions appeared most dramatically” (Johnson 33).⁵¹ Like Cinema Novo directors, who “narrated, described, poeticized, discussed, analyzed, and stimulated the themes of hunger” (Johnson 68), Meirelles and Lund produce *Cidade de Deus* in an attempt to expose this aesthetic of hunger and critique contemporary social arrangements that bring about unfair class differences, thus generating violence.⁵²

Lins uses his text with similar purposes. His *Cidade de Deus* provides a critique of the effects of progress and globalization on marginalized societies and makes a strong political statement about social and economic injustices in Brazil. His narrative exposes how borders are constructed and hierarchies redefined within the urban space. Only a few of the *favelados* in Lins’ text are ever able to transcend the social borders imposed by their violent realities.⁵³

However, unlike Cinema Novo directors, who presented a cinematic portrait of Brazilian society conformed of two broad groups, peasants and slum dwellers on the one hand and socialites on the other. The latter group [...] a leisure class that travels around in flashy American cars, drinks Scotch at poolside, is enamored of abstract painting and French books, frustrated in marriage, and given to unconventional erotic behavior; a parasitic group that never works and lives in luxury [...]. The poor [...] rejected by a society in which money circulates freely (in Johnson 282), both versions of *Cidade de Deus*, as it has already been said, choose to completely avoid references to the middle or upper classes and, instead, stay exclusively on and with the margins.

In addition, what makes Lins' and Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* different from Cinema Novo and Underground Cinema productions is their complex aesthetic quality. Partly due to an extreme scarcity of finance capital for film production, partly due to their rejection of Hollywood models, Cinema Novo and, later on, Underground Cinema directors, rather than imitate dominant cinema, "which would make their work symptomatic of underdevelopment, chose to resist by turning 'scarcity into a signifier'" (in Johnson 379). In his manifesto "For an Imperfect Cinema," Julio García Espinosa explains that Cinema Novo aimed at acting like a warning "against the technical perfection, beautifully controlled surfaces" which "lulled audiences into passive consumption and that were contrary to the needs of a cinema that should involve the audience" (in Chanan 1983). García Espinosa claimed

that “a film that remains incomplete without a responsive audience taking it up is useless” (in Chanan 1983).⁵⁴

Instead, although *Cidade de Deus*, in its two versions, does demand a responsive audience, Lins’ and the directors’ aesthetic choices have forced their narratives to deviate from the “dirty screen” and the “garbage esthetics” of the two Brazilian cinematic movements. While Lins utilizes very complex stylistic devices to render his representations of violence in the *favela*, Meirelles and Lund have produced a film marketed for an international audience. In order to do so, the directors successfully combined a very Brazilian theme and cinematic ideology with a very foreign and postmodern aesthetic mostly borrowed from Hollywood contemporary productions.

Meirelles’ use of the camera and his experimentation with time frames show that the director is a master of the postmodern aesthetic. *Cidade de Deus* is proof that Meirelles has the necessary talent to represent a serious contemporary issue with a contemporary and very entertaining format. However, numerous critics consider Meirelles and Lund’s aesthetic choice very problematic. According to them, *Cidade de Deus* ends up having a numbing effect on the audience. Film reviewer Peter Rainer explains that, at times, Meirelles

seems to be showing off the violence as if it were a new product line. The distinction between the depiction of violence and its exploitation is paper-thin. We are made to witness horrific acts of cruelty, and yet there is something unseemly in the way Meirelles glamorizes them with fancy effects: split screens, slo-mo, jump-cuts (2003).

While some claim that the film “sensualizes the violence cycle and makes a fetish of poverty” (Morris, par 8), others argue that because every act of violence in *Cidade de Deus* is presented differently, “as if the director saw each atrocity as another chance to wow us,” “the effect is that their impact is diminished, almost to the point of nothingness” (Heilman, par 2).

Cidade de Deus has been compared to other international films on urban violence such as *Goodfellas*, *Amores Perros*, and *Pulp Fiction*. Critics claim that Meirelles has borrowed the aesthetic principles of those films and that this borrowing has led to a spectacularization of violence that may have a negative and dangerous effect: that of making the brutal entertaining to the eye without producing a critique of it. Meirelles and Lund have borrowed aesthetic principles from these films— the structuring of the narrative into chapters that focus on different characters, the use of flashbacks, the circular nature of the narrative (all three films start from what seems to be the end, flash back and get back to the first scene to then add from there), and the rhythmic combination of violent and non-violent episodes. In addition, like *Goodfellas*, *Amores Perros*, and *Pulp Fiction*, *Cidade de Deus* deals with urban violence and poverty, describes a hyper masculine world in which women become either sexual objects or useful links in the drug business, and proves that pressure to consume leads people into crime.

However, in spite of these similarities, Meirelles and Lund’s film is very different from the other three in the way it chooses to present violence. While *Goodfellas*, *Amores Perros* and *Pulp Fiction* show violence indiscriminately and, sometimes, even purposelessly, *Cidade de Deus* relies more heavily on the suggestion of

violence.⁵⁵ The fact that *Cidade de Deus* is based on real life events acted out by real life *favelados* also differentiates this film from the others, particularly from *Pulp Fiction* and *Goodfellas*. While Meirelles and Lund utilize a specific aesthetic that can properly fit their rendering of real life violence in the *favela* world, Scorsese and Tarantino choose violence to fit their aesthetic purposes.⁵⁶

In fact, in its treatment of urban violence *Cidade de Deus* has more in common with productions like Luis Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* (1951) and Hector Babenco's *Pixote* (1980) and *Carandiru* (2003) than with the above mentioned Hollywood productions. *Cidade de Deus* shares with *Los Olvidados* and *Pixote*

its topic (delinquent children), its source (sociological documentation), its setting (the Third World metropolis), its style (documentary-inflected), its casting strategies (a mix of professional and nonprofessional performers), its focalization (the children themselves), and even its episodic structure (in Johnson 412).

Although *Los Olvidados* and *Pixote* work with an aesthetic of light typical of Cinema Novo— imagery in white, blacks and greys mostly— these two films as well as *Carandiru* and *Cidade de Deus* all immerse their audiences in the world of the poorest and the most forgotten.

Like Lins and other contemporary chroniclers, Meirelles and Lund use *Cidade de Deus'* many scenes of violence to make a political statement. Theirs is a compromised piece of work. Although the directors have paid a lot of attention to the aesthetic elements of the film, their interest in bringing Lins' narrative to the big screen is far from being "predominantly aesthetic." This film is also intended to make

a critique of the social and economic pressures that prompt the youths of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro into violence.⁵⁷

Both versions of *Cidade de Deus* are extremely hybrid narratives that represent the space of the *favela* as a *violent geography* ruled by confrontation and brutality. Although the film has modified the chronicle format of Lins' narrative and renders it in a more linear way, there is still a fragmentary and chaotic nature to both versions. Neither of them produces a "rhetoric of the promenade" that organizes the discontinuities of urban life for the audience. On the contrary, these urban chronicles of violence aim at reflecting a chaos that cannot possibly make any rational sense to those outside of it. However, Lins, Meirelles and Lund manage to lead their audiences into an understanding of the reasons behind and the consequences of violence in the *favela*.

III- Cidade de Deus vs. Cidade dos Homens

Lins, Meirelles and Lund present a somber depiction of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. Their *Cidade de Deus* chooses to merely concentrate on the possibilities of violence, while ignoring other cultural or social aspects of *favela* life. However, lately, the artists have contested such depiction with *Cidade dos Homens*,⁵⁸ a TV series that narrates the everyday experiences of Acerola and Laranjinha— interpreted by Douglas Silva and Darlan Cunha, two adolescents from one of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* who also participated as actors in *Cidade de Deus*. Produced and directed by a team composed of Meirelles, Lins, Lund, Jorge Furtado, Cesar Charlone, Guel Arraes, Rosa Amanda Strauzs, Paulo Morelli, George Moura, Eduardo Tripa, Melanie

Dimantas, and Regina Case, this series takes the audience into the *favela* world in new ways.

Cidade dos Homens works as the perfect complement to Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus*. Both narratives represent the realities of life in the *favela* and the risks of routinary violence; both reflect on the connections between the need to “consume” or “possess material things,” the drug trade, and crime; both render the narratives through a predominantly male viewpoint; both use actors that live in the *favela* and have been filmed in situ;⁵⁹ and, most relevant to this discussion, both are rendered in the form of contemporary chronicles. Like the chronicle, each of *Cidade dos Homens*' episodes is brief, deals with contemporary matters, and concentrates on one specific episode of the urban experience. In each case, the chronicler—Laranjinha, Acerola, or, sometimes, an omniscient one—takes the audience on a trip through the *favela* and its many public and private spaces.

Regarding rhetoric and style, both *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* have been constructed in a similar postmodern fashion: both use hand-held cameras and a variety of color filters to guide the audience through time and viewpoint changes; both juxtapose high-speed and zoom shots; both rely heavily on the visual; and both break with linear narrative through the use of flashbacks. In addition, both include cameras within the camera—reflected through freeze shots, when characters film or photograph other characters, and the inclusion of slide shows and documentary footage.

However, *Cidade dos Homens* concentrates mostly on the *non-violent side* of the *favela*. While *Cidade de Deus* depicts the *favela* as a *geography of urban violence*

and includes violent happenings in almost all the scenes, *Cidade dos Homens* addresses *favela* violence without making it the central focus of the narrative. Instead, the TV series presents the life stories of two *favela* members who make a daily effort to stay away from the surrounding violence of the place they inhabit. As Darlan Cunha claims in one interview, *Cidade dos Homens* proves that the “favelado pode namorar, pode trabalhar, pode estudar, pode jogar futebol [...]; não porque nasceu favelado va a morir traficante”(Meirelles 2003).

Cidade dos Homens is also different from *Cidade de Deus* in its inclusion of scenes that show the contrast between *favela geography* and *tourist geography*. While in *Cidade de Deus* the audience stays always within the marginal world of the *favela*, and, consequently, does not “see” beyond its geographical limits, in *Cidade dos Homens* the cameras offer multiple shots of both the *favela* against a background of tourist Rio de Janeiro and of tourist Rio de Janeiro against a background of uphill *favela* developments. According to the perspective they want to reinforce, the directors choose one or the other to dominate the scenery. Because the scenes of the outside and the inside of the *favela* are juxtaposed and balanced in number, the directors succeed at challenging the dichotomy center/periphery: in these narratives, *tourist* Rio de Janeiro stops being the exclusive center of interest.

Like *Cidade de Deus*, *Cidade dos Homens* comments on the connections between power and territoriality. However, *Cidade dos Homens* takes the audience even deeper into the spatial distribution of the *favela*. Cameras move constantly up and down the hills in order to follow naked or “Nike” feet either escaping from the police or other gang members or running to the encounter of beloved friends and partners.

Moving up the hill enables the directors to reflect how space relates to power: the higher in the *morro* characters are located the more powerful and violent they are. In addition, Acerola and Laranjinha move around the *favela* with ease. The young characters know its geography, understand its distribution, and have access to its hidden spaces. However, not always is that access open to them. As in *Cidade de Deus*, a number of episodes of *Cidade dos Homens* show a *favela* dominated by gangs who determine its inhabitants' movement proving that fear also factors in when mobility is concerned.

Three very interesting episodes that address the intersections between space, violence, and power are “A Coroa do Imperador” (The Emperor’s Crown), “Os Ordinarios” (The Commoners), and “Correio” (Mail). In “A Coroa do Imperador,” the directors juxtapose a school history lesson about Napoleon’s empire with the realities of the drug business in the *favela*. In one scene that places Acerola at school, the young boy uses typical *favela* language—“morro,” “bocas,” and “filho da puta”—to show the movements of Napoleon’s forces on the map of Europe. In the following scene the audience listens to the professor lecturing about the demise of Napoleon: while the professor explains the lesson, a slide show presents images of well-known *favela* criminals and their confrontations with the police, as if the audience was listening to the lesson from Acerola’s perspective.

In “Os Ordinarios,” a group of one middle-class Brazilian and two upper-class Japanese adolescents spend a day with Acerola and Laranjinha. Using one of the Japanese children’s digital camera, the boys take pictures of the many moments they live together. Frozen images of the *favela* and the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, of

shopping malls and parties with the *favelados*, are juxtaposed at the end of the episode to create a tourist album very different from what the audience would expect to see.

These two episodes, then, break with the typical dichotomy *favela/non-favela* by showing how both worlds interact and, consequently, affect each other. Although geographically speaking the *favela* is officially detached from the rest of the city, the characters of these episodes travel beyond existing physical borders in order to experience the “other side.” Their crossing enables the directors to show how violence affects both sides. For example, in “A Coroa do Imperador,” while at school the children *talk* about examples of historical violence, once back in the *favela* they *live* violence in its many contemporary versions.

Finally, “Correio” addresses the difficulty of making the disorganized structure of the *favela geography* fit official representations of the urban space. In this episode, Acerola and Laranjinha, who have gotten a job as *favela* postmen, go into downtown Rio de Janeiro to return a letter whose addressee they have not been able to locate. In order to find the addressor, the children follow a map a bystander offers them. When Laranjinha looks at the map, he realizes that their *favela* has not been included; it is nowhere to be seen. The space occupied by his and other *favelas* has been marked in green on the map, represented as “morros” or other mountain formations. The absence of the *favelas* on the map exposes the official attempt to “hide” the city’s marginal spaces behind a representation that only shows the side that benefits the tourist industry and the privileged sectors. Moreover, it is also a way of “silencing”

the many experiences of material and social violence to which the *favelados* are exposed on a daily basis.

When Acerola and Laranjinha get back to the *favela*, they convince a group of gang members to draw one of their neighborhoods. The gang leaders enjoy the idea but order the children to name the streets and alleys only after “important, powerful people,” that is after those gang members who control the business in the *favela*. The camera follows Acerola and Laranjinha as they attempt to draw the streets of the *favela*, a task almost impossible considering the fact that *favelas* are natural formations and, therefore, have no planned structure to them. The effort and difficulty implicit in organizing the *favela* through “foreign” means make a relevant statement about the symbolic gap that separates “official” and “unofficial” spaces and their realities. In addition, the fact that the streets must be named after powerful gang members explains how symbolic practices in the *favela* are also determined by violence. In this marginal space, power and the distribution and control of material and discursive spaces are tightly related to the execution of violence.

Cidade dos Homens exposes its audience to a geography of the *favela* very different from the one presented by *Cidade de Deus*. Although it can also be read as a compilation of contemporary chronicles, the series provides its audience with a better sense of what living in a *favela* is like for those who choose not to engage in violent behavior. Thus, the *favela* is not represented exclusively as a *geography of violence* but also as a space where friendships develop and relatives and neighbors support each other. *Cidade dos Homens* also does a better job than *Cidade de Deus* at establishing the connection between the geography of the *favela* and its surrounding

spaces. The *favela* is seen as part of a larger urban context which, in spite of its attempts to marginalize it, cannot ignore its presence.⁶⁰

While *Cidade de Deus* has become a product of mass consumption among Brazilian and international audiences and *Cidade dos Homens* was watched by an enormous number of spectators in Brazil, the commodification of these two productions and the capitalization of violence that has derived from it both lead to further discussion regarding the politics and economic interests behind cultural representations and the entertainment industry: Are the artists discussed in this chapter successful at doing something else than simply reflecting the everyday violence of *favela* life?; and, can their representations of urban violence challenge the hierarchies of the existing establishment?

Janice Perlman believes that the existence of the *favelas* is useful not only on the social and political levels but also on the cultural level because

the favelados provide much of the vitality for bourgeois culture even while they are disdained by it. Their slang, their music, their soccer, their sambas- all these become part of the life and entertainment of the middle class (260).

This proves that “the masses of the favelados can be easily and conveniently manipulated to serve the fluctuating and varying needs of the system” (260).

Perlman touches upon an interesting point when she claims that the *favelados* can be easily manipulated to serve the needs of the middle and upper class system. In fact, those who “consume” cultural products such as *Cidade de Deus* or *Cidade dos Homens* are able to be exposed to the “other side” without the need to interact with those who live in it. The audience is able to connect with their “fellow” citizens living

on the margins only through image and sound. The extreme violence depicted by these representations is welcomed by an audience who, comfortably sitting at the movie theatre, witnesses it without any personal risks involved. They both depict a world, a particular *geography* that audiences feel intrigued about and want to experience without necessarily having to materially encounter it.

However, Meirelles claims that the film has promoted change regarding *favela* policies instituted by the government. After the film was released, President Lula approached the director and told him that due to his film he had decided to change his policies of public security (Chagas 2002). The director has also commented that producing *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* has given some *favela* youths the possibility of getting a decent job and finding a way out of the *favela*'s everyday violence. In spite of their marketing success, and consequent commodification of the *favela* reality, these artists' representations have also fulfilled a "social" goal: they have been used to raise awareness among middle and upper classes and, most importantly, they have brought about some positive change for those who became the objects of those representations.

Conclusion

The comparative reading of *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* has allowed the discussion of how these contemporary representations of violence reflect on the relation between space and violence. These texts represent violence as it originates and develops in marginal *geographies* of Brazil's most important metropolises in

order to determine how violence affects the dynamics of those *geographies* and their inhabitants.

Cidade de Deus, however, represents the *favela* as a *geography of violence* differently from the way *Cidade dos Homens* does. The *favela* in *Cidade de Deus* becomes the

irregular agglomeration of sub-proletarians with no professional capacities, low living standards, illiteracy, messianism, promiscuity, alcoholism, the habit of going barefoot, superstition and spiritualism, lack of healthy recreation, refuge for criminals and marginal types, and spreader of parasites and contagious diseases (Perlman 93).

described by the official report of the *Fundação Leão XIII* in Rio de Janeiro more than three decades ago. Although Lins claims that becoming a criminal in the *favela* “doesn’t happen overnight” and that “when a kid enters a life of crime, he talks about it with his mother, talks with his father, talks with the crime boss” (Rohter), neither his text nor the film makes a real effort to stress it.

When asked whether *Cidade de Deus* is actually reinforcing existing stereotypes about the *favelados* and *favela* life, Meirelles strongly expressed that ““a gente não inventou aquela história. É como um espelho: a culpa não é do reflexo, é da realidade que está sendo refletida””(Ribeiro 129). Similarly, Lins has stated that his text did not contribute to increasing the stigma on the inhabitants of the “City of God” for ““não irá ultrapassar ao que já existe. Todo favelado já é estigmatizado””(Ribeiro 129). Lins concludes that his text was partly intended to demystify the image of the crook because “muitas vezes é colocado como sendo um personagem romântico que ganha

muito dinheiro. Isso é mentira, pois só quem fica rico são os que produzem e transportam a droga [...]” (Chagas).

Lins and Meirelles have expressed their alarm at the decay of the moral code that used to hold the *favela* communities together. Lins has commented that

the world of the favela today is much more cruel than when I was growing up there or even as I show it in my book. If I were to write about the way things are today, I would start the book with a pile of rubber tires, gasoline and someone being burned alive (Rohter).

Meirelles also agrees that, nowadays, drug dealers control all the *favelas*.⁶¹

News from a Personal War, included in the *Special Features* of the DVD version of *Cidade de Deus*, gives proof to Lins’ and Meirelles’ concern regarding current *favela* violence.⁶² Filmed and directed by Lund between 1997 and 1998, the documentary includes interviews with police officers and *favela* drug dealers and dwellers who talk about the realities of organized crime and violence in the *favela* today. A voiceover explains that “one person dies every half hour in Rio de Janeiro, 90% shot by large caliber guns” and that “there are 100,000 people employed in the drug business”(Meirelles 2002). The documentary ends in a somber tone: while a policeman declares that “There is no light at the end of the tunnel” and a *favela* drug dealer confesses defiantly that “the war will never end” (Meirelles 2002), names of *favela* criminals and police officers who have been killed in “combat” start covering the screen until there is no empty space left.

Recent newspaper articles on violence in Brazil have stated that, in 2004, one person was killed every 12 minutes in this country (Gosman). In an attempt to control

violence, the Brazilian government has decided to militarize the repression against drug dealing. Last year, President Lula even ordered the army to occupy the *favelas* in order to spot and arrest the leaders of the drug business (Gosman).⁶³

However, Lins, Meirelles, and Lund have partly challenged their own representation of *favela* life in *Cidade de Deus* and other media representations with *Cidade dos Homens*. Although the series also reflects the realities of *favela*'s everyday violence and produces a demystification of the crook, it does present a much livelier picture of the *favela* and its inhabitants. Instead of putting the focus on the *favelados*' "illiteracy," "promiscuity," and "lack of healthy recreation," all clearly stressed in *Cidade de Deus*, *Cidade dos Homens* portrays characters eager to study and interested in establishing community through honest and non-violent means. The many accounts of *Cidade dos Homens* humanize the criminal and challenge the belief that whatever happens in the *favela* is the result of "uncivilized" and "amoral" behavior.

Cidade dos Homens comes in as a necessary complement to *Cidade de Deus*. It allows the inclusion of other aspects of *favela* life also affected by the everyday violence but not necessarily resulting from it. Like contemporary chronicles, *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* work spatially in order to expose the characteristics of the *geographies of violence* they are exploring. Through complex montage and juxtaposition, Lins, Meirelles and Lund create the effect of simultaneity in order to incorporate all sorts of contradictory *favela* activities and experiences: stabbing and music, rape and religion, murder and games, love affairs and gang wars.

Cidade de Deus and *Cidade dos Homens* compile chronicles that portray how urban violence is experienced by those who speak through and among bullets. This group of Brazilian artists succeeds at representing a *geography of violence* not acknowledged by tourist maps or urban imaginaries but real and dangerous. Their work reveals not only how the *favelados* experience violence and live through it on an everyday basis but also how the rest of society capitalizes on that violence. The realities of the “City of God,” a hellish geography on earth, show how violence can become the main means of communication and the ultimate form of survival.

Chapter 3: Images that Say, Words that Show: Chronicles of Gang Violence in East L.A.

I see Los Angeles as a post-modern Wild West where everyone has a gun and they use it. It is an uncontrolled and slightly scary place, a land of dreams and beauty, playing by its own rules. My aim in photographing gang life in Los Angeles has been to get to the core of violence in America, not just the physical violence against one another, but the quiet violence of letting families fall apart, the violence of segregation and isolation. Joseph Rodríguez

Introduction

East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A. (1998), by Joseph Rodríguez, is a carefully elaborated photo-narrative that takes its audience to the core of gang culture and right into the center of the Latino *barrios* in the outskirts of contemporary South and East Los Angeles. In collaboration with novelist Luis Rodríguez and journalist Rubén Martínez, Rodríguez— a New York-based photographer whose work has been exhibited at multiple venues around the world— takes his audience into the most intimate spaces of gang life and challenges them to understand its manifest violence in both complex and contradictory ways.⁶⁴

For the production of this collection, Rodríguez spent almost two years, 1992-1994, photographing gangs full time in the Marianna, Evergreen, and Florencia neighborhoods of East and South Los Angeles. Rodríguez claims that, in many cases, it was the homeboys who “really called the shots. I only photographed what they told

me I could” (1998 30). Little by little, the photographer became a sort of “participant-observer” who, like Busca-Pé in *Cidade de Deus*, was able to gain the trust of his photographic subjects who even nicknamed him “Joe Kodak.”

Rodríguez’s *East Side Stories* is a hybrid text that combines the photographs he took during his long stay in East L.A. with personal journal entries he wrote as he was witnessing the violence practiced by them. The text’s hybridity also derives from Rodríguez’s inclusion of other artists’ voices. The photographer framed his photo-narrative with an essay by Martínez and an interview with L. Rodríguez—the essay and the interview appear at the beginning and at the end of the collection respectively. This particular framing makes evident that Rodríguez’s intention was to provide his audience with a comprehensive context that would allow them a better understanding of his photographs’ content and the intention behind their publication.

As in the previous chapter, this study considers how Rodríguez, in collaboration with Martínez and L. Rodríguez, represents urban violence by means of the chronicle. This analysis reads Rodríguez’s photo-narrative as a collection of contemporary chronicles that inscribe the violence of *barrio* life in the most marginal areas of L.A.⁶⁵ In *East Side Stories*, photography and text complement and translate each other to represent the *barrio* as a material and symbolic *geography of violence* and narrate the lives of those who live it as such.

The use of photography enables Rodríguez to represent and, at the same time, recreate the urban space he is recording in very postmodern ways. Because photography allows for a simultaneity rather than consecutiveness of features—the audience is able to “circle back, traverse, and criss-cross the image” in order to

understand the story or stories behind it (in Wells 2003 76) — and because the photographer has fragmented the collection by avoiding a chronological organization, each of his photographs represents a *geography of violence* that needs to be read spatially rather than temporally. In addition, the advantage of using photography is that the audience can do the viewing at their own pace. In this particular case, the possibility of approaching the photo-narrative at a personal pace is relevant because many of the photographs relate or respond to other photographs in the collection: viewers need to stop at the images carefully in order to find the connections between them.

Instead of creating a chronological representation of the lives of each of his photographic subjects, Rodríguez has purposefully disrupted the linear order of his photographs in order to increase the fragmentary nature of his work. This enables the photographer to articulate each of his photographs as an independent chronicle that reflects a moment of *barrio* violence, a snapshot of gang life, in order to represent how such violence has become a language of social relations as well as the enforcer of a social order in a cultural context in which non-violence has no safe place.

Rodríguez's incorporation of Martínez and L. Rodríguez makes special sense considering that they have both written about gang life in L.A. in their respective work. Martínez's *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City and Beyond* (1992) — a collection of chronicles about L.A., San Salvador, and Mexico City— and L. Rodríguez's *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* (1994) — an autobiographical novel of the writer's experience with gangs during his adolescence— both describe the everyday experience of Latin American immigrants

crossing to the “north” and gang members living in the large urban metropolis of L.A. This chapter will also refer to these texts in order to fill some of the gaps present in Rodríguez’s photo-narrative particularly regarding gang graffiti painting practices and their relation to violence in the urban space.

The fact that Rodríguez’s photo-narrative has also “traveled” to the web and appears in a variety of online versions further complicates the reading of this multi-media text. Considering the changes the printed narrative undergoes when transferred to a medium as flexible and ever-changing as the internet is relevant to the discussion of how Rodríguez’s representation of violence is impacted by the transfer. Because *East Side Stories*’ online versions include less photographs and text than the printed version, they lack the necessary background that would enable their audiences to develop sympathy for the subjects depicted or an understanding of why they need to resort to violence. While the printed version succeeds at both reproducing the history of the *barrio* and its inhabitants and explaining the reasons behind its everyday violence, the online versions become more “standard” representations of gang life proving that, without the necessary context, Rodríguez’s photographs risk being turned into the typical stereotyping images of Latino gangs.

Like *Cidade de Deus*, Rodríguez’s photo-narrative *presents* and *represents* space as an active variable that determines and explains violence. It *presents* it as an active variable because it shows, through image and text, how space dictates the mobility of its subjects and provokes the development of certain types of violence. It *represents* it as an active variable because the photographer offers snapshots that mark his

“moving” along *barrio* streets and his witnessing of violent practices and their consequences.

Unlike *Cidade de Deus*, Rodríguez establishes a balance between shots reflecting violence and shots reflecting non-violent practices. His photographs stop at the subjects to take a deep look not only at their aggressive confrontations and killing sprees but also at their everyday, mostly communal and non-aggressive, activities. With a special emphasis on gang aesthetics— tattoos, baggy clothing, hand flashing, and graffiti painting— and gang recreational activities— *barrio* parties and gang members’ social meetings—, Rodríguez’s camera provides portraits that reflect how gang practices are not exclusively destructive but also a reaction to cultural, political, and social isolation, and a means to create, develop, and maintain a sense of community.

In addition, Rodríguez takes an in-depth look at gang aesthetics in an attempt to expose how cultural hybridity and social isolation determine violent practices and aggressive behavior among the most discriminated and powerless. His work comments on the violence implicit in any politics of the border and the formation of borderline subjectivities in order to understand its manifestation through *barrio* violent encounters; it addresses the conflict between trying to belong to mainstream culture and trying to be different from it.

East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A. asks the audience to see gangs as more than violent clusters. It proves that life in East and South L.A. *barrios* is much more than that. Gangs and the *barrio* both become the locus for protection and the possibility to develop an identity that challenges mainstream U.S. politics and its

unfair impositions. As a reaction to and a consequence of frequent exclusion and discriminatory policies, gangs start operating as nation-formation agents, counter-nations with a territory and culture of their own. It is this study's claim that Rodríguez's photo-narrative does present gangs in such a fashion. The photographs included all suggest a strong sense of community based on a complex combination of violent behavior, aesthetic practices, and a hybrid cultural background.

Like the typical chronicler, Rodríguez goes into the L.A. *barrios* to narrate "the many cities that exist within the city" and converse "with characters that meet up with each other across different time frames and beliefs" (in Corona 57). His representation of gang life in East L.A. lays bare how economic, cultural, and social borders have determined both the distribution of urban space and its characteristics, and, consequently, generated the production and exercise of violent practices as a response to that distribution. Rodríguez does this by crossing those borders himself and looking at reality from the "other side." Unlike the *flâneur* or the detached tourist, the photographer becomes a postmodern *flâneur* who gets involved with the subjects and the stories he photographs. He *talks* less and *looks* and *listens* more.

However, although Rodríguez accompanies his subjects in their everyday activities, interviews them about their practices of inter-gang violence, and, at the end, elaborates a set of chronicles that incorporates their voices and images, his audiences only access the reality of gang life in East L.A. through his location as "outsider." The photographer's representation of violence is limited to what its perpetrators and potential victims are willing to share with him. Unlike Busca-Pé, who has direct access to the violence he registers because he belongs to the

community that practices it, Rodríguez depends on his sources—the Latino gang members and families he interacts with— to access the information and evidence that fill the pages of his narrative.

Rodríguez’s decision to stop at his subjects and offer portraits of *barrio* citizens enables him to address the phenomenon of *barrio* violence through the most personal. Instead of portraying the Latino gang member as the stereotypical victimizer, the photographer compiles shots that individualize the pain and suffering of those who participate in gang practices, thus presenting them as victims as well. *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* explores and, therefore, explains the reasons behind extreme violence among gangs in L.A. without buying into deceiving generalizations that “hide” the true connections between the *barrio* and its surroundings, the gang member, his community and the nation.

I- Alternative Readings, Alternative Meanings

Rodríguez’s *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* derives part of its postmodern nature from the multiplicity of readings it allows. Consequently, because Rodríguez’s representation of urban violence and his audience’s interpretation of it may vary according to both the order in which his photographs are read and which of his photographs are read, it is relevant to discuss some of its possible readings and their effects. It is also relevant to consider how the audience’s previous exposure to other representations of gang violence or violence in general may also determine different interpretations of the same representation.⁶⁶

If Rodríguez's collection is read in order that it has been edited, the meaning of the photographs greatly derives from what precedes or follows them. After all, it could be claimed that Rodríguez has organized the photographs the way he did speculating his audience would follow his editing order and derive meaning from it. Interestingly, Rodríguez has not ordered the photographs along specific axes of topics or chronologies. Instead, the photographer has intermingled shots of members from different gangs and their families, with shots of confrontations between rival gangs, with shots of funerals and masses for murdered victims.

This is another trait that makes Rodríguez's photo-narrative postmodern. There is no marked beginning or end and, therefore, no possible center. There is constant fragmentation and montage, collage and superimposition. Such nature enables the chronicler to "force" the audience to concentrate on each photograph as a chronicle of one particular moment of *barrio* violence. However, because the same subjects re-appear at different moments in the narrative, Rodríguez also forces his readers to connect these individual chronicles in order to put the pieces of his photographic subjects' stories together.

The off-centeredness of the collection as a whole is also a marked trait of each of the photographs that compose it. Such a choice has allowed the artist, as it will be seen in this chapter, to provide further context for and more flexibility to the reading of his photographs. By off-centering his photographs, Rodríguez forces his readers to look at both his subjects and their environment, and, consequently, to understand his subjects' production of violence in relation to their environment. In fact, the fragmentation and the off-centeredness of this collection become a means of *aesthetic*

violence that dislocates the audience by both forcing them into discomfort and requiring them to participate in the recompilation of each of the character's lifelines.⁶⁷

By purposefully mixing photographs that illustrate different moments in time and different groups at different locations in the East and South L.A. areas, Rodríguez produces a narrative that “erases” differences, at least discursively speaking, between the enemy gangs and their respective territories. The final product shows young Latino and African American men and women trying to survive the everyday experiences of *barrio* life regardless of their gang affiliation. Rodríguez's *East Side Stories* reflects the humanity of each of the urban characters it represents, thus challenging common stereotypes promoted by U.S. government agencies and the mass media. By letting his characters talk and share their personal stories Rodríguez is able to show “the other side” of a community that has usually been described as naturally deviant and violent, lazy and overtly sexual.

