

Ricardo Piglia's Schizophrenic Machine: The Madness of Resistance in *La ciudad ausente*

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Ricardo Piglia, in his 1992 novel *La ciudad ausente*, undertakes a deconstruction of madness by replacing the traditional dichotomy in which sanity is privileged over insanity with one in which 'schizophrenia' takes on paranoia. Specifically, Piglia describes the way in which a pseudo-schizophrenia similar to the one described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* counters and offers resistance against the paranoia of State repression in post-dictatorial Argentina in the aftermath of the Dirty War. From 1976 to 1983, a military Junta led first and most famously by Jorge Videla effected a campaign of torture, secret executions, censorship and intimidation that virtually silenced the public and took the lives of thousands of individuals, many of them trade-unionists, students and activists who were deemed subversive by the military government. Referred to by the military leaders that carried it out not as a war, but instead as a *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, the Dirty War, along with its atrocities, was whitewashed first by the Junta and later even by the democratically elected President Carlos Menem, who issued pardons for Jorge Videla and other Junta leaders for crimes committed during the *Proceso*.

In 2006, thirty years after the start of the Dirty War, President Menem signed a law declaring March 24 a "Día Nacional de la Memoria por la Verdad y la Justicia" to commemorate the day of the coup that began the *Proceso*. Years before this law made public and official the need to recuperate and preserve the national memory of the atrocities of the Dirty War, writers such as Ricardo Piglia were already offering texts to encourage readers to remember the realities of the *Proceso* rather than the revisionist history routinely offered by the government and often

passively accepted by the people. In *La ciudad ausente* this storytelling function is carried out by a machine that is often also a woman who sometimes claims to be, and is at other times accused of being, schizophrenic. This schizophrenic storytelling, which counters the State's efforts to repress memory and control information, reflects the power of literature to preserve national memory and fight oppression.

Ricardo Piglia has on many occasions expressed a fascination with his fellow Argentine story-teller and novelist, Roberto Arlt. Of particular interest to Piglia are Arlt's conceptions of both madness and fiction as means to escape the misery of everyday life. The concept of fiction, according to Piglia, is metaphorically represented in Arlt's works by a money-making machine. This machine, according to Piglia, "es la literatura, por supuesto" (28). In addition, in an interview with Marithelma Costa, Piglia reiterates this idea of a correlation between literature and machine by stating that "un libro es una máquina" that proliferates stories by taking them and telling them again and again (Costa 40). By correlating in Arlt's works first the idea of literature with that of madness, and then separately the notion of literature as a machine, Piglia finds in Arlt a trinity of interrelated concepts composed of madness, machines and literature.

In *La ciudad ausente*, Piglia moves away from an analysis of Arlt's work and turns to his own examination of the interrelatedness of the concepts of madness, machines, and literature. Unlike Arlt, for whom madness and angst are symptoms of the mechanization and urbanization of the modern world, Piglia portrays madness metaphorically as a means to resist repression. Piglia draws on Arlt's idea of fiction as a machine by making one of his central characters a dead woman who has been turned into a story-telling machine. Owing a debt of gratitude to another fellow Argentine author, Piglia's *La ciudad ausente* can also be considered a rewritten version of Macedonio Fernández's posthumous novel, *Museo de la novela de la eterna* (1967). This

experimental novel with no less than fifty prologues preceding the main narrative, concludes with one final “prologue” at the end of the text dedicated to whomever would like to rewrite the novel. In *La ciudad ausente* Piglia essentially undertakes the task offered by Fernández and writes his own version of *Museo de la novela de la eterna*.

In *Museo* Fernández takes up the concept of madness by stating, “[L]a locura en arte es una negación realista del arte realista [...] yo no doy personajes locos, doy lectura loca y precisamente con el fin de convencer por arte, no por verdad” (208). It is interesting to note that Fernández mentions his concept of “mad reading” in one of his fifty prologues to *Museo* as an introduction to a character who does not, in fact, exist. The character described as “the man who pretended to live” exists only in his own absence. Fernández clarifies, albeit somewhat paradoxically, that this man is neither seen nor alluded to in the novel. Fernández’ project of “mad reading,” therefore, appears to be concerned with madness as an embodiment of absence and as an art form rather than as mere character portrayal.

