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Collective responsibility, desires of repression and micro-fascisms

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## The Silent Majority in Cinema about the Argentinian (Post)Dictatorship: Collective Responsibility, Desires of Repression and Micro-fascisms.

The article re-examines the problem of collective responsibility for state-sponsored violence, taking the latest Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) as a case study, a country that has also elaborated a proper theoretical frame to research the subject. Here I propose to think the issue of society's implication in past violence in terms of the categories of desires of repression and micro-fascism, rather than the classical, Enlightened and heroic concepts of responsibility and resistance. To that end, the article analyses two very recent films of the Argentine cinema: *The long night of Francisco Sanctis*<sup>1</sup> and *Red*.<sup>2</sup> Both films address the situation of the ordinary people under systemic violence, exemplifying how societal desires and micro-fascist attitudes work to stabilise a repressive regime. The films' focus on the desires of repression and micro-fascisms, I argue, draws attention to the small fears, anxieties, resentments, and jealousies that constitute a society and represent the violent regimes' conditions of possibility. I suggest the films were read less as films about the abuses of the past and more as productions that illuminate the elements of the past that made possible the resurgence of repressive discourses and neoliberal ideologies in the present.

### 1. Introduction

This article intends to examine the problem of collective responsibility concerning the Argentinean dictatorship. I will focus on the analysis of two recent films: *La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis* (*The long night of Francisco Sanctis*) directed by Andrea Testa and Francisco Marquez, and *Rojo* (*Red*) directed by Benjamin Naishtat. Both films are concerned with a specific aspect of the latest Argentinean dictatorship – and of any dictatorship – namely, “the role of the civil society during those years; that silent majority who were *neither* militants *nor* direct accomplices of the military”.<sup>3</sup>

This double negation captures well the situation of the ordinary man/woman under dictatorships. My first argument in the paper is that the analysis of the relation between a repressive regime and civil society utilising the categories of “desire”<sup>4</sup> and micro-fascism<sup>5</sup> poses a heuristic advantage over the classic approach based on the concepts of “responsibility”<sup>6</sup>, “resistances”<sup>7</sup> or “hos(ti)pitality”<sup>8</sup>. I argue both films exemplify how

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Testa and Francisco Marquez, ‘La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis’, film (Argentina, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Naishtat, ‘Rojo’, film (Argentina, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Página/12*, April 16, 2016, Juan Pablo Cinelli, ‘Es un festival de gente que se formula preguntas: entrevista a Edgardo Castro, Sergio Wolf, Andrea Testa y Francisco Márquez’. Emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (UK, Souvenir Press, 1972); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Roberto Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, trans. Ames Hodges and Michael Taormina (New York, Semiotext(e), 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Karl Jaspers, *¿Es Alemania culpable?*, trans. Ramón Gutiérrez Cuartango (Barcelone, Nueva Época, 1998); Hannah Arendt, *Responsabilidad y juicio*, trans. Miguel Candel (Barcelona, Paidós, 2003 [1964]); Hans Jonas, *El principio de responsabilidad. Ensayo de una ética para la civilización tecnológica* (Barcelona, Herder, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad. La voluntad de saber*, trans. Ulises Guinazu (Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1998), p. 45-69; Michel de Certeau, *La invención de lo cotidiano. Artes de hacer*, trans. Alejandro Pescador (México, Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996 [1979]), p. 35-45; Guy Debord, *La sociedad del espectáculo*, trans. Fidel Alegre (Buenos Aires, Biblioteca de la Mirada, 2008 [1967]).

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *La hospitalidad*, trans. Mirta Segoviano (Buenos Aires, Ediciones de la Flor, 2000).

ordinary people's desires and micro-fascist attitudes work to stabilise a repressive political order. The heuristic advantage of the proposed categories is that they conceive of the individual not as a detached substance existing outside or above the social and political world, but as always-already an acting being embedded within a specific cultural formation – and therefore always a potential micro-fascist. In contrast to the notions of responsibility and resistance, which stress the idea of an enlightened subject who can take responsibility for what they did not directly do or trigger politically under a repressive regime, the categories of desire and micro-fascism allow us to look elsewhere, namely, to an extended time frame and to the complex web of anxieties, resentments, envy, and jealousy that constitute the very conditions of political violence. While enlightening in several aspects, I do not share the Deleuzian premise that “desire is revolutionary because it is always seeking more connections”.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, in dialogue with Wilhelm Reich, I suggest that desire can function in a perfectly fascist manner, or rather, in a micro-fascist one: inequality, discrimination, expulsion, and disappearance can be the objects of desire.

My second argument is that the creation of both films was possible thanks to the shape that the Argentine state's public policy on memory had taken since 2003, which could help understand the exclusive focus of these films on the figure of the “common people”. However, given the change of government in December 11, 2015, both were released in a different context from the one they were produced: the “memory regime”<sup>10</sup> changed dramatically with the coming to power of the right in 2015. As a result, they were understood by critics as films that addressed the issue of collective responsibility for the first time in forty-three years – when in fact they were continuing the worthy tradition of films about the role of ordinary men and women under the dictatorship that goes back to the 80s. Other prominent examples include *Juan como si nada hubiera sucedido* (*John as if nothing had happened*, Carlos Echeverría, 1987), *Garage olimpo* (Marcho Bechis, 1999), *Los rubios* (*The blonds*, Albertina Carri, 2003), *Andrés no quiere dormir la siesta* (*Andrew does not want to sleep the nap*, Carlos Bustamante, 2009) and *Rawson* (Nahuel Machésich and Luciano Zito, 2013), among others. In the case of literature, we should mention: *Lo imborrable* (*The indelible*, Juan José Saer, Bs. As., Seix Barral, 1992), *El secreto y las voces* (*An Open Secret*, Carlos Gamerro, Bs. As., Norma, 2002), *Pase Libre. La fuga de la Mansión Seré* (*Free Pass. The escape of the Seré Mansion*, Javier Tamburrini, Bs. As., Continente, 2002), and *Una misma noche* (*One same night*, Leopoldo Brizuela, Bs. As., Alfaguara, 2012).<sup>11</sup>