Needless to say, the fact that Rodríguez has chosen a particular order to compile his photographs in the collection does not mean that such choice is inevitably imposed on his audience.⁶⁸ For example, another way of reading Rodríguez's *East Side Stories* is focusing on each photograph separately, as an independent story, as a chronicle in itself. However, although each photograph does indeed tell a story and documents a very definite moment in *barrio* life, this type of reading would work against Rodríguez's agenda regarding his representation of Latino gang life and urban violence. There is a reason why the artist has put together a collection of his photographic production. Looking at the collection as a whole enables the audience to understand each of the moments of violence registered in the context of other

moments that either explain that violence or have resulted from it. Because many of the subjects photographed appear in various shots that show them engaged in violent and non-violent activities, focusing on only one image might mislead the audience into reducing the subject to that particular representation.⁶⁹

It is also relevant to consider that apart from being read in the context of this collection, Rodríguez's photographs should also be read in relation to other contexts. As Susan Sontag explains, not only do photographs always echo other photographs previously seen but also there are other larger contexts –such as the readers' personal background and cultural awareness of the photograph's subject, the historical and cultural moment in which the readers are located, and other mass media representations they might have been exposed to –, that affect the audience's understanding of the photograph they are looking at (2003 84).⁷⁰ Therefore, Rodríguez's collection should also be read in the context of other photographic, filmic, or written representations of gangs, urban violence, or Latino life in the U.S. This is particularly relevant in the case of the online versions where through links audiences can have direct access to other simultaneous representations — for example, one of the sites includes links to other photographers' work on violence.⁷¹

Finally, another alternative reading of *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* understands the photo-narrative as a collection of multiple miniseries, or “micro-histories,” that talk simultaneously to and about each other. This reading disrupts the order in which the photographs have been compiled and, instead, considers groups of photographs that are thematically linked and operate together as chronicles that reflect different characteristics of *barrio* violence. Such reading is perhaps the most

valid and helpful of the three options suggested so far because it enables a more organized understanding of the different variables that determine and derive from contemporary urban violence in the Latino “hoods” of East L.A.

Allowing a number of alternative readings gives Rodríguez’s narrative a complexity and mobility of its own. Each of the photographs included in the collection becomes a chronicle—that results from the artist’s wandering around the *barrio* and witnessing of different events—that provides information that helps the audience to understand the dangers of gang culture in the *barrios* of East and South L.A. However, it is the photo-narrative as a whole—including the essays and the interviews that Rodríguez has included—the compilation of all the visual and textual chronicles, that succeeds in presenting a different representation of the violence experienced and exercised by this particular group of the Latino population. The artist’s prolonged exposure to his photographic subjects’ everyday activities has enabled him to incorporate in his representation personal details that humanize the figure of the gang member, put a face to him, and show him beyond the violence that he is known to practice on a regular basis.

II- “Microhistories” of Barrio Life: Violent Communities in the Streets of L.A.

East Side Stories is ultimately a profile of a family, whether it is the nuclear family, the gang, or the entire Mexican-American population in East Los Angeles. Various gangs are brought together in the book—appropriately, because underneath the rivalries, they are all members of the same community; Rodríguez reminds us this community is also part of our country. **The New York Times Book Review**

This section chooses the third option discussed above and combines some of Rodríguez’s photographs into a number of miniseries that tell various “histories” of gang violence and gang life in the *barrios* of East L.A. Each of the clusters suggested becomes a chronicle that represents a different aspect of the *barrio*’s and the gang’s identification with and participation in violence. They become “symbolic geographies” that illustrate the reasons behind and the consequences of urban violent practices among Latino youths in contemporary L.A. The “micro-histories” analyzed in this section are just optional combinations of Rodríguez’s photographs. Due to *East Side Stories*’ fragmentary and non-chronological nature, it would be possible to combine the photographs differently in order to create other “micro-histories” that would reflect on other aspects of urban violence.

The first miniseries considered in this section is one that assembles a set of photographs of Chivo, a Latino Evergreen ex-gangmember who lives in Boyle Heights, East L.A. Readers encounter Chivo for the first time at the very opening of *East Side Stories*. The first photograph of Rodríguez’s collection takes the audience right into Chivo’s home and shows him teaching his baby daughter to hold a pistol while her mother looks on with a relaxed smile on her face (7). In the foreground, on

the floor, lie some loose bullets and three automatics. The photograph has been taken with a wide angle and, therefore, the framing is very open, connoting the photographer's proximity to those being photographed.⁷² However, the image troubles the sensibilities of the audience mostly because it is taken indoors and it implies that street violence has permeated the private to affect even the most innocent.

Rodríguez, who is certain that his readers will jump quickly to these conclusions, carefully contextualizes the image with a caption that explains that the photograph was taken “the morning after a rival gang tried to shoot Chivo for the fourth time” (6). Out of context, not only might Rodríguez's photograph be perceived as the stereotypical depiction of Latino gang members but also cause his readers to believe that Chivo is a dangerous presence that might hurt even the ones he loves the most. When contextualized, the photograph tells a different story, one of fear and aggression. It sends a powerful message: violence in the *barrio* becomes a means of survival; a defensive strategy practiced and taught to protect the loved ones.

The caption under Chivo's photograph is not its exclusive context. The rest of the “Chivo miniseries” includes a number of shots that show the ex-gang member interacting with other neighbors, friends, and relatives through different roles: Chivo as son— being lectured by his mother (153), as husband— helping around the house and mowing the lawn (154), as criminal— adding up carjacking money (157) or offering a line of cocaine to a young woman (158), as responsible worker— in his job as a truck dispatcher (162), and, finally, as father again— this time playing with his son Joshua in his living room (161). In addition, Rodríguez's gives Chivo the chance

to speak and includes an interview with the gang member during which he talks about the dangers of *barrio* life and how he decided to quit gang practices.⁷³

Thus, as Martínez claims in “East Side Stories: Joseph Rodríguez’s Images of East L.A.,” the introductory essay to this collection, through Rodríguez’s photographic series, Chivo is known in “all his contradictions, in his most generous and most volatile moments [...] in all his complexity” (33). Martínez explains that if audiences never saw Chivo cradling his kid, they would never think him “capable of redemption” and they would write him off “as another ‘Born to Lose’ gang member [...] just another media monster to beat into submission, to be locked away for eternity (33). Martínez is indeed right in affirming that if the context to read the opening photograph was not given and Chivo was not shown in all his contradictory but simultaneous roles, the audience would find him “incapable of redemption.”

However, it is relevant to consider how Rodríguez has structured and located the series within the photo-narrative. Opening the collection with the most controversial of Chivo’s images— instead of with any other of the photographs of the “Chivo series”— and placing the rest of the series at the very end of the collection— thus preventing the audience from seeing Chivo’s many different faces from the very beginning— become two very sharp moves on the part of the artist. The images compiled in between the “Chivo series”— photographs of home funerals of gang members and innocent victims caught either in the crossfire of enemy gangs or drive-by shootings, photographs of gangs engaged in street violence, and photographs of gangs posing defiantly with their weapons in front of the camera— help to illustrate the violent geography where Chivo and his family survive their every day. Ordering

the “Chivo series” in a chronological but “interrupted,” therefore “fragmentary,” manner and concluding it with the interview in which Chivo acknowledges his having abandoned his gang affiliation both enable Rodríguez to contextualize and, therefore, partly justify, the ex-gang member’s manipulation of guns at home. In addition, by concluding Chivo’s series with his photograph as responsible worker, Rodríguez makes his audience leave the *barrio* on a redemptive note, proving there is still a way out for those willing to take the risk.

However, the “Chivo chronicle” becomes the exception to the rule among Rodríguez’s many photographic subjects. The majority of the gang members Rodríguez follows around the *barrio* “pose” for the photographer for the last time in a coffin— in a way they get to *be* posed— at their own funeral. Martínez maintains that, although not every inner-city neighbor is a gang member, Rodríguez’s photo narrative is “an unflinching look at the ‘bad’ kids— the very ones we are obsessed with” (22).

The photographs on pages 95, 145, and 135 compose a miniseries that presents gang members as the ‘bad kids’ Martínez refers to in his essay. Each of these photographs represents episodes of actual violence the photographer witnessed and was allowed to record. The photograph on page 95 shows two Evergreen members throwing “bottles at a rival gang” passing by on a school bus in Boyle Heights. Because the focus is on the victimizers, the shot shows neither the weapons nor their victims— the bus passengers. The wide angle chosen by Rodríguez enables the artist to also include in the frame a group of bystanders who look anything but surprised at the violence taking place right next to them. Their indifferent attitude serves as

evidence of how desensitized to the violence in their neighborhood they have become. Finally, in spite of the very early time of day, the shot is very dense and dark, as if Rodríguez were trying to use lighting to comment, symbolically, on the somber reality of the Latino youths who “inhabit” his photographs.^{74/75}

The photograph on page 145 also explicitly reveals the ‘bad’ side of a group of gang members while engaged in a dangerous drive-by shooting: one male subject who has been shot lies in fetal position on the sidewalk while the rest of his gang is looking toward the street, apparently towards where the shots came from. The photograph has been taken outdoors and at night and is accompanied by a caption that reads “the night of a truce in East L.A., seconds after a drive-by shooting, a Clarence gang member is hit by fire from an automatic weapon. He survived. Boyle Heights” (1998).

This caption is not the only one in the collection that includes information about the fate of the subjects of the photograph it is describing. The photographer includes information about the fate of active gang members in other captions as well. This, many times, has a shocking effect on the audience, particularly when the caption clarifies that the person in the photograph died some months or days after the shot was taken (9, 115). Thus, in these cases, Rodríguez utilizes text to submit information he has not been able to register with his camera. In addition, telling the audience about the death of a subject they are looking at enables the photographer to imply these gang members’ vulnerability and their location as victims of the violence they perpetrate.⁷⁶

The photograph of the drive-shooting is also accompanied by one of Rodríguez's journal entries— dated “June 5, 93”— in which he explains,

One vato was shot four times, but he didn't die. The bullets went right by my face. This changes my relationship with Evergreen. Now they know I'm down for them. 'Hey man, did you see Joe? Man, he's crazy- bullets were right there' (144).

His standing by the violent practices of the gang guarantees his further acceptance by its members and gains him trust among them. This entry is indeed relevant to the whole narrative because it portrays Rodríguez as a contemporary chronicler who gets involved with his subjects. Rodríguez challenges Sontag's theory that

photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur* [...]; the photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the *flâneur* finds the world 'picturesque' (1973 55).

On the contrary, instead of operating as a detached observer, Rodríguez looks forward to getting involved with and experiencing the situations he is recording with his camera. His art is the consequence of the bonding he has established with the gang members he is photographing.

It is particularly interesting the way Rodríguez uses his journal entries as a form of alternative caption. His entries – almost field notes “left in original present-tense form without retrospective narrativization” (Brown 145) — give audiences access to

the artist's reactions as he is photographing his subjects. Thus, Rodríguez's journal becomes a meta-commentary of his photography. By recording his own reactions to his work, Rodríguez, like Busca-Pé, becomes one more subject in front of his audience's eyes, an audience who is able to "see" both the photographs and their photographer.

However, Rodríguez's entries operate not only as alternative captions but also as a discursive space through which *barrio* citizens can express their feelings and share their thoughts. This presents the photographer as the epitome of the contemporary chronicler who writes from a variety of different perspectives allowing those usually silenced to talk through his text. By breaking the binary between subject and object, artist and community, Rodríguez creates, in collaboration with the *barrio* dwellers, a collective history of the *barrio*'s most violent events and the neighbors' reactions to them. Disrupting the standard conventions of the journal — which is supposed to be private and univocal— and transforming it into a polyphonic text also contributes to both the postmodern nature of Rodríguez's collection and the production of a collective account of contemporary violence.

Put together, the journals become a textual *geography of violence* that both adds information to the photographs and incorporates the voices of the photographic subjects. They operate as very brief chronicles of violence that also situate the audience in time and space. In addition, the way Rodríguez organizes the entries enables him to produce a spatial rather than a chronological representation of urban violence. Instead of presenting the audience with a chronology of his experiences in East L.A. and matching all the entries with their corresponding photographs,

Rodríguez corrupts the order of the entries so that they do not necessarily appear next to the image they are commenting upon.

The effect of such apparent “narrative disorder” is indeed interesting. For example, at moments the audience reads entries that include some gang members’ comments right after they have seen them lying in a coffin. This, like the “Chivo series,” may be again a deliberate move on the part of the photographer to debunk the audience’s first reaction to the photographs they see. Having access to the gang member’s personal retelling of his *barrio* experiences or confessions might challenge first impressions or judgments the readers might have come to when looking at their funerals’ photographs.

It is attention-grabbing how differently the “drive-by shooting” photograph on page 145 of Rodríguez’s printed collection has been contextualized in one of his online versions (zonezero). To begin with, while in the printed version the photograph is both preceded and followed by photographs of gang members at parties or flashing their weapons at the camera, in the online version it is posted on a page that includes a photograph of a “child of a gang family”— a baby in diapers— and is followed by a page that includes a photograph of three gang members displaying their tattoos (Both photographs are also included in the printed version but have been compiled differently).

In addition, the online version includes, on the page right after the “drive-by shooting” photograph, a photograph of gang members carrying to safety the man that has been shot. This photograph, missing in the printed collection, captures the moment right after the victim has been shot. The two photographs of the sequence

have been put back to back but framed by other images of gang life that somehow create a life line, from innocence— the baby in diapers— to violence – the bleeding victim on the sidewalk; from gang community – the group displaying their tattoos in a circle— to the aftermath of gang wars – the victim being carried away. In addition, the “June 5, 93” entry has not made it to the link in the online format. The absence of this particular entry leaves Rodríguez’s online audience ignorant of a very relevant piece of information regarding the photographer’s relationship to the subjects he is photographing.⁷⁷

Page 135 includes the last key image in Rodríguez’s photo-narrative that portrays gang members interacting as ‘bad’ kids. The photograph shows Evergreen members confronting a rival gang. The group facing the camera shows very concerned facial expressions. Although no weapons are seen, the fact that the photographer— who at this point has gained their trust— has been sent out of the circle implies that the possibility of violence is imminent. Once more, the photograph becomes a chronicle that represents violence as it is happening

While the photographs on pages 95, 145, and 135 above discussed can be read as a chronicle that compiles moments of actual violence the chronicler witnessed, the photographs on pages 110, 111, and 131 work as a chronicle that shows gang members “acting out” violent situations— either individually or with other members of their gang— in front of the camera. The photograph on page 110 shows Porky, from the Marianna gang, sitting defensively against one corner of a sofa, with his arms folded over his chest and displaying a fearful facial expression, in order to describe “what it is like to get shot” (1998).⁷⁸ On page 111, a photograph of Popeye,

from Evergreen, shows the gang member checking “his .45 automatic before getting dressed for the day” (1998). Popeye is standing in the living room pointing his gun at an out-of-the-frame target and, although the low angle shot shows the cross hanging from Popeye’s neck, the photograph’s focal point is Popeye’s arm, dark against the light coming from the window in the background. Finally, on page 131, there is a photograph of “Clown and Largo from Evergreen” standing in the living room, one pointing a gun right on the other’s chest as if they were engaged in confrontation (1998).

Two other photographs that could be part of this collective chronicle are those on pages 43 and 149. In these two cases, Rodríguez has photographed Marianna Maravilla and Evergreen gang members “showing off their hardware.” While the photo of the Marianna Maravilla members has a relaxed air about it— a gang member holding a gun is looking to the right in a sneaky way, his gun pointing to the opposite side while a partner is holding a Bud can and flashing the Marianna sign (43)—⁷⁹, the photo of the Evergreen gang members has a more menacing tone to it— a gang member holding a gun is pointing it right to the camera as if ready to shoot Rodríguez (149).⁸⁰

This group of photographs has been possible because Rodríguez took them while interacting with members of the same gang. Because they trust each other and him, gang members felt relaxed to role-play violent behavior or pose in front of the camera. Instead of merely representing actual violence, Rodríguez chooses to also include graphic representations of “performances of violence” enacted in a “safe” environment. This enables the artist to show the audience a variety of violent

interactions and practices that he would otherwise, most probably, not be able to record if he were to witness them as they are actually taking place.

In addition, these photographs, as well as the photographs that portray gangs posing as a group or displaying their tattoos, enable Rodríguez's subjects to have a say in the composition of his narrative. In *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, Pierre Bourdieu explains that

[l]ooking at the person who is looking (or who is taking the photograph), correcting one's posture, one presents oneself to be looked at as one seeks to be looked at; one presents one's own image. In short, faced with a look which captures or immobilizes appearances, adopting the most ceremonial bearing means reducing the risk of clumsiness and gaucherie and giving others an image of oneself that is affected and pre-defined. Like respect for etiquette, frontality is a means of effecting one's own objectification: offering a regulated image of oneself is a way of imposing the rules of one's own perception (1990 83).

Participating in the composition of the visual chronicles Rodríguez produces enables his subjects to "control", at least to a certain extent, their own representation.

Rodríguez also concentrates his attention on the aftermath of violent action. As a consequence, many of his shots present the audience with gang members as victims rather than as victimizers. These photographs make up another chronicle relevant to this discussion of representations of urban violence. On pages 46, 81, 114 to 117, and 136 there are a number of photographs that represent gang members as vulnerable subjects to the violence they practice and by which they are surrounded. While on

page 136, there is a photograph of the “Third Street Station homicide Board”— a board with photographs of faces of gang members, the majority of them Latino men in their 20s and 30s, who have been killed by enemy gangs— and on page 46 there is a photograph of Mike Estrada holding a photo of his father— sent to prison due to gang practices—, pages 81 and 114 to 117 include photographs of gang members’ private funerals.

On page 81 there is a photograph of Gyro’s funeral accompanied by a caption that explains that Gyro, an Evergreen gang member, was killed by a rival gang months after he stopped gangbanging. Two of his closest friends, Frankie and Spanky, pay their respects to Gyro. One of them has laid his head on Gyro’s chest. The photograph is further contextualized by a journal entry, on page 76, in which Rodríguez incorporates Gyro’s voice. Gyro claims that he “would rather get out; I’m tired of looking over my shoulder. I don’t want to die, but I’m down for my barrio” (1998).⁸¹

On pages 114 to 117, there are images of Husky’s wake and tombstone. The shot of the tombstone, with an inscription that includes words such as “homeboy” and “warrior” next to a photograph of Husky, is indicative of what gang life implies: loyalty to one’s gang even if that means death. Gang members become “warriors” ready to die in battle if their gang demands them to do so. Putting a photograph on Husky’s tombstone becomes a way through which his loved ones individualize his death so that he does not become one more anonymous absence in the *barrio*.⁸²

Both Rodríguez’s photographs and the photographs within his photographs – those on the police station homicide board and the one on Husky’s tombstone— become a way of keeping alive, in the readers’ memory, those who have become

victims of the violence that surrounds them. In “Fire and Ice,” Peter Wollen explains that photography “has the cryogenic power to preserve objects through time without decay” (in Wells 2003: 78). Rodríguez and the *barrio* neighbors he interacts with “preserve” their “subjects” through image. It is these gang members’ portraits what keeps them as part of a community that is constantly losing its members due to their participation in violent practices.

It seems purposeful that the shots of Gyro and Husky that Rodríguez includes in the printed version of his photo-narrative never show them performing violent actions or engaged in violent behavior. Unlike the online versions, that include neither photographs of gang members’ funerals nor Martínez’s essay in its full extent, the printed version lets the audience look at them as other than aggressive gang members. In fact, Gyro and Husky are introduced primarily as “victims” from the very beginning of the narrative. In his essay, Martínez includes a detailed description of Gyro’s death. During his conversation with Maricela Vazquez, one of the women he interviews, Martínez learns that

Gyro was killed at a gas station halfway between Evergreen and Marianna territory [...]. A car pulled along his while he was pumping gas. The usual “Where are you from?” taunt escalated into shouts, and, finally, bullets. Gyro jumped in the car and hauled out of the station, but the car carrying the rival gang members followed him, shooting all the way. One bullet went through the rear window, the driver’s side car seat and, finally, through Gyro’s back (26).

Maricela also tells Martínez about the death of her nephew, Husky. Husky's killing resembles Gyro's almost to the detail.⁸³ Both scenes are described by someone who, although is no member of the gang, is an insider to the *barrio* and is witness to or gets first hand accounts of its daily violence. There is a visual nature to what Maricela is describing: she provides the specifics of place and time, includes dialogue, and gives details of the shooting. However, the audience never *sees* what Maricela describes. The collection includes no photographs of the shootings and instead focuses on the funerals of these gang members.

The “photographic absence” of the shootings can be explained through different hypotheses. Among the most obvious, the absence of these images could be due to the fact that Rodríguez was not present when they took place. Therefore, in order to include them in the narrative somehow, the photographer uses text— his journal entries, Martínez's essay, or the interviews at the end— to render what happened as graphically as possible.

Another theory could be that Rodríguez was present at the shootings but was not allowed to take photographs. After all Rodríguez has shared that “it was the boys who called the shots.” So, if the boys chose not “to call the shots” at those particular moments, he would have been left with no option but to witness without registering.⁸⁴ In some cases, Rodríguez makes his audience aware of such limitation. In his “December 3 & 4, 92” entry the photographer explains that he was out with the boys and “[o]ne takes out his gun, but I'm not allowed to take any photos” (68). Once again, the photographer intelligently uses his journal to include what he is not allowed to photograph.⁸⁵

One last possible theory could be that, although allowed to photograph the shootings, Rodríguez decided to either not do it or to not include the shots in his collection. Rodríguez is aware that images of violence are highly priced by agencies, that violence sells (1998 108).⁸⁶ However, he'd rather share with his readers his experience with *barrio* members in order to expose how some of their violent practices are a consequence of the social and economic violence they are victims of. A fine example of this is the series of photographs of Aída Quiles and her sons—members of the Marianna Maravilla gang. Instead of showing Aída's sons involved in violent action, Rodríguez includes two photographs, one of the whole family at home, sitting and standing around the dining table, and one of the family having breakfast (65, 66). With these images Rodríguez fulfills a double goal: he reinforces the importance of family for the Latino community and portrays Aída's children as "sons" instead of as "gang members."

In fact, Rodríguez's conscious refusal "to just photograph the violence" proves that, because of his personal involvement with the community he is attempting to represent, he wants to avoid depictions that may result in the further stereotyping of the Latino gang member and his *barrio*. Particularly problematic have been U.S. mass media portrayals of gangs operating in urban conclaves. In fact, a number of critics claim that television shows and the movies have a tendency to entertain the public with the topic of gangs rather than informing them about it (Sanchez Jankowski 298). Gangs are depicted as a "demonic element within society— that is, an immoral enemy that threatens society's basic moral codes. In fact, Hollywood has been able to portray the gang, particularly the nonwhite gang and its nonwhite women, as the

carriers of moral malignancy” (Sanchez Jankowski 301). The danger of such representations is their one-dimensionality that reduces Chicano/a and Latino/a experience to crime and drugs.⁸⁷

Reviewer David Maciel and producer Susan Racho warn readers about the societal implications of such one-dimensional and demeaning portrayal for not only does it silence how the system oppresses and disregards this sector of the population— that is the system’s responsibility for the execution of violence that takes place in the *barrio*— but it also “reinforces people’s beliefs and prejudices and can prove harmful to the victimized community [...]. Stereotyping and prejudicial representations have clearly helped spawn negative self-images among Chicana/o youth” (in Maciel 94). In a postmodern culture dominated by the image and in the absence of proper quality information or analyses, derogatory representations of *barrio* people and gang members distributed by the media end up becoming the “primary prisms through which people construct an understanding” of the social reality of these population groups (Sanchez Jankowski 302).

Instead, by refusing to concentrate exclusively on violence, Rodríguez “forces” his audience to look at “the other side,” the usually hidden side, of *barrio* life and its neighbors. If the collection had been dominated by photographs of fights, shootings, and bloody victims, the audience would have been inevitably drawn to them and the non-violent images of everyday life in the *barrio* would have been lost in their midst. In order to avoid that, Rodríguez has carefully organized image and text. In fact, Rodríguez’s inclusion of Martínez’s essay, which fuses interviews with *barrio* residents, some historical information, and a personal narrative, as the introduction to

the whole collection is central to the accomplishment of his agenda. In a way, Rodríguez “uses” Martínez to tell his audience how to interpret the content of his photographs and their organization in this narrative.⁸⁸

Martínez’s essay is structured into sections that both give background on the history of Boyle Heights and the *pachuco*, or Mexican-American gangster, and include interviews with East L.A. *barrio* women who refer to how violence has affected their families at the most personal level. The audience soon learns, for example, that Aída is a *barrio* mother deeply concerned about her sons’ gang practices. Martínez explains that “now, most days, Aída is virtually a prisoner in her own home” and that, perhaps, she has turned into “a kind of gang member herself”(12-3). She has been forced to stay “barricaded in her “territory,” home,

constantly watching for her sons’ rivals, who are no longer just other *barrio* children to her, but threats to the survival of her family. She even welcomes the Marianna homeboys and their weapons. Better that they kill defending her family than one of her own getting killed (12-3).

What is most relevant about Martínez’s interview with Aída is that the audience gets to “see” her. As Martínez claims “The problem for the rest of us is that when we see the *barrio*— and we see it only through the media and Hollywood— we only see the victims and perpetrators of the violence. In the American imagination, Aída doesn’t exist” (18).

Martínez also provides the audience with relevant background on Latin American migration to the East L.A. area in order to explain some of the reasons behind *barrio* violence:

Mexicans never expected an inner-city nightmare when they crossed the border. Ill-prepared for a culture of youth violence unknown back home (gangs are exported to Mexico, not the other way round) and lacking political know-how in a system that is stacked against them, the Quileses remain trapped between an Old World memory and an unreachable American future (13).

The isolation that Latin American immigrants experience is not merely cultural and economic; it is physical as well. Martínez explicates that “East L.A. [...] was literally the other side of the tracks: the “height” of Boyle Heights,” where Rodríguez takes many of his photographs, “is a gentle rise of land immediately east of the Santa Fe Railroad and the L.A. River” (15). This clear-cut division came as a result of the acceleration of suburbanization as the city’s nonwhite population, African Americans and Chicanos in particular, started to expand. Thus,

as the historic ethnic diversity of communities like Boyle Heights and Watts gave way to expanding brown barrios and black ghettos, new communities sprouted on the urban fringe, insulated from the racialized masses of the inner city (in Noriega 568).⁸⁹

Martínez maintains that “inner city violence appears to have grown as the sense of isolation and frustration deepens” when Mexicans and other Latino groups living on the East side of L.A. come to the realization that they would never be considered Americans. Latino immigrants are always the “Other” “to be lusted after or feared”(14). In *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, L. Rodríguez

shares how such geographical and, consequently, social isolation affected his coming into America:

The L.A. River, for example, became a new barrier, keeping the Mexican in their neighborhoods over on the vast east side of the city for years [...] Railroad tracks divided us from communities where white people lived, such as South Gate and Lynwood across from Watts. We were invisible people in a city which thrived on glitter, big screens and big names, but this glamour contained none of our names, none of our faces. The refrain “this is not your country” echoed for a lifetime (20).

L. Rodríguez’ narrative proves how the political and economic affect the personal and, ultimately, the communal: “The barrios that weren’t incorporated, including Las Lomas, became self-contained and forbidden, incubators of rebellion which the local media, generally controlled by suburban whites, labeled havens of crime” (40).

The process of fearful exclusion has been twofold. The inner-city inhabitant has also developed fear of the outside, of the world beyond the *barrio*. Martínez states that “the social walls around the barrio grew higher and higher” and the result is “a very limited world— a world hemmed in by fear. Fear of the police, of ‘white’ society, of the entire world beyond the L.A. River” (Rodríguez 17). After years of living in the U.S., many of these immigrants and their offspring continue to feel completely isolated and alienated and “with nowhere to go the barrio turns inward. The neighborhood becomes the world and families carry the weight of that world and [...] manage to survive with a sense of ‘us against the world’” (Rodríguez 17). Martínez agrees with the theory that claims that many of the gangs in the East L.A.

area arose as a response to that fear and isolation, “to resist Anglo-American cultural prejudices and to defy Anglo ethnocentrism. They sought to maintain a cultural separateness and physically to protect their *barrio* from harmful elements” (Sanchez Jankowski 135).

Some of the online versions of Rodríguez’s photo-narrative present a different version of Martínez’s introductory essay. In fact, of the four sites visited, only two include links to Martínez’s writing. In one of them— [powerbooks.com](#)— there is only a short essay in which Martínez discusses his experience with representations of gang violence in L.A. between 1986 and 1993. He claims that the images that appeared in newspapers and the news at the time were always the same: “gangsters flashing signs, showing off tattoos, posing with their handguns and assault rifles” (Powerbooks). The problem with this, the journalist argues, is that these photographers dropped into the *barrio* for a day or two, took the pictures, and got out quickly, not getting the rest of the story. Martínez praises Rodríguez for “getting the rest of the story” and creating a photographic journal that is not just about gangs, “but also about families, about relationships; about life and death, about fatalism and the possibility of transformation”(Powerbooks).

The tone of Martínez’s essay in this online version is more personal and self-reflexive than that of the printed version but the interviews have not been included and, consequently, the voices of many of the *barrio* neighbors, particularly its women, go missing. On the contrary, in another of the online versions— [zonezero.com](#)— Martínez’s essay is composed exclusively of excerpts from his

interview with Aída and what goes missing are his comments on Chicano history and representations of gang violence.

In spite of their differences, in both online versions Martínez's essay further contextualizes the photographs it accompanies and emphasizes the need to also acknowledge East L.A. gang members as the sons of women who suffer daily seeing their children trapped in an unavoidable cycle of violence. However, because in both versions Martínez's essay is accessed only through links— there is no guarantee that the audience will ever read it— and a lot of information has been cut out, the online audiences lack the structure and guide that the printed versions' audiences are privileged with. Of course, there is no guarantee that the printed version's audience will read the essay either. However, it could be assumed that because in the printed version the essay comes right at the beginning the chances that the audience will read it are many.

The fragmentary and non-chronological nature of Rodríguez's *East Side Stories*, which addresses and represents the chaos and unpredictability that violence generates among these communities, enables the combination of some of his photographic and textual chronicles into "micro-histories" that represent actual violence, foreshadow possible violent action, and describes the *citizenship of fear* these gang members and their families live every day. Rodríguez's purposeful disruption of his narrative's chronological order and the fragmentation of his subjects' individual stories enable him to both stress the postmodern nature of his narratives and manipulate his audience's reactions by playing with their prejudices and first impression judgments. However, as the discussion in this section has proven, reading each of the

photographer's chronicles in conjunction with others infuses the narratives with a more complex understanding of urban violence.

III- "Gang Nations:" Practices of Symbolic Violence and the Quest for Visibility

This last section discusses a number of Rodríguez's photographs that focus on gang aesthetic practices and their relationship to contemporary urban violence. The discussion of these particular visual chronicles enables a better understanding of the gang as a community of practice that also participates in the production of violence through symbolic means. In these photographs the audience can see how the gang member's body becomes a *geography of violence* that both reflects his affiliation to the gang and becomes proof of his violent behavior. Looking at these aesthetic practices of violence also explains how the gang becomes a tentative form of nation, a "counter-nation," that develops as a result of the material and social exclusion that these subjects experience and the need to redefine the community's identity against the derogatory representations of official practices.

Rodríguez's photo-narrative shows how East and South L.A have become sites for the construction of alternative identities. In a sense, the *barrio* that Rodríguez "travels" with his camera becomes a "nation," in this case markedly Chicano, that needs to define itself against the U.S. nation and its many other cultures. Violent practices and aesthetics are some of the ways of doing so and the gang becomes the means of producing and administering them. Rodríguez's photography presents the gang as a complex infrastructure— that includes activities, signs, a language system, territorial loyalties, and a military-style ranking of soldiers— and relies on "a

carefully articulated sense of a separate and empowered ‘national’ identity, as well as certain masculinist and homosocial behaviors” (Brown xviii). Much of the violence represented through Rodríguez’s photography partly derives from these gang members’ need to identify themselves against other oppressing or competing cultures.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson describes the nation as “an imagined political community” that is imagined as *limited*— because it has “finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations”—, as *sovereign* – because “nations dream of being free” and “[t]he gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state”—, and as a *community*— because, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship”(7). Homi Bhabha has complicated Anderson’s theory by emphasizing the difficulties involved in attempting to imagine the nation as a “homogeneous community.” Bhabha explains that “imagined political communities” can indeed be kept stable through the exclusion of their “liminal inhabitants”: “members of certain communities are necessarily excluded from full citizenship because [...] the smooth reproduction of social relations depends on their status as ‘others’” (in Brown, xxvi).

The communities in East and South L.A. represented in *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* are one example of those “liminal inhabitants” who need to be excluded or locked away to guarantee the formation of a homogeneous nation. Such exclusion has been justified by means of stereotypical representations that describe the populations living in these areas as deviant, violent, and uncivilized. As L. Rodríguez explains in the conclusion to *Always Running*,

What to do with those society cannot accommodate? Criminalize them. Outlaw their actions and creations. Declare them the enemy, then wage war. Emphasize the differences— the shade of skin, the accent in the speech or manner of clothes. Like the scapegoat of the Bible, place society's ills on them, then 'stone them' in absolution (250).

However, these sectors of the population have not remained passive to such discriminatory and purposeful exclusion. Instead, they have turned to other locations and cultural formations for both community identification and empowerment.

What is interesting about the gangs represented by Rodríguez is that they originate as a result of hybrid cultural and social formations that incorporate both Latin American, Latino, and U.S. values and juxtapose past and present Latin American practices and traditions. The subjects of Rodríguez's photographs are culturally and socially located between their parents' Latin American background, in the great majority Mexican, and their contemporary Anglo experience.⁹⁰ Gang aesthetics in East L.A. are the result of such hybrid positioning. Focusing on the aesthetics of gang practice is an indirect but effective means of exposing and explaining much of the violence experienced in the *barrio*.

In the interview at the end of the photo-narrative, L. Rodríguez outlines the connections between past and current Latin American cultural practices in the U.S. The writer compares contemporary Latino gang members living in East L.A. with their mid-twentieth century's predecessors, the *pachucos*: "The pachucos were the epitome of rebellious youth [...]; the pachucos were really alienated youth [...]."