Taking Macedonio Fernández up on his offer to rewrite *Museo*, Piglia alludes in the title of his novel to the absence not just of one character but of an entire city. The city’s absence referenced in the title of the novel refers in part to the virtual dearth of literary and intellectual voices in Buenos Aires as a consequence of the silencing imposed by the military leaders of Argentina’s 1976-1983 *Proceso de reorganización nacional*. According to Francine Masiello, the *Proceso*, which had as its primary aim to eliminate any resistance to the government, attempted to invalidate intellectual production by portraying all thinkers and artists to be potential subversives and, therefore, dangerous (12). David William Foster, in an article in which he highlights the existence of cultural production during the years of the Dirty War despite governmental efforts to silence it, still recognizes the near absence of culture available to the

public, making the meagerness of culture into a sign of the times during that period. The disappearance of publishing houses, theaters, art galleries, stacks of books from bookstores and many papers from the newsstands were as much a representation of Argentine culture during that period as were the few books, plays, paintings and papers that were produced (98).

With this implicit backdrop of a city and nation whose cultural production has been all but smothered, *La ciudad ausente* details the efforts of a reporter to obtain information regarding the location and functioning of a story-telling machine that repressive forces of the State have been attempting to silence and destroy. This protagonist-reporter, whose official name is Miguel Mac Kensey, is known throughout the novel simply as “Junior,” a moniker that implies a dual heritage linking him both to his biological father, referred to as “Mister Mac Kensey,” as well as to his literary father figure, Macedonio Fernández, who appears fictionalized in the novel and known as Macedonio or Mac, for short. The novel recounts how Mac had, with the help of an engineer, created a story-telling machine that was in an attempt to eternalize his deceased wife, Elena, and in keeping with the title of Fernández’ *Museo de la novela de la eterna*, the story-telling machine is kept hidden away by the State in a Museum. Junior, working as an investigative reporter for a newspaper called *El Mundo*, goes searching for news regarding the mysterious machine, following leads given to him by an anonymous female caller. Along the way, Junior obtains and reads copies of some of the stories produced by the machine.

In “Los nudos blancos,” one of the stories produced by the machine and reproduced in *La ciudad ausente*, a character who shares the name Elena with Macedonio’s deceased real-life wife is voluntarily committed to a psychiatric institution where she claims that she is a madwoman who believes herself to be a police officer trained to pretend to be locked inside a machine exhibited in a museum. In essence, Elena is claiming to be Mac’s story-telling machine. Within

the confines of the asylum, Elena, all the while clinging to her identity as a machine, resists the efforts of her psychiatrist, a Dr. Arana who maintains that he is attempting to treat her mental illness while he is actually pressing her to reveal information that will help him locate and deactivate Macedonio's story-telling machine. During one session with his patient, Dr. Arana explains to Elena that there are "nudos blancos" in everyone's brain that constitute a collective grammar of experience. The doctor is anxious to access these white knots with the purported purpose of curing his patient's mental illness but in reality with the intention of altering her memory and, by extension, the memory of the general public as well.

By the end of "Los nudos blancos" Elena understands that the white knots were the last trace of a lost language that had once been common to all living things. These knots, which had once been present in all creatures, could now only be found on marine turtle shells. In an effort to save Mac, Elena gives Dr. Arana information regarding a photographer named Grete Müller, who has taken pictures of the turtle shells and was trying to reach a place named Finnegan's Island, where she could continue the study of the white knots in order to establish the lost common language. Malva Filer points out that the idea of evidence of a lost original language being contained in these turtle shell knots has resonances of Carl Jung's notion of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Filer states that the search for the meaning of these signs in which the memory of the past is written "representa simbólicamente el esfuerzo por recuperar e interpretar el sentido del pasado" ("Funciones," 158). Grete Müller's act of photographing turtles is considered subversive, according to Filer, because it represents resistance against the State's attempts to control the collective memory and, in doing so, erase evidence of acts of State-sponsored violence. Similarly, Dr. Arana "...actúa sobre la memoria de su paciente Elena, ya sea para invadir recuerdos que ella no quiere revelar, o para borrarlos, desactivando la máquina

(159). Finnegans Island, as a place where collective memory can be read and recovered, and the machine as a teller of stories the State would rather have silenced, are both examples of the forces of narrative resistance to the State's attempts at controlling and eliminating the memory of the people.