Before providing the article's outline, it is important to introduce the context in which these films intervene. The legal processes of dealing with the latest Argentine dictatorship, considered as “exemplary” and atypical at the international level, are well known.<sup>12</sup> The state organised the first trial of the Juntas in 1985; the report of the National Commission on the

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, *Two Regimes*, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca más. La memoria de las desapariciones en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> I have systematically analyzed these bodies of artistic work in my forthcoming book (XXX). The book's central argument is that the critical perspective articulated in the chosen literary and cinematic representations was possible because of their external point of view: the fact that they performatively created a place from where to critique the official memories of the past. In particular, I argued that alternative stories emphasizing issues of collective responsibility and small resistances under dictatorship emerge if one interviews and listens to ordinary people's testimonies. However, the book's analysis does not include Humberto Constantini's homonymous novel on which Marquez's and Testa's film is based and which was written just a few months after the end of the Argentine dictatorship. The novel went unnoticed even by the specialist studies on the subject. It was one of Testa's and Marquez's merits to retrieve it from the socio-political as well as scholarly oblivion.

<sup>12</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Los abusos de la memoria* (Barcelona, Paidós, 2000).

Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) was published during the administration of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989).<sup>13</sup> The amnesty legislation that led to the end of prosecutions in the 1980s – the Full Stop law of 1986 and the law of Due Obedience in 1987 – were the result of military pressure and so were the “Menemist pardons” in 1990, which freed key members of the three military juntas and of other political-military organisations. The aforementioned measures share a common thread: the hegemony of the theory of the “two demons”, concisely captured by the writer Ernesto Sabato in the prologue of the CONADEP report.<sup>14</sup> The “two demons” theory argues that between 1976 and 1983, Argentina was torn apart by two types of violence, both equally alien to society, namely, by the military and left wing guerrillas. Civil society was caught in the middle as a victim. By 2001 when courts reversed the amnesty laws this “theory” was getting socially eroded.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, this erosion did not arise spontaneously: it occurred as a result of the stubborn political action of the families of the detained, disappeared and exiled, in particular the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, the political memory avant-garde. After the major economic crisis of 2001, these organisms served as a foundation upon which Néstor Kirchner’s administration restarted the legal engagement with the past in 2006, and more trials followed.

Around the premiers of the two films, the politics of memory came to the fore of public debates. On May 3, 2017, the year between the premiere of *The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis* and that of *Red*, the new Supreme Court, arbitrarily reformed by president Macri, halved the sentences of the officers convicted for crimes during the dictatorship. After a massive demonstration against the ruling on May 10, 2017, this measure was overturned. Around this time, the ongoing trials against the military were decelerated due to political pressure. Lastly, government officials and former politico-military activists, such as Graciela Fernández Mejjide and Héctor Leís, embraced a language of “dialogue, agreement and reconciliation”<sup>16</sup> which was presented as morally superior to the alleged resentment of the Mothers, Grandmothers and Children of Plaza de Mayo represented by the phrase “we do not forget, we do not forgive and we do not reconcile”.<sup>17</sup>

This article is structured as follows. In the first section I will reconstruct the plot of *The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis*. The second part is dedicated to *Red* and I will prompt a dialogue between both productions. Although both cases are fictional and do not take the form of documentaries or docu-dramas, they constitute, circulate and subvert the social meanings through which the Argentine post-dictatorship had been processed, and in particular the issue of widespread social responsibility. Throughout, I will inductively analyse the ideas these films propose for making sense of the behaviour of the “ordinary person”. This section seeks to excavate the theoretical and conceptual work both productions provide, starting from the premise that filmmakers are thinkers who act through images.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, *Nunca más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires, La Pagina, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> CONADEP, *Nunca más*.

<sup>15</sup> M. Franco, ‘La “teoría de los dos demonios”’: un símbolo de la posdictadura en Argentina’, *A contracorriente. Una revista de historia social y literatura en América Latina*, XI (Winter 2014), pp. 22-52).

<sup>16</sup> A. Goldentul and E. Saferstein, ‘La memoria y el diálogo acotado’, *Bordes. Revista de Política, Derecho y Sociedad* (March 20, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> This statement, primarily associated with Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, has no recognisable author; it represents an expression of part of the society’s attitude towards the dictatorship that became a slogan of the social memory of the country. Nonetheless, Jelin (1987) and Tcach (2003) had elaborated two different but both very useful contextualizations and analyses of this popular and anonymous utterance.

<sup>18</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *La imagen-movimiento. Estudios sobre cine 1*, trans. Irene Agoff (Barcelona, Paidós, 1984); Gilles Deleuze, *La imagen-movimiento. Estudios sobre cine 2*, trans. Irene Agoff (Barcelona, Paidós, 1987).

Nonetheless, the proposal to approach the issue of collective responsibility through two contemporary films cannot avoid a very significant methodological issue: the fact that we are dealing with representations, and not with historical “facts”<sup>19</sup>. While the assumption of “facts” existing independently of the subject perceiving and understanding them is a (neo)positivist idea, strongly criticised since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century by scholars such as Heidegger<sup>20</sup>, Gadamer<sup>21</sup>, and Ricoeur<sup>22</sup>, we should not lose sight of the socially and politically mediated character of aesthetic representations. For this reason, the paper will adopt a hermeneutical approach, highlighting the importance of tradition, comprehension and interpretation to understanding socio-historical texts such as films. These films, to the same extent as any other socio-historical text, are marked by triple historicity: 1) that of the context of production, 2) that of their dialogue with the reader, and 3) that of the tradition in which they are embedded and which they take up and renew in the act of creative retelling. Throughout this paper, I work with the assumption that hermeneutics is useful to reveal the interweaving of separate simultaneous layers of historicity in the same text. As will become evident in what follows, these layers of historicity will guide my analysis of the two films.

In the third section, I will develop the theoretical analysis, arguing that both films can be understood in terms of desire and micro-fascism. A desire of repression that underpins micro-fascisms is not a platonic desire, understood as a result of some sort of lack, deprivation or unsatisfied need, but a desire constitutive of society, with all its discriminatory and unintended micro-attitudes and consequences. As a consequence of the political changes in 2015 and the discontinuation of the government’s human rights agenda and policy on memory, both films were read less as films about the abuses of the past and more as productions that illuminate the elements of the past that made possible the coming to power of a new right-wing, neoliberal government. Both films were read as helpful for understanding this changing political context. Their contextually sensitive reception is explainable by reference not only to the constitutive openness of every aesthetic product, but also to the vitality of the community of spectators at a time when it was believed – this author included<sup>23</sup> – that the latest dictatorship had fallen into a certain state of aesthetic disgrace. The conclusion summarises the arguments and points to its potential expansion beyond the scope of this paper.