These youth were completely pushed aside in the culture, and so they created their own” (176).

Like the *pachucos*, who became “the principal actors in the Chicano narrative of cultural affirmation and resistance” by inspiring “masculine visions of streetwise opposition to the disciplinary regimes of power” (in Kaplan 72), the contemporary East L.A. gang is a cultural and social reaction to the discriminatory policies and the social violence practiced against certain sectors of the population. Like the *pachucos*, characterized by very particular vestments and mannerisms— reflected in the codified *language of the body*, posing defiantly to show their tattoos, hair style, gestures, dance, and dress (zoot suits, ducktails, khakis and GI T-shirts) — and in the codified *language of space*— marking their territory with graffiti and claiming possession of particular *barrios* or sectors of a *barrio* by occupying them (Duran 156)—, contemporary Latino gang members mark their body and territory to claim possession, show affiliation, and differentiate themselves from other gang communities in the area.

The *language of the body* is central to Rodríguez’s photo-narrative. Much of his photography in the collection represents the gang member’s body as a *geography of violence*, both material and symbolic, marked to reflect gang affiliation and loyalty. Tattooing the body and publicly showing it is one way of doing so. In some cases, Rodríguez’s photographs and journal entries expose how tattoos act in *integrative* ways when used to reflect on the realities and dangers shared by the gang community. The tattoo becomes a “signature of identity [...], a mark representing one’s lineage, social identity within a group [...]. Tattooing is thus conceptualized as a rite of

passage, revered by participants as a sacred ceremony of cultural creation and confirmation” (Atkinson 52).

Due to the fact that Rodríguez’s narrative stays exclusively in the *barrio*, his photographs emphasize how Latino gangs in East L.A. use tattoos mostly to speak to each other, to show disaffiliation with other gang groups. The gang member’s body is transformed into “an intimidating text” (Atkinson 167) that acts, at least in Rodríguez’s collection, as a foreshadowing of inter-gang violence and its effects. In order to intimidate rival gangs, gang members need to show their tattoos, thus proving their affiliation through material evidence. Indicative examples of this need to display one’s tattoos are the photographs on pages 63 and 123.

The photograph on page 63 shows the Marianna Maravilla gang posing for the camera. Four members of the group have taken their shirts off in order to display their tattooed bodies. The tattoos are, in this case, inscriptions that read “Marianna”. The only member wearing a shirt, consequently not exhibiting his body marks, shows his affiliation throwing the gang’s hand sign, an “M” shaped with the fingers. The photograph on page 123 shows three members of the Florencia gang also posing for the camera right outside their school in South Central. They have bare chests and two of them are giving their backs to the photographer in order to display their “Florencia 13” and “F13” tattoos.⁹¹ In both cases, the inscriptions tattooed are big, covering either the chests or backs almost in their entire width.

The photos on these pages prove how the body becomes a territory that is explicitly marked to define and identify its loyalties. Through tattooing these subjects transform their bodies in symbolic *geographies of violence* that interact within the

material *geography of violence* that gang life in the *barrio* represents. Both photographs reflect the importance of displaying one's allegiance to the gang in very visible ways. The tattoo becomes a "physical statement" among groups that are "expected to model their altered bodies publicly" and for whom "wearing the standard uniform is a relished (and demanded) signifying practice" (Atkinson 231). Exposing one's body to tattooing is also a way for male gang members to make a personal statement about their manhood. Getting a tattoo involves pain and, in turn, as in any rite of passage, experiencing pain also contributes to one's belonging to the "tribe."⁹²

However, gangs do not only wear tattoos to differentiate themselves from each other. Rodríguez's photographs prove that, in some cases, enemy gangs share some of the same tattoo images. Three good examples of this are the spider web (74), the comedy-drama theatre masks (123, 129),⁹³ and the Virgin. The spider web and the theatre masks relate directly to violence and how violence is inflicted both upon and by gang members. Thus, they become particularly powerful intimidating imagery used to provoke fear and prove courage.

The tattoo of the Virgin, on the other hand, marks these gangs' affiliation to their Latino roots and, therefore, operates as an *oppositional* symbol against mainstream society.⁹⁴ Page 10 of Rodríguez's photo-narrative includes the photograph of a gang member exposing his naked back, tattooed with the image of the Virgin, to the camera. On page 41 there is a photograph of an Evergreen gang wearing a T-shirt with an image of the Virgin stamped on the back. Finally, on page 63, a photograph of the Marianna Maravilla gang shows the "Marianna" inscription

tattooed on the members' chests. On the page previous to this photograph, Rodríguez includes an icon of the Virgin of Santa Mónica to make sure that his audience will make the connection between icon and text (62).

That the Marianna and the Evergreen gangs have chosen either the image or name, or both, of the Virgin as one of their identifying icons indirectly addresses the gender issue in the process of formation of these “counter-nations.”⁹⁵ Considering that the virgin stands as both *mediator*— between men and God— and *matter dolorosa*— the tear-drenched mother crying for her endangered sons—, it seems contradictory that, instead of having chosen powerful and menacing *macho* imagery, such as the Mexican ranger— Rodríguez includes this icon on page 119— or the *pachuco*, these Latino gangs, which are mostly Mexican-American and Chicano in their composition, have chosen as their identifying image the Virgin.

The choice, however, makes sense if the focus is on the Virgin as a symbol of *sacrifice, suffering, and virginity*. Gangs see themselves as family and are ready to sacrifice and suffer in order to keep that family intact. The significance of *virginity* makes sense in terms of territory control. One of the gangs' main goals is keeping their territory safe from the attack or invasion of other gangs or groups and violence is used to any extent in order to protect the “virginity” of their *barrio* or “motherland.”⁹⁶ The land the gang occupies becomes symbolically female, a female *geography of violence*, mostly because protecting the *barrio* is also protecting its women and children. Even the gang itself is characterized as female by some of its members. Snoopy, from Barrio Street Villains, comments that ““joining a gang is like

meeting a girl: when you first see her, she's a body until you get to know her. When you get into it, it's about hatred, loyalty, and respect'"(68).

As Martínez claims,

In Joe Rodríguez's photographs, we see many family portraits. The mother doting over her gang member sons. The gang member cradling his newborn baby. Even in the classic formal portraits of the gangs-flashing their signs, proudly display their weapons-we have another family image, that of blood brothers (Powerbooks).

Territoriality becomes key to keeping that "family" together and safe. Gang members express their willingness to "die for *el barrio*": "I am respected by all my homeboys, wanted by many; hated by others, but respected by all. I love the barrio more than I was loved," Porky confesses to Rodríguez during one of their conversations (112).⁹⁷

Finally, it makes particular sense that the Virgin has been chosen by these gangs considering the forceful political and cultural impact this image had on the revolutionary Mexican-Chicano movement during the 60s and 70s both in Mexico and the U.S. To begin with, because the Mexican version of the virgin is *mestiza*, the synthesis of the old world and the new, of the conquerors' and the conquered cultures, Mexican immigrants identify racially with their Virgin of Guadalupe. In addition, because Guadalupe "took upon herself the psychological and physical devastation of the conquered and oppressed *indio*", she has become the Mexican and Chicano "spiritual, political, and psychological symbol"(Anzaldúa 52). Finally, Guadalupe symbolizes

rebellion against the rich, upper and middle class [...]. She mediates between

the Spanish and the Indian cultures and between Chicanos and the white world [...] [she] is the symbol of ethnic identity and of the tolerance for ambiguity (Anzaldúa 52).

Thus, in its *integrative function*, the image of the Virgin contributes towards the unification of the gang by standing as both a symbol of *life*— as the mother gives birth to her sons the gang generates its new members through recruitment—, of *protection*— at the times of violent encounters the gang can pray to her for protection—, and of *racial identification*— her *mestizaje* allows Chicano gang members to identify with her. The image also stands as a metaphor for the gang members' *suffering* that comes as a consequence of gang-related crime. In its *oppositional function*, the Virgin stands as a symbol of both the gangs' acknowledgement of the cultural and economic differences from U.S. mainstream culture and rebellion against the middle- and upper-class establishment.⁹⁸

Apart from reflecting the gang's use of tattoos and their values as community building and confrontational symbols, Rodríguez's photography's repetitive focus on the image or icon of the Virgin also enables him to “re-humanize” the Latino gang members in the eyes of his audience. As Brown explains,

(b)y re-imagining the presence of the mother, readers of the text and those who think deeply about American gang problems can remember the humanity of gang members, the first step in securing some semblance of rescue and release (156-7).

To exploit the image of the “mother” even further, the photographer opens his photo-narrative with a mother's voice – Aída's, whose comments about her sons' gang

activities are included in Martínez's essay — and closes it with the images of two mothers (Rodríguez 187) — the photograph of an anonymous young woman holding her young child as “she walks in front of a large mural of a mother figure caressing the hair of a young child whose body is rising from planet earth” (Brown 157).

Martínez extends the family metaphor one step further when he describes Rodríguez's ethnographic position for the production of this narrative as one that embraces the mother's gaze:

For the images in this book aren't really from Joe's 'objective' point of view.

One senses a subject behind the lens as well as in front of it, someone intimately

related to the kids and their families. And I felt as though I was seeing the neighborhood through a mother's eye. Joe Rodríguez's photographs tell me that these homeboys are our children [...]. This point of view – the figure at the center of barrio life— is a mother who'd gladly sacrifice herself to ensure her sons' safety (Rodríguez 31).

By stressing, through text and image, the central role of the mother, both Rodríguez and Martínez make sure their audience will “see” her and, consequently, will have access to the story missing from mainstream accounts that tend to demonize and dehumanize gang members.

What is absent, in spite of Rodríguez's interest in incorporating the female presence in his representation of gang life, is the story of female gangs. Only a couple of shots show one of the female gangs— the Insane Juvenile Queens— hanging out together in the streets and only one journal entry— dated “June 24, 92”— includes

their voice (105). Brown believes that such a choice could partly derive from the artist's fear to "challenge simplified and comfortable notions about women" (88). One thing is to think of women as protectors and life-giving creatures; another very different is to think of them as cruel perpetrators of everyday violence. These female gang members who, rather than embracing their roles as mothers, lovers, or victims, have chosen to take part in street violence have no visual space in Rodríguez's narrative.

The gang world photographed by Rodríguez is a male-dominated one. In *East Side Stories* women are not seen participating in gang violent practices. In his essay, Martínez explains that for the Mexicans "the family is the hub of life, and the mother is at the center" (13). Rodríguez's narrative proves this point. Women are seen, for the most part, at home, talking to their children, or, as *matter dolorosas*, crying their dead sons and husbands. They are at the center of the family in the domestic space. They are never portrayed as perpetrators of the violence that surrounds them, only as its victims.⁹⁹

It is because of this that the exclusion of Martínez's interview with Aída in some of the online versions becomes a powerful loss that deeply affects Rodríguez's representation of Latino gang members. By excluding the mother's voice, these translated versions of *East Side Stories* "silence" a very central Latino *barrio* presence and leave the audience almost unable to imagine the gang members photographed as anybody's "children."

It is also interesting that Rodríguez has chosen to concentrate on the less violent marking of the body, tattooing, instead of on the most violent, scarring. Scars also

demonstrate allegiance to the gang. They are proof that the subject has been involved in violence and has had the courage to survive it.¹⁰⁰ For example, “Going Up in L.A.”(1992)— one of the chronicles in Martínez’s *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City, and Beyond*— includes a photograph of a gang member, Prime, displaying his scars in front of the camera (107). Photographing Prime’s scars enables Martínez to show him as the victim of others’ aggression and prove his own vulnerability to the violence he participates in. Instead, Rodríguez chooses to show the scars of the innocent victims of gang violence— for example, the photograph of Anthony Bolin, already mentioned before, in which the boy reveals a massive scar that streaks across his belly (54). Thus, although the artist makes an effort to “humanize” the gang members he photographs through the inclusion of the mother figure and their family life, he also makes visible the consequences of their gang violence.

This group of photographic chronicles focusing on the gang’s tattooing practices is another example of how Rodríguez’s subjects have participated in the composition of his narratives. Although the photographer has obviously directed them to stand in specific ways, it is evident the gangs being photographed have also determined their posing in order to reflect both their allegiance to the gang and their “macho” manhood.¹⁰¹ Each of these pictorial renditions represents how the tattoos become simultaneous symbols of aggressiveness and solidarity among gangs.

Like marking the body, marking the territory is another means through which gang members show their allegiance to the gang and produce violence. Tagging and graffiti painting become key symbolic practices for such an endeavor. Tagged walls

and columns appear in the background to some of the “gang portraits” Rodríguez takes (9, 14, 53, 105). Although in most of these photographs the graffiti painting or tagging is not the focal point of the frame, Rodríguez’s choice of a wide angle has enabled him to include it in the background.¹⁰² Therefore, the *barrio* as a *geographical presence*,¹⁰³ as the space where violence is executed, as a material *geography of violence*, makes its presence felt through the photographer’s decision to frame the buildings and walls that have been symbolically “bombarded.”

It is intriguing, however, that Rodríguez has devoted none of his journal entries or captions to comment on the phenomenon of gang graffiti painting in the *barrio*, considering the central role graffiti plays among gang practices. Through graffiti and tagging gangs talk back to mainstream society— to those living on the privileged side— in an attempt to express their critique of the imposed order and disrupt the cleanness of their urban landscape. The fact that some of the inscriptions or images drawn are incomprehensible for those who do not control that hermeneutic code also gives gang members control over their territory. They can speak to each other without the intrusion of outsiders. Graffiti also allows these marginal groups to express what mainstream commercial, political, or mass media circuits do not allow them to (García Canclini 1995 249). However, as with tattoos, gangs utilize graffiti as an *oppositional* symbol to mark their territory and textually threaten rival gangs. Gang graffiti becomes an alternative violent practice that, like drive-by shootings, serves to define and limit the gang nation’s territorial boundaries.¹⁰⁴

Martínez’s chronicle “Going Up in L.A.” becomes a helpful complement to Rodríguez’s collection regarding the phenomenon of gang graffiti and its relation to

urban violence. Like Rodríguez, in order to write this piece, Martínez went into the L.A. *barrios* and interacted with some gang members about whom he later on wrote his chronicle. Because Martínez was interested in representing their “other side”—the side that the mass media usually leaves untold—¹⁰⁵, he interviewed a number of graffiti painters and accompanied them while they were producing their art.¹⁰⁶

“Going Up in L.A.” concentrates primarily on Prime, an extremely talented gang graffiti painter recently shot by an enemy gang. Thus, Martínez uses this chronicle to comment on the intersections of violence, art, and politics in the Latino *barrio*. The journalist tells his readers that although Prime has admitted that he has been “in the wrong place at the wrong time on more than one occasion,” he sees himself more as an artist than as a gangster (1992 108).

Martínez also describes Phoe, a teenager of Hawaiian-Filipino ancestry and a member of the BC (Beyond Control) gang. Phoe— whose tag is the “intentional misspelling of ‘foe,’ which, according to him, means ‘society’s enemy’” (1992 112)— tells Martínez that tagging is a way of communicating with other writers throughout the city (1992, 112). It is also a means, Martínez stresses several times in this narrative, of being “seen,” of achieving visibility.¹⁰⁷ The journalist claims that that tagging is not only a means of naïve or innocent self-expression. It is also a practice perceived as revolutionary precisely because it goes against the law. The taggers’ crew names, KCC (Kids Committing Crime) and CIA (Criminals in Action), tell the story (1992 117-8). In addition, a particular tag is many times chosen to “cultivate either a dark, brooding image – DOOM, DREAD, DYE— or conjure a notion of hip-hop ‘badness’— REGENT, PRIME, SLICK” (1992 117-8).

Martínez's narrative provides detailed descriptions of the graffiti he sees as he walks the streets of the L.A. *barrios*. His interviews with graffiti painters and taggers enable him to see the complexity behind these artistic practices.¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, graffiti becomes a healthy option for gang members who, like Prime, want to leave the dangers and violence of gang life. On the other, graffiti painting is both a safe way for releasing anger and deception and a means of inflicting visual violence on other gang groups and on mainstream society as a whole. As an example of this, Martínez refers to the rivalry between WCA (West Coast Artists) and K2S-STN (Kill To Succeed-Second To None) who, like break-dancers, battle each other through graffiti writing: "The spoils of victory may include several dozen spray-cans, or the appropriation of a writer's tag"(1992 114). "Bombing," as graffiti painting is usually referred to, the walls of the rival gang's neighborhood or of a wealthy neighborhood beyond the *barrio*'s limits becomes a way of displaying power and challenging the enemy.

Thus, Martínez's chronicle shows how even the most artistic practice can become a violent one among gang members of rival affiliations. The marking of the territory— indispensable to secure power and control in the "gang nation"— is both material, through the presence of gang members at specific corners and vigilance over specific areas, and symbolic, through the marking of walls, buses, and other public spaces.¹⁰⁹

The reading of the photographs in this section shows that visibility is key to these counter-nations' existence and continuity as well as to their exercise of violence. The photographs and text in both Rodríguez's collection and Martínez's chronicle

emphasize how each of the components that define the gang nation fulfill *integrative* and *oppositional* practices that inevitably involve, one way or another, the use of violence. Even guns, which some gang members flash at Rodríguez's camera, fulfill both *integrative* and *oppositional* functions in the sense that owning a gun guarantees both one's membership in a gang and the possibility to retaliate against the members of other gangs.

However, Rodríguez explicitly problematizes his representation of gang culture when he claims that reducing it to a limited number of symbols results in its incomplete and, therefore, false representation. In his "May 27, 1992" journal entry the photographer writes,

It is so hard getting access. How can I expose gang culture? I was thinking about details like tattoos, cars and rooms. But that's not the way [...], the kids won't open up. They'll only let you come so far. They'll say 'Don't take my picture in [this or that situation].' It's less so with the younger ones, but it's literally a fucking battle (40).

This journal entry is relevant to the whole photo-narrative for a number of reasons. First, Rodríguez comments on the artist's impossibility to accurately represent the complexities of gang culture through a limited number of objects or images. Second, Rodríguez stresses the fact that the validity of his representation very much depends on his status as an insider to the culture he is trying to represent. In the end, Rodríguez is successful in portraying gang life beyond its mere appearances or the typical representations that show violence without reflecting the humanity behind it. Instead, Rodríguez is able to show that there is more than one side to each and

every one of his photographic subjects, the citizens of these “counter-nations.” Gang members are also fathers, sons, brothers, workers, students, and artists, and, no matter which of these sides is being portrayed, a sense of communal bonding always transpires through these images. Gang portraits, very much like fraternity or high school group pictures, reflect union, solidarity and trust. Photographs on pages 41, 53, 63, 74, 79, 90, and 133, all show gang members either posing to the camera as a group or enjoying their free time together. In fact, when tattoos or hand signs are not displayed, it becomes difficult to tell one gang from the other.

With this collection, Rodríguez also succeeds at showing how much in common these youths who are dying and killing to defend their “differences” really share. Martínez certainly reflects on this when he states that “[t]he vast majority of gang violence is internecine. The rage turns inward: the gang kid blows away his mirror image, another gang kid. Thus, every drive-by shooting is nothing else than ethnic suicide” (18). Even some gang members are aware of this. On page 132, Pablo “Diablo” Trujillo, an Evergreen gang member, shares his poem entitled “Brown Faces.” The first three stanzas read:

So many lands,
so many different places,
all that I see is the same brown faces.

Day by day is how I live,
ask me why?

That’s just the way it is.

So many lands,
so many different places,
all that I see is the same brown faces.
Doing whatever they can to survive,
because we have to stay alive.
We must live long
and make a change.
Oh God give me some strength.

So many lands,
so many different places,
all that I see is the same brown faces.
Killing one another,
is how they survive.
You should see the pride it gives 'em
to see another brown face die [...] (1998).

The poem, unfortunately missing in all of the collection's online versions, discloses a very intimate and telling explanation of inter-gang violence: "Killing one another/ is how they survive," claims "Diablo," who later on becomes one more "brown face" who fatally dies to ensure the survival of another "brown face." His death becomes a tragic proof of his words. His body's fate, a material *geography of*

violence, becomes representative of his own literary discourse, a symbolic *geography of violence*.

Trujillo's poem also speaks to the dangers of creating "exclusivist and defensive enclaves" as a response to threatening global forces (Hall in McClintock 184). As García Canclini states, gangs can "take intercultural conflicts to their most exasperating extremes" as their "turf battles and struggles for sociopolitical control" (1995 70). Thus, what begins as a counter-movement that challenges mainstream oppression ends up becoming a self-destructing movement that, by destroying others in similar social and economic disadvantages, collaborates in its own destruction.

Conclusion

Rodríguez's *East Side Stories* fulfills the dual roles of generating documents and creating works of visual art. His photographs become chronicles of urban violence and urban life but acquire full meaning only if the audience is ready to look beyond their frame and understand their complexity.¹¹⁰ Unlike other photographers who use their camera to "depreciate" their subjects into "articles of consumption" promoted into items "for aesthetic appreciation" (Sontag 1973 110), Rodríguez intends that his audience understood this collection not only aesthetically but also politically.

The various *geographies of violence* this photo-narrative aims to represent tell the many stories of *barrio* experience in East and South L.A. The audience needs to approach each of them spatially in order to understand them in their full complexity. Attempting to read them chronologically is also necessary if the audience is to make sense of the many moments that make up each of these photographic subjects' life:

seeing Chivo transitioning from a gang member into an honest worker adds hope to the somber picture the majority of Rodríguez's photographs paint. The *barrio*, the Chicano community, the gang, the gang member's body, the graffiti, the gang's car, each and all become independent and complementary *geographies of violence* that interact to give sense to the Latino youths living on the outskirts of L.A.

East Side Stories becomes the history that others have not dared to write.

Rodríguez becomes a micro-historian who gives a visibility to the *barrio* and its people. Taking his photo-narrative to the web is also a major step in giving visibility to East L.A. and the Latino people who inhabit it. Both the printed and the online versions introduce image and text that explain, complement, and translate each other. However, it is the printed version that really succeeds at explaining the reasons of gang violence by situating the readers both culturally and socially in the realities of the Latino population.

Unlike *Cidade de Deus*, in which gang members are represented as individualistic beings only interested in killing each other for a personal benefit, *East Side Stories* presents the gang as a cultural and social formation that also provides its members with a sense of belonging and pride for their background and traditions. Unlike *Cidade de Deus*, in which the gang acts mostly as an economic agent that provides its members with drugs, weapons, and money, *East Side Stories* avoids discussing the economics behind gang formation and, instead, focuses on the gang as a space where identity is developed.

However, in spite of these differences, *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories* share a number of fundamental similarities. First, both individualize each of the

subjects they describe: gang members are not anonymous beings that look all alike but characters that have a name, a family, a past. In addition, both representations develop on the premise that, as stated in chapter one of this dissertation, “social and spatial relations are dialectically and inter-active interdependent, that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent” (Soja 1989 81). Both *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories* address how space determines violent behavior and is determined by it. Such spatial limitations and markings are both physical and symbolic: from drive-by shootings to graffiti, from the gun to the tattoo. Both representations comment on the value of making violent action visible, to both one’s own group and others, in order to prove loyalty and secure survival.

Finally, both *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories* are structured in a fragmentary format that partly results from the chaotic realities they are trying to represent. Violence and precarious living conditions force the members of these communities to be constantly on the move, and the chroniclers who are registering their everyday existence move with them in order to report what they experience. They both demand an audience with the ability to establish connections in order to make sense of the many fragments that make up the whole. In both cases, violence is produced and experienced repetitively, and, therefore, represented repetitively. This suits perfectly the choice of the chronicle which, due to its briefness and mobility, gives these narratives a certain rhythm and a fragmentary structure.¹¹¹

The collaborative work of J. Rodríguez, Martínez, and L. Rodríguez forces the audience to see other simultaneous and usually ignored narratives operating both against and within the mainstream national space. They show that, as Bhabha claims,

the nation can no longer be “the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society” (1994 149). They do so by commenting on how the differences “within” originate, are developed and maintained, and end up reacting against homogenizing mainstream forces.

In the conclusion to his essay Martínez claims that *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* is the view of the *barrio* that was missing. Rodríguez’s photo-narrative complicates the comfortable binary center/periphery by challenging audiences to recognize *barrio* kids as “their” (America’s) children too.” As Brown explains, this collection attempts to

resist dominant culture’s dehumanizing rhetoric regarding Latino/a gang members, suggesting that a deep sense of disenfranchisement from a national society that has forgotten them has led to alternative networks of meaningful solidarity, nationalistic, territorially based families [...]; gang members are starved for a sense of belonging, respect, recognition, and a sense of acceptance and solidarity that comes from participation in a system of shared fantasies and symbols (158).

By concentrating on the realities of those who have been marginalized, these hybrid chronicles, both graphic and textual, serve to complicate the false notion of the American “melting pot.” Instead, they prove that cultural, economic, social, and geographical borders, once established, are both difficult to disrupt and dangerous to handle.

Unlike other contemporary chroniclers who represent the city as a “transgressive space, which dislocates established frontiers and forces apparent opposites together”

(Wilson 109), Rodríguez emphasizes the fact that, in some cases, those borders are never forced together but instead kept being pushed apart. His own experience is a proof of that. In his “March 5, 93” entry, the photographer states,

What a night. Tired, sick, but still I go to the Evergreen meeting [...]. They are definitely a brotherhood. I was told to get out of the meeting; they were talking about “paying for their mistakes” [...]. I take a drive downtown, to look at tall buildings and cool out. Watch white folk stroll for the evening and kiss on the bridge, amidst the skyscrapers. The distance between East L.A. lowrider hip-hop and the Los Angeles Philharmonic is just crossing the bridge, and you’re there. I drive, and everything looks beautiful on this side. Meanwhile, across the bridge the guys were planning sinister madness (134)

In this passage the artist draws a picture of a city clearly divided by race, class, and experience into two very different, quite opposite, spaces: one side is safe, the other violent. He also addresses his own privileged position that enables him to go back and forth between both spaces and be accepted in both. Unlike the subjects of his photo-narrative, Rodríguez has a choice of where to be.

However, Rodríguez’s intention is to prove that, although barriers, both ideological and physical, have been established, subjects should still try to see “beyond” them to recognize the hidden similarities that make such barriers obsolete. His emphasis on the communitarian aspect of the gang, on the notions of “gang as family” and “gang as nation,” is one effective way of achieving this. Brown believes Rodríguez is not successful at emphasizing this notion though:

there are multiple family scenes that tell another story, of family members eating and talking together, of homeboys playing with their children, cutting each other's hair, getting disciplined at high school, washing cars [...], at dances [...], at the park [...]. Despite the power of the images of gang members in domestic scenes [...] these are overshadowed by the more familiar and performative images of gang members flashing signs, holding weapons, doing drugs, partying, mourning dead homeboys, and staring straight into the camera, menacingly (154).

Brown fails to read Rodríguez's narrative beyond her own stereotypical understanding of gang life and culture. Brown's reading also lacks in comparative nature. The critic is not able to see this text in conversation with other different representations of violence and gang life in marginal neighborhoods. Rodríguez's photo-narrative discloses what the eye sometimes misses; it is an example of subversive photography, not the photography that "frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes," but that which is "*pensive*," which "thinks" (Barthes 1981 38). *East Side Stories* leaves Rodríguez's audience thinking about the many variables that determine urban violence among these marginal gangs. His chronicles establish the connection between space, politics and violence in order to challenge static notions detrimental to the most disadvantaged.

Chapter 4: “Scarred” realities, Hidden “Pearls:” Pedro Lemebel’s Chronicles of Urban Anger

Introduction

“Porque esta urbe se ha vuelto tan peluda, tan peligrosa, que hasta la respiración de las calles tiene ecos de asalto y filos de navaja”

Pedro Lemebel

Pedro Lemebel was born in Santiago de Chile in the mid-1950s. His artistic production is prolific and varied. He is a chronicler, novelist, visual artist, and radio performer. During the 1980s, he became well known with his “Yeguas del Apocalipsis” (1987). Created in collaboration with Francisco Casas, this art bus incorporated photography, video, performance, and installation art to expose and protest the abuses of the military dictatorship still in place at the time. During the 1990s, Lemebel produced a radio program in Radio Tierra—*Cancionero*—and had three collections of chronicles published – *La esquina es mi Corazón. Crónica Urbana* (1995),¹¹² *Loco Afán. Crónicas de Sidario* (1996),¹¹³ and *De Perlas y Cicatrices. Crónicas Radiales* (1998).¹¹⁴ In 2001, the artist finished his novel *Tengo Miedo Torero*, and, in 2003, he released his last compilation of chronicles, *Zanjón de la Aguada*.

This chapter discusses how Lemebel uses the chronicle to represent and critique contemporary urban phenomena, especially violence. The analysis of Lemebel’s chronicles demonstrates that the artist conceives the city as a set of intersecting

material and symbolic *geographies of violence* both resulting from and regulating urban experience and citizenship. In addition, because Lemebel's chronicles travel from oral media—the radio—to the page and combine the pictorial—photography—with the written, it becomes relevant to evaluate how the translation process and the combination of a variety of registers affect the formal nature of his narratives. The evaluation of such formal aspects shows that Lemebel's manipulation of a variety of media has a profound impact on the rhetoric used to represent urban violence. The various translations across media and media combinations have resulted in a much more ironic, fragmentary, and graphic discourse that, in turn, depicts urban violence in a more judgmental and episodic manner.

The city Lemebel describes in each and every one of his chronicles is a dangerous and impersonal space that hides past political brutalities, develops and sustains unequal social and economic boundaries, and promotes individualistic and indifferent behavior. The city in Lemebel's work is a violent and dehumanizing space where apathetic bodies bump into each other aggressively in their daily attempt to survive the requirements of urban life. Lemebel populates the pages of his narratives with those urban characters that the conservative upper and middle classes of Santiago de Chile avoid: prostitutes, transvestites, young criminals, the homeless, the “barras bravas” (hooligans), the disabled, the poor, the sick. Lemebel's chronicles become a “manual de ruta de ciudadanos periféricos” as the writer takes his audience to the “marginal” spaces that, somehow, “desarman el mapa reticular de lo que se llama ciudadanía establecida” (Mateos del Pino 22) Lemebel's collections include

chronicles that narrate the many “cities” that exist within the city and expose the unfairness of the current neo-liberal system.

Lemebel maps the urban geography of Santiago de Chile through its many contradictions. The chronicler challenges the urban utopic agenda whose goal is to keep divisions intact by focusing on those “marginal elements” that infiltrate the organized center and disrupt those attempts to exclude them. However, unlike *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories*, Lemebel’s chronicles do not stay exclusively on the “other” side. Instead, the chronicler moves between the privileged and the underprivileged spaces of the city in order to foreground the unfair differences that determine urban contemporary life. In fact, Lemebel’s chronicles stay mostly on the privileged side to suddenly disrupt it with the unwarned inclusion of the margins. Lemebel’s “voice interpellates not the marginal Other, but the discourse of power, which oppresses the Other, and which is subsequently transformed into a target of sharp political criticism” (Corona in Jorgensen 147).

Stylistically speaking, Lemebel’s chronicles enter the discourse of the majority to fiercely attack it from within through irony and sarcasm. Lemebel views the reality of the urban space he inhabits through the gaze of the privileged but with the knowledge, understanding, and judgement of the marginal. Therefore, by means of an antagonistic discourse, his chronicles succeed at unmasking the hypocritical lifestyle of the Chilean upper, middle, and ruling classes. Lemebel uses his chronicles to criticize “established citizenship,” a numb citizenship practiced by a Chilean society merely interested in constant consumption and public appearances and totally devoid of political ideals. Many of the artist’s narratives are linked by a marked nostalgic

tone as the artist expresses his disappointment at the failure of a socialist agenda that, had it ever been in place, would have benefited the most underprivileged. Finally, Lemebel structures the majority of his chronicles through the conflation of opposites. He carefully articulates contradictory viewpoints in order to represent urban realities from a variety of social and cultural locations.

Excessive movement – both spatial and temporal—characterizes Lemebel’s chronicles in a variety of different ways. Not only does the chronicler move around the city registering its many physical spaces and their inhabitants’ daily activities but he also juxtaposes past and present to keep the “silenced” historical event of the military dictatorship alive in his readers’ memory. Lemebel’s chronicles become memory, testimony, and proof of a past marked by political abuses and inhuman tortures exercised during the military dictatorship under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990).¹¹⁵ Thus, like *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories*, Lemebel’s chronicles travel in time to explain how past violence has led to current political and social violence.

In addition, Lemebel, as chronicler, enters and leaves his own narratives, becoming either protagonist or witness, or both, of the events he records. Narrating events that he protagonizes himself— that is constructing himself as a character in his writings— enables the chronicler to transform some of his chronicles into entries of a personal journey, mark his location as homosexual, and share his ideological agenda, both anti-capitalist and anti-military. By openly establishing his homosexuality – thus stating his own marginality within the system and authorizing the critical tone of his discourse— and exposing his political viewpoints, Lemebel presents himself as a

subjective *flâneur* who weaves in his narratives his subjects' experiences and voices with his own.

Finally, Lemebel's chronicles reflect movement by traveling across various media. Previously published in newspapers and magazines or performed on radio stations, each of the narratives compiled in Lemebel's collections has "inhabited" other media before entering the format of the "academic" book. The inclusion of photographs, which operate as pictorial chronicles that both illustrate and add to the written chronicles, and of excerpts from popular song lyrics, which provide some of the narratives with a distinctive oral aura, enables the artist to take his audience across a variety of registers, thus accessing violence through a number of alternative means.