Finnegans island appears later in the novel in another story produced by the machine appropriately entitled "La isla." The inhabitants of this island exist in a state of constant linguistic flux in which the language spoken and understood by all of the inhabitants changes periodically, leaving all of the islanders with no memory of the prior language. The only book that can be found on the island is James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* because, due to its multilingual puns, the narrator claims that it can be read no matter in what language the islanders are currently speaking and understanding. *La ciudad ausente* ends with another reference to Joyce, this time in the form of a monologue emitted by the machine that is reminiscent of Molly Bloom's soliloquy in the last episode of *Ulysses*, ending, as does Joyce's novel, with an affirmation, "sí" (168). Nevertheless, while Joyce describes the word 'yes' in *Ulysses* as denoting "the end of all resistance" (Gillet 111), the concluding affirmation in Piglia's novel represents literature's continued resistance to the State's attempts at control.¹

Borrowing from Arlt the concept of the machine metaphor for both madness and fiction and from Fernández the idea of a museum for a novel inspired by a lost loved one, and a novel that can appear in an infinite number of different versions, Piglia writes his own version of Fernández's *Museo de la novela de la eterna* in which a mad machine produces fiction for all

¹ In his Claybook for James Joyce, Louis Gillet writes that the Irish author once told him that in *Ulysses* "I had sought to end with the least forceful word I could possibly find. I had found the word 'yes', which is barely pronounced, which denotes acquiescence, self-abandon, relaxation, the end of all resistance. For *Work in Progress* [*Finnegans Wake*], I tried to find something better if possible. This time I discovered the most furtive word, the least stressed, the weakest in English, a word which is even not a word, which barely sounds between the teeth, a breath, a mere nothing, the article 'the'" (111).

eternity. *La ciudad ausente* has as its protagonist Miguel Mac Kensey, who is known throughout the novel as “Junior,” a moniker that implies a dual heritage that links him biologically to his father, referred to as “Mister Mac Kensey” as well as literarily to Macedonio Fernández. Junior, an investigative reporter for a newspaper called *El Mundo* goes searching for news regarding the mysterious machine, following leads given to him by an anonymous female caller. Along the way, Junior obtains copies of some of the stories produced by the machine, and these stories are then simultaneously read by Junior and by the reader of the novel.

With regard to the current state of criticism on *La ciudad ausente*, Ignacio Sánchez-Prado points out that Piglia’s novel has been amply examined with regard to its treatment of dictatorship, politics and literature in Argentina (187). No study to date, however, has focused on the role of the nearly ubiquitous presence of madness in the novel. Jorgelina Corbatta, in *Narrativas de la Guerra Sucia*, includes *La ciudad ausente* among the works she examines that write the history of Argentina during the *Proceso*. Similarly, Gareth Williams, in his article entitled “Hear Say Yes in Piglia: *La ciudad ausente*, posthegemony, and the “fin-negans” of historicity,” reads Piglia’s novel as commentary on Argentina’s post-hegemonic state and concludes that the novel traces the possibilities of thought and narration in postdictatorial Argentina. Borrowing from Ernesto Laclau’s concept of ‘exhaustion’ as an end of history that signals the conclusion of a regime of sense and intelligibility, Williams views *La ciudad ausente* as a reflection on “the production of meaning and on the possibility of narrating meaning at a time in which the signifying processes of Argentine modernity have brought about the exhaustion of the grounds and unity of meaning” (134). Williams’ insightful analysis does not, however, extend to Piglia’s use of madness as a metaphor for the forces of resistance to the meaninglessness of the post-hegemonic state. Francine Masiello, in similar fashion to Williams,

finds that the novel raises the issue of the problematic of representation in a world in which the concept of truth has been lost. As her focus rests on the feminine and outsider voices in the novel as a contradiction to the masculine approximation of reality, she concludes that the effects of drugs, alcohol, hallucinations, and madness “press characters toward places of eccentricity, socially without power, where they look for the possibility of writing a dissident kind of national history” (166).