## 2. The long night of the silent majority

Francisco Sanctis is a low middle-class man, married, with two children. In the opening scene, we see him living in a residential complex of rationalist architecture built under the first Peronist government (1945-1955).<sup>24</sup> He is an employee of a private company and has been waiting for a promotion for the last three years, to no avail. Instead of a promotion, he receives the company’s annual prize: a box full of non-perishable food. His boss had delegated the

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<sup>19</sup> I am thankful to the anonymous peer reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.

<sup>20</sup> Martín Heidegger, “V. El “ser en” en cuanto tal. 32. El comprender y la interpretación” (166-172), *El ser y el tiempo* (México, FCE, trad. de José Gaos, 1977 [1927]).

<sup>21</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “La hermenéutica y la escuela de Dilthey” (154-172), *El giro hermenéutico* (Madrid, Editora Nacional, trad. Arturo Parada (1997), 2003 [1991]).

<sup>22</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Explicar y comprender. Texto, acción, historia” (81-94), *Hermenéutica y acción: de la hermenéutica del texto a la hermenéutica de la acción* (Bs. As., Prometeo, trad. Mauricio M. Prelloker, Luis. J. Adúriz, Aníbal Fornari, Juan Carlos Gorlier, María Teresa La Valle, 2008 [1977]).

<sup>23</sup> Author, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Juan Molina y Vedia, *Mi Buenos Aires herido. Planes de desarrollo territorial y urbano (1535-2000)* (Buenos Aires, Ed. Colihue, 1999).

delivery of “the good news” to a subordinate, further humiliating Francisco. The protagonist carries the box into his office where he shares it with his colleagues inviting them in a disappointed voice: “take whatever you want”. However, in this very same office, a place of old frustrations and unfulfilled promises, he receives an unexpected call: Helena, or the “fat Vacaro”, as Francisco and Peruggia – his only friend from his early years as a humanities student and left-wing activist – used to call her. In his middle age, Peruggia dedicates himself to bourgeois exploits, such as building a new holiday house on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Helena, now a literary agent, is calling because she claims to be interested in publishing one of Francisco’s old poems in a Venezuelan Magazine.

When Francisco gets Helena’s call we can see his sense of excitement and understand he hopes for and anticipates a sentimental affair that could save him from his dreary daily life: his typical family, living in a tiny flat and constrained by the dictatorial context, a job that pays the bills but not much else. Instead of a much-desired sentimental affair, Francisco receives a slap in the face: upon meeting Helena in her car to discuss the publication, she betrays his expectations. She asks him to write down two names and an address: “Julia Cardini. Bernardo Lipstein. Lacarra 6072.” Francisco, still optimistic, hopes these are the names of two literary agents and the address of the Venezuelan publishing house, to which Vacaro blurts out: “they will come to get them”. She does not need to say anything else, nor does he ask again: he understands immediately. In that moment, all his knowledge about the political context is activated. He immediately realises the military will disappear Julia Cardini and Bernardo Lipstein that night. The film shows very clearly that knowledge about the abuses of a repressive regime cannot be a decisive variable in retrospective evaluations of degrees of responsibility: people *always* knew. Of course, not *everyone* had a full grasp of what was happening, but the repressive system itself produced signs relentlessly: a car that parks or breaks abruptly, plain clothes policemen stop-and-frisk people in the street, as we see at several points in the film. While there is a question about how much information one can derive from the regime’s signs, those who see them are not ignorant, they know what they are doing – they know they must remain silent, look the other way, protect their own, even if they don’t know for sure against what. For this reason, in the following section, we will talk about social desires of repression and micro-fascism which offer, I argue, a better way of capturing what is at stake in Francisco’s decisions from the moment Vacaro charges him with rescuing the two strangers.

In response to Helena’s demand, Francisco uses a phrase that is undeniably related to the problem of collective responsibility at both the national and international level. He asks: “and what do I have to do with this?”. Helena does not reply by saying “everything” which would have been accurate. Instead, she replies using a phrase that would be valid for the last forty-four years of the Argentinean history: “we have to do *something*”. I said forty-four, and not forty-three, intentionally, to refer back to year 1975, a year before the “official” start year of the Argentine dictatorship in the 1976 military junta coup d’état. As we will explore in the analysis of *Red*, the year 1975 represents the culminated moment of the “cultural preparation”<sup>25</sup> of what is going to be performed for seven years, that is, the construction of necessity and even desire of repression, of disciplinarian order and of hierarchical authority.<sup>26</sup> Helena announces that she cannot do anything else, that her “doing something” was over. She mentions that she is certain that the information was accurate for it was provided by her husband, who was an air

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).

<sup>26</sup> Mariana Caviglia, *Dictadura, vida cotidiana y clases medias. Una sociedad fracturada* (Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2006); Marina Franco, *Un enemigo para la Nación. Orden interno, violencia y subversión, 1973-1976* (Buenos Aires, FCE, 2012); Sebastián Carassai, *Los años setenta de la gente común. La naturalización de la violencia* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2013).

force officer. Moreover, she also stresses that “he is not involved in any of this”. However, the details of her current life –her husband’s job, her travelling history – cast a dark shadow of doubt over her words.<sup>27</sup>

The film follows Francisco through the long turbulent night that follows this encounter. He seeks to delegate the responsibility that had been imposed to him in various ways: he tells Vacaro that he does not believe “he is the right man”, he kills time in a bar with his friend Perugia reminiscing about the old times, and searches for Claudio, a young man from the neighbourhood who *everyone knows* is a member of a left militant political organizations, hoping to pin this mission down on him. Everyone Francisco interpellates responds with a bartebylan “*I would prefer not to do it*”: Vacaro through a frightened silence and indifference, Perugia by replying “they [the left-wing militants] caused the war, they have to take responsibility”. Claudio does not trust Francisco and doesn’t accept his compensatory offer to host him in his house, for this would have put Francisco’s family at risk including his wife, two kids and mother-in-law. However, Francisco is already in a state of inertia that makes him push his dear ones to the background of other figures, slowly experiencing a sort of “ethical awakening” in relation to the certainty that two people will be disappeared.