Instead of grouping his chronicles thematically or chronologically, Lemebel has organized them in ways that defy all logic. Choosing an apparently illogic and "disorganized" layout has allowed the chronicler to recreate both the hectic geography of the contemporary city and his own shifting positioning. Challenging the typical chronological structure has also permitted Lemebel to constantly bring the past upfront. This becomes a shrewd move on the part of the author who forces his audience to both remember the unjustified brutality executed on those who dared to dissent with the official sources during the dictatorship and acknowledge their own investment in attempting to forget or ignore it.

Going against Lemebel's narrative choice, the first four sections of this chapter consider groups of chronicles thematically. This has been done with the intention of discussing the different types of urban violence – political, social, and symbolic—represented in Lemebel's chronicles in a more structured and organized manner.

Grouping Lemebel's chronicles according to theme also allows reading them beyond their insertion in each of the collections. Instead, these sections look at the chronicles as separate narratives that both complement and contradict one another. The last section in this chapter incorporates a formal analysis of Lemebel's chronicles by focusing on both their multi-genre and multi-media nature. This analysis allows a thorough discussion of how formal aspects have affected Lemebel's representation of violence as well as a consideration of how his choice of theme has affected the formal aspects of his work.

I- Chronicles of Political Violence: A Parallel City of Terror.

The cluster of chronicles analyzed in this section represent instances of political violence exercised and experienced by Santiago's inhabitants during the military dictatorship under the rule of General Pinochet. In these narratives, Lemebel provides descriptions, in an almost cinematic manner, of some of the most grotesque crimes committed by the regime against dissenters and their families or acquaintances. These chronicles could act as chapters of an untold history, a history whose own protagonists have made the effort to "erase." Sociologist Tomás Moulian justifies the Chileans' compulsion towards blocking memories about the dictatorship by explaining that such practice is common among societies that have experienced extreme situations (31). The danger, Moulian claims, is that with the negation of the past comes a discursive loss, the impossibility to overcome past grievances due to the subjects' inability to talk about a shared past (31).¹¹⁶

Lemebel fights the danger of such discursive loss through this set of chronicles. Not only does the artist refuse to forget but he also denounces the violence inherent in attempting to “erase” a common past of abuse and terror. In innovative ways, the chronicler uses these writings to expose in detail the tortures and abuses committed by a military dictatorship that claimed innumerable lives. Some of his chronicles retell events that have been reconstructed from either personal testimonies or information compiled through other sources such as journalistic articles or government reports. However, instead of presenting them in a matter-of-fact manner, the chronicle allows Lemebel to construct the events through a narrator who is witness to the events, thus producing a representation of violence – and reconstructing history at the same time— through a discourse that is much more personal, immediate, and critical than the one utilized in government records or in other fields such as History or Sociology.

For example, in “Carmen Gloria Quintana (o “una página quemada en la feria del libro”)” (1998 88-9), Lemebel renders the brutal burning of a group of protesters in an extremely lyrical way:

Cuando los tiraron al suelo violentamente, riéndose, mojándolos con el inflamable, amenazando con prenderles fuego. Y al rociarlos todavía no creían. Y al prender el fósforo aún dudaban que la crueldad fascista los convertiría en mecheros bonzo para el escarmiento opositor. Y luego el chispazo. Y ahí mismo la ropa ardiendo, la piel ardiendo, desollada como brasa. Y todo el horror del mundo crepitando en sus cuerpos jóvenes, en sus hermosos cuerpos carbonizados, iluminados como antorchas en el apagón de la noche de protesta.

Sus cuerpos, marionetas en llamas brincando al compás de las carcajadas. Sus cuerpos al rojo vivo, metaforizados al límite como estrellas de una izquierda flagrante (1998 89).

Like Lins, Lemebel presents the most violent through the most poetic discourse possible. The chronicler methodically juxtaposes, through a sequence of visual images, the brilliant burning bodies of the victims against the darkness of the solitary night. The ugliness and violence of the burning are transformed into statements of pain and struggle once rendered through the eyes of the sympathetic chronicler created by Lemebel.

However, Lemebel's narrative does not stay exclusively in the past. The chronicler uses the event to openly criticize the practices of a contemporary society that, in spite of the horror witnessed, refuses to remember Quintana's burnt face. The chronicler claims that most Chileans have chosen to forget Quintana's personal history because it has nothing to do with "la literatura light que llena los escaparates [...], esa página de historia no tiene precio para el mercado librero, que vende un rostro de loza, sin pasado, para el consumo neoliberal" (1998 88-9). Reconstructing the moment of Quintana's attack allows Lemebel to issue a ruthless critique of present social policies of consumption that give value to the "light" and the artificial instead of promoting the recovery and acknowledgement of a national history marked by violence.

With similar horrific detail, in "Las Amazonas de la Colectiva Lésbica Feminista Ayuquelen" (1998 155-6), the audience witnesses the savage beating of a female "suspect":

y vino otro puñetazo y otro, y a patadas la sacaron a la calle, a la vereda,

donde la siguieron golpeando, donde le partieron el cráneo y la sangre de la pequeña Mónica les mancho los puños, y ese color aumento la brutalidad de la golpiza. Y ellos no se cansaron de golpearla, como en éxtasis le rebotaron la cabeza en el cemento. Y cuando se fueron, caminando tranquilos por la oscuridad macabra de la dictadura, la Mónica quedo hecha un guiñapo estampado en el suelo (1998 155-6).

Both chronicles present the most violent events in the most graphic ways. The narratives are filled with the most horrific visual imagery—bodies that burn, skulls that break, blood that stains— and structured through rhythmic enumeration— Lemebel gives rhythm to the passage by both constructing sentences of equal length and starting each of them with the connector “y” (and).

Both chronicles represent two parallel and complementary *geographies of violence*. On the one hand, Lemebel’s narration stops at the victims’ and their perpetrators’ bodies as they turn respectively into passive and active *geographies of violence*: while the victims’ bodies get marked by blows, burns, and stab wounds that write a text of violence on the corporeal, the perpetrators’ bodies turn into machines that execute violence, into weapons of unlimited destruction. On the other hand, the chronicler portrays the streets of Santiago as *geographies of violence* – a physical location where the most inhuman and illegal can take place because the “citizenship of fear” (Rotker 2002) in place prevents neighbors from intervening and interrupting it. The episodes described happen in “deserted” streets. However, the narrator makes explicit the fact that the aggressors know that, behind curtained windows and closed doors, a silent audience is witness to their actions. The streets become the perfect

scenario through which the government's emissaries can stage violence in order to promote further fear.

While in these two chronicles Lemebel has constructed a narrator through whom to render the events, in others Lemebel presents himself as direct witness and narrator of the events being described—thus authorizing his discourse. In “Los cinco minutos te hacen florecer” (1998 86-7), Lemebel narrates the killing of three adult males in September of 1973. The chronicler describes a childhood memory through an adult discourse that allows him a more complex analysis of the event and its implications. Still a child those days, the chronicler remembers his looking at the corpses from the window of his third-floor apartment. He moves the narration down with him to the street, describes his attempt to see in between his neighbors' legs, and incorporates both the witnesses' conversation and a close-up description of the dead men:

mis vecinos comentado que tal vez eran delincuentes ajusticiados por el Estado de Sitio, como informaba la televisión [...]. Para mí algo de la sospecha no correspondía, no encajaba el adjetivo delictual en esos cuerpos de 45 a 60 años, de caballeros sencillos en su ropa triste, ultrajada por las bayonetas (1998 87).

Lemebel combines excerpts from the official discourse, his neighbors,' and his own to denounce the incongruences of a duplicitous system. The child in this narrative becomes an unprotected witness to the aftermath of a violence that justifies itself through deceiving arguments.

In each of the chronicles considered so far, Lemebel concentrates on the victims' exposure to the extreme violence inflicted on their bodies. Instead of stopping at the perpetrators, the chronicler's eyes follow the victims in order to stress their

vulnerability and the consequent impossibility of defending themselves. This choice allows Lemebel to engage in a sort of “psychological game” with his Chilean audience by forcing them to “see” and, consequently, accept responsibility for the violence they once cooperated to maintain with their inaction and are currently invested in forgetting with their frivolity.

While in “Carmen Gloria Quintana (o “una página quemada en la feria del libro”),” “Las Amazonas de la Colectiva Lésbica Feminista Ayuquelén,” and “Los cinco minutos te hacen florecer,” Lemebel focuses exclusively on the literal description of some of the crimes committed during the dictatorship, in “Las orquídeas negras de Mariana Callejas” (1998 14-6), the artist juxtaposes the experiences of the tortured with those of the Chilean population who indifferently accepted the abusive ruling of the regime. The narrative combines references to both bodies that are being tortured, subject to extreme brutality, and to minds that pretend those brutalities are not happening:

Todo Chile sabía y callaba [...]. Todo el mundo veía y prefería no mirar [...]. Esos cuarteles tapizados de enchufes y ganchos sanguinolentos, esas fosas de cuerpos retorcidos. Era demasiado terrible para creerlo. En este país tan culto, de escritores y poetas, no ocurren esas cosas [...] decía Mariana subiendo el volumen de la música para acallar los gemidos estrangulados que se filtraban desde el jardín [...]. Seguramente, quienes asistieron a estas veladas de la cursilería cultural post golpe, podrán recordar las molestias por los tiritones del voltaje, que hacían pestañear las lámparas y la música interrumpiendo el baile. Seguramente nunca supieron de otro baile paralelo, donde la contorsión de la

picana tensaba en arco voltaico la corva torturada (1998 15-6).

Through “Las orquídeas negras de Mariana Callejas,” Lemebel exposes a murderous Santiago “hidden” beneath a hypocritical Santiago that carries on a normal lifestyle and enjoys the advantages of a terrorist system. The juxtaposition of both realities reinforces the effects of real violence by opposing it an apparent but deceitful non-violence.

This effect is also achieved, maybe more successfully, through a set of chronicles that focus on contemporary Santiago but are “interrupted” with flashbacks that allow Lemebel to include descriptions of violent events that took place during the times of the dictatorship. These chronicles are the most successful in causing discomfort and generating guilt in the audience because the readers, who are engaged in reading about a present event, are surprised by the unannounced appearance of this type of intermissions or digressions.

Two interesting examples of how Lemebel utilizes such “interruptions” are “La ciudad con terno nuevo (o “un extraño en el paraíso”)” (1998 183) and “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol” (2003 49-70). “La ciudad con terno nuevo” opens with a chronicler who is quietly walking the streets of contemporary Santiago. However, the tone of the narrative quickly shifts when the narrator starts recounting, very nostalgically, the neighbors’ past experiences at those same spots he is “visiting.” For example, at one corner he stops to describe the past realities of those urban subjects who would stay right where he is waiting “a ese compañero que nunca llegó a la cita, o al contacto para sacarlo del país, esos años de gasa negra” (1998 183). Through this brief comment, the chronicler incorporates a subtle but very

powerful reference to the disappearances experienced by those plotting or suspected of plotting against the system during the dictatorship.

Similarly, in “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol,” Lemebel starts describing the football courts in some of the marginal neighborhoods of Santiago to then flash back to the times when they were transformed into nocturnal “concentration camps” by Pinochet’s men. The chronicle opens in a light tone as the narrator describes the courts as festive spaces where low-class neighbors come together to celebrate their team’s victory or the club’s achievements. Suddenly, the narrative travels back in time to address how those festive geographies were turned into *geographies of violence*— material spaces where bodies were forced to get naked and suffered abusive tortures— when appropriated by the regime’s soldiers to pack together “jóvenes en los allanamientos nocturnos a mediados de los ochenta” (2003 53). The comparison is particularly interesting if the audience is able to see soccer and its practices as a sort of symbolic warfare among fan groups as opposed to the material warfare that the military government practiced against those who dared be dissenters, to “cheer for the opposite team.”

Each of the narratives analyzed in this section guides the audience through the streets and homes of Pinochet’s Santiago in order to expose, as graphically as possible, the policies of violence that determined urban lifestyle during the years of the dictatorship. Every one of them introduces snapshots of bodies that are tortured or were declared “disappeared” to publicly acknowledge that they existed. It is also significant to address that while Lemebel could have used his descriptions of the physical violence executed by regime against its citizens to justify some sectors of the

population indifference to it, by arguing that due to their living a “citizenship of fear” these sectors resorted to silence as a protective means, the artist has chosen to use those descriptions to unsympathetically expose that indifference and generate certain “guilt” in his readership.

The use of the chronicle enables Lemebel to render subjective and episodic versions of a long and dense history that otherwise might go unread. In addition, using the chronicle gives Lemebel the chance of making his audience re-live the moments described through the eyes of some of their most closely affected witnesses instead of incorporating factual and detached renditions. Finally, his wandering as a chronicler gives Lemebel the opportunity to not only represent the different episodes of political violence that happened in the streets of Santiago during the times of the regime and the citizens’ reactions to them, but also to address how those episodes are being re-considered by contemporary urban subjects.

II- Contemporary Chronicles of Social Violence

While Lemebel’s chronicles about the terrors of the military dictatorship may be the most graphically violent, they are not necessarily the most effective in issuing the strong critique that lies at the center of his work. Although Lemebel is invested in reminding his audience of the brutal past in the history of his country, his main concern is to expose present instances of social and economic injustice in Chile. This section discusses a corpus of Lemebel’s chronicles that concentrate on contemporary Santiago and its many economic and social contradictions. Through these chronicles,

Lemebel describes Santiago's contradictory social and spatial *geographies* arguing that they get generated and maintained by a violent system that discriminates against certain sectors of the population while benefiting others.

Lemebel structures each of the chronicles in this corpus through the combination of opposites. The chronicler walks the city and registers its many locations while marking the ways in which different social classes experience the urban space. “La comuna de Lavín (o “el pueblito se llamaba Las Condes”)” (1998 169-70) and “Los Albores de La Florida (o “sentirse rico, aunque sea en miniatura”)” (1998 189-90) are two illustrative examples of how the chronicler understands and reacts to the social violence reflected by the spatial divisions of contemporary Santiago. In both chronicles Lemebel employs an extremely sarcastic tone to describe the wealthy neighborhoods that have developed on the outskirts of downtown Santiago.

In “La comuna de Lavín” the chronicler explains that

la fruncida comuna de Las Condes es una reina rubia que mira por sobre el hombro a otras comunas piojosas de Santiago [...]. Es el ejemplar de un sistema económico que se pasa por el ano la justicia social, es la evidencia vergonzosa de un nuevo feudalismo de castillos, condominios y poblaciones humildes que hierven de faltas y miserias, de habitantes tristes y habitantes frívolos y cómodos que lucen el esplendor de sus perlas cultivadas por el exceso neoliberal (1998 170).

The narrative contrasts the rich comfort of Las Condes with the sad poverty of Santiago's marginal neighborhoods. Reflecting on the differences between both enables Lemebel to introduce the margins in his discourse, thus making them visible,

particularly to those who attempt to ignore them. Similarly, in “Los Albores de La Florida” Lemebel provides, mostly through ironic commentary, a strong critique of those middle-class groups who, in an attempt to imitate the upper-classes’ voluntary territorial isolation— exercised through the establishment of closed neighborhoods and surveillance systems—, establish self-sufficient communities that avoid interaction with those urban subjects belonging to other social groups.

Lemebel uses these narratives to comment on the inherent violence of a social system that has determined the distribution of urban space according to income. In his critique, the chronicler also includes references to the damaging effects of modernity, which he perceives as a menacing and violent force that destroys the traditional and attempts to hide the marginal. In “La ciudad con terno nuevo” (o “un extraño en el paraíso”)” (1998 182-3), Lemebel talks nostalgically about those poor neighborhoods that have disappeared under a modern architecture that

arrasa sin piedad con la memoria de los pobres. Con su monstruosa maquinaria demoleadora, hace polvo el perfil evocado de la cuadra, la casa con corredor y su mampara, la pieza de alquiler y su colectiva promiscuidad (1998 183).

In its place rises a Santiago

clasista, recuperado, remozado y afirulado por los urbanistas municipales que preservan solamente la memoria aristócrata. Para que el turismo vea esos palacetes sin alma y piense que no siempre fuimos pobres, que alguna vez Santiago se pareció a Europa, a París, a Inglaterra (1998 183).

Once more, like with the chronicles about the military dictatorship, Lemebel makes his audience see the true Santiago beneath the appearances. He exposes the “urban transvestitism” that intends to suppress memories in order to create a city without a past, a city that seems to be always young.

However, Lemebel includes a selection of chronicles that show how the utopic division of the city into organized and closed sections gets challenged by those who inhabit its less privileged areas. The occupation, in all these cases, is described as an aggressive one, mostly because Lemebel structures the narrative from the viewpoint of those comfortably established at the center. The chronicler follows the crowd into the city, describes their conquest of the public space through symbolic and physical violence, shifts viewpoint to portray the “invasion” through the gaze of those whose space is being occupied, and concludes with an omniscient description of the aftermath of that “unauthorized” invasion.

In “Veraneo en la Capital” (O la gota gorda del sudor capitalino)” (2003 194-6), the chronicler describes a group of families playing in the fountain and lake of Parque Cousiño, a popular park in downtown Santiago. Lemebel explains that those enjoying the hot summer afternoons in the park are members of a “proletarian class” not able to vacation on the coast. The chronicler comments on how the aristocratic appearance of the park gets transformed by the lively interaction of its visitors: “Esos espejos de agua con esculturas clásicas y querubines piluchos, ahora cobran vida cuando el familión proleta veranea en el césped de la plaza” (2003 194-5).

Up to that point, Lemebel has described the episode from the standpoint of an objective bystander who is enjoying the spectacle. However, he soon awakens his

audience to difference through the inclusion of an old upper-class woman's viewpoint. A biased bystander, the old woman looks at the visitors with contempt and protests that they are transforming the park into a "vulgar" space. The presence of the working class bothers the aristocratic eye used to repressed impulses and strictly structured appearances.

To the old woman, the "invasion" of the park becomes a violent attack that is both physical and symbolic. The quiet and clean green space gets transformed, under her eyes, into a chaotic geography— a geography of aesthetic violence— that has lost its "proper" form to the ways of the working classes. However, because Lemebel constructs a chronicler that is sympathetic with the working classes, it is the old woman who is rendered as an invasive element that attempts to "destroy" the entertainment of the subjects at the park.

In "La esquina es mi corazón (o los New Kids del bloque)" (1995 29-36) and "Los Duendes de la Noche" (2003 33-5), the intervention of the "margins" into the "center" described by the chronicler is more controversial and aggressive because it takes place through criminal action. These two chronicles, published in *La esquina es mi corazón* and *Zanjón de la Aguada* respectively, could act as complements to each other or as a sequence that explains the reasons behind the criminal action of some members of society. In "La esquina es mi corazón" Lemebel identifies the reasons why some marginal members of society turn into criminals. The chronicler introduces the narrative with an image that presents low-class youths as victims that, many times, turned into corpses dumped weekly in the cemetery's public graves (2003 35). Lemebel argues that a dark environment of poverty, without economic opportunity or

social benefits, can only predispose these youths to a tragic future of crime, prostitution, and death (1995 36).

As in a planned sequence, in “Los Duendes de la Noche” that Lemebel places these youths in the middle of the “civilized” urban center. He tells his audience that they do not have to open their eyes wide to see them, “para descubrirlos en la telaraña metálica y deshumanizada de la urbe” (2003 33). Lemebel blames the city for having corrupted these youths transforming them in a menacing presence. The city, with its many temptations,

pervirtió la dulzura que la niñez lleva en el mirar, y les puso esa sombra malévola que baila en sus ojillos cuando una cadena de oro se balancea al alcance de la mano. La ciudad los hizo esclavos de su prostíbula pobreza y explota la infancia desnutrida ofreciéndola a los automovilistas, que detienen el vehículo para echarlos arriba seducidos por la ganga de un infantil chupar (2003 34-5).

The city is personified as a corrupting force that turns low-class youths into violent subjects eager for possessions and a standard of living that the system advertises and puts value on but does not allow them to have.

The invasion of the urban public space turns even more violent in “Cómo no te voy a querer (o la micropolítica de las barras bravas)” (1995 51-8) and “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol” (2003 47-70). In these two narratives, Lemebel renders how groups of hooligans, football fans, enter the city to “corrupt” its cleanness and alter its geography. “Cómo no te voy a querer” describes how out-of-control fans invade the city

pateando las señales del orden, meándose en cada esquina donde la autoridad instaló cámaras para vigilar con ojo punitivo. Marejadas en shorts y zapatillas rotas, desafían la represión que silba en bombas lacrimógenas y carros lanza-aguas abollados por los peñascos (1995 58).

In an ironic tone, Lemebel opposes these fans—whom he describes as marginal subjects who live in poverty and have, in their majority, a *mestizo* background—to “[n]uestros muchachos de espíritu sano, de polera blanca y jeans recién planchados, empeñados en el servicio social, en pasear ancianos y sacar el barro de las inundaciones” (1995 58). Once again, Lemebel structures the chronicles by means of contradiction, marking the difference in behavior between social classes. However, his is a very biased narrative: he characterizes the privileged youth as “exitista, conservadora e idiotizada por la navidad consumista de los mall, shopping y centros comerciales del Miami chileno” (2003 70), thus issuing a critique of their superficial experiencing of the urban territory.

The “uncivilized” fans, who are described with terms that would apply more to animals than to human beings, “pollute” the “clean” city, the “continent’s neo-liberal face” with their illegal appropriation of the organized public space, “rebasando la nota armoniosa de la urbe civilizada” (1995 56-58). Lemebel uses “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol” to show how part of such occupation is carried out through graffiti painting, an activity that symbolizes the violent conquest of the city’s tidy external look. However, according to the chronicler, far from being a purely aggressive and meaningless aesthetic practice, graffiti painting becomes both a

powerful political tool and a strong piece of evidence of extreme economic inequalities. Lemebel states,

Pareciera que en este gesto de rayar y rayar muros [...] ellos confrontaran críticamente el nuevo orden educacional del libre mercado, las políticas clasistas de las universidades y colegios privados que inauguró el modelo económico a los que no tienen acceso los jóvenes pobladores que no pueden pagar sus altas mensualidades (2003 68).

Shifting viewpoints from the hooligans to the aristocratic classes and back to the hooligans enables Lemebel to expose false prejudices and explain the reasons behind some of the urban violence generated and experienced by these groups.

Lemebel also makes use of flashbacks—especially to the times of the dictatorship—to introduce other plausible reasons that may partly justify the fans’ unrestrained violence.¹¹⁷ Through these means, the chronicler establishes a clear connection between past political violence and present social violence to support his argument that the hooligans’ aggressive practices can partly find justification in these youths’ need to respond to the unfair manipulation of force and distribution of privilege coming from past and present governments.

However, in spite of their many thematic coincidences, the gaze that delivers “Cómo no te voy a querer” differs greatly from that of “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol.” Because Lemebel renders a moment of “Cómo no te voy a querer” through the eyes of an homosexual standing in the crowd of enthusiastic “macho” hooligans, the gaze in this chronicle turns out to be much more erotic:

A pesar del calor que cosquillea en la gota resbalando por la entrepierna

ardiente, a pesar del pegoteo de torsos desnudos mojados por la excitación, los chicos se abrazan y estrujan estremecidos por el bombazo de un delantero que mete pelota rajando el himen del ano-arco. Entonces el gol es una excusa para sobajearse acaramelados unos sobre otros (1995 53).

Always stressing the idea of forceful “invasion,” Lemebel intersects very violent imagery with very sensual commentary: after the ball “penetrates” the goal, an image with explicit sexual connotations, the hooligans “march into” the city. The idea of violence is innate to both correlative episodes, the scoring of the goal and the celebration of that scoring.¹¹⁸

The chronicles considered in this section are perhaps among the most illustrative of how Lemebel perceives the contemporary city. In their own way, each of these episodes describes the city in all its contradictions: as a trap where violence is either experienced or committed,¹¹⁹ as a corrupting force that generates more violence,¹²⁰ or as a “guardian angel” that protects the most violent subjects from being spotted and captured.¹²¹ The city portrayed by Lemebel is an unfriendly environment, one symbolically and physically compartmentalized, divided by security forces and iron fences. The citizens of Lemebel’s chronicles are always scared of potential violence; they are, as Rotker claims, “citizens of fear”(2002). As a result, they isolate themselves in their secure neighborhoods in an attempt to avoid personal encounters that might derive in dangerous, unsafe, or uncomfortable situations.

These narratives prove that the chronicle is the perfect genre for Lemebel not only to map the material geography of Santiago but also to move with its subjects in order to understand their behavior and interaction. Through the chronicle Lemebel is able to

pinpoint the activities through which each group of the urban population either lives or occupies the city. Because the chronicler concentrates on class divisions and conflicts, his representation of such activities stresses the violence, either symbolic or physical, that articulates them and that, consequently, transforms the urban space into a battlefield where resources are fought over and monopolized.

III- Dangerous Consumption: Foreign Temptations and Media Lies

The previous two sections have discussed chronicles that represent the phenomenon of urban violence as it is manifested in its more physical ways— body tortures, the material distribution of the urban geography, criminal action, or graffiti painting. Instead, the chronicles discussed in this section include representations of a more symbolic type of violence that derives from the intersection of the cultural, the political, and the national. In these chronicles Lemebel criticizes Chilean society for its tendency towards the unlimited and unquestioning consumption of the foreign and media symbols and its complete lack of interest in the social realities of their country. There is, then, an inherent reference to the numbing effects of a “media world” that assigns value to material possessions, instead of promoting the fight for ideals, and disregards the local in favor of the global.

The chronicles in this section expose how contemporary Chilean cultural and social life has been penetrated by the symbolic of consumerism (Moulian 106). Like *Cidade de Deus*, these chronicles describe citizens that interact through the medium of consumption. They prove, as García Canclini claims, that, nowadays, it is the market, and not politics or the state, which brings urban citizens together (2000 23).

The characters in these chronicles judge and understand each other according to their capacity to either own or consume. Thus, in Lemebel's representations of urban life, the "citizen as a representative of public opinion" (2000 24) is substituted by an indifferent and materialistic consumer that only cares about money and easy entertainment.¹²²

In "I love you Mac Donald" (o "el encanto de la comida chatarra") (1998 174-5), Lemebel describes how the city has been invaded by "Yankee" food chains that impose their "fried options" through slogans and signs. The establishment of these chains is rendered as a violent type of colonization that has altered the national metabolism once used to Chilean typical dishes: "prendieron como pólvora inundando la ciudad con sus luces, neones, slogans, olores, y fritangas gringas que atraen a la masa urbana con el aroma plástico de la comilona chatarra" (1998 174).

This narrative enables Lemebel to comment on the consumerist nature of the contemporary citizen only interested in buying the Mac Combo to get the "happy meal's box," "todo un mugrerío de muñecos y juguetes para engatusar la fiebre consumista del buche Mac Donald" (1998 175), and criticize a global market that prompts the disregard for the national as citizens compete with each other to become the subservient employees of "una multinacional que arrasa con las costumbres folclóricas de este suelo" (1998 175).

Two other interesting chronicles that discuss the corrosive and aggressive influence that consumption exerts on the urban experience are "Lucero de mimbre en la noche campanal" (1995 147-154) and "El Paseo Ahumada" (o "la marea urbana de un caudaloso vitrinear") (1998 138-9). In these two narratives the chronicler travels

the city to describe masses of urban subjects frenetically consuming in popular shopping malls.

In “Lucero de mimbres en la noche campanal,” Lemebel presents the variety of “Christmases” experienced by the different sectors of Santiago’s population. Middle- and upper-class citizens are rendered as a human crowd of sweaty bodies pushing each other to get the most fashionable gifts: the Barbie, the tennis shoes with lights, or the video game that “hipnotiza a los niños matando monstruos karatecas, para que no jodan” (1995 148). Christmas becomes a justification for the selfish and out-of-control consumption of the privileged ones. Thus, a celebration that, according to the chronicler, should be experienced as a peaceful spiritual holiday becomes a violent materialistic practice that transforms the city into a disorganized battleground.

Lemebel uses “Lucero de mimbres en la noche campanal” to comment on the social violence inherent in current urban consumerist practices. He develops such comment through the comparison between the “mesías de plástico que reparte la cigüeña taiwanesa en los hogares de buena crianza [...] asegurados por la dieta gorda de la diestra nacional [...]” (1995 150) and the Jesus of the low-class kids “quemados por los 20 watts del arbolito rasca [...]. Enanos moquientos, pendejos de la pobla que adornan un carretón como trineo [...]. Niños viejos que recorren la ciudad chupándose las vitrinas” (1995 150).

The image of the poor kid “sucking the display windows” resurfaces in “El Paseo Ahumada” where the chronicler demystifies the belief in the possibility of sustaining a social contract that can articulate the conditions for urban solidarity. Instead, Lemebel describes a street inhabited by bodies that bump into each other in their

nervous walking across the public space (1998 138). Suddenly, the artist shifts viewpoint to render the episode through the eyes of a poor child, holding his mother's hand and frightened by the avalanche of shoes that walk past him (1998 139). Lemebel justifies the child's restlessness by placing, right next to him, another child who is silently enjoying a big ice-cream cone. He concludes,

[y] el niño sabe que la mama le dirá que no tiene plata para un barquillo [...], cuando va de la mano con su mamá por el Paseo Ahumada, mirando la fanfarria chillona de las vitrinas, chupándose con los ojos el resplandor publicitario (1998 139).

Thus, Lemebel intelligently uses both chronicles to force his wealthy audiences to witness how their violent, in addition to unnecessary and excessive, consumerist desire disregards the violence immanent in the inability to possess shared by the most underprivileged sectors.

The trafficking of illegal substances also turns the city into a menacing *geography of violence*— a location where the consumption of damaging drugs parallels the consumption of foreign products. In “Noches de raso blanco (a ese chico tan duro)” (1995 125-30), Lemebel follows cocaine's itinerary in its wandering in and out of different popular urban establishments. Cocaine is described as an “unethical queen” whose journey is marked by power's perpetual shifting (1995 127). The chronicler follows the high demanded drug in and out of Congress, editorial houses, management parties, pubs, night clubs, and discos, as he described how it is snorted by politicians, artists, musicians, waiters, and strippers.

Thus, Lemebel is able to portray how drugs permeate every social class and every private and public space giving its consumers the chance to duplicate “la resistencia según la demanda neoliberal como impulso del mercado” (1995 128). However, the chronicler concludes, it only “snows” “en el barrio alto y cuando caen unos copos en la periferia, matan pajaritos” (1995 130). Once again, Lemebel stops at a common urban practice, drug consumption, with the intention of criticizing the hypocrisy of a system that only punishes the most underprivileged.¹²³ In addition, his following the path of such a deadly substance allows the chronicler to mention the many threats of the urban space, a space that claims its inhabitants’ lives not only through crime but also through temptation.

Finally, Lemebel uses his chronicles to make a critique of TV imagery which he describes as a damaging force that promotes the further isolation of city dwellers. Lemebel develops a number of chronicles that comment on the symbolic violence involved in the consumption of unfair representations that render the most marginal in the most mocking and derogatory ways. In “La baba tricolor de la risa nacional” (2003 275-8), the chronicler criticizes the “macho” humor that laughs at the disabled and the poor, the uneducated and the sick. By claiming that the media stereotypes of “pobres hilachentos y mujeres de cuatro dientes, degradados por el sin sentido de sus parches” (2003 275) are nothing but false characterizations lacking in true referents and blind to the realities of the country, Lemebel destroys the apparent truth behind popularly accepted representations.

In some of these chronicles, Lemebel exposes the agendas of those TV programs that promote numb consumerism through their apolitical and classist agenda. In “Don

Francisco (o “la virgen obesa de la TV”) (1998 51-3), the chronicler makes explicit his disgust at and disapproval of those entertainment programs that have gained their popularity by degrading low-class participants who agree to be mocked on screen in order to get the car or radio set that, otherwise, they would never be able to afford.

While in “La baba tricolor de la risa nacional” and “Don Francisco (o “la virgen obesa de la TV”) Lemebel assumes that the audiences to the programs described are either middle- or upper-class citizens who, both comfortably and indifferently, “consume” the suffering of others,¹²⁴ in other narratives he explores— in a tone both sympathetic and bitter— how low-class audiences consume TV programs that portray high-society entertainment.

In “Zanjón de la Aguada (Crónica en tres actos)” (2003 13-23), Lemebel goes into a low-class home to depict how its inhabitants, in an attempt to escape their everyday somber reality, eagerly consume TV shows about high-class lifestyle:

mejor rematar neuronas como espectador de la pantalla donde el jet-set
piojo se abanica con remuneraciones millonarias [...] sacándole la lengua
a la teleaudiencia sonámbula y roticuaja que pone una olla sobre el aparato
de tevé para recibir la gotera que cae del techo roto, que suena como
monedas, que en su tintineo reiterado se confunde con el campanilleo de
alhajas que los personajes top hacen sonar en la pantalla. Pero al apagar
el aparato, la gotera de la pobreza sigue sonando como gotera en el eco
de la cacerola vacía (2003 22-3).

Like with many of his other chronicles, Lemebel structures this narrative in a circular manner: the narration journeys from the description of the poor everyday reality of a

marginal home, through the TV advertising of wealthy realities, and back to further references about the marginal home. Structuring the narrative in such a way allows the chronicler to further emphasize the economic differences between the various sectors of Chilean society through the correlative exposure of their contradictory experiences.