Elsa Dehennin takes a narratological approach to what she describes as an atypical and eccentric anti-novel in which narration is the revolutionary mechanism used by memory and language against repression (222). Likewise, Malva Filer contrasts the virtual world created by Piglia to Borges’ imagined world of Tlön in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius.” According to Filer,

Mientras Borges en los años cuarenta transpone la experiencia del totalitarismo a la invasión del orden fantástico del planeta Tlön, Piglia comunica la experiencia de la represión de los años setenta y sus efectos, creando una realidad virtual que perturba el mundo ideológicamente ordenado bajo el control estatal. (135)

Continuing along the lines of the science fiction elements of *La ciudad ausente*, J. Andrew Brown discusses the numerous cyborgs that appear in the novel as subversive forces in which the fusion of flesh and technology acts as a testimony of the trauma endured during the dictatorship (100). Pointing out the cyborg nature of several male characters in the novel as well as figure of the female narrative machine, Brown’s thesis counters Francine Masiello’s argument that the feminine nature of the machine reflects “the ways in which women are transformed by a technological culture in order to serve the political and esthetic projects of men (239).

For his part, Sánchez-Prado concentrates on the character of the narrative machine by opposing it to the nomadic war machine postulated by French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix

Guattari. Although he admits that the respective machines share some characteristics, Sánchez-Prado draws attention to the fact that Piglia's narrative machine offers resistance to the State from a position within the confines of the State itself (the museum), while the Deleuzian war machine is understood to be located outside the State (190). Marcelo Paz also analyzes Piglia's machine in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theories, but instead of focusing on the war machine as described in the French critics' *A Thousand Plateaus*, Paz uses the Deleuzian concept of the desiring-machine from *Anti-Oedipus* to examine Piglia's story-telling machine as a producer of desire (224). Piglia's machine, according to Paz, is a producer of fictional stories, although the objects of these stories appear intermingled with other objects in the museum in which the machine is housed.

My own reading of Piglia's rewriting of Fernández' novel with focuses on the way in which this story-telling machine that is alternatively locked up in a museum and committed to an insane asylum exemplifies the concept of schizophrenia as presented by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. In short, I argue that both the story-telling machine in the novel and the novel itself act as Deleuzian desiring-machines, schizophrenic producers of a type of fiction that is a resistant force against the paranoid repression of the State.

It is important to understand that Deleuze and Guattari do not use the term 'schizophrenia' in its clinical sense as a disease or mental disturbance. Eugene Holland clarifies that "[s]chizoanalysis does not romanticize asylum inmates and their often excruciating conditions of existence; it construes schizophrenia in broad socio-historical rather than narrowly psychological terms" (2). Instead, Deleuze and Guattari construe schizophrenia in broad socio-historical rather than narrowly psychological terms. In fact, the French theorists claim never to have seen a schizophrenic. *Anti-Oedipus* presents schizophrenia as a "free-flowing, relatively

unfixed, form of desire” that Deleuze and Guattari offer to counter the Freudian model of desire based on lack and repression (Holland 19). According to Deleuze and Guattari, while “Oedipus presupposes a fantastic repression of desiring-machines” (3), “schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines” (5). According to Holland’s interpretation of *Anti-Oedipus*,

[The text] aims not only to promote a broader understanding of schizophrenia but to promote schizophrenia itself; not merely to reformulate our understanding of desire but to reshape the very form our desires take. The book itself, in other words, was designed to function as a kind of desiring-machine, to program or produce, as well as to model or comprehend, desire in schizophrenic form.

