

**Free From the Shadow: Cultural Expression in the Face of Redemocratization,
The Argentine Example**

Dictatorships generally seek to control the cultural practices of the nation they lead, regardless of the country's level of development. Any country led by one person or group that has complete and total power over all of the activities within its boundaries at any given point in time has fallen victim to the unjust circumstances surrounding autocratic rule. As a nation that is prone to militaristic or tyrannical regimes, Argentina's cultural development has been inhibited by its repressive administrations. There has been a redefinition of in the wake of each crisis, resulting in a need to recreate the social icons of each epoch, revitalizing popular understanding of cultural forms in a transient atmosphere. Examining the progression of Argentina just beyond the grip of the military dictatorship in 1983, one is able to see that new cultural forms were stunted by the ongoing trauma of the people by the long-lasting effects of the dictatorship. Through an analysis of two films, *Camila* (1984) and *The Official Story* (1985), it appears that even after the dictatorship, repression was still in the collective consciousness of the people. In order to appreciate this reaction, Spanish society after the fall of Franco's dictatorship in 1975, is a valuable comparative model of how another society reacted to their renewed social consciousness. Contemplating the differences between the two nations, a very important question arises, why was Argentina's response to Redemocratization in the 1980s so different from that of Spain's in the post-Franco period?

Before delving into an analysis of Argentine cultural forms, it is vital to first define what is meant by the term 'culture'. Culture, in the most general sense, is the combination of individual elements that characterize a people or a generation. This idea of culture includes not

just literature and art, but also basic human rights, styles of living, systems of beliefs as well as the conventional values within a society. As Javier Torre reasoned, “Culture is that which makes us human, rational, critical and ethically committed beings,”¹ unfortunately, in the case of most dictatorial regimes, culture is seen as the enemy as well as a large source of conflict. It is considered by the dictatorships to be the leading force behind those who question the authority of the regime. With this in mind, we can then explore how culture was affected in Argentina in the aftermath of authoritarian rule.

It is a difficult task to fully describe the cultural developments in Argentina as a different response to those in Spain at the fall of the dictatorships due primarily to the immensity of the reactions experienced in each nation. Not only did a staggering amount of cultural expressions exist within both individual nations prior to and subsequent to their respective dictatorships, but also many of the varying artistic forms in each country are not easily comparable. The most well known form within and outside Spain and Argentina is their style of national dance. Flamenco dancing in Spain is powerful and filled with tragedy, as is shone with each step of the dance. The Argentine Tango is another passionate dance that is filled with controversy and sexual overtones. While both dances were formed in the lower classes of society within a rebellious environment, the two dance forms are actually quite different in nature and in performance. The subtle nuances of the Tango and Flamenco complicate the process of defining what is culture in different milieus. Diversity within national expression stems from the wide variety of *pueblos* in Spain and *provincias* in Argentina and further separate the manifestations of culture throughout each nation. Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, my goal is to try and explain why Argentina’s reaction to democracy’s return, culturally speaking, was not as pronounced as

¹ Javier Torre and Adriana Zaffaroni. *Argentina: Its Culture During the Repression and During the Transition. The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture, 1983 and Beyond.* An International Research Symposium. Arizona State University. 1987. p11-12.

in other countries, using Spain as the counter example. A large part of the difference lies in the actual dictatorial administration that ruled the nation before democracy reappeared on the scene. This paper will explore the contextual history of Argentina, first beginning with a brief description of the two films and their roles within society, then a mild overview of the situation in Spain, analyzing how the divergent responses were a result of the disparities between the dictatorships in each nation, with a particular emphasis on *Camila* and *The Official Story*. Through exploration of the background of the regime, the culture of the oppressed within, and an analysis of the culture produced in the post dictatorship period, this paper will clearly demonstrate how and why Argentina's reaction, though subtle, was a reflection of the type of dictatorship experienced from 1976-1983. It will also illustrate that culture's new role in society was demonstrated through film, whose narrative showed a visible need to deal with the tragedy of recent events before being able to move forward with original and innovative forms of expression. Through analysis of *Camila* and *The Official Story*, it is demonstrated that there was a strong desire to confront reality head on in order to accept the past and move forward.