Like “La esquina es mi corazón (o los New Kids del bloque)” (1995) and “Los Duendes de la Noche” (2003), “Don Francisco (o “la virgen obesa de la TV”) — compiled in *De Perlas y Cicatrices* — “La baba tricolor de la risa nacional” and “Zanjón de la Aguada (Crónica en tres actos)” — compiled in *Zanjón de la Aguada*— work as complements to each other. Reading them together allows the audience to visualize the violence implicit in a politics of representation that portrays upper-class standards as the desired ones. Through the analysis of some of Chile’s most popular TV programs Lemebel is able to indirectly reflect on the economic inequalities of Chilean contemporary urban life.

The chronicles in this section serve the chronicler to explore how media representations and the pressure to consume have transformed the city into a potential space for the articulation of violence. By commenting on the dangers of consumption, each of these narratives addresses how by restricting their citizenship exclusively to their role as consumers—thus judging each other according to their ability to possess—, city dwellers change the city into an unsafe and chaotic geography that both promotes crime among those who lack the means to consume and fosters the development of hostile behavior among those competing to consume.

Second, by exposing the manipulated representations promoted by the Chilean TV programming, Lemebel's writings show that when urban subjects base their interaction with each other on the knowledge obtained through media representations, the possibility of developing a safe space where differences can be both accepted and respected becomes undoable. According to Lemebel, the media itself becomes a *geography of symbolic violence* that influences the development of further discrimination and corruption among the most powerful.

IV- Snapshots of Violence in the Streets of Santiago

This section discusses a group of four chronicles – “Coleópteros en el Parabrisas” (1995 139-46) (compiled in *La esquina es mi corazón*), “Manifiesto (Hablo por mi diferencia)” (1996 83-90) (compiled in *Loco Afán*), “La Leva (o “la noche fatal para una chica de moda”)” (1998 36-8) (compiled in *De Perlas y Cicatrices*), and “Los Ojos Achinados de la Ternura Mongólica” (2003 40-3) (compiled in *Zanjón de la Aguada*)— that, due to their themes and rhetorical characteristics, stand out from both the group of chronicles that has already been discussed in the previous sections and the rest of Lemebel's narratives.

These four chronicles deserve to be discussed in a separate section because every one of them represents the urban space as a *geography of violence* in very unique ways. While the majority of Lemebel's chronicles reference each other, mostly through their inclusion of similar ironic commentary and their addressing of similar themes, each of these four narratives depicts one very salient urban event through a rendition that is particularly aggressive in tone and powerful in impact. As a result of

this, the violence represented in these selected texts lingers in the minds of their readers for pages.

“Coleópteros en el Parabrisas” (1995), in which the chronicler records the multiple happenings on a city bus as it travels the city, stands out from the rest in its collection—*La esquina es mi corazón*—for two main reasons. First, the narrative is constructed through a gaze that is excessively mobile: not only does the chronicler travel the city on the bus, but he also moves inside the bus, from the front to the back, to collect as many details as possible. Second, the narrative juxtaposes the everyday, the criminal, the erotic, and the fatal in exceptionally flowing ways: as described by the chronicler, the experience on the bus is dangerous and erotic at the same time. Such successful juxtaposition is what allows the chronicler to portray the daily urban experience as a collection of violent happenings that affect the individual and the collective at the most personal levels.

At the narrative’s opening, the chronicler describes the passengers’ bodies “colgando de los fierros,” almost falling asleep to the “vaivén gelatinoso de la rutina vehicular” (1995 141). However, the chronicler disrupts this image of peaceful traveling by focusing his audience’s attention on a hand that “despabila la billetera” (1995 142) as passengers hysterically fight for a free seat. The criminal hand soon becomes the sexually-driven hand that explores the legs of its victims. Although Lemebel avoids passing judgment on the violence implicit in the criminal activity he witnesses, he quickly jumps to the defense of the violence implicit in the promiscuous touch for, he claims, it is always necessary in the city “porque remece la frigidez y deja caliente el agua para el mate que se tomará en casa” (1995 142). Lemebel

celebrates the touching that might awake the desire for future touching, thus of personal exchange. He represents the rhythmic contact of the bodies on the bus as a type of symbolic intercourse that disrupts, at least partially, the divisions and barriers that the urban experience attempts to emphasize.

Nevertheless, the bodies on the bus are still alienated bodies only interacting with other anonymous bodies, mostly physically, when forced to and prevented from the capacity to determine their personal space. The chronicler proves this by suddenly interrupting what his erotic rendering of what he calls “la fiesta micrera” with his description of a tragic happening, a car accident. The chronicler carefully describes how the crash affects each of the bus passengers traveling with him:

Todo es charco en la violencia del impacto. Todo es chispazo y ardor de huesos astillados. Todo es gritadera de auxilio [...]. Un todo de dolor que comprimió para siempre a la loca y al péndex en un abrazo de tripas al aire, justo cuando al chico le venía el chorro de perlas (1995 145).

Thus, in this last scene, Lemebel conflates the violent with the sexual in the most tragic manner. The crash becomes the “climax” of the episodic violence, both criminal and sexual, that the chronicler has witnessed on the bus.

“Manifiesto (Hablo por mi diferencia)” (1996) stands out from the rest of Lemebel’s narratives because it is the most personal and the most formally different of all. Written in the form of a poem, this chronicle merges the two types of marginalization that Lemebel has experienced in his life: political, due to his socialist beliefs during the times of the military dictatorship and the current neo-liberal government, and sexual, due to his declared homosexuality. Lemebel uses this

manifiesto to define his nation, Chilean society, and Santiago de Chile—the cultural, social, and physical territories he occupies—as

violent geographies, to redefine the masculine through the homosexual gaze, and to convince his audience to embrace difference instead of aggressively marginalizing it.

The Chile the chronicler describes in this narrative is afraid of and discriminatory against those who attempt to live differently. Challenging the conservative views that take the heterosexual as the norm, Lemebel enumerates the ways in which he has learned his homosexual manhood. Lemebel provides a critique of the most traditionally accepted types of manhood, such as those practiced by the military or sports fans, mostly developed through aggression directed at the most fragile. Instead, the chronicler claims,

[m]i hombría me la enseñó la noche [...]. Mi hombría fue la mordaza [...].

Mi hombría fue morderme las burlas/ Comer rabia para no matar a todo el mundo/ Mi hombría es aceptarme diferente (1996 83-90).

“Manifiesto” enables Lemebel to affirm that he “speaks for his difference”¹²⁵ and to explore, from the time of the dictatorship to the present, the various geographies and individuals that interact within the confines of the city. His critique goes to the heterosexual structuring of reality that promotes aggressive behavior as the only viable way for men to develop and protect their identity. Instead, he concludes, he envisions the re-founding of the city on non-violent, non-masculine grounds.¹²⁶ By disclosing the dangers of the heterosexual system in place, Lemebel suggests a way of re-conquering and re-organizing the urban territory with the most marginal at its very core.

“La Leva (o “la noche fatal para una chica de moda”)” (1998) stands out from the rest precisely because of its unforgiving critique of excessively violent heterosexual practices. The chronicle describes the massive rape of a young female adolescent on one wintry night. Probably one of Lemebel’s most violent urban episodes, this chronicle does both question heterosexual models of manhood and denounce the damaging indifference that characterizes contemporary life. The chronicle is also unique among the rest of Lemebel’s narratives because of how it has been structured and the imagery it incorporates.

The chronicle’s narrative is circular and it has been developed through parallel images. The episode opens with the chronicler witnessing one

leva de perros babosos encaramándose una y otra vez sobre la perra cansada, la quiltra flaca y acezante, que ya no puede más, que se acurruca en un rincón para que la deje tranquila la jauría de hocicos y patas que la montan sin respiro (1998 36).

The brutality of the scene suddenly reminds him of the story of a violent rape of a girl he once knew. The chronicler flashes back to the night of the rape and renders it with an imagery very similar to the one he has used to describe the dogs’ intercourse at the beginning of the narrative:

desnudándola entre todos, querían despedazarla con manoseos y agarrones desesperados [...]; abriéndole las piernas, montándola epilépticos [...]. Y en un momento gritó, pidió auxilio mordiendo las manos que le tapaban la boca. Pero eran tantos [...]. Eran tantas fauces que la mordían, la chupaban, como hienas de fiesta [...] (1998 37).

In a cruel and animalistic manner, the male rapists “penetrate” their female victim without control or pause. Lemebel stresses that the girl “shouted for help” in order to expose the cowardice of her neighbors, who witness the crime behind closed doors without intervening (1998 37). He thus establishes a clear parallel between the physical violence involved in the rape and the social violence implicit in the community’s refusal to intervene.

To conclude the chronicle the narrator returns to the present, back to his description of the dogs having intercourse, and shares a reflection on the brutality of urban aggressions that get repeated and go unpunished on an every day basis. Like the chronicles discussed in *Section I*, “La Leva (o “la noche fatal para una chica de moda”)” portrays a city that becomes a deserted and violent trap for defenseless victims who suffer the unfair impact of indiscriminate aggression – the girl’s only “sin” has been to expose her attractive body. The city is transformed into an entity that offers no protection to its most vulnerable inhabitants.

Finally, the last chronicle to be considered in this section, “Los Ojos Achinados de la Ternura Mongólica” (2003), stands out from the rest of Lemebel’s work because, unlike no other of his narratives, it directly and emotionally articulates his personal response to the violence that derives from those discriminatory policies that rule contemporary society and determine its current values. In this chronicle, Lemebel sets out to challenge the social system of classification established by the traditional center. He achieves this goal through his depiction of how some marginal groups understand and live the city and its experiences. In other words, this chronicle puts

into question the logic that rules the whole social and cultural organization of the current urban system.

The chronicle narrates Lemebel's encounter with a disabled girl at a book signing event he attended. However, in order to conflate opposites, the narrator opens the text with a description of the standards contemporary society uses to classify its members:

estas sociedades automatizadas en su cuadratura dominante privilegian únicamente el aparato de la razón que pueda mantener en orden los sistemas de control. Así, se establecen categorías de 'lo sano y lo enfermo,' a partir de un patrón generalizado por leyes de conducta [...].En este sentido, el llamado síndrome de Down agrupa, excluyendo, a una parte de los ciudadanos que viven esta característica. Les pone etiquetas de tontos sin retorno (2003 40).

Right after this comment, the chronicler meets the girl with Downs-syndrome who, after hearing him and, apparently, recognizing his voice from listening to his program on the radio, hugs him tenderly. Lemebel identifies the girl as the “minority” among the “minorities” – the *mestizo*, the homosexual, and the women—who are at the event waiting for his autograph.

The encounter with the girl becomes the turning point in the narrative. Swiftly, the chronicler shifts viewpoint and, looking at society from the girl's location, issues a critique towards a hypocritical social establishment that hides its discrimination of the disabled by placing them into low-pay service jobs (2003, 43). Thus, like in the rest of Lemebel's chronicles, the audience witnesses a symbiosis between the narrator and the narrated, “[u]n proceso de metamorfosis en el cual el registro discursivo se traviste e identifica con la voz de la urbe santiaguina” (Mateos del Pino 22).

Lemebel concludes the chronicle out in the city streets where, he states, it is normal to see these children

casi siempre de la mano de un familiar a quien ellos colman de besos, sin ningún pudor, sin ninguna vergüenza. Como si en esta fiesta de caricias, develaran el cortinaje de cinismo que educa nuestros afectos. Ellos son así de libres, y van esparciendo su zigzagueante mirar por los viaductos de la urbe controlada, quizás proponiendo un paréntesis o una ruptura a la lógica civilizada de nuestro tedioso pasar (2003 43).

Understanding the city from the perspective of the apparently “illogical” allows the chronicler to question the value of what the “healthy” citizens perceive as urban “logic.” Lemebel views this “logic” as a corrosive presence that transforms the citizens’ everyday routine into a tedious and senseless experience and violates the most natural human instincts. Once again, Lemebel privileges the perspective of the marginal. He structures his discourse in a disruptive manner, incorporating difference in an attempt to denaturalize traditionally accepted hierarchies and power structures. This also allows him to show his audience how standard systems of classification become *discursive geographies of violence* through their biased and unfair depiction of those who either fit the less privileged categories or are unable to fit any of them.

The four chronicles discussed in this section present very detailed, subjective, and emotional depictions of moments of urban violence. They map violence at urban venues that are both material, the streets of Santiago where the audience witnesses the bus crash and the rape, and ideological, the discriminatory nature of current social categorization practices. Each of them represents an urban experience marked by

extreme violence but rendered through the eyes of a sympathetic chronicler who sides with the most fragile, thus challenging the power structures in place.

V- A Multi-media Aesthetic of Violence

Finally, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, this last section concentrates on the formal aspects of Lemebel's writing. The analysis of these chronicles' multi-genre nature, their rhetorical transformations when translated into a different medium, and their complementary relationship with each other, enables a discussion of the direct effect these formal aspects have on both Lemebel's manipulation of the chronicle and the type of representation of urban violence he constructs.

There is a multi-generic nature to Lemebel's collections explicitly reflected through the artist's inclusion and combination of song lyrics, manifestos, historical data, *testimonios*, gossip, anecdotes, poetry, letters, photography, and a variety of media registers— such as advertising, entertainment TV, and news. The fact that Lemebel has chosen the chronicle, an extremely hybrid form that naturally welcomes the inclusion and melting of other genres, partly explains the chronicler's natural incorporation of such a variety of different registers.

Another reason that justifies the combination of such a variety of genres is Lemebel's thematic choice. Because the chronicler utilizes his discourse to map the city—a space that inevitably brings a variety of discourses together— and deals with such a contemporary phenomenon as urban violence, his narratives require the incorporation

of popular discourses— usually considered or referred to as “minority discourses”— to authentically represent how violence is experienced by different sectors of the population. In order to be able to expose the mechanisms that facilitate and originate violence in the city, Lemebel needs to inhabit and travel back and forth between these discourses so that violence can be understood from a variety of different perspectives. In addition, privileging these “minority” discourses allows Lemebel to imprint his work with both an informal and oral quality that helps to draw his audiences even closer to the everyday events he describes.

Finally, the key factor that determines Lemebel’s manipulation of alternative discourses is his chronicles’ multi-media nature. As it has already been mentioned, most of Lemebel’s chronicles were published in local newspapers or magazines and performed by the chronicler on *Cancionero*—his radio program— before being finally compiled in their respective written collections. As a consequence of this transition, his written chronicles have an oral quality. However, due the fact that Lemebel wrote the chronicles before performing them on the air, his radio chronicles also reflect the characteristics of written media—especially considering the fact that the artist reads them when he is on the air.

In a number of interviews, Lemebel has claimed that he has felt very comfortable in the radio and the most prolific when he has been able to return his written texts to the urban orality where they originated (Mateos del Pino 20). Lemebel has confessed that what his texts do is “piratear contenidos que tienen una raigambre más popular para hacerlos transitar en otros medios donde el libro es un producto sofisticado” so that they get to be spread in less conventional and canonical ways (Jeftanovic 2000).

In “Tu voz existe (o “el débil quejido de la radio AM”)” (1998 204-5), published in *De Perlas y Cicatrices*, Lemebel describes the radio as a privileged means of urban communication with both social and political value. Lemebel opens the chronicle claiming that the AM radio was, for a long time, the voice that maintained Chilean audiences informed of the country’s everyday events: “La milonga radial del conventillo, la cumbia del pasaje, el gol del mundial gritado en la esquina [...]; la radio ha sido fundamento en la reciente historia del país” (1998 204).

However, Lemebel’s interest lies not in the social value of the radio but in its function as a means of political intervention. Lemebel establishes the relation between urban media and the violence involved in illegally controlled politics of representation. The chronicler comments on the AM’s revolutionary value during dictatorship times:

En esas frecuencias ‘tan patrias,’ era difícil enterarse de los acontecimientos, tergiversados, ocultos y opacados por la cortina de un himno nacional. Por eso, la afición radio-escucha se hizo más compleja, como Radio Umbral, importante espacio difusor de la acción protesta. También surgieron como callampas las radios clandestinas (1998 205).

In a bittersweet tone, Lemebel concludes that, although the AM radio was not designed for the sophisticated listening of stereo addicts, it is difficult that the impersonal “cursilería FM contagie la memoria sonora como lo hizo la radio AM con su débil quejido, con los tarros de su bullicioso encanto” (1998 204-5). Thus, once more, the chronicler brings together two opposites: the apolitical and market-oriented nature of the FM stations against the ideological and activist nature of the AM

stations which, particularly during the dictatorship, participated in both hiding and exposing the abuses committed by the government.

Like its published translation, the radio version of “Tu voz existe (o “el débil quejido de la radio AM”)” (1998 204-5) – entitled “La radio, tu voz aún existe” — works through the conflation of extreme opposites: the chronicler describes the AM as a source of both entertainment and political violence and confrontation. However, although the script of both versions is almost similar, their rendition varies a lot. The radio version includes excerpts from past aired radio programs that serve to illustrate the chronicler’s statements as he “performs” the chronicle. The inclusion of these excerpts enables Lemebel to emphasize, more dramatically and effectively, the contrasts mentioned. For example, right after Lemebel has made his audience listen to a Rock’n Roll song, he introduces a reference to Radio Cooperativa— one of the stations active during the dictatorship— and intermingles excerpts of news about killings and disappearances this station released during the times of the regime. Lemebel’s reliance on auditory stimuli— a stimuli that has not been included in the written version of the chronicle— does both authorize his discourse through excerpts heard that have been taken from historical records and explicitly illustrate the violence referred to during the chronicler’s reading of the narrative.

The first time the audience listens to Lemebel on the radio, they do not necessarily experience they are listening to a performance. The chronicler reads his chronicles without using a lot of variation in his intonation and, in fact, his reading seems, at certain moments, quite forced, as if he was struggling to get through the narrative. However, this first impression might change once the audience has listened carefully

to a number of Lemebel's chronicles. Lemebel structures the majority of his radio chronicles by means of montage and the juxtaposition of a variety of music and sound effects. Those incorporations allow the chronicler to provide his narratives with a rhythm of their own and to bring emotion to his, sometimes, monotonous reading tone.¹²⁷

In some cases, the chronicler's choice of music is related to his intention to introduce irony in his narratives. Although when Lemebel reads, his ironies immediately jump right out for the listeners, the chronicler is many times more successful when he uses music to imply irony. Two good examples of this are "El barrio Dieciocho (o la noche en que se inauguró la luz)," published in *Zanjón de la Aguada* under the same title (2003 190-3) and "Cecilia Bolocco, la belleza plástica de la burguesía nacional," published in *De Perlas y Cicatrices* as "Cecilia Bolocco, (o "besos mezquinos para no estropear el maquillaje" (1998 61-3).

Both the radio and the published versions of "El Barrio Dieciocho" have a circular structure: the chronicler walks the city and stops at a traditional Santiago neighborhood to describe the decay of a group of mansions that used to be inhabited by members of the Chilean aristocracy at the turn of the 20th century, then flashbacks to describe the day when these mansions got electric light for the first time, and returns to the present to comment again on the damaging effects of the passing of time. In both versions, the chronicler moves in and out of the mansions he is looking at: from the decaying framework of the building, to the preparations inside the mansion as its high-class inhabitants await the coming of electric light, to a group of low-class bystanders standing eagerly in the cold all day to witness the experience

from the outside, and back to the interior of the mansion where the owner asks her maid to close the curtains so that the poor bystanders would not be able to see what is going on.

However, the radio version is much more ironic and, consequently, “sounds” much more critical of the upper-classes than the published one. This is so mostly because the radio version incorporates music, in this case a waltz, to further emphasize the chronicler’s biased standpoint towards the aristocratic sector he is describing. A waltz introduces and closes the narrative and accompanies the chronicler as he reads through it. Because Lemebel is quite judgmental of Chilean aristocracy’s indifference to the lower classes and superiority complex, it makes perfect sense that he has chosen a waltz to accompany this narrative.¹²⁸ Because the ironic tone of the chronicle is reinforced in the radio version, the reference to the social gap between the aristocracy and the low-classes is also stressed. Lemebel uses text and music to comment on the violence of a system that allows only a few to enjoy modernity and its comforts.

The radio version of “Cecilia Bolocco, (o “besos mezquinos para no estropear el maquillaje)” is also more successful in its critique of Chilean media characters than its written translation. In this chronicle, Lemebel talks about beauty pageants and particularly about the Miss Chile and Miss Universe competitions. The chronicler is particularly bothered by Bolocco, who became Miss Universe at the time of the military dictatorship in Chile, and her indifference to the violent political situation her country was living at the time. Lemebel is especially upset by Bolocco’s decision to meet the dictator right after she comes back to the country:

lo primero que hizo fue visitar al dictador que la recibió en palacio retratándose con ella como emperador y soberana. Y todos vimos a nuestra Miss Universo acaramelada posando con Augusto. Y todos sentimos la misma decepción al verla tan sonriente avalando la pesadilla de aquel mandato (1998 62).

Lemebel's tone in the radio chronicle is extremely aggressive towards Bolocco. Not only does he mockingly imitate the beauty queen's voice in her answers to media interview questions but he also introduces her with a very popular Latin American song whose lyrics read, "La rubia tarada, bronceada, aburrída..." (Lemebel).

Lemebel's radio chronicles, then, incorporate sound effects—both the narrator's tone of voice, songs, and other sounds—that emphasize the chronicler's critical judgement and produce a more violent type of discourse.¹²⁹ However, it might be a misjudgment to claim that his radio chronicles are "more successful" than their written or pictorial versions. It would be more accurate to claim that to an audience that has no access to the three forms, the radio one might end up being the most effective in sending the chronicler's message. Instead, to an audience able to access the three forms, the radio version becomes a very valuable addition that potentially increases the irony of Lemebel's discourse.¹³⁰

Apart from the written and radio versions of his chronicles, Lemebel adds to the multi-media nature of his work through the inclusion of photography sections. Two of Lemebel's collections include a section of pictorial chronicles that both complement and add information to the written ones. In *De Perlas y Cicatrices*, the section entitled "Relicario" (1998 105-116), compiles photographs taken in Santiago during the 1970s and 1980s. Particularly interesting is the way in which the chronicler has

compiled the photographs in this section. The images alternate between happy and sad moments in the history of Chile.

For example, opposite a photograph of “Peggy Cordero en la cartelera del Bim Bam Bum, 1972)” (1998 108), the chronicler includes a photograph of a baby whose caption reads, “Claudia Victoria Poblete Hlaczik, Fotografía del libro de Mujeres Chilenas Detenidas Desaparecidas (Agrupación de familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos)” (1998 109). Similarly, right opposite a photograph of a public protest in “Zona Sur” of Santiago (1998 110), that shows upset and disoriented bystanders against a background of smoke, apparently produced by an explosion, there is a photograph of “Día de la Liberación Nacional 1982” (1998 111), in which a group of citizens, apparently in the midst of celebration, look happily at the camera.

The most shocking opposition comes on pages 112 and 113. On page 112, there is a photograph of “Carmen Gloria Quintana” – the protagonist of the written chronicle “Carmen Gloria Quintana (o “una página quemada en la feria del libro”)” (1998) – carrying a sign that reads “NO A LA TORTURA” (1998). The image of Quintana’s burnt face crying for justice has special value because the chronicler has already devoted a whole narrative describing how the woman’s face came to be burnt. Thus, the audience is able to “see” the consequences of past violence, something they have been asked to merely “imagine” or “picture” some pages before. Right opposite, on page 113, there is a picture of “Miss Chile, 1988” (1998 113). In the photograph, Miss Chile is proudly looking into the camera, while posing for a group of reporters who can be seen on the background.

Like Quintana's photograph, this image of Miss Chile illustrates the previously included written chronicle on Cecilia Bolocco (61-3 1998). In this chronicle, Lemebel criticizes not only the apolitical position of Chilean beauty queens, especially of those popular during Pinochet's government, but also the false and discriminatory standards of beauty promoted and defended by the Chilean media and upper-classes.¹³¹ By opposing the photograph of Quintana's burnt face—which also exposes Quintana's *mestizo* background—to the photograph of Miss Chile, Lemebel is able to comment on the cultural violence involved in media representations that value “white” European beauty. In addition, the fact that Miss Chile is being photographed by a large number of reporters is very revealing of the promotional interests of the Chilean media. It seems more profitable to concentrate on the “light beauty” of a pageant queen than to expose audiences to the images of past torture and injustice.

Compiling a happy and a tragic moment on consecutive pages allows the chronicler to give balance to the structuring of his narratives—both his written and pictorial chronicles are structured through the conflation of opposites—and to implicitly comment on the dangers of silencing and hiding those aspects of Chile's national past or present the privileged sectors of the Chilean population are willing to forget or ignore. The inclusion of the photographs of disappeared people also enables Lemebel to transform these subjects into characters that are physically present. They re-appear through word and image to remind audiences of a violent history that affected many in irreversible ways.

“Relicario” closes on a sad note with a photograph taken from the book *La memoria y el olvido. Detenidos Desaparecidos en Chile*. The photograph shows

members of “Cueca Sola. Conjunto Agrupación Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos” (1998 116) performing on the street. Members of the group carry signs with the photographs of missing people. One member of the group, standing in front of the rest, is covering her face with a handkerchief, as if she was drying her tears. Like the rest of the pictures in “Relicario,” the photograph is in white and black. This choice is relevant in this case because the audience is drawn by the black faces of the disappeared victims on the signs carried by their relatives. The lack of color also adds to the somber tone of the moment that is being recorded. In fact, each and every one of the photographs in this section, even those which record “happy moments” in Chilean history, have a somber tone to them; they all portray unsafe or hypocritical urban spaces, filled with protest groups and bomb fumes and unable to grant their inhabitants the advantages that modernity promised it would bring to them.

As “Relicario,” “Porquería Visual” (2003 157-75), the photographic section in *Zanjón de la Aguada*, incorporates a number of images that either refer to or illustrate some of the written chronicles included in the collection. However, “Porquería Visual” incorporates a more comprehensive mapping of the spatial and temporal history of Santiago than “Relicario” does.¹³² This enables the chronicler to address different moments of urban violence in Santiago across time. In addition, like in “Relicario,” Lemebel has compiled some of the photographs in order to produce an explicit conflation of opposites. For example, a photograph of hooligans—portraying a group of potentially dangerous fans cheering for their team— has been edited opposite a photograph of the 1987 Woman’s International Day parade—where Lemebel is posing with other women dressed in female clothing. This conflation

allows Lemebel to lay special emphasis on the violent side of urban experience and his siding with female practices.

However, in spite of these similarities, the tone of “Porquería Visual” is much more ironic than that used to articulate the images in “Relicario.” The title of the section is already ironic. The term “porquería” is used to compile a number of contradictory referents: the Chilean aristocracy of the past century, Pinochet, the hooligans, the low classes’ occupation of the public space, and the chronicler himself, to mention only some of the references. Lemebel forces his audience to acknowledge how one’s positioning within the system influences their categorization and validation of urban experiences. Therefore, the chronicler addresses the violence implicit in the manipulation of language when appropriated and used indiscriminately against the most powerless groups of the population.

Lemebel also comments on the intersections of between violence, power, and the manipulation of language through his treatment of the photographs’ captions. While the captions for the photographs of the military— particularly the series on Pinochet’s return to Chile— and of Chilean aristocracy tend to be sarcastic, biased, and judgmental— his use of the word “pitucos” to refer to a beginning-of –the-twentieth-century aristocratic family posing next to their car says it all—, the captions of the photographs of minority groups, such as lower-class children, football fans, women, the homosexual, are merely descriptive. Thus, the chronicler uses captions to make his audience realize how public discourse has an effect on how they perceive reality and react to their fellow citizens.

The inclusion of pictorial chronicles allows Lemebel's audience to "visualize" the city described in the written narratives. Because these photographic chronicles are unquestionable proof of historical and contemporary events in Santiago, they authorize the chronicler's depictions of violence that make up his written work. The insertion of the photographic section right in the middle of both collections is also a smart move because it somehow forces the audience to go back and forth between text and image in order to "re-encounter" the characters they have already met in the narrative. Therefore, the audience gets to both "read about" and "see" how urban experience is, many times, articulated through violent practices.

Apart from the photographic "narratives" included in "Relicario" and "Porquería Visual," the photographs on the cover of each of Lemebel's collections become chronicles of their own. With the exception of *Zanjón de la Aguada*, each collection's cover includes a photograph of Lemebel posing in both very sexual and defiant ways. The cover of *La esquina es mi corazón* shows the artist lying erotically on a bench against a black background. The chronicler, who is looking straight at the camera, is only wearing women's net pantyhose and has his legs wide open. However, the photograph suggests more than what it shows: a huge lizard has been strategically positioned to cover the artist's penis while strongly connoting its presence (1995).

The photograph seems to be working as an extremely unconventional remake of Goya's popular painting *Nude Maja* (1797-1800). However, the chronicler conflates sexuality, represented by his own naked body, with violence, represented by the lizard, in an attempt to foreshadow what the audiences will encounter when they enter the pages of his text. The unconventionality of the photograph—after all readers are

looking at the writer of the book they have in their hands posing naked and dressed like a woman in front of them—is also a reflection of *La esquina es mi corazón*'s content—its unconventional and politically incorrect critique of the upper classes and popular media icons of contemporary Santiago—and its aesthetic quality—the narratives' constant juxtaposing of a variety of different temporal and physical spaces and their various discourses.

The photograph on the cover of *Loco Afán* has a very different tone to it. It features Lemebel with another man, both posing very close to one another, both looking up, surrounded by white doves (1996). The emphasis of the message is more on the affectionate nature of the apparent homosexual relationship than on its sexuality. The cover clearly articulates the two main themes that bring this collection together: homosexuality, suggested by the sensual proximity of both male bodies, and the potential presence of death through AIDS, signified by the white doves. However, the cover is more a celebration of personal relationships and life than a somber look at the fatal effects of AIDS.

Unlike the photograph in *La esquina es mi corazón*, this image does not seem to include any markers, potential or explicit, of violence. Nevertheless, the image may look violent to the conservative, heterosexual eye, not ready to encounter difference in such explicit terms. From the very beginning of his text, Lemebel challenges his audience to explore, with his guidance, the marginal world of the homosexual, the transvestite, and the AIDS victim. He takes his audience to those urban spaces in which violence comes as a direct result of sexuality.

In *De Perlas y Cicatrices*, the cover includes a photograph of Lemebel's naked chest, his face has not been framed, wearing a necklace made up of razors. The "razor necklace" strongly evokes the sense behind the title of the collection: the "pearl," signifying Chilean hypocritical and superficial society, and the "scar," standing in as a symbol for both the tortures of the military dictatorship and the injustices of the present social system, are juxtaposed in the image of the "razor necklace," purposefully worn by a man to denaturalize all the expected.

In each of these three covers, Lemebel produces a violent impact on the audience by exposing his own body as the focal point of the image. He marks his homosexuality and exposes his *mestizaje* by apparently rendering his body vulnerable to the camera lens. However, a close look at the photographs proves that his posing is far from rendering him vulnerable. It is evident the chronicler is posing; his standing in front of the camera is being performed. In the end, he is in control of what the camera registers. This is also a foreshadowing of what the audience will encounter in his narratives. Not only is the chronicler in control of the narratives he produces but, by switching viewpoints, he is able to put the most marginal in control of discourses usually owned by the most powerful.

Finally, for the cover of *Zanjón de la Aguada* Lemebel breaks with the expectations of the audiences who have been following his work and, instead of posing himself, he illustrates the cover with a photograph of a woman's face montaged over some images of flowers. The photographic montage seems to be connected to the author's dedication at the very beginning of the text: "Para ti, mamá, estos tardíos pétalos" (2003 7). The relationship between title and photograph gets a

possible explanation in the first chronicle of this collection, “Zanjón de la Aguada (Crónica en tres actos)” (2003 13-23), in which the chronicler describes his own growing up in this marginal area of Santiago de Chile. The chronicle opens with a short history of the Zanjón, “ese piojal de la pobreza chilena [...]. Una ribera de ciénaga donde a fines de los años cuarenta se fueron instalando unas tablas, unas fonolas, unos cartones, y de un día para otro las viviendas estaban listas” (2003 13-4).

Right after that, the chronicler tells his family history as they move into the area:

Aún así, bajo ese paraguas del alma proleta, me envolvió el arrullo tibio de la templanza materna. En ese revoltijo de olores podridos y humos de aserrín, “aprendí todo lo bueno y supe de todo lo malo”, conocí la nobleza de la mano humilde y pinté mi primera crónica con los colores del barro que arremolina la leche turbia de aquel Zanjón (2003 15).

All throughout the narrative, the narrator stresses the fundamental importance of the maternal presence. He incorporates references to the personal, the social, the political, and the criminal in order to reflect the experiences of a child growing up on the outskirts of Santiago. This opening narrative allows the chronicler to locate himself and, once again, to authorize his critical discourse about the connections between violence, politics, and geography.

The photographic sections and the collections’ covers all serve as complements and visual additions to the written narratives. They both complement each other perfectly not only because they are representations of the same or similar urban events but also because they match stylistically speaking. Because Lemebel describes what he witnesses in detail, his written narratives are filled with visual imagery that

reproduces the city in almost cinematic forms. Lemebel's ironic discourse utilizes a register that is almost visual, as if his chronicles operated as scenes in a film.

Photography and text become two corresponding means through which Lemebel is able to map violence in more explicit ways.

Like Lins, Meirelles, Lund, and Rodríguez do in *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories* respectively, Lemebel manipulates the formal aspects of his narrative in order to stylistically represent the violence addressed and criticized by it. Thus, his aesthetic choices are determined not only by the genre in which he is producing his work, the chronicle, but also by the main themes his work is trying to address.