(Holland 3)

Piglia’s story-telling machine perfectly exemplifies this Deleuzian idea of a productive and reproductive desiring machine. Just as Deleuze and Guattari write of a schizophrenia that is in reality a pseudo-schizophrenia, the different manifestations of Piglia’s story-telling machine, although she claims or is accused of being schizophrenic, does not exhibit signs of true mental illness. In addition, Piglia’s novel itself is another example of a Deleuzian desiring machine, as it also aims to reformulate our understanding, just as the machine’s stories attempt to do. Just as Macedonio proposes the concept of “mad reading,” Deleuze and Guattari present a schizophrenic writing of schizophrenia. Likewise, *La ciudad ausente* both offers an example of a desiring-machine in the form of Macedonio’s narrative machine and exemplifies such a machine by its own narration. Just as “schizophrenia” is presented in Deleuze and Guattari’s work in a positive light counter to a negative and repressive force, the numerous narrations produced in Piglia’s novel represent resistance against the power of the State that is working to deactivate and shut

down the story-telling machine. The machine's stories represent the truth-telling power of fiction against the backdrop of revisionist history offered by the military dictatorship. Piglia's novel has the dual role of both creating the story-telling machine and being one of its stories.

Anti-Oedipus similarly distinguishes between what are described as the "two poles of social libidinal investment: the paranoiac, reactionary, and fascising pole, and the schizoid revolutionary pole" (D & G, *Anti-Oedipus* 366). As such, "paranoia" and "schizophrenia" can be viewed in Deleuze and Guattari as two opposing types of madness, the first being repressive and authoritarian while the other is liberating and resistant.

The two poles are defined, the one by the enslavement of production and the desiring-machines to the gregarious aggregates that they constitute on a large scale under a given form of power or selective sovereignty; the other by the inverse subordination and the overthrow of power. (D & G, *Anti-Oedipus* 366)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, "paranoia" can be identified with oppressive and enslaving wielders of power while "schizophrenia" is associated with the forces that attempt to overthrow the oppressors. In other words, the schizophrenic nature of Deleuze and Guattari's desiring-machine makes it a type of revolutionary force that acts to overcome the repressive power of enslavement and oppression and is, as such, to quote Eugene Holland "a *preferable* objective tendency, in its opposition to the paranoia of tradition and in its potential for radical freedom" (3, my emphasis).

Deleuze and Guattari further explain the opposition between the two poles of social libidinal investment by describing the paranoiac as

the lines of integration and territorialization that arrest the flows, constrict them, turn them back, break them again according to the limits interior to the system, in

such a way as to produce the images that come to fill the field of immanence peculiar to this system or this aggregate. (D&G, *Anti-Oedipus* 367)

The schizoid, on the other hand is identified by the

lines of escape that follow the decoded and deterritorialized flows, inventing their own nonfigurative breaks or schizzes that produce new flows, always breaching the coded wall or the territorialized limit that separates them from desiring-production. (D&G, *Anti-Oedipus* 367)

For Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, “paranoia” is a repressive force from whose bonds ‘schizophrenia’ attempts to escape. Furthermore, the paranoia/schizophrenia dichotomy is equated to the Deleuzian binary of territorialization/deterritorialization in that paranoia is associated with territorialization (or reterritorialization) while schizophrenia is equated with the idea of deterritorialization. Holland explains the Deleuzian dichotomy of paranoia and schizophrenia by stating that “paranoia represents what is archaic in capitalism, the resuscitation of obsolete, or traditional, belief-centered modes of social organization, whereas schizophrenia designates capitalism’s positive potential: freedom, ingenuity, permanent revolution” (Holland 3).

Schizophrenia, therefore, is associated with the Deleuzian concept of “deterritorialization” or change-producing movement, while paranoia is the product of “reterritorialization” or artificial recoding (Holland 93). In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari define deterritorialization in rather vague terms as the movement or ‘line of flight’ by which something leaves a territory (508). Adrian Parr’s *Deleuze Dictionary* clarifies that deterritorialization implies creative potential and defines the action as “to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations” (67). Although the

French theorists avoid a concise definition of deterritorialization, they do further elaborate the concept by distinguishing between its positive and negative types. While deterritorialization as a departure from a territory can be seen as a liberating movement from territorialization to freedom, it is often, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialization obstructing the line of flight” (508). Deterritorialization is, then, considered negative when its line of flight is obstructed by subsequent reterritorialization, while positive deterritorialization occurs when the freeing movement prevails over the reterritorializations. According to Adrian Parr, deterritorialization is equated with the idea of decoding in *Anti-Oedipus*, and “to decode in the way that Deleuze and Guattari intend it, means to strike out at the selfsame codes that produce rigid meanings as opposed to translating meaning” (68). Decoding and deterritorializing, therefore, represent resistance to imposed rigidity and restraint.