Sanctis is presented alone in an abandoned city, running on dark, empty streets, his steps resonating through the deserted public space. The military do not need to appear to inspire fear as suspicion and the state of generalised distrust are symptoms of their real power. The protagonist is a man who slowly awakens to his task which he had tried to unsuccessfully delegate to others. He becomes lonelier and lonelier as the film progresses and slowly realises that he should not expect any support from others. He understands that, that night, Cardini and Lepstein depend on him and him only.

Francisco makes his way through the city, frightened, looking for the address Vacaro gave him. He loses his tie and his watch, symbols of his present life. As he does so, he appears to lose his current, complacent identity, which had led him to forget a politically committed past as a left-wing activist and accommodate himself to a secure – but frustrating – present. As he approaches Cardini’s and Lepstein’s house, the film ends. In contrast to the novel, the filmmakers thus sought to emphasize that the point of the story was not whether Francisco finds them or not, but the process by which he abandoned his indifferent life to re-recognize himself as a political subject, someone who makes History and is responsible for it.

I argue that the reception of *The long night of Francisco Sanctis* can be reconstructed along three axes. First, some interviews and reviews stressed the film’s alleged interest in “the silent majority, ordinary men and women, the grey-middle-class citizen”.<sup>28</sup> Tackling the grey zone

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<sup>27</sup> Marie-Monique Robin, ‘Escadrons de la mort : L’école française’, documentary (Argentina and France, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> David Blaustein, ‘Manivela’, *Radio Nacional AM 870*, April 10, 2016; ‘Charco de arena’, *FM La Tribu*, April 7, 2016; *Clarín*, April 15, 2016, Pablo O. Scholz, ‘Del BAFICI directo a Cannes’; *Clarín*, November 11, 2016, Pablo O. Scholz, ‘La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis’; *Clarín*, November 11, 2016, Pablo O. Scholz, ‘La dignidad no se negocia’; Pablo Suarez, ‘La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis’, *Sublime Obsesión* (December 30, 2016), <https://www.sublimeobsesion.com/single-post/2016/12/30/La-larga-noche-de-Francisco-Sanctis-de-Francisco-M%C3%A1rquez-y-Andrea-Testa>, accessed on January 30, 2019; Enrique Morales Lastra, ‘La eternidad de un poema’, *Diario U Chile Cultura* (July 31, 2017), <https://radio.uchile.cl/2017/07/31/la-larga-noche-de-francisco-sanctis-la-eternidad-de-un-poema/>, accessed on

was considered a gap in the Argentine cinema on the latest dictatorship. Secondly, other critics commended the director's decision to shy away from judging what they depicted – and this not exclusively because they did not live under the dictatorship, but because their aim was to comprehend and “breathe” the years from 1976 to 1983, rather than naturalistically represent them.<sup>29</sup> Finally, we can find the more political reflections of the directors – in the narrow sense of *politics*, if you will – which focus on the political sense of cinema, why to perform it and the paradoxes of European festivals and its awards for south-American filmmakers.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, my interpretation here is that, as Francisco moves away from his home, he gets closer to his past of political engagement. While certain reviews focused on his intense paranoia about being followed as he navigates the dark and hostile city,<sup>31</sup> I argue his anxiety is related to his past coming back to haunt and mobilise him. His past refuses to stay buried and Francisco slowly re-learns to behave in the way his younger self would have. He taps back into his political youth to find resources of courage and strength to accomplish his mission. In this reading, Vacaro, Peruggia and Claudio are mere avatars of Sanctis himself and their conversations can be understood as part of an internal dialogue Francisco has with himself in order to decide *what to do*.

By the end of the film, his past becomes his present. The film's inserting Nino Bravo's “I am leaving but I will be back” song in the soundtrack points in this direction. What Francisco realises is that an ethical and risky response to the challenge Vacaro had thrust upon him, a response that no longer prioritises his family's well-being and safety, affirms a political responsibility for the two unknown people. Although Francisco is not shown stopping to reflect on all this process, he ends up acting in a way that was not only mostly exceptional at the time, but also a thorough break with his own twenty depoliticized years. Thus, the film shows how an ordinary man can awaken from his safe depoliticized existence and find his ethical salvation in rising up to the moment of danger.

### **3. The Red of the “temporary moral eclipse becoming permanently moral apocalypse”.**

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January 30, 2019;

Manuel Aneglo Prado, ‘Cuestionar el pasado para acercarse al presente’, *Lamula* (August 12, 2016), <https://redaccion.lamula.pe/2016/08/12/francisco-marquez-y-andrea-testa-recordar-el-pasado-para-entender-el-presente/manuelangeloprado/>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

*La Nación*, November 10, 2016, Alejandro Lingenti, ‘Cuando Buenos Aires era una ciudad en estado de paranoia constante’.

<sup>29</sup> Violeta Bruck and Javier Gabino, ‘Secretos de una larga noche’, *Laizquierda diario* (April 17, 2016), [https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Secretos-de-una-larga-noche?id\\_rubrique=1714](https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Secretos-de-una-larga-noche?id_rubrique=1714), accessed on January 30, 2019; *Radar*, October 23, 2016, Diego Broderson, ‘Lo que no se dice’;

*Pérfil*, November 19, 2016, Martín Kohan, ‘Una noche, una película’.