Lemebel's multi-media narratives represent urban violence through image, text and sound, thus bringing the audience closer to the chronicler's experience as he walks the city and records its history and contemporary happenings through his very personal experience. Some of Lemebel's narratives become translations of themselves as they travel from one medium to the other. However, although this section has considered how Lemebel's chronicles vary depending on the medium through which they are rendered, it is not necessarily this translation what affects Lemebel's representation of violence.

It would be more accurate to claim that it is the conflation of all different sorts of media what allows this contemporary chronicler to depict a variety of urban violent experiences in such an effective manner. The extremely hybrid nature of his work has an impact on his final production in the sense that it forces the audience to use all their senses to grasp the situations the chronicler is attempting to portray. In Lemebel's case, the multi-media nature of his work is relevant because it allows the

writer to enhance his ironic tone, probably his most compelling weapon to expose and criticize urban violence of different sorts. As the epigraph to his *De Perlas y Cicatrices* reads, “Golpe con golpe yo pago, beso con beso devuelvo. Esa es la ley del amor que yo aprendí, que yo aprendí” (1998 7). Lemebel is aggressive only with those who, in his opinion, “behave” or “talk” violently. However, his multi-generic and multi-media narratives let him express his aggressiveness in ways that are both original and sophisticated.

Conclusion

The analysis of the chronicles seen so far exposes how Lemebel uses contrast to portray the city as a menacing and dangerous space that generates violence. By making his readers travel the different areas of the city through alternative gazes—the aristocracy, the hooligans, the AIDS victims, the most poor, the government, the handicapped, and the media, just to mention some—, Lemebel succeeds at producing constant shifts in his narratives tone and viewpoint. Such shifts allow the artist to show what the city and its official discourses pretend to hide: the social, economic, and cultural “violences” that permeate it all and guide urban behavior and divisions.

As the politically compromised chronicler he is, Lemebel is aware that “otherness” or the different is no longer a distant space but the very center of one’s “own” culture (Bhabha 148). Lemebel’s urban chronicles describe “characters that meet up with each other across different time frames and beliefs” and present “other means of communication between dialects and rituals that make up the diverse social

therapy” (Corona 2002 57). Right on the opposite end of the typical Conquest chronicles, Lemebel’s narratives displace the heroic to replace it with the most ordinary. His discourse becomes an attempt to re-center those “marginal” subjects and practices that the “civilized” and “politically correct” Chilean society has the intention of relegating or hiding.

Similar to *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories*, Lemebel’s work presents, in an extremely fragmentary and multi-media form, the realities and dangers of urban violence. Each of Lemebel’s texts is a piece that represents a very specific experience in urban life. Once compiled, Lemebel’s chronicles become a sum of violent moments that recreate a dehumanizing city inhabited by scared, indifferent, or aggressive inhabitants. However, his narratives prove that for every apparently individual act of violence there is a social context while exposing how violence has been institutionalized as an acceptable means of solving conflicts and expressing disagreement.

Like Busca-Pé, Rodríguez and Martínez, Lemebel becomes the outsider/insider who narrates the many experiences he witnesses with an attitude at times emotional and, at others, distanced. However, it is the emotional attitude that dominates the majority of the chronicles in these collections. In “Lemebel o El Salto de Doble Filo” (1998/9), Dino Plaza Atenas claims that, with the exception of a very obvious excess toward the sexual, Lemebel’s chronicles are rendered from the distance. Plaza Atenas affirms that

[n]o se observa un compromiso personal en lo que describe. Sólo se puede ver que el cronista es un individuo que registra lo que sucede en el espacio público

y privado. Y a veces, sólo en ciertas ocasiones, realiza un diagnóstico con una actitud lejana (132).

Although it is true that, in some of Lemebel's narrations, there is an excess of the sexual, it is an over-generalization to claim that the chronicler stays distant from the situations he describes or that there is no personal compromise with the characters or events he is writing about. Not only does Lemebel identify himself as the narrator of his work, thus marking his proximity, particularly sexual, to some of the characters with whom he interacts or the situations he either witnesses or participates in, but he also sides with the minority discourses when he opposes them to the official ones. The ironic and sarcastic tone of his many narratives is proof of his "proximity" to certain cultural, political, and social groups and his disapproval of and contempt for others.¹³³

Lemebel "registers what happens in the public and private space" in a very personal and, most times, strongly ideologically marked manner. In fact, his proximity to some of his characters or situations, sometimes achieved through discursive means – as in "Las Amazonas de la Colectiva Lésbica Feminista Ayuquelén" (1998 155-6) and "Carmen Gloria Quintana (o "una página quemada en la feria del libro")" (1998 88-9) when the chronicler includes close-up descriptions of the tortures committed against them– and other times achieved through physical means – as in "Los Ojos Achinados de la Ternura Mongólica" (2003 40-3) where the chronicler describes how his hugging the Downs-syndrome girl illuminates his understanding of discrimination— allows the chronicler to represent the most violent in the most critical ways.

It is also this proximity to his subjects or the situations he describes what authorizes his voice that in turn renders visible and gives a different value to the “unauthorized” voices of the most marginal. His chronicles are proof that the urban order imposed by those officially in power involves the violent displacement of the racially, sexually, economically or culturally different. They help to explain how racism, sexism, and classism, already institutionalized in Chilean society, have operated and operate as socially regulated acts of violence.

However, each of Lemebel’s narratives allows the chronicler to destroy the utopic notion of the institutionally organized and carefully compartmentalized city. By exposing how urban opposites interact with each other on a regular basis, Lemebel’s chronicles, as Guerra states, not only subvert the norms imposed by the dominant order but also the cartography of the urban space (83). Lemebel walks the city with a different attitude and, therefore, is able to see things usually hidden to or ignored by the tired and indifferent urban eye. He lays bare “[l]a ciudad hipócrita, como un Miamicito lleno de carteles y neones que ocultan con su resplandor la miseria que se amohosa en los bordes” (1998 136-7). The chronicler reproduces the city as a space where multiple and contradictory cities coexist through a violent exchange materialized in aggressive social, political, and cultural practices.

Lemebel’s corpus produces an intelligent attempt at reverse psychology by shifting the blame of urban violence to those who claim are its unprotected victims. Lemebel’s chronicles reflect on the hypocrisy of a system that supports an ideology with false racial and cultural referents and avoids responsibility for the aggression both experienced and practiced by urban citizens on an everyday basis. The

chronicler speaks, both directly and critically, to those who, either consciously or unconsciously, contribute to the continuation and strengthening of such system. As Plaza Atenas claims, Lemebel's audience is in the presence of a type of discourse that "se reconoce en el Otro y que por esta misma razón no le habla a quienes se ubican en el margen, sino en el territorio opuesto" (133). It shows them how the violence of the social order they endorse only serves to nurture a psychology of violence, which in turn reinforces the social, economic, and political structures of violence that determine their daily urban experience.

Chapter 5: Conclusions: Morphologies of Fear, Chronicles of Violence

The social production of human spatiality, from the global to the most local scales, is an active part of the creation and maintenance of inequality and injustice, of economic exploitation, cultural domination, and individual oppression. **Edward Soja**

To substitute violence for power can bring victory, but its price is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is paid by the victor in terms of his own power. **Hannah Arendt**

I- Multi-Media Rhetorical Paradigms of Urban Violence

The analysis of how each of the artists discussed in this study utilizes the chronicle to articulate the phenomenon of contemporary urban violence reveals that the genre, due to its innately dynamic characteristics, is particularly suitable for the contemporary representation of violence. One reason why the chronicle is appropriate to represent violence is its reliance on continuous movement, with its consequent focus on the retelling of the immediate. This particular trait has enabled these artists to construct a type of narrative that weaves a wide variety of simultaneous and intersecting urban situations. These “multispatial narratives” enable the chroniclers to discuss and represent the existing conditions of violence in the city.

Each of these chroniclers or their respective narrators become urban subjects of *flânerie* with the gaze of a subject who observes the city as an object on exhibit and is able to engage in a “process of symbolic consumption that integrates the fragments of the modern metropolis that emerged in an already splintered condition” (Ramos in García Canclini 2001 82). The ability to construct their narratives from the standpoint of a “wandering narrator” gives these artists the opportunity to explore the phenomenon of urban violence through fragmentary and detailed texts, thus producing, once compiled in their respective collections, a fruitful juxtaposition of spatial and temporal realities where violent practices and experiences take place.

In spite of the fact that all these texts are rendered by urban subjects of *flânerie*, each of the chroniclers in this study becomes or constructs a different type of “wandering narrator,” of contemporary *flâneur*. *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* are both rendered through the eyes of insiders who understand the dynamics of *favela* violence but are detached enough to make it intelligible to their audiences and produce critical commentary on it. Although the chroniclers of these narratives are participants in the culture and social location they portray, they are not engaged in the production of the violence they describe. Consequently, they have a more conscious understanding of how violence is originated and executed and are in a position to evaluate and map the connections between space and violent practices through their narrations.

However, the chronicler in Lins’ *Cidade de Deus* represents violence in a much more detached and detailed way than the chroniclers in Meirelles and Lund’s film or in *Cidade dos Homens* do. Lins creates an omniscient narrator who witnesses and

records simultaneous violent events but is not personally or directly affected by them. In addition, the construction of an omniscient chronicler enables Lins the creation of an extremely lyrical discourse, the development of a sophisticated “poetics of violence.”

On the contrary, the chroniclers in Meirelles and Lund’s *Cidade de Deus*, Busca-Pé, and *Cidade dos Homens*, Acerola and Laranjinha, are not mere observers but also active characters in their respective narratives who are directly affected by the violence they portray. Consequently, their narration is both affected and limited by their physical exposure to violence — if their narratives are to look authentic, these chroniclers’ renditions need to reflect a witnessing that is both subjective and determined by the threat of being constantly a potential target. Moreover, because the film and the TV series are rendered through the viewpoint of *favela* adolescents, the tone is much more colloquial due to the fact that the development of their narratives, also for purposes of authenticity, relies heavily on the inclusion of *favela* and youth slang.

As in *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens*, the “wandering narrator” of *East Side Stories* is a witness and not a participant of the violence described. However, Rodríguez becomes a different kind of contemporary *flâneur* because he is not an insider to the culture that practices the violence he records. Although Rodríguez elaborates a set of chronicles that incorporate his photographic subjects’ voices and images, his audiences only access the reality of gang life in East L.A. through his location as “outsider.” As a result, the photographer’s representation of violence is limited to what its perpetrators or victims are willing to share with him. Contrasting

the chroniclers in *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens*, who are able to expose their audiences to each episode of violence they experience, the chronicler in *East Side Stories* is only allowed to share a partiality of his witnessing.

Nevertheless, despite these differences, the chroniclers of these three collections all become *flâneurs* of urban spaces with similar characteristics. Because they have all chosen to focus their narratives on a witnessing that occurs only in the most marginalized areas of the urban space, their movement as narrators gets limited to *geographies of violence* inhabited by the most underrepresented sectors of the population. By especially concentrating on the violence emerging from and experienced by urban subjects who are incapable of leaving their social or physical location, these artists reflect on how violence becomes a means through which the most disadvantaged react to their non-movement within an all-encompassing economy that places value on the very possibility of movement— of information, of goods, of images, of currency.

On the contrary, Lemebel's chronicles are produced by a narrator who travels the city in its entirety. Unlike Rodríguez – who concentrates his chronicling on Latino gangs in East L.A. and invests time in developing intimate ties with his subjects—or Lins, Meirelles and Lund— who focus theirs on the *favelados* and their experiences in the *favela*, Lemebel becomes a “wandering narrator” who neither stays in one specific sector of the city nor establishes close relationship with the characters that populate his narratives. Instead, the Chilean chronicler constantly moves across various social, cultural, and economic spaces, producing a superimposition of

contradictory realities in an attempt to explain the reasons behind current violent practices in a more comprehensive manner.

However, in spite of the lack of personal involvement with his chronicles' subjects, which results partly from a constant wandering that does not give him enough time to interact with his fellow citizens and partly from his interest in merely observing as silent witness, Lemebel becomes a *flâneur* that clearly takes sides and criticizes the system in place. Thus, as Charles Jenks claims in "Watching your Step: the History and Practice of the Flâneur," "far from instancing a supercilious consumerist disregard for the crowd," Lemebel becomes the type of *flâneur* who is both engaged and observes with a potentially ironic eye "which aptly disposes such an interested analyst to simultaneously resist and invert the seamless nihilism of the postmodern city experience" (in Jenks 20).

Regardless the type of "wandering narrator" behind the construction of these chroniclers' narratives, they all address the connections between violence and spatial location and produce representations that compile "the discontinuities of urban life" through a "rhetoric of the promenade." However, instead of trying to organize the violent chaos of urban experience through a structuring or organizing discourse, as Julio Ramos claims chronicles usually do, these chroniclers construct narratives that expose those "discontinuities of urban life," not with the intention of ordering them, but to explain them and the urban chaos and violence they originate from.

Although each of these chroniclers do impose a certain order to their narratives, because they compile and organize them with an agenda in mind, they purposefully structure their work to make it look "disorganized" in order to direct their audiences'

focus to the intersections of violence and space. Thus, instead of organizing chronologically the events they witness, these chroniclers present the information collected in a disruptive manner that emphasizes the spatial over the temporal. In Lins,' Meirelles,' Lund's, and Rodríguez's cases, the decision to disrupt a linear chronology relates, on the one hand, to their attempt to exploit stereotypes and make their audiences aware of them, and, on the other, to the artists' attempt to represent the difficulties the chronicler faces as he collects information in order to make visible the histories of those rejected or ignored. In Lemebel's case, the disruption of a linear chronology relates to both the chronicler's need to keep memories of a brutal past constantly in the foreground and his wandering across various and contradictory sectors and realities of the contemporary city.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that each of these chroniclers is a privileged narrator in his own respective location. In fact, their narratives originate because they are in a privileged position to witness, understand, and, afterwards, compose a narrative about what they have experienced or seen. In a sense, each of these chroniclers becomes a sort of micro-historian who, by compiling moments of everyday violence and concentrating on how individuals live that violence, participates in the production of an urban history that pays attention to the particular and relates it to its macro-structures in order to make sense of cultural, economic, political, and social arrangements.¹³⁴

Another reason why the chronicle is a suitable genre for the representation of urban violence is the fact that chronicles tend to be episodic and brief. Because the chroniclers considered in this study are exposed to a variety of episodes of violence

that take place every day and are simultaneously experienced by different groups at different locations, the briefness of the chronicle allows them to consider a larger variety of representations of violence than any other genre would. In addition, by deciding to organize their narratives in compilations, these artists are able to stress, through the principle of repetition with variation, the inevitability and overwhelming presence of violence in everyday urban reality.

Through repetition with variation these chroniclers are able to represent violent experiences of the same sort from a variety of locations and different viewpoints. For example, Lins, Meirelles, and Lund include in their narratives countless scenes of inter-gang shootings and sexual abuse. However, each time a crime is described the chroniclers portray it differently, through new imagery, variations in tone, shift of viewpoint, or the incorporation of structuring devices such as flashbacks or digressions. Similarly, although Rodríguez compiles a number of photographs that portray gang members posing with their guns, exhibiting their tattoos, or at their own funerals, each of the images is contextualized in a different manner, either through the inclusion of the photographer's entries or other photographs. Finally, while Lemebel incorporates innumerable references to the past brutalities of the military government and the current symbolic violence of media representations and social discrimination in Chile, he includes in each of his chronicles very unique sarcasm and very specific commentary on Chilean political and cultural events.

Thus, there is always a distinction either in rhetorical choice or content matter that individualizes the description of violence each of these chronicles provides. The immediacy that characterizes the genre enables these artists to include a variety of

registers of language that further contributes to the originality and individuality of each of their chronicles. Through the incorporation of slang expressions, songs lyrics, excerpts from radio or TV programs, photographs, interviews, and personal commentary, this group of chroniclers represent and re-create the violence they witness in innovative ways.

The fragmentary nature of the chronicle transforms it into one of the most adequate genres to reflect the chaos and disruption that evolve as a consequence of urban violence. In return, its focus on the theme of urban violence forces the genre of the chronicle to become even more fragmentary in order to adequately reflect its multiple realities. The chronicle as genre and the phenomenon of urban violence as theme become the perfect fit for each other. Although there are variations in the degree of fragmentation of their work, all the chroniclers considered in this study represent their respective urban *geographies of violence* in a very episodic manner.

The briefness and episodic nature of the chronicle also enable these artists to render urban violence through a variety of complementary viewpoints. Although this is not a choice every chronicler necessarily makes, each of the artists analyzed has purposefully decided to represent violence from different standpoints. *Cidade de Deus*, *Cidade dos Homens*, and *East Side Stories* prove that it is possible to render violence from the perspective of those who exercise it without producing a desensitization of its effects. By privileging, discursively speaking, the standpoint of those perpetrating the violence that is being represented, Lins, Meirelles, Lund, and Rodríguez are able to expose their audiences to a more comprehensive and complex understanding of the reasons that prompt such violence.

Lemebel's chronicles also introduce a variety of viewpoints but, instead of limiting it to those who either produce or react through physical violence, his narratives also incorporate the perspectives of those who either inflict or are victims of symbolic—social, political, and economic— violence. This comes as a consequence of Lemebel's decision to walk the city in its entirety in an attempt to address how the various population groups that inhabit the urban space experience everyday violence.

Finally, these artists' decision to use the chronicle to represent urban violence is especially appropriate considering the multi-media nature of their work. The analysis of these multi-media chronicles has shown that, due to its ties to urban modernity and its formal investment in mapping space, the genre easily translates into the technologies of contemporary film, photography, and radio. However, the in-depth discussion of each of these artists has revealed how both their choice of media and the translation of their chronicles across media determine the type of rhetorical paradigm chosen for the representation of their respective urban *geographies of violence*. Each of these chronicles undergoes a process of translation – from the written page to visual or auditory forms of discourse or vice versa – that impacts not only on their nature as chronicles but also on the type of representation of violence they produce.

Cidade dos Homens and Lins' *Cidade de Deus* present rhetorical paradigms of very similar characteristics. They were both conceived and rendered as very fragmentary, very visual, and more spatial than temporal narratives. The fact that *Cidade dos Homens*' episodes are brief and cover only one specific event in *favela* life at a time makes them resemble Lins' structuring of his narrative into a set of

consecutive and, most times, simultaneous *favela* happenings. However, Lins' written medium enables him to produce a more detailed and focused rendition of violence. The juxtaposition of scenes and the excessive movement of the hand-held cameras in *Cidade dos Homens* "bombard" audiences with such an excessive amount of sensorial stimuli that it is almost impossible to concentrate on one particular situation or character without getting distracted by their surrounding phenomena. Violence becomes so overwhelming and omnipresent in the film that there exists the risk that audiences might lose track of its origins and reasons.

Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* also impacts the audience with an excessive inclusion of visual and auditory stimuli. However, these filmmakers have modified Lins' narrative by producing a translation that results in a less fragmentary discourse that balances the spatial and the temporal more evenly. Although each of Lins' sections follows the storyline of their respective main character, the chronicler constantly disrupts the chronological retelling of those storylines through the inclusion of numerous episodic descriptions of violence protagonized by other characters in the *favela*. As a result, each of the sections operates more spatially— as a collection of independent chronicles— than temporally— as a chronology of the main characters' lives.

Meirelles and Lund's translation of Lins' chronicles into a more chronological narrative could have to do with their need to condense, in as clear and organized manner as possible, a 400-page text into a two-hour film. Establishing parallel chronologies through flashbacks enables the directors the possibility to develop Lins' main characters and their actions so that the audience can understand how these

characters' past and present experiences in the *favela* determine their violent destinies.

Not only have the directors affected the formal characteristics of Lins' text but also its representation of urban violence. Although Meirelles and Lund literally translate Lins by over-saturating their audiences with scenes of in-crescendo violence, they have paradoxically, considering the medium, opted for showing less and suggesting more. This choice might find justification in the directors' awareness of the fact that their translation of Lins' text into a visual mass product could easily result into a representation that glamorizes and exploits violence rather than explaining or critiquing it.

However, what Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* lack in excessive fragmentation and detailed exposition of violence respectively, they compensate with their much more elaborate rendering of the *favela* as a material *geography of violence*. The hectic movement of the hand-held cameras as they follow the *favelados* in their every day activities and the construction of parallel chronologies through the implementation of flashbacks allow the filmmakers to place special emphasis on how the material space of the *favela* affects and is affected by violence. More successfully than Lins, these directors use their representation of the *favela* to address how spatial location and movement, on the one hand, and violence, on the other, determine the characteristics of each other.

Rodríguez's combination of photography and text enables him the development of a very different rhetorical paradigm than the ones presented by the Brazilian artists. Rodríguez combines photography and text in a variety of different ways, thus

achieving singular effects. In many instances, Rodríguez's photographs become graphic translations of his journal entries. When used as such, the photographs "say" more than the artist's or his subjects' words do. Due to their brevity and personal tone, the photographer's entries do not provide lots of descriptive information. Instead, the photographs allow audiences to witness the context in which violence is perpetrated and, therefore, visualize the conditions that prompt it.

In some cases, however, the entries let the photographer "show" what the photographs "hide" at first sight. For example, most of the shots of gangs portray subjects posing defiantly or aggressively in front of the camera, a perception that changes once the audience is able to "listen" to some of these subjects' opinions and life experiences incorporated in Rodríguez' entries, Martínez' introductory essay, and the interviews at the end of the collection. In other cases, the entries allow the photographer to "show" what his photographic subjects did not let him record— as is the case with a couple of drive-by shootings Rodríguez describes but the audience is never able to see. Finally, many times the photographer uses his entries as a foreshadowing of photographs that only appear a number of pages later. Thus, in *East Side Stories*, photography and text translate each other and serve as complements by exposing what the other "hides" or avoids mentioning.

The use of photography and journal entries makes Rodríguez's representation of *geographies of violence* the most static and the most fragmentary of the ones provided by the collections analyzed in this study. Although the chronicler moves around the neighborhood following his photographic subjects in order to record different moments of their everyday experiences of violence, the fluidity that, on the

one hand, Lemebel and Lins achieve through their manipulation of lyrical discourse and visual imagery and their juxtaposition of temporal and spatial frames, and, on the other hand, Meirelles and Lund stress through their use of digression, flashback, and intense camera movement around the *favela*, goes missing in Rodríguez's *East Side Stories*. The fact that many of Rodríguez's photographs portray subjects who have been carefully arranged in front of the camera, either deliberately posing in groups or "posed" in their coffins, factors in producing his chronicles' "static" effect. In addition, because Rodríguez focuses on one very specific time frame—the two years he spent in East L.A. interacting with the subjects of his narratives—his photographs do not allow him to reflect the changes that the *barrio*, as a material *geography of violence*, or its inhabitants, as participants in that violence, undergo.

Although, as the analysis in the third chapter of this dissertation has demonstrated, it is possible to establish storylines by combining photographs that portray the same subjects engaged in various activities at different moments throughout the two years that Rodríguez spent with them, the photographer has compiled his photographs in a way that disrupts linear chronology. Rodríguez has chosen to increase the fragmentary nature of his collection by presenting each photograph and each journal entry as an isolated moment of *barrio* violence. Doing this enables the artist to symbolically represent the continuous disruption that violence causes in the lives of these subjects.

However, in spite of their differences, *East Side Stories* shares with the film version of *Cidade de Deus* and *Cidade dos Homens* the intentional manipulation of graphics that operate as image within the image. Thus, while *Cidade de Deus* and

Cidade dos Homens introduce freeze shots— when Busca-Pé and Acerola take pictures with their cameras, slide shows, documentary clips, and maps, *East Side Stories* includes photographs of tattooed bodies and walls covered with graffiti. Each of these inclusions serves to represent micro *geographies of violence* within the macro *geography of violence* portrayed by the scenes or photographs in these collections.

Finally, Lemebel produces a rhetorical paradigm that differs from the other chroniclers' in its heavy reliance on both irony and the conflation of opposite binaries. Of the chroniclers discussed, Lemebel is the one who uses the most aggressive discourse, especially during his various direct attacks on those sectors of the population that inflict violence without admitting to it. Lemebel's discourse shares with Lins' its lyrical and sophisticated nature. However, while the former fills his narratives with sarcastic comments and taints them with a strong nostalgic tone, the latter privileges the use of enumeration and detailed description and elaborates complex visual imagery. Therefore, while Lins' chronicles are more descriptive and solemn, Lemebel's are more critical, humorous, and blunt. These variations in rhetoric partly result from Lins' decision to concentrate primarily on the representation of instances of physical violence in the limited geography of the *favela* as opposed to Lemebel's carefully balanced rendering of both physical and symbolic violence in various spaces of Santiago de Chile— a rendering that is not reduced to the “violence of poverty” and the violence resulting from poverty that Lins, Meirelles, Lund and Rodríguez represent.¹³⁵

Another key difference between Lemebel's and the rest of the chroniclers' narratives discussed in this study is the former's investment in incorporating a variety of oral registers. This is partly a consequence of the fact that Lemebel's narratives were originally composed to be performed on the radio and, as a consequence, rely more heavily on the inclusion of auditory stimuli. Many of Lemebel's chronicles have undergone a process of double translation: from the written page to their performance by their author on the radio and back to the written page when compiled for their publication. However, in spite of their transference across various media, Lemebel has made sure that his ironic references and his inclusion of Chilean colloquial registers are kept intact in all the versions of his chronicles. A good example of this is the incorporation of the lyrics of popular songs, usually played as introduction and background to the content of many of Lemebel's radio chronicles with ironic intention, as epigraphs to most of the sections in *De Perlas y Cicatrices*.

Because Lemebel reads his chronicles during his radio appearances, his narratives do not experience the formal transformation that Lins' do when translated to the big screen by Meirelles and Lund. However, the radio version of his chronicles allows Lemebel to take the sarcastic tone of his written narratives to further extremes and, as a result, produce the effect of a more critical rendering of urban violence. On the other hand, the compilation of his chronicles in written collections gives Lemebel the chance to challenge the ephemeral nature of the radio versions. In addition, the written compilation of his narratives helps his audience to both complement the reading of each chronicle with the information or viewpoint provided by the others

that either follow or precede it and establish a more graphic map of the *geographies of violence* described by the artist as he wanders the neighborhoods of Santiago.

Regardless of their use of different structural or rhetorical devices, each of these chroniclers produces narratives that travel across and combine different media thus exposing their audiences to representations of urban violence that originate from and result in the juxtaposition of heterogeneous discourses. These narratives are engaged in translation practices that allow their chroniclers to both re-create them, thus generating new versions of the original work, and establish alternative standpoints regarding their own production.

It is interesting and indeed relevant to read these chronicles and their translations not as independent productions but as complementary pieces. Such a reading contributes to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of urban violence for two main reasons. First, all the original and translated versions considered in this study include references to different aspects of the geographies they describe: while Lins' *Cidade de Deus* incorporates detailed descriptions of the public and domestic violence performed by some of the *favelados*, Meirelles and Lund's version permits a better visualization of the *favela* as a physical geography that promotes violence; while Rodríguez's journal entries provide a combination of factual information about violent happenings in the *barrio* with the photographer's personal reactions and some of the gang members' opinions, his photographs allow audiences to "see" his photographic subjects as they engage in a variety of cultural and social practices; finally, while Lemebel's radio narratives give the chronicler the perfect symbolic space for the juxtaposition of popular songs and other auditory

stimuli in order to reflect violence through irony and sound, his written collections incorporate the visual element of photography to illustrate some of the violent moments mentioned in the chronicles.

Second, a reading of these narratives and their translations as complements rather than as separate productions helps to stress aspects that may have gone silenced or been omitted in one of the versions. For example, Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus* addresses how *favela* violence is perceived and handled by those who do not participate in it. While Lins' omniscient chronicler does provide descriptions of how violence is inflicted on innocent victims, Meirelles and Lund's decision to use Busca-Pé as their main chronicler enables them to render violence from a *favelado* that can register it without being victimized.¹³⁶ Similarly, Rodríguez's photographs focus on the marking of the body, on the gang members' bodies as *geographies of violence*, a factor that goes unmentioned in the journal entries or the introductory essay. Finally, by including photographs of the author in their covers and photographic chronicles in some of the sections, Lemebel's written compilations let the audience access information about the chronicler and the Santiago he is describing that is unavailable in his radio chronicles.

II- Violent Subjects, Violent Spaces, Frightening Encounters

In spite of the impact of their translation practices and their different choice and manipulation of rhetorical tools, each of the artists discussed in this study uses the chronicle to describe the contemporary city as a gathering of *geographies of violence* – both material and symbolic— that interact to produce the further alienation of the

urban citizen and the inevitable confrontation of the various social groups that inhabit them. The violence described by these artists not only cuts lives short but also produces the compartmentalization of the urban space into isolated clusters of subjects who live their citizenship in fear and, consequently, interact with others mostly through aggressive behavior.¹³⁷

In “Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation,” Teresa Caldeira claims that “the new urban *morphologies of fear* give new forms to inequality, keep groups apart, and inscribe a new sociability that runs against the ideals of the modern public and its democratic freedoms” (in Low 1999 105). The contemporary city’s landscape becomes filled with “islands of enclosure,” an archipelago of “fortified spaces that both voluntarily and involuntarily barricade individuals and communities in visible and not-so-visible urban islands, overseen by structured forms of public and private power and authority” (Soja 2000 299). These strategies of protection, that are partly a response to the increase in urban violence, insecurity, and fear, change not only the city’s landscape but also its “patterns of residence and circulation, everyday trajectories, habits, and gestures related to the use of streets and of public transportation” (Low 1999 87).

This reality is reflected in the chronicles of Lins, Meirelles, Lund and Rodríguez when they portray how inter-gang violence in the *favela* and the East L.A. *barrios* limits their inhabitants’ traveling within those locations and creates a social environment that discourages the development of personal relationships or friendly interaction. At the same time, these chroniclers use their narratives to comment on how circulation in these areas is restricted to those who live there. This proves how

citizens in these urban centers have barricaded themselves, either inside or outside the *favela* and the *barrio*, in order to protect themselves from the ones living on the “other” side.

Lemebel also shows how constrained the circulation in urban locations has become by presenting a Santiago de Chile inhabited by citizens who violently bump into one another without apologizing, who witness violence without interfering or confessing to it, who uncritically accept the media’s promotion of aggressive consumption – of brand clothing, media imagery, fame, power— and damaging stereotypical depictions, and who defend policies that foster the expansion of a type of individualistic citizenship that leads to the production of further symbolic and material violence.

However, as the chapters in this study have shown, the work of these chroniclers also proves that keeping urban compartments intact is an impossible task. In spite of the intensification of social and spatial control generated through the new developments in the privatization, surveillance, and “design of the built environment and the political geography of cityspace,” the boundaries of the city are becoming more porous thus confusing the lines separating it from what was once clearly categorized as its “elsewhere,” the non-city (Soja 2000 299).

Lins, Meirelles, Lund, and Rodríguez establish the connection and intersection between the city and its “elsewhere,” the *favela* and the *barrio* respectively, by exposing how the practice of a “citizenship of fear” that leads to urban isolation has resulted not only in the materialization and development of such marginal locations but also in the increasing amount of violence that emanates from them. Their

narratives portray how the violence in the *favela* and the *barrio* is not only prompted by the resentment and economic need of their inhabitants but also by middle and upper class interests that benefit from it.¹³⁸

Cidade de Deus, *Cidade dos Homens*, and *East Side Stories* prove that, as Ian Chambers argues in *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience* (1986), the city “exists as a series of doubles; it has official and hidden cultures [...]; urban ‘reality’ is not single but multiple, inside the city there is always another city” (in Soja 2000 325). By focusing their representation on the realities of the “non-cities” and explicitly discussing how they intersect with the realities of the privileged urban sectors, these chronicles force their audiences to re-define their understanding of the relation between urban distribution and socio-political practices and acknowledge their partial contribution to the violence that develops as their consequence.

While Lins, Meirelles, Lund, and Rodríguez explain urban violence by emphasizing the relevance of the distribution of material space and its consequences, thus re-creating through their chronicles how these physical *geographies of violence* develop and operate, Lemebel uses his narratives to expose not only how those citizens of the physical “elsewhere” intervene the spatial safety of the “civilized center” but also to reveal the many symbolic “elsewheres” that exist within this center. For example, by exploring how the military government implemented violence against dissenters on a regular basis, how the handicapped or the racially different have been exploited by the economic infrastructure, and how the media manipulates representation to “obscure” the multi-cultural and multi-class reality of

Chilean society, the chronicler is able to disclose the system's attempt to hide differences in order to maintain unfair hierarchies.

Thus, through his narratives, Lemebel challenges the discourses that “ideologize the city,” that render it an “object of knowledge and a governable space” (Jenks 1995 19). Lemebel proves that violence is immanent to any type of representation that, by looking at the city “through the prism of memory, desire, and fantasy” (Jenks 1995 78), attempts to present it as an organized location that promotes civilized conduct and guarantees progress. His writings reveal that beneath these deceiving representations of urban order lies the truth of chaotic experiences determined by a social and political violence that benefits the few.

The comparative reading of the work of this group of chroniclers reveals that, in spite of their focus on different sectors of the city and different population groups, they all reflect the urban space as an “inequalities-generating machine by its very nature” that creates, “in the context of urban geographies and the interrelations of social processes and spatial form, a fertile terrain for the cumulative aggravation of injustices” (Soja 2000 107). These artists' narratives address the realities of those subjects who are marginal, either because they live on the geographical peripheries of urban centers or because they have been placed on the periphery of the dominant cultural systems, and help to explore how “once a particular spatial form is created it tends to institutionalize and, in some respects, to determine the future development of social processes” (Harvey 1973 27). Consequently, through their chronicles, each of these artists considers how existing material and symbolic *geographies of violence* get to be established and maintained, thus addressing how central the notion of space

is to the understanding of the urban subject's experience of and reaction to urban violence.