Role of Film in Demonstrating Female Position in Society

Camila and *The Official Story* are two films that were made in Argentina during the aftermath of the 1976-1983 military junta. Each film takes place in a different time period in Argentina, the first representing the regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas from 1829-1852, and the second the military junta of 1976-1983. Though the individual stories of the protagonists differ greatly in each film, the overall theme of the oppressed woman fighting for liberty and to gain her independence is analogous. In the film *Camila*, Camila fights with her father, her lead oppressor, in determination of maintaining her freedom and ability to voice her opinions against the administration that her father supports. While the lead character in *The Official Story* is not

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fighting her father, she is contesting the control of her own oppressor, her husband, by going behind his back when he refuses to acknowledge her quest for information on their adopted daughter, Gaby. Both instances demonstrate two strong-willed women who refuse to accept the position they are told to keep, seeking alternatives to their situations despite the grave consequences they are bound to face. These two women, though reflecting a sentiment many women might have possessed, are unique in their actions and defiance of the roles assigned to them by the dictatorships governing the country at each respective time period. Overall, the roles of these women within the general themes of the two films represent a time period where woman were often viewed as the property, so to speak, of their male family members. Though the Rosas regime held higher standards for the role of the woman as wife to her husband and mother to her children, the military dictatorship of 1976-1983 did little more to acknowledge the contemporary woman as seen in the rest of the world.

Argentina in Turmoil and Militaristic Oppression

March 24, 1976 is a day that will forever be embedded in the minds of Argentines. The military coup that shook the nation began an eight-year reign of state terror in Argentina. The objectives of the new regime were to end one historical cycle in order to create a new one through elimination of all guerillas, limitation of civil society, and reorganization of the economy. Through these measures, the military sought to hinder the production of potentially Marxist subversion, which they viewed as any act that was possibly leftist or, even worse, communist. Anyone who was a potential activist was persecuted and was often “disappeared.” The military dictatorship of the period was infamous for its act of not so subtly removing people

from society. The disappearances that characterized this epoch were new to Argentine society.² This evasion of accountability was a way for the military to avoid responsibility while at the same time to create an atmosphere of fear and tension. According to General Videla, (commander of the military at the time,) a terrorist was not just a person who killed another using a weapon or bomb of some sort, but was also one who provoked ideas that were “contrary to our western and Christian civilization.” He continued to say, “First we will kill all of the subversives, then we will kill their collaborators, and after their sympathizers, later those who remain indifferent and finally we will kill those who are timid.”³ The subversives were not limited to men, but rather openly directed towards the youth generation in Argentina. Young women were equally sought in the hunt, while the older generations of women were ignored, mainly those who were seeking answers as to the locations of their loved ones. *The Official Story* presents the story of an upper-class woman who is treated as secondary to her husband’s control, further demonstrating the roles of women during the junta.

The government viewed the younger generations of Argentine woman as equally involved in subversive activities as men. They were involved in practically every interaction between the government and the guerillas. As a result the government sought to redefine the role of women in Argentina by praising the woman as the foundation of the family, which in effect was the basis of society. Rather than being seen as beings with strong opinions and anti-military values, they were transformed into guardians of the society’s morality. They became solely responsible for the socialization of their children, whereby they were held accountable for the actions and behaviors of their children in society. The government believed that the activities of

² The term “disappeared” was coined when relatives of the missing attempted to find explanations for their vanished loved ones, and when they approached military personnel they were told that the family members has just “disappeared,” with no further explanation of how, why or where they had disappeared to.

³ María Sáenz Quesada. *La Argentina Historia del País y de su Gente*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana S.A. © 2001. p659.

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a woman outside of her home should not impede upon her responsibilities within the family.⁴

The role of women during the military dictatorship reflected that of women during Franco's Spain in that there was a return to traditional family and gender roles by the leading dictatorship.

The difference, however, between Argentina and Spain was that Franco was acting alone when making rules and regulations within his society. What was generally unknown to Argentines at the time was that their military government was not acting alone in their terrorization and targeting of subversives and their subjugation of women, but rather in a network of five military regimes within the Southern Cone.

Operation Condor (Operación Condor), also termed the MERCOSUR of terror by Nilson Mariano, was an intricately networked system of intelligence between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile. It was set up to defeat the communist threat in the Southern Cone. The operation consisted of an agreement that established a shared database of names and information regarding possible subversives in all five nations, as well as a collective access to torture methods for use against the dissidents. The Dirty War as it was later termed, entailed a hemispheric incidence of repression against popular movements, political opponents, syndicates and students alike, ignoring geographic borders and limits. Throughout Condor's reign over the Southern Cone, daily life was regulated by terror, without a visible end. The existing fear was justified completely, as after the regime's collapse the number of *desaparecidos* was revealed in Argentina to be 30,000 people, all killed by military forces during the eight-year reign of Condor.⁵

⁴ Ana Maria Marini. *Women in Contemporary Argentina*. Latin American Perspectives. Sage Publications, Inc. © 1997. p114-120.

⁵ Nilson Mariano. *Operación Condor: Terrorismo de Estado en el Cono Sur*. Buenos Aires. Ediciones Lohlé Lumen. ©1998.