<sup>30</sup> Andrea Testa and Francisco Marquez, ‘Pensar después de Cannes’, *Laizquierda diario* (September 18, 2016) <https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Pensar-despues-de-Cannes>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

Griselda Soriano, ‘Solo en la oscuridad’, *HaciendoCine. Cultura+Industria* (July 11 2016), <http://www.haciendocine.com.ar/content/solo-en-la-oscuridad>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

Horacio Dall'Oglio, ‘A contramano del individualismo’, *Revista Cítrica* (August 12, 2016), <http://revistacitrica.com/a-contramano-del-individualismo.html>, accessed on January 30, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> *Variety*, May 24, 2016, Jay Wessberg, ‘The long night of Francisco Sanctis’; Shari Kizirian, *Mill Valley Film Festival*; Joshua Brunsting, ‘Andrea Testa's and Francisco Marquez's *The long night of Francisco Sanctis*’, *Criterioncast* (August 24, 2017), <https://criterioncast.com/reviews/theatrical/joshua-reviews-andrea-testa-and-francisco-marquezs-the-long-night-of-francisco-sanctis-theatrical-review>, accessed on January 30, 2019.



*Red*'s critical reception can also be organised along three axes. The first one entails all those reviews that point out the similarities with *The Long Night*, but also foreground Naishtat's film as the first that focuses specifically on collective responsibility for the dictatorship.<sup>32</sup> The second type of critique use the social relations shown in *Red* as a starting point for speculating about the Argentine national identity, described as "corrupted, cowardly, exploitative and cunning."<sup>33</sup> Lastly, the third axis corresponds to those interpretations that depict silence as the central issue highlighted by the film.<sup>34</sup> In what follows I will reconstruct the film proposing an alternative reading, which focuses on the role of micro-fascist attitudes and desires of repression in preparing the conditions of possibility for political murder.

*Red* begins with a long frontal shot of a middle-class house. Various individuals are stealing items from it and, as any Argentine spectator would recognise, the house appears to have been destroyed by either the military forces or the police. These individuals are neighbours, they are not "thieves or people from the slums", as the protagonist's friend explains when he himself proposes to occupy the sacked house.

The main character is a prestigious small-town lawyer, married to a beautiful woman and father of a teenager daughter. While he is waiting for his wife in a Spanish canteen, he is approached by an (un)known person, a "hippie" who asks him to vacate the table he was seated at since he was not consuming anything. This is an impeccable capitalist argument that disputes the social distribution of places.<sup>35</sup> Having in mind we are watching a film on the latest Argentine dictatorship, the spectator expects to see the figure of the repressor represented as arrogant, authoritarian, aggressive, as someone that does not recognise the Other.<sup>36</sup> This interpellation

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<sup>32</sup> *Metaradio*, October 25, 2018, 'The long night... and Red are sisters films'; Martín Chiavarino, 'Una llanura tranquila', *Metacultura*, <http://metacultura.com.ar/una-llanura-tranquila/>, accessed on January 30, 2019; *EscribiendoCine*, October 23, 2018, Emilio Basile, 'El mal interno';

<sup>33</sup> Marianela Santillán, 'Crítica Rojo', *Proyectorfantasma* (October 23, 2018), <http://www.proyectorfantasma.com.ar/critica-rojo-2018-dir-benjamin-naishtat/>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

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Diego Brodersen, "El silencio como estilo de vida", *Pagina/12* (October 26, 2018), <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/151031-el-silencio-como-estilo-de-vida>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

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Susana Salerno, 'Los estrenos de la semana en el cine', *Impacto24* (October 28, 2018), <http://www.impacto24.com.ar/index.php/2018/10/28/los-estrenos-de-la-semana-en-el-cine/>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

*La Nación*, October 25, 2018, Lingenti Alejandro, 'Rojo: complicidades y miserias en un film notable'; *Variety*, September 27, 2018, Jessica Kiang, 'Film review Rojo'.

<sup>34</sup> *Clarín*, October 24, 2018, Pablo Scholz, 'Pueblo chico, infierno grande'; Santiago Balestra, 'Ejercicio simbólico y sutil sobre una oscuridad que se avecinaba', *Altapeli* (October 25, 2018), <https://altapeli.com/critica/review-rojo/>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

Roger Koza, 'Rojo', *Con los ojos abiertos* (October 28, 2018), <http://www.conlosojosabiertos.com/rojo/>, accessed on January 30, 2019;

Hugo F. Sánchez, 'Rojo', *Subjetiva* (October 25, 2018), <https://subjetiva.com.ar/2018/10/25/rojo-de-benjamin-naishtat/>, accessed on January 30, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Le destin des images* (Paris, La fabrique-éditions, 2009) ; Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (Paris, La fabrique-éditions, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Teresa Caldeira, 'Violence, the Unbounded Body, and the Disregard for right in Brazilian Democracy', in *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in Sao Paulo* (London, University of California Press, 2000) pp. 339-451; Analía Goldentul, 'En los márgenes de la narrativa humanitaria: los juicios "lesa" y el pasado

by the hippie triggers a quarrel after which the lawyer cedes his place. However, the film thwarts the viewer's expectations and the real authoritarian presents himself: from behind the hippie's table, looking at his back without being seen, the lawyer delivers a moralistic, self-righteous speech, that crushes his target. The other customers stop talking and keep a respectful silence. The moral speech humiliates the "hippie", who breaks down, starts shouting and crying as he is being restrained and thrown out from the restaurant. The lawyer returns to his initial place at the table, and his wife joins him soon after. They are the last to leave the canteen.

The conflict does not end there. The "hippie" waits for them outside the canteen. While the lawyer and his wife drive away, a stone hits the car, and the hippie emerges with a weapon in his hand. The lawyer and his wife run to the desert, where the 'hippie' threatens and then commits suicide in front of them. After the lawyer confirms that he is still breathing, he decides to take him to the hospital. He drops his wife at home first, but half way through the journey, he changes his mind about his destination. He realises he had killed the hippie without actually pulling the trigger, with his morally righteous speech. And so he decides to leave the dying body in the desert.

The hippie's disappearance prepares the entrance of a Chilean detective, Sinclair, famous in Argentina for his effectiveness. He is a former member of the Chilean police, "one of the best in the world" and has a penchant for grand statements: he claims he is "Cartesian", that "for a policeman things are either white or black" and that "people here have a poor memory".