The comparative analysis of these chroniclers also allows plausible suppositions regarding the reception of their work. The discussion of these artists' production confirms that it is possible to render violence aesthetically without de-politicizing or de-contextualizing its effects. Although they manipulate rhetoric and experiment with a variety of media, each of these artists makes sure that the infrastructures and cultural practices that promote violence are exposed and explicitly criticized. As a consequence, it can be inferred that, in spite of their excessive exposure to representations of violence, the audiences of these chronicles will not sit through them numbingly. The degree of detail with which each of these narratives is rendered, the critical tone with which the violence they explore is described, and their authors' effort to explore and deconstruct what other representations tend to uncritically stereotype, all guarantee that audiences will be, if not moved to action— as it was the case with Brazilian president Lula who after watching *Cidade de Deus* reviewed his *favela* policies—, at least heavily impacted by what they have witnessed.

Whether descriptions of violence like the ones provided by these chronicles might ensure the continuity of violent practices by shaping the sensibilities of those planning to endorse or commit future acts of terror, whether these representations will help to subvert existing structures of inequality and oppression that cause violent behavior and thought, and what the dangers of these types of representations may be when “foreign” audiences— many times lacking in the necessary cultural or political background about the groups depicted—“consume” them uncritically, are matters that

deserve special consideration and would be interesting to explore in further studies. The fragmentary nature of these chronicles appeals to contemporary audiences used to an MTV type of culture. Regarding this phenomenon, it also becomes interesting to consider up to what extent it is the audiences' tastes and expectations which determine the cultural productions they consume or it is the cultural products they consume what determines their tastes and expectations.

A different set of questions that may also be relevant to consider pertains the genre of the chronicle and its future commitment to the mapping of contemporary urban spaces. The analysis of these chroniclers' work has shown that the chronicle has shifted, by both becoming more fragmentary and adapting to a wider variety of media, in order to represent the chaotic experience of urban life and its many practices of violence.

However, the fact that the group of chroniclers discussed here are in the midst of their professional careers, still engaged in active artistic production and inhabiting urban spaces whose geography is currently being transformed by economic, cultural, and political phenomena, suggests the possibility of their further experimentation with the genre, particularly concerning its representation of current urban phenomena such as violence. The consideration of how other chroniclers, especially female, experiment with the genre would also become an interesting addition to the study presented in these pages.

If, as Lefebvre argues, social space is both a "*field of action* (offering its extensions to the deployment of objects and practical intentions) and a *basis of action* (a set of places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed)," "at once

actual (given) and *potential* (the locus of possibilities)” (191), the chronicle as a genre, that both is articulated in reference to and articulates the locations it maps, also becomes a *field of action* and a *basis of action*. Discussing how these and other contemporary chroniclers use the genre as such becomes a challenging task for it also contemplates how these artists understand social, political, and cultural interaction as it is happening and participate in the construction of their national histories.

Endnotes

1 Alberto Concha-Eastman defines violence as “an intentional use of force or power with a predetermined end by which one or more persons produce physical, mental (psychological), or sexual injury, injure the freedom of movement, or cause the death of another person or persons (including him or herself)” (Rotker 2002 44). Eastman’s definition is accurate but too concise. Other issues regarding violence are in place: what different types of violence are there?, what are the variables to be considered when analyzing a violent act?, and, what are the characteristics of a violent act?

2 Paying attention to the various languages and its registers— Portuguese, Spanish, Chicano, and English— in which these chroniclers produce their narratives is also relevant because the rhetoric used by these writers is determined and defined by it. In addition, the register of language— colloquial or formal, street language or academic discourse— chosen also acts as a marker of the chronicler’s and his/her subjects’ national, social, economic, sexual, and cultural background or desired positioning

3 The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 in Washington D.C. and New York are a perfect example of the movement and countermovement immanent to any violent act. During the attacks, violence was inflicted upon thousands of U.S. and foreign citizens. Those indiscriminate killings prompted reactions by both the U.S. government and the American people. The government reacted by elaborating policies restricting the entrance of foreigners to the country, restructuring the national defense system and inflicting violence through the occupation of Iraq. Many U.S. citizens reacted by supporting the use of violence against “the enemy” and reinforcing discriminatory practices against those who “fit” the terrorist stereotype. While the actions of the U.S. government are an example of structural violence, the reaction of U.S. citizens is an example of epistemic violence and the importance of location in reference to that violence. Fear and the apparent lack of security have made many American citizens react unfairly. Those who “look” like terrorists have been either physically assaulted or socially and economically segregated. This has been, at least in part, the result of media representations reinforcing the stereotype of “the terrorist.”

4 Violence comes in many different forms: there is structural violence, resulting from specific social, economic, or political policies or practices that may determine social difference, lead to oppression, and provoke confrontation; there is interpersonal violence, many times a consequence of structural violence, others a consequence of very personal private experiences; and there is *historical violence*, which involves specific violent happenings of worldwide impact that have a destructive effect on large numbers of people, ethnic groups, or nations. Good examples of events that have connoted historical violence are the establishment of the institution of slavery, the conquest of new territories, the two World Wars, or more contemporary instances of ethnic cleansing or religious confrontation in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, to mention only some.

5 *Symbolic or epistemic violence*, violence that takes place in and through representation, many times functions as the basis and justification for physical violence. For example, representations of certain groups of the population through negative stereotyping may result in unfair policies or violent confrontations that the rest of the population, which has had access to the “targeted group” only through the media, generally controlled by those in power, supports or justifies.

6 Colonial chroniclers were writing for a European public and they needed to remain European. In order to do so they had to use specific strategies that allowed them to keep their distance from the “native” world they were describing. Distance was also a safe way of producing epistemic violence. One of those strategies was that of expressing constant wonder or surprise at the customs and places discovered. Another strategy was the use of classification and taxonomy: “The other world, the world of the Other, was classifiable, apt to become the object of taxonomy” (González Echevarría 108). However, some chroniclers went too far in their “recreation” of the New World. An interesting example is Fray Marcos de Niza’s chronicle *Descubrimiento de las Siete Ciudades de Cibola* (1540s). Most historians have agreed that Fray Marcos’s account of what he did and saw in New

Mexico is complete fabrication. Fray Marcos introduced the elements of fiction and literary craft to a genre that had originally been born to have the characteristics of scientific discourse and provide anthropological information about the new cultures. A reason for such a choice might have been the result of his inability to leave his position as European colonizer and record what he was witnessing objectively.

7 One of the reasons for this, explains Clark Colahan, is that he did not arrive among them as a conquistador; instead, he learned and was helped by the native Americans (González-Berry 1989 18).

8 Garcilaso's father employed him as a scribe and as such the Inca "must have mastered the legal and notarial rhetoric of the time" (González Echevarría 66). Under his father's guidance, the young mestizo learned that writing "was a form of enfranchisement, of legitimation" (González Echevarría 45). By the time he started writing his chronicles the history of America and its conquest had already been told. Garcilaso's narratives would help to fulfill a revisionist task.

9 This emphasis on his standing as witness also separated himself from those scribes writing the history of the colonies only from sources brought to them by the Conquistadores.

10 Guaman Poma's chronicle was not a completely accurate report of historical events. His narrative shows signs of the blending between history and fiction. At points he "contradicted his documentary sources and elaborated a fictionalized narration of events that had much more to do with his own political arguments than with the rigorous demands of writing history" (Adorno 1986 10).

11 The Inca Garcilaso and Guaman Poma appropriated the chronicle and utilized it to present a new viewpoint, thus challenging the monopoly of those representations elaborated by those coming from abroad. Through their writing they emphasized the need to acknowledge the value of those beliefs and traditions existing before the colonization process started, especially after witnessing how this process attempted to render them irrelevant. Their chronicles allowed them to come up with a new description of those cultures that had been either exoticized or tainted by preconceptions in the writings of the Conquistadores.

12 The term modernismo was coined by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916) and was used to describe a general desire to modernize the literary language and themes of poetry that arose out of discontent with the somewhat provincial Hispanic tradition. The Modernists were the first generation of Spanish-American writers "to devote themselves to liberate art from didactic purpose so that they were free to cultivate beauty of form and style. French poetry was the greatest influence upon them. They were variously influenced by the Parnassians and Symbolists and like them they created a counter-culture against the materialist values of their time"(380) According to Rotker, "modernists perceived themselves to be in a position similar to that of the nineteenth-century European writers: isolated between the uneducated classes and the bourgeoisie [...]. Modernism was about an intellectual elite that felt marginalized and alienated by the readjustment of social relations"(2000 5) The Spanish America of Martí and Darío's "was the beginning of another period, that of the crumbling of certainty, the age of suspicion"(7) Modernist prose and poetry, Rotker explains, was not unlike the work of the French symbolists. It derived a system of symbology based on the theory of correspondences. "This conception of the word was similar among symbolists and modernists. Symbolists like Baudelaire thought of synesthesia not as the contact between interior vision and the divine, but rather as the connection between the mind and the senses [...]. Modernist texts registered cosmopolitanism, anti-economist idealism, elitism and social compassion, religiosity, hispanism and francophilia, Latin Americanist and anti-yankee sentiment, the cult of popular heroes, and more. Along with the symbolist techniques were mixed impressionism and even naturalism. The result was an assortment that transformed literary discourse and created a space of synthesis"(13).

13 According to Rotker, the Mexican Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, who wrote in *El Nacional* in Mexico during the 1880s, and the Cuban José Martí, who published in both *La Opinión Nacional* in Caracas and *La Nación* in Argentina during the 1880s and 1890s, are the founders of this new type of chronicle in Spanish America (2000 47). Inspired by the “frivolous and gossipy chroniques published by French dailies such as *Le Figaro* and *La Chronique Parisienne*,” Gutiérrez Nájera is believed to be the first to have imported the genre from France (González 1993 87).

14 Generally speaking, New Journalism in the United States dealt with four main topics: “1) celebrities and personalities; 2) the youth subculture and the new cultural patterns; 3) the ‘big’ events (of the moment), often violent ones such as criminal cases and antiwar protests; and 4) general social and political reporting” (Hollowell 1977 40). It covered a variety of current topics that reflected the happenings of a country in turmoil

15 In “Borderline Texts: The Chronicle, Writing in the Open,” Rossana Reguillo argues that “the chronicle attempts to understand movement, constant flux as a characteristic of the age: movements of people, goods and discourses, that not only reconfigure the spatial horizon of our societies, but point, above all, to the steady migrations of meaning” (Corona 2002 53). Reguillo’s definition of the contemporary chronicle focuses mainly on its fluid nature. Movement is indeed an inherent component of the chronicle’s contents: chroniclers move, cover space, in order to collect the information they need in order to produce their narratives. In fact, it is the immediacy of the genre that requires such a constant wandering in the search for the everyday, the current.

16 The figure of the *flâneur* is originally practiced and constructed by nineteenth century French writers. Priscilla Ferguson identifies two types of flâneurs at the time: the ordinary flâneur and the flâneur artiste. The ordinary flâneur remains a passive reader, bewildered and confused; the flâneur artiste becomes a powerful reader of the urban text, imposing “his will on the texts of the city. Ferguson also differentiates between Balzac’s, Flaubert’s and Baudelaire’s flâneur. While Balzac’s is a “romanticized, aristocratic master and producer of the urban text,” Faubert’s “signals the anguish of failure [...] [for] at every turn the city frustrates desire and resists control”(110). Finally, Baudelaire’s flâneur sets the “archetype of the modern artist.”(110) Like Balzac’s flâneur artiste, Baudelaire’s “painters of modern life aims higher than the pure flâneur but the city is no longer reflected in the puzzles resolved by the detective but rather by the mysteries confronted and revealed. If the city is the locus of personal misery, it is also the site of creativity”(112). This is the flâneur Wilson considers in her article. His routine coincides, at least in three aspects, with that of the contemporary chronicler: first, the flâneur spent “most of his day simply looking at the urban spectacle”; second, a significant part of the urban spectacle the flâneur concentrated on was “the behavior of the lower ranks of society”; and, finally, he was “essentially a solitary onlooker, activated [...] by his fleeting, but continuous and necessary, contact with the anonymous crowd” (Wilson 1992 94-5).

17 It should be mentioned that, sometimes, it was not the conquistadores but the Crown’s appointed scribes who wrote the colonial chronicles. These scribes collected the information from those coming back from the expeditions in the new continent and wrote the chronicles as demanded by the Crown.

18 In *Questions of Travel*, Karen Kaplan defines the traveler against the migrant and the nomad. The traveler, Kaplan explains, moves between fixed positions: there is a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary, and an eventual return (139). The migrant, on the other hand, calls for “a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation,” while the nomad is involved in “absolute movement,” with no determined origin or destination (139).

19 The Mexican Cristina Pacheco becomes an excellent example of the female chronicler who produces narratives with a marked female influence. Pacheco's chronicles carry with them a feminine tone. The chronicler has a tendency to look at her subjects in a motherly way. Feelings of compassion and sympathy dominate her pages.

20 In *Postmodernism or the Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson argues that the postmodern does not allow any place for oppositional forces to develop: "Under globalizing postmodernism [...] critical distance has very precisely been abolished [...]. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our own now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically incapable of distantiating [...]" (49). In his view, then, contemporary cultural conditions have resulted in a lack of center, no place for the subject to stand in ideology, no enemy to go against. Baudrillard's theory that in this new postmodern world, the distinctions between illusion and reality, signifier and signified, subject and object, have collapsed so that we have entered the society of simulacrum, "an abstract non-society devoid of cohesive relations, social meaning, and collective representation" (Kellner 1994 51) is clearly in agreement with Jameson's belief in the impossibility of any political positioning within the system.

21 The chronicles in this study abide by Stuart Hall's and Linda Hutcheon's theories of the postmodern. Hall challenges Baudrillard's belief in the end of representation resulting from the extreme pluralization of cultural codes under postmodern influence. Instead, Hall understands the postmodern as a period in which there exists an infinite multiplicity of codings that prove that meaning is not a natural but an arbitrary act— "the intervention of ideology into language" (in Morley 1996 137). Hutcheon celebrates the lack of center that the postmodern generates because it allows the interventions of the "ex-centric," which she describes as those class, race, gender, sex and ethnic different subjects "unrepresented" or "misrepresented" by the dominant monolith of the middle-class, male, heterosexual, white and Western ideology (12). Through their acknowledgment of minority discourses both Hall and Hutcheon suggest the positive value of the postmodern in allowing a fracture of the modern structure for incoming decolonized subjects.

22 As John Beverly explains, "an important element in the popularization of testimonio was the importance given in various forms of sixties counterculture to oral testimony as a form of personal authenticity, catharsis, and liberation" (1993 73).

23 This is why George Yúdice states that "the subject constructed during the testimonial practice is dialogic"(215 [my translation]). It makes sense that this subject be dialogic because he/she also tends to be representative of a larger group. This happens because, as Beverly explains, the *testimonio* is not "so much concerned with the life of a problematic hero like the *pícaro* as with a problematic collective social situation that the narrator lives alongside others"(1989 74).

24 Although *testimonios*, especially those produced in Latin and Central America, do sometimes refer to those in power, they do so in order to discuss the negative impact of their decisions or practices on those with no say in the happenings of their national agenda.

25 Because compilers transcribe what the subject dictates to them, one of the formal aspects of the *testimonio* is that it is narrated in first person, an "I" that demands to be recognized. The *testimonialistas* agree to tell their stories with the hope that such a telling will improve both their personal situation and that of their community.

26 Renato Prada Oropeza, for example, lists as one of the characteristics of the testimonio, "the absence of the use [...] of literary mechanisms typical of other discourses (such as the short story or the novel) or of mechanisms typical of other systems of communication (TV, film)" (in Jara 1986 16 [my translation]). Among those mechanisms "typical of other systems of communication," Prada Oropeza mentions change of viewpoint, the break of temporal units, or montage. He concludes that in

the dichotomy between truth (its version of the truth) and beauty, the *testimonio* chooses the first and sacrifices the second (in Jara 1986 16). Like Prada Oropeza, Beverly states that “part of the aesthetic effect of *testimonio* [...] is paradoxically that is not literary, not linguistically elaborated or authorial. One symptom of this has been an ambivalence about the ‘artistic’ as opposed to the ‘documentary’ character of *testimonio*, and about the distinction between *testimonio* per se and the more elaborated ‘testimonial novel’”(1993 92).

27 Needless to say, there is experimentation with the aesthetics of the discourse. Before published, the *testimonio* is edited and there is an imposition of the conventions of literary realism in order to make it “sound” as realistic as possible. As a consequence, it is not accurate to claim that the *testimonio* lacks in aesthetic value. As Yúdice explains, the *testimonio* “is a way of using narrative discourse whose function is not only pragmatic (that is for the purpose of self-defense and survival) but just as significantly ‘aesthetic’ (insofar as the subjects of the testimonial discourse rework their identity through the aesthetic), though that aesthetic does not usually correspond to the definitions of the literary” (in Gugelberger 1996 46). The *testimonio* is a text and as such it inherently possesses aesthetic value. After compiling the information, the editor manipulates the narrative, organizing the facts, leaving comments out, or even, including titles or footnotes to structure the text. Finally, and in disagreement with Yúdice’s statement, that an indigenous representative is narrating does not necessarily imply that the aesthetic that results will not “correspond to the definitions of the literary.” Although maybe unaware of it, narrators like Condori Mamani use symbolism or metonymy in their narrations.

28 - The title refers to the “City of God,” a peripheral neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro organized into uneven rows of ramshackled houses and surrounded by dirty lots. “City of God” was originally designed in the 1960s as a conjunto, a housing project, developed to relocate the inhabitants of Rio’s multiple favelas. In *The Myth of Marginality. Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*, Janice Perlman describes the “City of God” of the 1970s as a “crowded and demoralized” area, located too far from the center of Rio, with “poorly constructed apartments,” dusty roads, and poor services (228). The removal and relocation of the favelados had some socio-cultural effects that “can best be understood in relation to the advantages of the favela as a functional community”(216). Because individuals were scattered throughout new districts on the basis of their income level rather than on the basis of their social and family ties, “the support structure of the favela” could not survive relocation (216).

29 While the favelas started developing naturally when groups of homeless and poor people illegally occupied unpopulated territory and took possession of it, the conjuntos were legal spaces developed by the government in an attempt to stop the increasing number of favelas. However, at one point in Lins’ narrative Miúdo states why the “City of God,” originally a conjunto, should be referred to as a favela: “Conjunto o quê? Favela! Isso mesmo, isso aqui é favela, favelão brabo mesmo. Só o que mudou foi os barraco, que não tinha luz, nem água na bica, e aqui é tudo casa e apê, mas os pessoal, os pessoal é que nem na Macedo Sobrinho, que nem no São Carlos. Se é na favela que tem boca-de-fumo, bandido pra caralho, crioulo à vera, neguinho pobre à pamparra, então aqui também é favela, favela de Zé Miúdo” (209).

30 In an interview, Meirelles explains that, “[a] leitura de *Cidade de Deus* foi como uma revelação [...] de um outro lado de meu próprio país [...]. Decidi fazer um filme que fosse fiel ao partido do livro: filmado de dentro para fora da favela. Um filme sem cenários e sem técnicas de interpretação, alias sem atores profissionais, mas com garotos que vivem aquela realidade, e que podem nos trazer a menos a sensação do que é viver à margem [...]. Mas *Cidade de Deus* não fala apenas de uma questão brasileira e sim de uma questão global. De sociedades que se desenvolvem na periferia do mundo civilizado” (Meirelles 2002)

31 In one of her conclusions, Perlman argues that housing projects, barrios, and favelas originated from “the desire to keep the citadel of the privileged— keeping out the ‘riff-raff’ along with their unsightly settlements”(200). Perlman adds that pejorative connotations of the urban poor have deep historical roots in Latin America where the city was developed as a “fortress of high

culture, the citadel of elites,” as a space of highly homogeneous class composition (92). Once the favelados were moved to distant locales, they could no longer play upon the fear of those middle and upper classes enjoying the benefits of the “civilized” city.

32 When describing both cities, St. Augustine explains that “[t]he one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after their kind [...]. Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience” (1993 441, 477). St. Augustine expresses deception at man’s inability to fulfill God’s plans for him on earth.

33 Lins’ *Cidade de Deus* is structured into three parts – “A História de Inferninho” (The story of Inferninho), “A História de Pardalzinho”(The story of Pardalzinho), and “A História de Zé Miúdo”(The story of Zé Miúdo). Although the narrative concentrates in more detail on these three characters, Inferninho, Pardalzinho, and Zé Miúdo, and how they execute violence, it also includes the stories of many other favelados who are exposed to the everyday brutalities of favela life.

34 However, Lins avoids generalizations. Not all the favelados’ criminal nature is the result of their upbringing. In fact, two of the cruelest characters in *Cidade de Deus*, Tutuca and Inho, come from very caring families. However, Lins’ narrator clarifies that Tutuca “quis ser bandido para ser temido por todos, assim como foram os bandidos do lugar onde morou [...]. Queria ter uma vida igual à da maioria dos garotos do morro”(26).

35 The majority of the youth described in *Cidade de Deus* grows up admiring the most violent gangsters in their neighborhood: “Inho [...] admirava Inferninho, mas tinha adoração por Grande, bandido que mandava na favela Macedo Sobrinho. Se conseguisse chegar a ser igual a Inferninho, rapidinho ficaria igual a Grande: temido de todos e querido pelas mulheres”(51). Inho has one main goal: “Ficaria mais temido pelos outros bandidos, pela rapaziada do conceito, pelos dedos-duros. Gostava de ver o pessoal com medo dele [...]. Um dia seria o bandido mais famoso do lugar”(59).

36 In *Laughter Out of Place*, Donna Goldstein explains that “[i]n favelas [...] the drug chiefs are important local figures; they are often homegrown and locally based, and, as is well known, they provide badly needed services – for example housing and cash in times of emergency” (181). Gangs also provide an alternative justice system, “a parallel state, if you will— among the poorest, who thoroughly reject a corrupt police force and, in their everyday lives, seek some organized entity that can administer ‘justice’ in the local arena” (207). Thus, local gangs are, paradoxically, providing their community with protection against the violence they themselves are responsible for producing in the first place.

37 There are a number of examples that portray women as either housewives or sexual objects. For instance, Inferninho wants to seduce Berenice because “precisava de uma mulher para fazer sua comida, lavar-lhe a roupa e entregar-se aos seus braços na hora que ele bem entendesse”(59). In another episode, Tutuca, who desires Laranjinha’s woman, states, in a quite derogative tone, that “seria melhor matar o paraíba e prender sua mulher para sempre [...]. Moraria com ela na marra, pois mulher é igual a cachorro, acostuma como os novos donos com o passar do tempo [...]. Mulher gosta mesmo é de dinheiro e piroca dura”(124).

38 Even in the presence of transvestite characters, Lins keeps the division intact. For example, when Ari—a transvestite nicknamed Ana Rubro Negro— engages in violent action, the narrator tells us that “quem corria com sede de vingança não era a Ana Rubro Negra, era o Ari, homem de um metro e noventa, acostumado a encarar policiais na mão nas madrugadas da Lapa e

do Baixo Meretrício”(214). It is his male side, Ari, who becomes aggressive; his female side, Ana Rubro Negro, remains passive and extremely sensitive.

39 In *Consumers and Citizens*, Nestor García Canclini explains that commodities have a specific function in society: “Humans exchange objects to satisfy culturally-defined needs, to integrate with and distinguish ourselves from others, to fulfill our desires and to map out our situation in the world, to control the erratic flux of desires and to give them stability or security through institutions and rituals” (46). García Canclini explains that while “in the past, the state provided the framework that contained the variety of forms of participation in public life” today it is the market that “brings together these forms of participation through the medium of consumption” (22). This has brought about a redefinition of the sense of belonging and identity as there has been a “shift from the citizen as a representative of public opinion to the consumer interested in enjoying quality of life” (24).

40 Like Lins’ text, Meirelles and Lund’s adaptation consists of three parts and utilizes non-linear cuts. However, Meirelles and Lund have reduced Lins’ almost 400-hundred page and 352-character text to a two-hour film that follows the lives of a few principal characters. Their scriptwriter, Braulio Mantovani, has wisely re-developed Lins’ story around five characters- Busca-Pé (Rocket), Bené (Benny; Pardalzinho in Lins’ *Cidade de Deus*), Cenoura (Carrot), Mané Galinha (Knockout Ned; Zé Bonito in Lins’ *Cidade de Deus*), and Zé Pequeno (Li’l Zé; Zé Miúdo in Lins’ *Cidade de Deus*).

41 Some critics have argued that “the faces in Meirelles’ film are not much more than masks,” that “poverty and depravity have stripped these kids of any defining humanity and turned them into a race of grotesques”(Rainer, par 3); others claim that “there are too many stories here, too many to keep track of, serving the collective function of pointing up the dismal of too many lives snuffed out too young in turf or power wars” (Lowerison, par 3).

42 At least Lins does include background for some of his female protagonists. Instead, Meirelles and Lund choose to completely disregard their stories. Alliances, friendships, and wars are only male matters.

43 Of course, Busca-Pé is not the only one “profiting” from favela violence. The newspaper he works for also capitalizes on Busca-Pé’s access to the inner world of the favela. They know that he is their only way in and they utilize that access to improve their sales.

44 An Afro-Brazilian cult that combines a more traditional Yoruban practice with common elements of syncretic faiths.

45 With a few exceptions, corpses are never claimed in Meirelles and Lund’s film. The camera never shows the victims’ families after the shootings. By choosing to leave family and neighbors out of the picture, those non-violent aspects of favela life get to be silenced. The danger behind such a representation is that the audience might deduce that favela life is synonym to public armed wars and interpersonal violence. However, according to a number of anthropological studies and Lins’ text, life in the favela can also be peaceful, community feelings can be developed, and relatives and neighbors do worry about other.

46 It is particularly interesting that Meirelles and Lund have avoided including most of the scenes in which Lins describes the murdering of innocent victims. With a very few exceptions, every person that dies in the film dies because he or she is consciously involved in the violence that is taking place. Lins, on the contrary, makes clear that anybody can die in this geography of violence. In his text, babies are shot and families are trapped behind windows in order to avoid dying.

47 A good example of how the city deteriorates throughout the decades is the scene that tells “The story of the apartment.” By means of montage the audience witnesses how the walls and the floor get holes, cracks and humidity. In some sense, there is the feeling that the architectural decay is accompanying a moral decay that by the end of the film is almost complete. According to a

number of sociologists, the favelados' "filthy and disease-ridden shantytowns supposedly manifest all the symptoms of social disorganization— from family breakdown, anomie, and mutual distrust to rampant crime, violence, and promiscuity" (Perlman 1).

48 The "Runts" talk about making a "black list" and "killing them all": "'Cocoa robbed 3 stores in Barra,' 'Better kill him,' 'Who shot Roger?,' 'It was Beef,' 'Kill that fucker,' 'We should kill the Chief and Gringo as well,' 'What about Cherry?,' 'Let's go. Us two and three others...,' 'It's a deal,' 'Have you heard of the Red Brigade?,' 'No, but if they come, we'll kill them,' 'Who knows how to write?,' 'Me, sort of,' 'Let's make a black list. We'll kill them all,' 'Put Fucking Nightowl on there,' 'And Croquet,' 'Leonard, too, he owes me money,' 'And ChinaMan, he thinks he's too hot stuff,' 'And Claudio...'" (Meirelles 2002).

49 It is also an overgeneralization to claim that these favela youths think that violence is "the norm." The fact that they have to deal with violence every day and they live it as a norm does not necessarily imply that they think it as such.

50 Joshua Tanzer explains that "[t]ense situations are filmed in a supercharged, fast-motion montage that feels almost like the eye of a photographer searching for the best shots and freezing on them when it finds them"(2003).

51 Generally speaking, the films of Cinema Novo often tried "to present a broad portrait of Brazilian society, highlighting its structural injustices, with the self-proclaimed purpose not only of informing the public about the surrounding society, but also of provoking a reaction, a prise de conscience"(in Johnson 282). The task of this cinema was to expose the mechanisms of oppression to which the underdeveloped Latin America was a victim (Chanan).

52 In "An Esthetic of Hunger," Glauber Rocha contrasted Cinema Novo and "its 'gallery of starving people'" with what he called "'digestive' cinema: 'films about rich people with pretty houses riding in luxurious automobiles; cheerful, fast-paced, empty films with purely industrial objectives'"(in Johnson 68). Rocha explained that the noblest cultural manifestation of hunger was violence. He concluded that Cinema Novo would serve to teach that "an esthetic of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary. It is the initial moment when the colonizer becomes aware of the colonized. Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture it exploits" (in Johnson 70).

53 The story of a young gang member, by the end of the narrative, says it all: "sentiu saudades do tempo em que estudava [...]. Pegou um outro caderno, que era só de perguntas: Qual a música que marcou sua vida? Quem você levaria para uma ilha deserta? Com quem foi o seu primeiro beijo? Onde é seu ponto fraco? Qual é o tipo de garota que te atrai? Você está interessado em alguém no momento? Procurou uma caneta, insistiu em responder àquelas perguntas, respondia, apagava [...]. Tentou de todas maneiras passar naquela prova [...] se conseguisse responder àquelas perguntas seria uma pessoa que possuía ainda um lado saudável, mas nada, nada vinha à sua mente, só lágrimas lhe chegaram aos olhos, jogou-se na cama por cima do caderno, chorou baixinho até dormir" (370). The extreme sadness and resignation felt by this youth who, in an effort to experience some normalcy, tries to relate to the every day experiences of a normal human being prove that the violence of favela life can destroy the "healthy" dreams and expectations of many.

54 *Cidade de Deus* does resemble aesthetically Underground Cinema, which developed as a reaction to Cinema Novo's movement toward relatively high-budget films characterized by technical polish and production values (Johnson 316), in its inclusion of elements from different cinematic genres, its disruption of the conventional linear narrative structure, and its interest in urban popular cultures and the characteristics of urban violent practices. In addition, Meirelles and Lund rejected the studio system. Instead, they filmed *Cidade de Deus* in situ and worked with non-professional actors, the majority of whom were favelados living on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro.

55 In the films mentioned, blood splashes on the screen, the camera provides close-ups of wounds and scars, and characters react to their brutal behavior with ironic commentary. *Pulp Fiction* even becomes a mockery of crime as an “expert in hiding bodies” is called in to eliminate one of the corpses.

56 Meirelles has repeatedly said that he does not want to have his film compared to *Pulp Fiction* or *Goodfellas*. He claims that *Pulp Fiction* is different from *City of God* because while Tarantino uses violence “as an amusement, something funny and spectacular,” *City of God* does the opposite (González 2002). Meirelles adds that every time he had the opportunity to show the violent he avoided to show it. The director does not believe that violence is glamorized in this film (González 2002).

57 However, Meirelles and Lund have claimed that their critique goes beyond the realities of their own national space. In fact, Meirelles states that “*City of God* is not only about a Brazilian issue, but one that involves the whole world. About societies which develop on the outskirts of our civilized world” (González 2002).

58 Once again, the title brings reminiscences of St. Augustine’s *City of God*. This time, however, the title seems more appropriate considering that the space represented by *Cidade dos Homens* fits perfectly the “City of Men” described by St. Augustine in his narrative: this city is inhabited by men who “live after the flesh,” has been formed by “the love of self, even to the contempt of God,” and “glories in itself”(1993 477)

59 In *Cidade de Deus*, Meirelles chose not to give them the script. The director only explained the scenes to the actors who were left free to perform as they wished. This process turned out to be truly effective because the actors were able to contribute with their own knowledge of favela life to the scenes they were asked to perform. Meirelles and Lund allowed their actors to contribute to the script which was re-written as the film was being shot. Events told to Meirelles by other favelados, not included in Lins’ text, were added to the original script as well. In addition, the absence of known actors made the rendition of the story more credible. Watching professional actors perform the role of favelados would have cost the film much of its authenticity.

60 It is also interesting to discuss how, in many of the episodes, a number of scenes show how the police has barricaded the entrance to the favela: favela citizens, mostly grown-up men, are usually searched for weapons as they walk past these checking points. Thus, the presence of the police force marks the imaginary boundaries between the favela and the rest of the urban space.

61 For example, all the favelas in Rio de Janeiro belong to one of the three main criminal factions: the Red Command, Friends of Friends, and the Third Command (González 2002)

62 In fact, even though *Cidade de Deus* is supposed to reflect life in the favela between the 1960s and the 1980s, each of the comments included in Lund’s documentary reflects that things have not changed much since then: Janete, a favela dweller, claims that “the new generation, the young people, is in a suicidal mode. They don’t care if they’ll die or kill. They have no fear” (Meirelles 2002); one favela drug dealer says that “to kill the enemy is a victory [...]. It’s worth celebrating” (Meirelles 2002); most favela members assure that the police is as corrupt as the criminals; and Itamar Silva, a community leader, explains that gangs offer these third favela generations the respect they don’t get when they choose an ordinary job. He claims that violence gives these young favelados a power they feel they have over a society that does not recognize their true worth (Meirelles 2002).

63 The reasons behind this increase in violence in the last decades are clear and known to everyone: an economic crisis that has left many in complete poverty, the slowness of the Brazilian justice system, the overpopulation in state prisons, the development of more dangerous and complex weapons, and the increase addiction to drugs. However, according to some, keeping the favelas alive is profitable to those in power because the “favela as a political subculture is perfectly suited for manipulation and exploitation from above”: the favelados provide cheap labor, which serves to lower the reproduction cost of all economic sectors, purchase those goods and services that the middle and upper classes reject, and “serve in the creation of jobs for diverse sorts of professionals and quasi-professionals, especially social workers, social scientists, and urban planners”(Perlman 259).