The story-telling machine in *La ciudad ausente* exemplifies the Deleuzian schizoid in that it is a tool of resistance against the State’s attempt to manipulate reality. According to Malva Filer, the machine gives voice to those individuals who witnessed the horror of the dictatorship and, therefore, “representa un desafío que pone en peligro la máquina estatal” (“Funciones,” 156). In addition, Piglia’s machine is a deterritorializing instrument that translates stories in a way that is both liberating and creative. The machine created by Macedonio in Piglia’s novel was originally intended as a translation device. When it was fed its first story to translate, however, it converted Edgar Allen Poe’s “William Williamson” into an expanded and modified story named “Stephen Stevenson,” which no longer bore any resemblance to the original (Piglia, *La ciudad* 41). The State, on the other hand, has created a “mental State” in which “todos pensamos como ellos piensan y nos imaginamos lo que ellos quieren que imaginemos” (Piglia, *La ciudad* 144).

This idea of government controlled thought echoes the situation that existed in Argentina during the Dirty War.

According to Francine Masiello,

Como parte de una lucha por el control hegemónica y una forma de manejar el crecimiento de los movimientos de masas, la Argentina durante el gobierno de los generales...también intentó imponer una forma de olvido a los civiles...

Paralelamente, una ceguera asombrosa ante los abusos políticos cundió según se dijo entre la clase media, anulando la conciencia de tal modo que sus miembros colaboraron con el discurso oficial. (Masiello 11-2)

Masiello's description of the *Junta's* success in convincing the public to forget or disacknowledge the state-sponsored violence is a perfect example of Deleuzian reterritorialization.

The State's attempts in *La ciudad ausente* to maintain rigid control over the thoughts of its people are, in this way, countered by the machine's translation and retelling. According to Russo, the engineer who helped Macedonio create the story-telling machine,

La inteligencia del Estado es básicamente un mecanismo técnico destinado a alterar el criterio de realidad. Hay que resistir. Nosotros tratamos de construir una réplica microscópica, una máquina de defensa femenina, contra las experiencias y los experimentos y las mentiras del Estado. (142-43)

Just as Roberto Arlt's machines are, in Piglia's opinion, metaphors for writing, this feminine defense machine posited by Russo is also, as Piglia himself would say, "la literatura, por supuesto."

While the machine's function of storytelling is described as one of translation, the State's reterritorialization or recoding of its own history is described in the novel as "retranslation." According to Russo, the State "conoce todas las historias de todos los ciudadanos y retraduce esas historias en nuevas historias que narran el Presidente de la República y sus ministros" (143).² The storytelling machine's translations and the State's subsequent retranslations appear to reoccur, therefore, in an endless Deleuzian cycle of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

In an article entitled "Tres propuestas para el próximo milenio (y cinco dificultades)," Piglia sets out to answer a question posed by Italo Calvino concerning the future of literature and to do so from a purely Argentine point of view. In this article, published in 2001, only one year prior to *La ciudad ausente*, Piglia details the ongoing struggle between literature and the State.

Podríamos decir que también el Estado narra, que también el Estado construye ficciones, que también el Estado manipula ciertas historias. Y, en un sentido, la literatura construye relatos alternativos, en tensión con ese relato que construye el Estado, ese tipo de historias que el Estado cuenta y dice. (14-5)

In Deleuzian terms, Piglia is describing here a territorialization on the part of the State which is met with literature's attempts at deterritorialization, the same cycle that is exemplified by the State and the machine in *La ciudad ausente*. In the novel, the culmination of the State's attempts to maintain control of knowledge is, in Russo's opinion, no different from the methods of torture carried out by the police and the military (143). The physical violence and brutality of torture, therefore, are accompanied by a lesser offense of intellectual torment provoked by the State's rewriting of history. Although Russo's analysis disturbingly exaggerates the degree of similarity between the torture, disappearances and executions carried out by the State and the

² It is important to point out the Spanish word *historia* can in English mean both 'story' and 'history'. While the English 'story' is appropriate in this context, an allusion to the rewriting of Argentina's history is also implicit in this quote.

subsequent attempts to erase the public's memory of those same events, Russo is correct in identifying a correspondence between the acts of physical violence and the attempts at mental manipulation.