When the detective visits the lawyer in his office, he is received with hos(ti)pitality<sup>37</sup> a mixture of helpfulness and rejection, solidarity and denunciation, hospitality and hostility at the same time. The lawyer predictably states: "this is a quiet place mister Sinclair. Full of people who want to live and work in peace"<sup>38</sup>. The detective asks him to show him around the desert. The lawyer refuses, but the detective eventually compels him. Once in the desert, the detective snaps: "do you think people forgot how you humiliated the boy?" The lawyer "breaks down"<sup>39</sup> and starts sobbing. The policeman concludes: "This is what is turning this country into shit. Because of people like you". I read the foreign detective's diagnosis as a condemnation of the cowardice of those who disappear 'undesirables' – or those who merely wish for them to disappear – but never work to achieve that desire.

A second disappearance is performed by the macho boyfriend of the lawyer's daughter, out of sheer jealousy: he suspects an affair between her and another younger man. Earlier in the film, we see a confrontation between several young men. The jealous boyfriend, who co-pilots a green Falcon, uses deceit and force to disappear girl-friend's suspected lover. O'Donnell and Galli's hypothesis according to which the dictatorship "released the wolves in society, stimulated and rewarded by the micro-authoritarianism of a society that patrolled itself"<sup>40</sup>, is here translated cinematographically in a vivid manner. The aggressiveness and strong sense of entitlement in this scene indicate a culture of impunity had become normalised.

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reciente en la voz de familiares de militares condenados', in A. Farji, A. González, M. Greco and V. Le Boirgne de Boisriou, eds., *Las ciencias sociales en tiempos de ajuste* (Buenos Aires, IIGG-CLACSO, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Derrida, *La hospitalidad*.

<sup>38</sup> I claim it is *predictably* because it is the type of response that I received during three years of fieldwork in the vicinity of a former clandestine detention centre (CCD) of the latest Argentinean dictatorship (Author, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> Ana Longoni, *Traicioneros. La figura del traidor en los relatos acerca de los sobrevivientes de la represión* (Buenos Aires, Norma, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Cecilia Galli, 'Democracia en la Argentina' micro y macro', working paper #2, The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, p. 20.

As Sinclair the detective prays in the church, the mother of this second disappeared man comes asking for help. The symbolism is powerful as the mother of the disappeared is produced as a figure by the dictatorship. The Christian detective's first instinct is to be solicitous. However, as the mother narrates the story on how her son "left for a party and never came back", and expresses her worry about how "bodies have been found in the desert", the detective modifies his reaction from hospitality to hostility in a matter of seconds. Another scene where we can observe the mutual imbrication of hospitable and hostile attitudes is when the detective asks the lawyer in the desert: "was not He [God] the one that opened the earth to swallow the Koré and burnt alive the sons of Leví? Fear, lawyer, fear. Because it is He who guides us. Through mysterious paths. But it is He who guides us. Let's not talk about this issue again". As José Emilia Burucua stated in a book on the "Goldhagen debate", we, as "kind" Christians, have a collective responsibility concerning the Jewish extermination, regardless of whether we are believers or not.<sup>41</sup> We have this responsibility since the latter should be thought in a *longue durée*, a long duration that includes all the crimes committed in the name of the culture within which we were educated.

The significant fragment mentioned in the Detective's quote is not only a reference to God. It is also a reference to the pronoun "Us" used by the detective repeatedly in his speech to the lawyer. Everyone knows what happened, many people saw the lawyer carrying the hippie into his car and (not) taking him to the hospital. And if no one said anything, if no one reported the incident to the police or knocked on the door of the hippie's family to tell them, it was because they agreed with what had happened. The lawyer, at least, *began to work to bring about the object of his desire: he took on the desire of the community and became their hero*, a micro-fascist representative who acted for them. But, as he showed in the Spaniard canteen, he does not content himself with this role. He pushes his power by delivering pompous speeches and later, when he has been cleared of the 'hippie's death, by sorting in public a ridiculous hair piece to hide his baldness – which only makes it more evident – fully knowing that no one will dare open their mouths or laugh at him. The king is still naked, only that now he knows it and is shamelessly displaying his body, fully certain no one will confront him and enjoying his power.

Perhaps this is the danger – and the true eclipse of our moral faculties – of interpreting the film as representing the "common people", who are willing to do anything to live "in peace". To "live in peace" means to *turn a blind eye* when they observe people being stop-and-frisked or when they know that somebody will be kidnapped and disappeared. To "live in peace" – something that does not presuppose the absence of violence – is what Deleuze calls "the new fascism": one that is no longer about "the politics and the economy of war", but "the global agreement on security, on the maintenance of a peace just as terrifying as war"<sup>42</sup> This is how the physics of micro-fascism works. If *Red's* community and its desire to "live in peace", performed and backed a disappearance of a former member of society, "the hippie", it was also out of this desire for peace that the Lawyer and his neighbours were willing to hide the crime and continue living in total normality. It was a foreigner, the Chilean detective, who brought light into the communal complicities. As Martínez Estrada stated, "our truth is always seen by our neighbours, we can never approach the fact of the groups we belong to from inside".<sup>43</sup> It happens that, in this case, the foreigner, who happens to be an ex-Pinochetist *carabenero*, is as

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<sup>41</sup> José Emilio Burucua, 'Goldhagen y la culpa colectiva. Reflexiones de un gentil', in F. Finchelstein, ed., *Los alemanes, el holocausto y la culpa colectiva. El debate Goldhagen* (Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Deleuze, *Two Regimes*, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup> Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro. Ensayo de interpretación de la vida argentina* (Buenos Aires, Beatriz Viterbo, 2005 [1948]), p. 800.

much willing to turn a blind eye on this disappearance as the natives. This shared agreement seals the closure of the disappearance's circle. If the Lawyer's character incarnates a micro-fascist hero of the community, acting upon what society desires but does not dare to accomplish, the community endorses and sustains the desire of repression through silence and social dissimulation.

#### 4. Desires of repression and the (not-so-rare) new micro-fascisms

As I argued elsewhere, my analysis of novels, films and testimonies of the Argentine post-dictatorship led me to the conclusion that the categories of responsibility and resistance do not fully capture what is at stake in the attitudes and actions of the "common people", i.e. what Derrida called "hos(ti)pitality"<sup>44</sup>. This paper seeks to avoid the superhero "whiff"<sup>45</sup> of the concept of "responsibility" and the strong voluntarist flavour of "resistance". Responsibility, resistance as well as hospitality, do not take into account the common people's desires: Sanctis' desire to survive and continue living his life, as well as the lawyer's desire to be respected and occupy a position of privilege without having to incur any costs after having disappeared a known stranger.