64 Rodríguez completed his formal studies in Photography at the School of Visual Arts and at the International Center of Photography, both in New York City.

65 Rodríguez describes *East Side Stories* as a photo-documentary. Bruce Warren explains that “(a)ny photograph that gives information about the subject photographed could be thought of as a record or document. Documentary photography is often associated with photographers who are trying to convey a personal perspective about a subject” (2002 278). I believe that such a reading is not necessarily contradictory with my decision to read his photo-narrative as a compilation of urban chronicles. After all, the chronicle also fulfills the function of “giving information” about the subjects photographed and conveys “a personal perspective” about those subjects.

66 *Cidade de Deus* has been edited too but it does not allow the freedom that a collection of photographs does. In the case of the film, the audience cannot, at least as easily as with photography, go back and forth, skip, or avoid looking at the many scenes or sections edited together.

67 It is relevant to mention that Rodríguez does not stay in only one specific section of East or South L.A. when he is taking the photographs for the collection. During his stay, the photographer visits a number of different L.A. barrios. Nor does he stay exclusively in the streets. He also goes into the homes, schools, jails, and youth centers where the gang members he is photographing spend time.

68 Susan Sontag, who claims that photographs must be read in context, believes that a book is not the best, or most satisfactory, scheme for presenting photographs to an audience because “the sequence in which the photographs are to be looked at is proposed by the order of pages, but nothing holds readers to the recommended order or indicates the amount of time to be spent on each photograph” (1973 5).

69 Looking at one individual photograph would be risky in this case mostly due to the type of representation Rodríguez is dealing with. Because the photographer takes a number of photographs of gang members performing illegal activities, if the audience were to look at that particular photograph in the series it would be led to believe that the stereotyping of Latino youth is indeed true, therefore missing the many other sides of Latino youths’ experience, such as their interaction with their families or their everyday suffering due to economic and cultural marginalization.

70 Sontag claims that “socially concerned photographers assume that their work can convey some kind of stable meaning, can reveal truth, partly because the photograph is, always, an object in a context, this meaning is bound to drain away; that is, the context which shapes whatever immediate- in particular, political- uses the photograph may have is inevitably succeeded by contexts in which such uses are weakened and become progressively less relevant” (1973 106). Like Sontag, Linda Rugg argues that “photographs are not simply the things they represent, but must be read through the culture that creates and consumes them” (Rugg 1997 12).

71 Rodríguez's *East Side Stories* also echoes *West Side Story*, the mass consumer film of gang violence of the musical variety released in the 1960s. It also reminds us of other Hollywood productions such as *Grease* (1978) and Baz Luhrmann's version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1996).

72 Rodríguez used still 35mm cameras to shoot the photographs compiled in *East Side Stories*.

All the photographs in this collection have been taken with a wide angle. Rodríguez is always very close to his subjects, even during funerals and drive-by shootings. This shows he was able to establish and develop a relationship with his subjects that gave him access to the most intimate moments and situations. It is graphic proof of the intimacy he was able to develop with them.

73 Chivo confesses that once he did try to leave the barrio, East L.A., but "I felt out of place. The way people stare at you, they have so many prejudices. That's how I felt over there; I didn't feel comfortable so I came back [...]. Now I'm prejudiced against them- white, black. When I come back here, where I grew up, with my own people around me I feel safe" (Rodríguez 166).

74 The choice of having developed the photographs in black and white enables Rodríguez to signify through aesthetic. Because the topic the photographer is dealing with is a serious and, at times, very depressing, one, color photography would not have been as appropriate.

75 The photograph on page 95 could also belong to another miniseries made up of images of young gang members while attending school. The photographs in this series are structured by means of a binary set up: those photographs taken in the classroom reflect an atmosphere of safety and control. However, once in the streets, shots show faces that reflect fear and bodies that participate or are ready to engage in violence. Images of a "gang awareness class" (87- 8) and a counselor talking to a young gang member (92) are juxtaposed with shots of gang members "looking out for rival gangs while waiting for the bus" (91) or attacking other gangs (95). It is also interesting to see how once in the street, gang members pose together as a group flashing their respective gang's signs (90), thus marking their identity against that of other gangs. This need to self-identify with one's own gang is not evident when members are together in the classroom.

76 In "Rhetoric of the Image," Roland Barthes explains that photographs offer us "three messages: a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message" (in Wells 116). Barthes considers that "the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance" (in Wells 118).

77 Captions also tend to be different in the online versions. In general, they include more information, which seems to be a deliberate move to make up for the absence of journal entries right next to the photographs. Because journal entries— some of which have not even been included in the printed version— can be accessed through a link, they do not come attached to any particular photograph and this further disrupts the order of the printed version. When asked about some of the omissions in the online versions of his photo-narrative, Rodríguez has claimed that "I want people to buy the book, if we put too much up people won't buy books" (Beroiz 2004). This also comments on how capitalist interests determine the outcome of artistic productions. However, I wonder how effective the decision to exclude information is. I am not so sure that people who have access to the online versions, especially those who have not seen the printed version, will be aware of the fact that information is missing.

78 Because the photographer is very close to Porky he has had to choose what to put in focus, the first plane or the second plane. In this case he has chosen to put the focus on Porky's face because his facial expression is indicative of the feeling of fear that the photographer is trying to emphasize.

79 Although the gun, the Bud can, and the hand sign, all look equally harmless— objects used to mark affiliation to the gang—, the possibility of violence is still present.

80 While the gun is in focus, very sharp, the rest of the image is out of focus, which seems to imply that Rodríguez got scared when he was taking the picture. Although, according to the journal entries Rodríguez gained the trust of the gangs he was photographing and only shot the photographs they allowed him to, the threatening pose of the gang member pointing the gun at him is still disturbing.

81 In fact, the photograph of Gyro's funeral comes as a shock considering the photographs that precede it. On page 80, we see a photograph of Gyro relaxing outdoors with the gang, while Frankie gives him a haircut (79). Similarly, pages 74 and 77 include photographs of Gyro posing in front of the camera while his friends drink beer at a party.

82 The photograph on pages 114-5 has a very complicate reading. If looked at from right to left, the focus is the altar. This makes sense because the altar is lit with numerous candles. This reading of the photograph is also possible because it is off-centered. If Frankie and Spanky had been centered, the altar would have lost protagonism. Centering Frankie and Spanky would have also left the other neighbors attending the funeral out of the frame as well. Consequently, off-centering the photograph has allowed Rodríguez to include more "variables" in the frame and provide his audience with a clearer background in order to better understand the situations being depicted

83 According to Maricela's version, Husky and his gang were eating off the top of a car when a kid approached them: "'This is Barrio Stoners,' he said. It was true; they had crossed into Stoners territory. Husky was the first to react: he flashed the Evergreen sign with his hands and said, 'You know what? I'm from Evergreen!' The Stoners kid responded 'Fuck Evergreen!' and a second later pulled out a gun and started firing wildly" (Rodríguez 25). Husky and Gyro tried to protect themselves in their car but Husky got shot in his chest and was pronounced dead shortly after arriving at the local hospital.

84 It is interesting and pertinent that Rodríguez has chosen the expression "call the shots" to talk about this photo-narrative. The gang members the artist photographs "call the shots" in all senses of the word. They decide where, when, and whom to shoot, most probably causing death, and what Rodríguez can "shoot" with his camera.

85 Another good example of this use of the journal is Rodríguez's "July 17, 93" entry in which the photographer describes a drive-by shooting— that he has not included photographs of— in detail (116).

86 In his "November 24, 93" entry Rodríguez says: "At the beginning I made a few very powerful images— like the kid with the scar [...]. These days I'm taking less photos; I'm driving people to jobs, taking kids out to eat (some go two days without eating!), helping a seven-year-old to do his homework, even taking some girls to an OB/GYN clinic. I've rushed Trigger to the hospital after a shooting. No pictures are coming out of these encounters. To just photograph the violence doesn't cut it for me. It misses what the story has to say" (126). Rodríguez is indirectly commenting on the inadequacy and hypocrisy behind those representations of gang life that only focus on inter-gang violence.

87 Analyses of Latino portrayals by Hollywood productions and the U.S. mass media have indeed shown that there has been a tendency to produce stereotypical representations damaging to the perception of the Latino community. In "'Yo soy Chicano': The Turbulent and Heroic Life of Chicanas/os in Cinema and Television," David Maciel and Susan Racho claim that in a large number of films and television programs, "the Chicano has been portrayed as the greaser, the convenient villain, the perpetual bandolero, the buffoon, the Latin lover, and the peón. Chicanas, for the most part, have fared no better [...]. In contemporary

Hollywood, Chicanos have become major protagonists as drug users/dealers or as urban gang members” (2000: 94). Maciel and Racho provide a number of examples— *The Three Amigos* (1987), *Colors* (1988), *Predator 2* (1990), *Bound by Honor* (1992), *Mi Vida Loca* (1994), and *187* (1997) — that “clearly reveal that commercial cinema clings to the traditional formula of casting Chicanas/os as perpetual villains” (2000 94).

88 In an interview, Martínez explains that “For *Eastside Stories*, Joe asked me to come in after he had completed much of his photographing. Nevertheless, he provided me with unusually intimate access to his subjects for in-depth interviews. In many ways, I retraced his steps in the neighborhoods and with the main characters in his images, teasing out the threads of narrative apparent in them. I was also already very familiar with East Los Angeles because I had written numerous stories from there over the years” (Beroiz 2004)

89 According to some studies, however, L.A. urban planners, realtors, homeowners, and government officials further contributed to the segregation of the colored population in the inner city through the construction of a freeway system that, instead of serving the downtown area, “bolstered decentralized development and vitiated downtown”(Noriega 569). In “The Folklore of the Freeway: Space, Culture, and Identity in Postwar Los Angeles,” Eric Avila explains that the impact of the L.A. freeway system upon the Eastside was both economic and physical as its construction “unleashed massive destruction and chaos upon the inner-city communities” (Noriega 570). In addition, the freeway allowed the suburban driver to completely avoid the inner city area; it became a “safe passage through the ghetto or the barrio” that helped to do both maintain “the social distance between separate and unequal worlds” (Noriega 577) and reinforce existing stereotypes and media images of the inner city citizen as a dangerous presence.

90 In an interview, Rodríguez explained that most of these East L.A. kids “listen to old school 60’s and 70’s R&B, Hip Hop and, of course, *Música Norteño*”, the majority “spoke English, although many of their parents didn’t”, and, most of them wear or respond to the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, the most important icon in Mexico (Beroiz 2004). Martínez adds to these comments that “hybridity is a cultural fact and, increasingly, a cultural commodity. The gang kids in L.A. – and not just the gang kids, but I would expand to say kids of color in the inner city— are vibrantly hybrid. Hip Hop itself (from which flowed rap and graffiti art) was originally a hybrid collaboration of black and brown youth on the east coast. In Los Angeles, graffiti artists were following in the footsteps of Mexican muralists and Chicano activists and combining these influences with east coast aesthetics. What is NOT hybrid among these young people? I spent quite a bit of time as a writer in Los Angeles in the early 90s noting the ironies of Chicano ‘nationalists’ whose aesthetics were largely African-American. In a city where so many blacks and browns have dated, fallen in love and had children that the term ‘blaxican’ had to be coined to describe the latest mixed-race shade that flows from that desire” (Beroiz 2004). This goes to show how East L.A. gang members live a mixture of Anglo, African American, and Mexican traditions. These Chicano kids are the result of such a cultural and historical exchange.

91 *Florencia* is the Spanish equivalent for the street of Florence Avenue in Los Angeles where the F13 gang is based. *Trece* is the Spanish word for the number thirteen which represents a gang’s association with the geographical region of Southern California, or any region south of the city of Fresno”(Alonso 15).

92 The tattoo also implies the idea of a stable attachment to the gang. Tattoos do not wear off easily; once marked, the body becomes a stable part of the gang it is identified with. Finally, having one’s own body tattooed also connotes a sense of taking control over that body (Featherstone 2); of being in control, something very much desired among these youths involved in the everyday uncertainties and chaos of gang violence in the barrio. (The term “tribe” is being used in the sense that Mafessoli uses it in his book *The Time of the Tribes*)

93 In the interview included at the end of *East Side Stories*, L. Rodríguez explains the significance of both images: “You couldn’t leave it. And in many ways, that’s what this “smile now/cry later” thing is [...]. If you have a good time, when it’s over, you’re gonna get it on the other end [...]. Everything seems trapped inside a web. You can’t escape it. I guess that’s why the vatos (dudes or guys) would tattoo that image of the spider web all the time” (176).

94 Atkinson explains that tattoos are used by “subcultures” to indicate “a sense of disaffiliation with more established orders (e.g., dominant classes, a dominant gender, or racial majorities)”(2003 164), to express despair, and to articulate a sense of distance from mainstream society (2003 55). They can also be used to symbolize social protest or political dissent.

95 The “Marianna Maravilla” gang derives its name from the Virgin Mary, upon whom the cult of “Marianismo” was developed. Based on a characterization of the Virgin that presented her as mediator –between men and God—, savior –ready for sacrifice and suffering—, virgin— thus untouched and pure—, and *mater dolorosa*— the tear-drenched mother crying for her endangered sons—, this cult fosters the idea of “feminine spiritual superiority” and claims that “women are semi-divine, morally superior to, and spiritually stronger than men”(in Pescatello 91).

96 Religion, politics, gender, and violence conflate in the concept of “motherland.” Anne McClintock claims that “all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous [...]. Nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space [...]. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit [...]. Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency” (in McClintock 90).

97 In fact, it is this emphasis on the need to protect one’s territory from being invaded, or, metaphorically speaking, “raped” by its enemies that could also explain why these Chicano gangs have chosen the Virgin instead of her opposing figure, La Malinche, as their iconic reference. Although La Malinche has been recognized as an active presence during the conquest— her role as linguist, interpreter, and diplomat allowed her to intervene in the colonial encounter, transformed her in the carnal mother, the Eve, of the mestizo nation, and gave her the chance to save the lives of many—, she has been predominantly presented as the traitor to the land, as the “violated woman” who epitomizes the defeat of the Indian and the conquest of their land. Through La Malinche, “the territorial conquest is rephrased in terms of a sexual conquest. The rape of the woman is metaphorically equated with the rape of the land” (Melhuus 237). Her characterization as traitor and “chingada” (raped) throws shadow on her actions in behalf of her people and explains why contemporary gangs have chosen to disregard her image as a representative symbol of their union.

98 In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), Pierre Bourdieu claims that “[t]astes (i.e., manifested practices) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes. In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (‘sick-making’) of the tastes of others”(57). The choice of the Virgin becomes the proof of a “taste” that affirms the Latino youths’ difference asserting themselves against those living beyond the barrio, immersed in U.S. traditional culture.

99 In fact, if Rodríguez’s intention was to humanize the male gang, at least partly, through their connections with their women, including either graphic or textual descriptions of female gang violence would have complicated his goal. When asked about the balance in this photo-narrative, Rodríguez admitted that he was aware that the project was very much male-driven and he did not spend much time with the women while he was in the barrio (Beroiz 2004)

100 In fact, a number of studies among gang members in prison tell that “scars are displayed like medals, and members who do not have them are always a little envious” (Sanchez Jankowski 139).

101 In an interview, Rodríguez explains that many times it was the gang members who would arrange the group shots. Other times it was him who asked them to pose in a particular way (Beroiz 2004). This proves how collaborative this project came out to be. Rodríguez’s photographic subjects had a say both in terms of content and form. In a way, such intervention challenges Sontag’s theory that claims that “(t)o photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed”(1973 14). Although it is true that the audience can “symbolically possess” these photographic subjects, the fact that these gang members have sometimes chosen their posing implies that they have imagined the way they want to be seen and they are choosing to show only what they want.

102 As Sontag claims “the photographic image, even to the extent that it is a trace (not a construction made out of disparate photographic traces), cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude” (2003 46).

103 The barrio is present more “as symbol” than as a physical space. The interviews and “captions” that accompany the photographs present the barrio as a space that contributes to the development of specific “communities of practice” that experience and produce, among other things, violence. The barrio is more than simply a space; it is described as a feeling, a lifestyle, a way of understanding reality. Because of this, violence finds its justification when used as a means to protect the barrio.

104 As García Canclini claims, this territorial writing of the city has the intention of asserting presence and possession of a specific neighborhood or area (1995 249).

105 In an interview, when asked to comment on how the chronicles in *The Other Side* came about, Martínez states, “I was very young at the time—in my late 20s, just a few years older than many of the subjects in the book. Many of the young people I talked to naturally saw me as an ally. I was young, I was brown, I could talk to them in their language (I’ve always had the ability—or at least imagine that I have—to ‘fit in’ linguistically). I do not have any fixed interviewing strategy; among some subjects I might emphasize what we have in common, among others, the differences between us. The important thing is to establish an elemental relationship of trust, and that takes time. (In the case of some of the stories in *The Other Side*, months; for *Crossing Over*, it took two years.) I write stories about people I am genuinely interested in, and, most often, sympathetic towards. I am not an investigative writer looking for people’s dirty laundry. I am a writer looking to paint a detailed portrait of a life. It is, in the end, MY portrait of an other’s life. I was drawn to a particular subject, one whose narrative resonated with mine, and the narrative in some way is a result of that intimate resonance. So for every one of my stories there is another ‘author’ that does not get the ‘byline’ or name on the cover of the book: the subject of the non-fiction narrative. I try to be as reflexive as I can about this process in my work. I usually ground the prose in the first person. I discuss my reasons for being drawn to the subject. I allow the subject to contest me, if possible” (Beroiz 2004).

106 In this particular chronicle, Martínez juxtaposes interviews, personal comments, data, and photography in a style that is both journalistic and extremely lyrical. When asked how conscious of his stylistic choices he is when he writes and whether he uses a combination of a journalistic and a lyrical style in order to appeal to a broader audience, Martínez provides an interesting response: “I started my career as a poet, and I am a ‘performer’ as well (I have many years of ‘spoken word’ and singer-songwriter experience), and so aesthetics are always paramount for me. I never liked the term ‘journalist’ much. Especially these days, when corporate-owned outlets basically serve as mouthpieces for the corporate bottom line. [...]. Shifting points of view,

lyrical prose, subjectivity, experimental form: all these are available to a writer of non-fiction. In Latin America, the term 'non-fiction' doesn't exist, 'crónica' describes a form that was always considered 'literary'. And during my time in Latin America I learned from many writers about this form. So I suppose I'm writing a blend of American literary journalism and Latin American 'crónica'. As far as audience, every writer wants the widest audience possible..."(Beroiz 2004).

107 Alonso explains that tagging is the most widespread type of graffiti inscribed on public spaces of the urban environment. The purpose of tagging is "about 'getting up' in as many places as possible because, for the tagger, recognition as a prolific writer is an important goal. Through prolificity, fame and a sense of power are acquired by how many tags a writer can complete"(10). Thus, the tagger takes up public space and uses it as a means of self-expression. In L.A. in particular, taggers have left the barrio to also tag the freeway, a safe passage through the barrios that allows its middle and upper class riders to avoid seeing or getting in contact with the inner-city Black and Chicano kids. However, those tags work "against the 'out of sight, out of mind' principle of urban design. Tags become visible reminders of those ignored Others; they are counter-narratives, counter-expressions that assert these Others' existence and humanity" (Noriega 577). Martínez indeed provides a good example of this when he tells us: "Later, driving back down the freeway, westbound, Wisk tells me, 'Look at that shit we did the other night,' pointing excitedly to his and a fellow WCA writer's tags. 'Look! W, W, W, W, J-A, J-A, J-A! Look at all them Ws lined up, bro'! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!'"(1992 122).

108 Unlike Rodríguez, Martínez includes interviews with police and government representatives invested in "erasing" such marking of the city. He thus moves beyond the barrio limits and presents us with a number of opposing viewpoints on the topic.

109 On page 124 of *East Side Stories* there is a photograph of Danny and Cesar, from Marianna, in the actual process of graffiti painting, tagging the gang's initials, "MM," on a school bus.

110 Lins' narrative provides details Rodríguez's cannot. *Cidade de Deus* overwhelms with its long descriptions and its detailed and graphic commentary of violent practices. With *East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A.* the audience is forced to imagine the stories behind the photograph. Captions and journal entries are brief and do not always provide the necessary information to fully contextualize the images.

111 Regarding their fragmentary nature, it is Lins' *Cidade de Deus*, and not Meirelles and Lund's version, that resembles Rodríguez's photo-narrative the most. Both narratives are made up of distinct moments, brief chronicles that, once compiled together, paint a picture of what life is like in the spaces they are representing. Both narratives share a hybrid nature in which text and image intermingle to convey meaning. The case is different with Meirelles and Lund's version. Although like Lins' *Cidade de Deus* and *East Side Stories*, the film presents numerous images of urban life and violence, it asks for a more chronological type of reading and demands a less "adventurous" or experimental audience. Lins' and Rodríguez' texts demand a primarily spatial reading, Meirelles and Lund's a more temporal one.

112 The majority of the chronicles compiled in *La esquina es mi corazón* were published between 1991 and 1993 in the magazines *Página abierta* (47 and 64) and *Revista de crítica cultural* (III, 5, July 1992). While in 1994, some of these chronicles were published in *La Nación*, one of Santiago de Chile's newspapers, others appeared in *Utopía(s)* (201-4), *Aposentos. Colección de Relatos Breves* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Asociación Beecham, 1995, pp.57-61) and the magazine *Espejo de paciencia* (Universidad de Palmas de Gran Canaria, 4) (Mateos del Pino/ [my translation])

113 - *Loco Afán. Crónicas de Sidario* is a compilation of poetic chronicles that concentrates mainly on the great sufferings and little joys of the transvestites and homosexuals living with AIDS. It is also a strong social critique of Chilean classism and U.S. (Fernandez-Aleman 9)

114 *De Perlas y Cicatrices* is a compilation of the selection of the chronicles transmitted by Lemebel in the feminist radio station Tierra, Santiago de Chile.

115 On September 11, 1973, the Chilean Armed Forces staged a military coup and overthrew Salvador Allende, the first democratically elected socialist president in Chile. Once in power, the Armed Forces declared the existence of an “internal war” in the country. Chile would experience 17 years of dictatorship which ended March 11, 1990. The period was characterized by the imposition of policies through the systematic and massive violation of human rights. Not only did the military regime suspend elections but also it put into practice different types of repression such as arbitrary imprisonment, torture, disappearances, execution, exile, intimidation, illegal raids, dismissal from jobs, and surveillance. Finally, in 1988, the regime called a plebiscite in which the head of the regime and of the Army, General Augusto Pinochet, proposed the continuation of his government. Because Pinochet lost the plebiscite, he was forced to call presidential elections. The new elected president, Patricio Aylwin, sworn in as president on March 11, 1990. Since then, the discussion of the effects of the extended violation of human rights have become both one of the greatest conflicts which subsequent democratic governments have had to confront and a major theme of interest for artists of different sorts.

116 “En la década de los 90 los chilenos y chilenas se volcaron hacia el futuro de un modo casi compulsivo [...]. La ilusión de cerrar el pasado [...] fue una aspiración extendida a todos los niveles de la sociedad [...]. El espíritu de los 90 se caracterizó también por una clara propensión al consenso o, si se prefiere, por una especie de intolerancia hacia el conflicto. Se privilegió y se premió la búsqueda de acuerdos por sobre la polarización y la confrontación” (Tirón 19).

117 In “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol,” the chronicler retells—as discussed in Section I of this chapter— how football grounds in marginal areas were utilized by the military during dictatorship times to pack, search, and torture potential suspects or dissenters. Lemebel openly denounces the classist policies of the regime: “Los operativos de represión que solo afectaban a los barrios bajos [...]. Y allí nadie podía contradecir esa orden con metralleta en mano [...]. Por estas y otras razones, el desolado eriaz de la cancha pareciera ser el punto de partida desde donde comenzaron las movilizaciones masivas de las barras bravas (2003 53).

118 While the chronicles compiled in *La esquina es mi corazón* and *Loco Afán* are rendered primarily through an erotic gaze, the narratives in *De Perlas y Cicatrices* and *Zanjón de la Aguada* are presented by a more sexually neutral gaze. In his first two collections, Lemebel privileges a homosexual location from where realities are perceived. Therefore, most narratives present a chronicler that travels the urban space transforming it into a desired body. The city, rendered through the uninhibited homosexual eye, becomes a geography of sexual fantasies and erotic impulses. However, violence is still central to the sexual encounters described. Sex is described as a practice that involves either aggressive penetration or the transmission of a killing virus, AIDS.

119 In “Quiltra Lunera,” Lemebel establishes an analogy between the city and jail: “antes de doblar, antes que la madrugada fría se lo tragara en el fichaje iluminado de esta ciudad, también cárcel, igual de injusta, y sin salida para este pájaro prófugo que dulcificó mi noche con el zarpazo del amor” (1998 149).

120 In “Quiltra Lunera,” Lemebel, as he is about to be robbed, describes a city that has become “tan peluda, tan peligrosa, que hasta la respiración de las calles tiene ecos de asalto y filos de navaja” (1998 147).

121 In “La enamorada errancia del descontrol,” Lemebel talks about the proletarian youths who, “luego del vandálico deporte, desaparecen en la sombra cómplice que les brinda la urbe, regresan a su territorio al compás de sus cantos” (2003 69).

122 According to Moulian, “[I]a ciudadanía week-end y la ciudadanía crediticia son formas de despolitización de la ciudadanía [...]. La ciudadanía como administración de lo local, renuncia a preguntas sobre el orden social global predeterminado a priori. La ciudadanía crediticia asume que el poder al que debe aspirar es solo el ejercicio de los derechos del consumidor” (104).

123 In “La Enamorada Errancia del Descontrol,” (2003 52) Lemebel comments on how, due to its high price, the market that produces and sells cocaine has issued a cheaper version of the drug, called “white paste,” to be sold to low-income citizens. This reference is interesting for two reasons. First, because the chronicler addresses how each and every aspect of urban life is affected by income. Second, because the chronicler uses his many chronicles to complement each other. Consequently, only those readers who have had access to all of Lemebel’s collections are able to fill the gaps or recognize the silences in the chronicler’s writings. This is significant because those readers who can read all of the artist’s chronicles are able to map a different urban space, more complex and contradictory, than those who are only exposed to a limited amount of his narratives. In this particular case, the reading of Lemebel’s work in its entirety also allows audiences to better understand how violence is produced and reproduced by different sectors of society.

124 In a couple of his chronicles, Lemebel also makes reference to the silences of a media that only “remembers” the marginal when a tragedy happens. The chronicles is able to expose the unfair politics of representation that determine the inclusion and exclusion of news in the public eye. In “La inundación,” (1998 140) Lemebel describes how the damages of a terrible flood motivate TV to show “the hidden face of the peripheric orphanage” (1998 141). Lemebel claims that this is the only times when the news will show the realities of the marginal communities: “Por esta vez, se desenmascara la mentira sonriente de los discursos parlamentarios, la euforia bocona de la equidad en el gasto del presupuesto” (1998 141).

125 In an interview, Lemebel explains that he is interested in the homosexual as a cultural construction, a different way of thinking oneself. He claims that alternative homosexualities become ways of allowing doubt, of breaking down the phallogocentrism that has been installed in most of the population (Jeftanovic, 2000). In “Ciudad Neoliberal y los Devenires de la Homosexualidad en las Crónicas Urbanas de Pedro Lemebel,” (2000) Lucía Guerra Cunningham claims that the chronicles in *La esquina es mi corazón* have as their ur-text the urban chronicles of Néstor Perlongher, Argentinian anthropologist and gay activist: “Su perspectiva de la ciudad, como en el caso de Deleuze y Guattari, rompe la imagen falogocéntrica que sustenta su fachada oficial, para ingresar en ella un Yo deseante” (83)

126 Lucía Guerra explains that “el acto fundacional esta enraizado en la “masculinidad” como sinónimo de proeza, valentía y aptitud en lo bélico. La voluntad misma de poder y autoafirmación del conquistador, quien anhela llenar de sí mismo un espacio que su imaginación ha convertido en la nada, corresponde, indudablemente, al impulso falogocéntrico de imponerse como sujeto a través de la devaluación de los otros a quienes relega a la categoría de salvajes y herejes” (2000 74)

127 For example, in “Raphael, la burla hecha canción,” published in *Loco Afán* under the title “Raphael (o la pose amanerada del encanto)” (1996 127-9), the chronicler gives a portrait of the popular Spanish singer Raphael as the audience listens to some of his songs both in the background of Lemebel’s voice and during Lemebel’s narrative pauses. In “El test anti-doping, o vivir con un submarino policial en la sangre,” published in *De Perlas y Cicatrices* under the same title (1998 180-1), the chronicler intermingles the sounds of sirens and helicopters to illustrate his description of a low-class citizen’s everyday ordeal in his attempt to get hired for a job. In “El letrero Soviet en el techo de mi bloque,” also published in *De Perlas y Cicatrices* under the same title (1998 135-7), apart from a song that serves to introduce the narrative, the chronicler introduces variation through his imitation of female neighbors in the middle of an argument. Finally, in “Lágrimas heladas en la inundación,” published in *De*

Perlas y Cicatrices under the title “La inundación,” (1998 140-1) the chronicler describes how the flood affects the poorest section of the population in Santiago de Chile as the audience listen to the sound of rain and thunder in the background.

128 The choice of waltz over any other type of music also serves to convey the chronicler’s critique of the aristocratic tendency to privilege the foreign over the local.

129 The chronicler also includes the sound of bombs and shots when he describes Bolocco’s experience as a CNN reporter: “Vino la Guerra del Golfo y ella apareció en la CNN narrando con simpatía el vuelo de los cadáveres destrozados en el aire. Como si contara una película, su acento Miami describió fríamente el horror...” (1998 62).

130 Although most of the sections and some of the chronicles in *De Perlas y Cicatrices*, which is actually the compilation of radio chronicles, include transcripts of songs’ lyrics, the effect is much more intense when the audience is able to listen to them during the radio readings

131 Lemebel makes reference to racial politics in Chile and the intersections between race and class and in many of his urban chronicles, “Rosa María Mac Pato del Arpa (o “las encías doradas del arte”)(1998 59-60) and “Del Carmen Bella Flor” (o “el radiante fulgor de la santidad”)(1998 78-9) are two good examples of this. In this particular case, the chronicler harshly criticizes the popular understandings of beauty that, greatly determined by the Chilean media, tend to ignore or discriminate the mestizo population. The writer ends the chronicle “Cecilia Bolocco” in quite a nostalgic tone: “y la corona de reina sigue esperando a esa mujer, ni tan alta, ni tan espigada que en algún rincón de este suelo, sus negros ojos tristes bordan la tarde con su anónimo pasar”(1998 63).

132 In “Porquería Visual,” Lemebel includes photographs of the Chilean aristocracy at the beginning of the 20th century— “Pitucos en la Plaza de Armas, 1915” (2003 161) — , of political events – on page 165 there is a series of shots of Pinochet on a wheelchair during his arrival back in Chile, the caption reads “El regreso de la pesadilla (y Lázaro andó)” (2003) —, of hooligans displaying their flags (2003 166), of citizens spending their summer at various urban public places – on page 171, there are two photographs of grown-ups sitting on a bench in Plaza de Armas and of a group of children playing in a puddle by the side of the pavement — and of the chronicler himself participating in different urban activities – such as in the 1987 Woman’s International Day parade (167 2003).

133 The chronicler also includes the sound of bombs and shots when he describes Bolocco’s experience as a CNN reporter: “Vino la Guerra del Golfo y ella apareció en la CNN narrando con simpatía el vuelo de los cadáveres destrozados en el aire. Como si contara una película, su acento Miami describió fríamente el horror...” (1998 62).

134 In “On Microhistory,” Levi Giovanni explains that “[m]icrohistory as a practice is essentially based on the reduction of the scale of observation, on a microscopic analysis and an intensive study of the documentary material” (in Burke 99). Giovanni makes clear that, although microhistory “tries not to sacrifice knowledge of individual elements to wider generalizations, and in fact it accentuates individual lives and events,” at the same time, it “tries not to reject all forms of abstraction since minimal facts and individual cases can serve to reveal more general phenomena”(in Burke 112-3)

135 Although each one of these chroniclers incorporate in their text the violent slang used by their characters in order to reflect on how violence is also a discursive practice, Lins is the one who challenges the most the expected rhetoric for the representation of violence by elaborating very lyrical narratives.

136 In addition, although *Cidade dos Homens* cannot be considered a translation of either Lins' or Meirelles and Lund's *Cidade de Deus*, it allows the writer and directors to open the spectrum of their representations by incorporating a variety of non-violent phenomena and events that are also a part of favela life.

137 All the chroniclers in this study, even Lemebel who does not focus his narratives on gang practices, describe contemporary citizens that show the characteristics that Sanchez Jankowski uses to identify gang members. According to Sanchez Jankowski, gang members develop a "defiant individualist character" that is composed of "an intense sense of competitiveness," "a sense of mistrust or wariness," an extreme sense of self-reliance that leads to social isolation, and a "survival instinct" (23).

138 As mentioned in chapter two, Lund's documentary "News from a Personal War" openly criticizes the ways in which both the middle and upper classes of Rio de Janeiro contribute to the development of the drug business in the favelas by buying the drugs to the favelados and the corrupt police promotes inter-gang violence by contributing with the trafficking of weapons through the selling of heavy artillery and guns to favela leaders.

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