Throughout the novel the State attempts to silence Macedonio's machine. Disturbed by the all-encompassing power and scope of the machine when it begins to produce versions of the conclusion of the Falkland Islands war contrary to the one put out by the State, and when it becomes known that even Borges' stories are products of the machine, the State reacts by housing it in a museum in an effort "a ver si la podían anular, convertirla en lo que se llama una pieza de museo, un mundo muerto" (145).

The machine's story entitled "Los nudos blancos" contains an allegorical representation of both the physical and mental torture perpetrated by the military leaders during the Dirty War. In the asylum, Dr. Arana tortures Elena with electroshock therapy in order to force her to reveal information regarding the identity of the individual known as "Mac." As J. Andrew Brown points out, the political connotations of this scene are particularly disturbing as it is an obvious reference to the Argentine military's extensive use of the *picana* or electric cattle prod as an instrument of torture during the Dirty War. Although the standard treatment in the clinic is to cure mental illness with medication by converting psychotic patients into addicts because "la única manera de normalizar un delirio era construirle una dependencia externa" (66), Dr. Arana also proposes brain surgery, claiming a necessity to "desactivar neurológicamente" his patient (79). In his desperate effort to extract information from Elena, the doctor even brings in a specialist in artificial memory to conduct part of the interrogation, though it is unclear whether his function is to see through the fictional memories that Elena has created for herself or to fabricate new artificial ones for her.

In an effort to resist Dr. Arana's figurative and physical prodding, Elena senses the urgent need to flee and manages to do so only by imagining that she is communicating telepathically with someone with whom she takes flight through the streets of Buenos Aires in an attempt to find Mac. Her hope is that Mac will eventually lead her to an island where the last vestiges of collective memory can still be found. In Deleuzian terms, Dr. Arana's tactics of torture amount to evidence of paranoia while Elena's resistance to them can be characterized as schizophrenic in that the doctor's efforts to enslave Elena, to alter her memory, and to break and deactivate her through electroshock therapy and brain surgery are met with Elena's resistance in the form of a mental flight to an island where the language of collective memory can be restored. Interestingly, Arana tries to convince Elena that she suffers from paranoia. He tells her, "Se ha vuelto psicótica y tiene un delirio paranoico. Estamos en una clínica de Belgrano, esto es una sesión prolongada con drogas, usted es Elena Fernández" (79).

This series of declarative statements on the part of Dr. Arana is a clear example of his attempts to narrate in an effort to manipulate his subject's perception of history. It is important to recall that Elena, though she appears to be human throughout the story, claims to be Macedonio's machine, and even shares his deceased wife's name, down to the last name Fernández. Elena's efforts to resist Dr. Arana, therefore, are representative of the schizophrenic resistance to the paranoid state carried out by story-telling machine.

The function of Piglia's story-telling machine is, therefore, to break through Argentina's historical amnesia by means of schizophrenic storytelling, countering the paranoia and repression induced by the State with a liberating Deleuzian schizophrenia that manifests itself as the creation of fiction. Gone is the traditional dichotomy in which sanity is privileged over insanity. Instead, Piglia proposes a new dichotomy in which Deleuzian pseudo-schizophrenia counters the

paranoia of State repression, as the State's attempts to rewrite history and repress collective memory are met with the machine's to memorialize by means of perpetual retelling. This schizophrenic story-telling machine is, as Piglia himself would say, "la literatura, por supuesto." Piglia, therefore, in similar fashion to Macedonio Fernández before him, does not offer mad characters. He offers schizophrenic story-telling precisely with the purpose of convincing by way of literature and not by way of rewritten history.

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