To analyse this sort of desires, I will turn to the Ukrainian psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich's earliest and largely forgotten work, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. This work provides a toolkit to think about social coexistence under a dictatorship beyond usual explanations: that the common people did not know or were oblivious to certain practices. When Francisco takes his kids to school, he sees and acknowledges that in front of him the police is stopping and frisking people arbitrarily. Similarly, the whole town in *Red* knew that the lawyer left the hippie in the desert to die. The lawyer is also cognisant that everyone knows and radicalises the hypocrisy of the general simulation by wearing his absurd head-piece in public and daring everyone to laugh, certain that nobody will. In what follows I propose – following in Reich's foot-steps – that the involvement of civil society is better understood in terms of their desires for repression.

Reich, a materialist Marxist psychiatrist, argues that, considering that a good part of the German people supported Nazism, our analysis should not be based on the idea of a "moral eclipse" that prevented people from seeing the blinding luminosity of the truth. The explanation ought to be sought elsewhere. For Reich, a psychology of the collective must rely on "a sex-sociological science, on the patriarchal marriage and family and on the psychic energy of the average mass of people".<sup>46</sup> As an example, he quotes *Mein Kampf*: "[the] true mass psychological tactics dispense with argumentation and keep the masses' attention fixed on the "great final goal" at all times".<sup>47</sup> If Hitler's speeches were not directed to the rationality of contemporary Germans, what was he trying to do? According to Reich, "one is on the wrong scent when one attempts to explain Hitler's success solely on the basis of the demagoguery of the National Socialism, the "befogging of the masses", their "deception".<sup>48</sup> The question then is: "why did the masses allow themselves to be politically swindled?"<sup>49</sup>

Reich does not understand these "masses" in an undifferentiated and homogenous way: "while subordinate to the top, he is to those below him a representative of this authority and enjoys,

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<sup>44</sup> Derrida, *La hospitalidad*, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> M.P Lopez, 'La autonomía en cuestión', *El ojo mocho. Otra vez*, I (Spring 2011), pp. 61-63).

<sup>46</sup> Reich, *Mass Psychology*, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36. Italics in the original.

as such, a privileged moral (not material) position”.<sup>50</sup> Let’s think about Sanctis’ position: he is an administrative worker pushed around by bosses emboldened by the dictatorial context. The lawyer who, while *enjoying* material comfort, feels threatened by the detective and several of his friends. The satisfaction associated with the experience of authority cannot be dismissed, even when simulation is involved: “despite all hypocrisy, the ecstasy derived from the notions of “honour” and “duty” is genuine”.<sup>51</sup> This satisfaction can be observed in Sanctis’ promise of a promotion, and in the lawyer’s sentiment of power when he lectures in the canteen, listened to by everyone with great deference. Hence, we are referring to the active meaning given to a dictator, the enjoyment of a moral protection and the ecstasy of pure hypocrisy: this “cannot be reached with rational arguments alone”.<sup>52</sup>

Reich’s vision links with the post-Marxists approaches that, starting with the second World War, will place the focus of analysis on the social microsphere. In this sense, Reich affirms, “the revolutionary movement also failed to appreciate the importance of the seemingly irrelevant everyday habits, indeed, very often turned them to bad account”.<sup>53</sup> Emblematic in this sense are the scenes where we see Francisco’s and the lawyer’s formal outfits, Francisco’s wife intending to find a job despite Sanctis’ soft-macho refusal, or the lawyer’s wife simulating to have tea in a social gathering while she is just drinking water. When asked about the reasons for her pretense by another member of the meeting, she answers in a scot-free and careless manner that once she learnt that in order to participate in social life she had to pretend and go along with the flow.

Two of the main representatives of the abovementioned post-Marxists approach are Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. After the 1960s, they focused on everyday social relations e.g. relations between parents and children, teachers and students, gender, and nature. My focus here is on their first joint book, *The Anti-Oedipus*, where, in addition to the radical critique of the Freudian psychoanalysis, Reich’s work is invoked.<sup>54</sup> More specifically, I am interested in the “desire of repression” hypothesis, according to which “even the most repressive and the deadliest forms of social reproduction are produced by desire”.<sup>55</sup> Deleuze and Guattari state that “the fundamental problem of political philosophy is still precisely the one that Spinoza saw so clearly, and that Wilhelm Reich rediscovered: ‘Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?’”<sup>56</sup> Why does Sanctis accept that his bosses deceive him for three consecutive years instead of rebelling against them? Is it exclusively for fear of losing his job? Why, during the hippie’s last dinner, do the other customers at the canteen not feel also lectured by the lawyer? Reich’s possible answer to these questions could be that there is a jouissance in the symbolic protection by authoritarian powers, an ecstatic hypocrisy by their addressees, due to a projected energy placed in the figure of authority.

Deleuze and Guattari, thirty-six years after the Ukrainian psychiatrist, went one step further by arguing that: “*the social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions*. We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire”.<sup>57</sup> The libido (also repressive) “has no

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pp. 68-69.

<sup>54</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 38 Emphasis in original.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 39. Emphasis in original.

need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation to invade and invest the productive forces (...) *There is only desire and the social, and nothing else*".<sup>58</sup> Thus, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that it is essential to analyze the links between dictatorship and society – not only to grasp the appearance of the radical event, but to analyze the conditions of possibility of its emergence and the ways these are reproduced in the present.

As I mentioned before, Deleuze and Guattari go beyond Reich's premises: is this the case only because they talk about *desire* at all times? They perceive Reich "at his profoundest as a thinker when he refuses to accept ignorance or illusion on the part of the masses as an explanation of fascism".<sup>59</sup> Moreover, they argue that "Reich never manages to provide a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon, because (...) he reintroduces precisely the line of argument that he was in the process of demolishing by creating a distinction between rationality (...) and the irrational element in desire".<sup>60</sup> Consequently, they argue, "he gives up trying to discover the common denominator or the coextension of the social field and desire".<sup>61</sup> This is another way of saying that desire does not come from outside a society rendering everything irrational. Instead, desire and the social field are one, and they belong to the same productive process of society. For example, in the case of *The long night...*, they produce out an ordinary man a politically conscious member of the society, and in the case of *Red*, they point out the cultural preparation of a community by which a disappearance is normalised.

This paper proposes that Deleuze's and Guattari's theory better captures the imbrication between desire and society under repressive regimes via the category of micro-fascism. Deleuze argues that old style fascism, however real and powerful it may be in many countries, is not the real problem facing us today. "New fascisms are being born".<sup>62</sup> While the image of Mussolini's black shirt, or the Nazi brown suit, or the green uniform of the south American dictatorship as are the images of fascism that capture our imagination, this "old-style fascism looks almost quaint, almost folkloric".<sup>63</sup>

Instead of these large and obvious images of fascism, Deleuze suggests we should pay attention to the way in which "[A]ll our petty fears will be organised in concert, all our petty anxieties will be harnessed to make micro-fascists of us: we will be called upon to stifle every little thing, every suspicious face, every dissonant voice, in our streets, in our neighbourhoods, in our local theatres".<sup>64</sup> The accent on the petty, minor, insignificant and negligible must not be underestimated. These molecules of social desire embodied in family organisations, labour, or the bonds with the community and oneself make terrorist dictatorships possible. If we put our focus on a synchronic image of the events depicted in the story, a dictatorship that stops-and-frisks people on the street, or that throws sedated bodies to the Río de la Plata, we cannot really see the film.<sup>65</sup> I would like to suggest that what is depicted in *Red* are the productive conditions of *The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis*. The conditions of possibility for the plots in both films, however, are the small fears, anxieties, resentments, and jealousies that constitute and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 39. Emphasis in original.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 30. Emphasis in original.

<sup>62</sup> Deleuze, *Two Regimes*, p. 137.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>65</sup> In the case of Argentina, for instance, this problem should go back to the Spanish *discovery* of America, or to the massacre of the indigenous population by the Argentine Enlightenment generation that built the Argentine modern nation-state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This perspective would allow us to map the long flows of desires for "genocides" (Feierstein, 2007) or "massacres" (Burucua and Kwiatkowski, 2014) that constitute a society.

build a society. The heuristic advantage of categories such as micro-fascism, as well as the desire of repression, is that they articulate how individuals are located within certain social formations that they reproduce. The concepts of responsibility, resistance and even hospitality are limited because they require a certain enunciative position of exteriority from where the individual can act. Instead, if we see individuals as potential micro-fascists, we can understand more fully repressive regimes' conditions of possibility.

Francisco's efforts to delegate the unexpected task Vaccaro assigned him and hence to continue living his normal life under exceptional political conditions, or the lawyer's performance acting "as if nothing had happened"<sup>66</sup> when he has blood on his hands, draw attention to the societal desires and "petty fears"<sup>67</sup> that make dictatorships possible.

## 5. Conclusions

This article analyses two recent films on the latest Argentine dictatorship produced by three young directors born as the military regime was being dismantled. It cannot be argued, at least from a biographical perspective, that they had experienced what they intended to represent on these films, but the three of them considered themselves part of the story they told. This is not exclusively because, as in the case of Naishtat, he and his family had to go into exile in France as a result of the threats made by the Argentine Anti-communist Association, known as Triple A between 1974-1976. Testa and Márquez, as part of the post-dictatorial generation,<sup>68</sup> avoid taking on the position of external judges. They seek to understand without prejudice what happened during the dictatorship, they try to "breathe its air" aesthetically, as well as remember their own day-to-day normalisations, forgetfulness and indifferences.

In the introduction I stated that one of my arguments was that the creation of both films was possible due to the cumulative politics of memory over the twelve years since 2003 until 2015, but that their release in 2016 and 2018 placed them in a different memory regime. While the hypothesis of a modification in the social atmosphere and the memory formation about the recent past need further discussion, both films were interpreted in relation to the change of government rather than the context of their production. More explicitly, they were read in relation to the micro-fascism that would characterizes part of Argentine society rather than the culmination of a historical process of dealing with the past. Although both films intend to bring forth the issue of collective responsibility during the latest dictatorship, only one, i.e. *The long night of Francisco Sanctis*, contains a modest vision of resistance in its hero finally having the courage to embrace the task he was charged with towards the end. The public reception of both films focused on either their relation with the present and the new government of Mauricio Macri or on the Argentine national history and identity, while forgetting their embeddedness in a broader tradition of aesthetic productions about the dictatorship. There is a discrepancy between the intention of the filmmakers/thinkers and the interpretations of the audience. The audience, as postulated by some literary studies<sup>69</sup>, read what they needed to read according to the synchronic moment in which they were situated.

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<sup>66</sup> Carlos Echeverría, 'Juan, como si nada hubiera sucedido', documentary (Argentina and Germany, 1987).

<sup>67</sup> Deleuze, *Two Regimes*, p. 138.

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Jelín, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Madrid, Siglo xxi, 2001); María Marta Quintana, 'Identidad, verdad, responsabilidad: configuraciones discursivas de las y los nietos restituidos en la escena pública', *V Encuentro Patagónico de Teoría Política, (En)Clave Comahue*, XXII (2017), pp. 65-82.

<sup>69</sup> Hans-Robert Jauss, *Pour une esthétique de la réception*, trans. Claude Maillard (Paris, Gallimard, 1978).

It is for this reason that I consider that reading these films in terms of repression, productive desire and micro-fascism can help understand both what is being shown through the narrative, the scenography and (sub)plots, as well as why their reception took the shape it took. A repressive desire is a desire for order, peace and security that produces society, constituting micro-fascist attitudes that cannot be reduced to fascism's spectacular manifestations. It is a heuristic tool that allows for an in-depth analysis, deeper than what the notions of collective responsibility, small resistances or hospitalities can achieve. In a nutshell, the recent events, occurring not only in Argentina, but also in Brazil, Andalucía, or the rise of the neo-right in much of Western Europe – are bringing to the fore the relevance of understanding why a significant portion of society may desire inequality (gender, economic, linguistic), discrimination (of all sorts) and disappearance.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> One could extend this argument to the European seas full of African immigrants left to drift to their own deaths.



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