Life under the military dictatorship entailed a strict code by which the people had to live. The government sold the state-owned companies to private investors, essentially eradication social spending. The public sphere was virtually deserted, primarily due to the complete censorship of everyday life in Argentina. People could not voice any opinion that was remotely against the government, its values, or what it was doing in the nation, (more specifically, they could not voice any opinion that was not totally in favor of the military and what it promoted.) Books, songs, film, national and international artists, as well as television series were all eliminated from quotidian life.⁶ As children's book writer, María Elena Walsh, eloquently stated in her 1979 article titled "Misadventures in Kindergarten-Land" ("Desventuras en el País-Jardín-de-Infantes"),

"For some time now we've been like children, and we can't say what we think or imagine. When the censor finally disappears... , we'll be decrepit [and] not even know what to say... The ubiquitous and diligent Censor has transformed one of the most lucid cultural centers of the world into a Kindergarten, a fabricator of deceits that can only undertake the childish, the impudent, the frivolous or the historic, [and then only] if it's been blessed by holy water."⁷

Her article addresses the impact of the regulatory methods put in place by the regime and the acceptance of censorship in a way that totally blocked the artist from being able to create.

Opposition Culture in Argentina Throughout the Military Dictatorship

The strict censorship implemented in Argentina during the time of the military dictatorship created a civilization that discouraged cultural creation or expression. Censorship did not begin on any particular day, but rather went through various phases of development and growth, affecting varying realms of society, not just the cultural sphere. It was a tool used by the

⁶ Quesada, María Sáenz. *La Argentina Historia del País y de su Gente*, 664.

⁷ Jean Graham-Jones. *Broken Pencils and Crouching Dictators : Issues of Censorship in Contemporary Argentine Theatre*. Theatre Journal. The Johns Hopkins University Press. ©2001.

military dictatorship to further the use of a state terrorism whose “basic methodologies was indiscriminate and groundless repression in order to massively internalize the concept of punishment and to paralyze, by doing so, the greatest number of possible reactions.”⁸ The incidence of culture varied from literature and music to film, theater, plastic and visual arts, written press, television and radio. It was defined by the dictatorship based on three interconnected characteristics; the first was that the appropriate use of culture should not be altered; the second was that morality should always come before culture, and the third was that culture had the ability to be used inappropriately.

The greatest degree of authoritarian culture was witnessed in Argentina during 1976-1983. The enforcement of the doctrine of National Security upheld the idea that the enemy came from within in the form of the subversive. The control of television stations and film production by the military government led to a depoliticization of public thought. Foreign films with obvious references to sex or social uprisings were banned, as were books with ‘negative’ implications. Many Argentine intellectuals were forced into exile, creating a huge disparity between literature and cultural production produced within Argentina and that outside the country during the dictatorship.⁹ In addition to the censorship enforced by the dictatorship, there existed a degree of auto-censorship by the artists and writers, which grew out of fear of the threat of confiscation or punishment on the person by the regime. The regime also modified the academic programs in the country to best promote their cause. Literary traditions and texts themselves were tailored to suit the needs of the dictatorship during the regime, especially for use of propaganda and an overall “cultural sanitation.” Unfortunately for Argentina, the *censura*

⁸ Andrés Avellaneda. *The Process of Censorship and Censorship of the Proceso: Argentina 1976-1983. The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture, 1983 and Beyond.* An International Research Symposium. Arizona State University. 1987. p23-47.

did not end with the fall of the dictatorship, but rather continued to influence expressive life on a daily basis in much the same way as before.¹⁰

Beyond the Tyranny

Despite the alleged freedom from dictatorial rule, Argentina's violent past continued to haunt her in the Redemocratization period. There was a minor explosion of political and cultural expression during the initial elimination of military rule, however, repression had yet to fully subside. The neo-liberal economic strategies of the military regime ended in overall economic decline and unemployment, which led to dissatisfaction in the popular segments of society. It became apparent after the military's fall that President Menem was creating an atmosphere in Argentina that was oddly similar to the preceding leadership. It was an atmosphere of keeping the nominal status of the lower classes, giving pardon to those who obstructed justice, and by maintaining censorship of the public, threatening against anyone who was disrespectful or disdainful towards the new government. Even if Menem had been completely open to freedom of expression, there was such a powerful internalization of censorship that the authors might not have produced accordingly. As Roberto Mario Cossa believed, "External change doesn't mean anything if there is no change inside...Even though we may live in a democratic country, there is a censor in each one of us, a crouching dictator ready to react."¹¹

A new Argentina was born in 1983, when she began to reevaluate her system of democracy. For many artists of the time period who had begun their careers during the tyranny, any level of freedom of expression was an unfamiliar incidence. Their distinct view of the world

⁹ Javier Torre and Adriana Zaffaroni. *Argentina: Its Culture During the Repression and During the Transition*, 15-16.

¹⁰ David William Foster. Preface: Towards an Agenda on the Redemocratization of Argentine Culture. The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture, 1983 and Beyond. An International Research Symposium. Arizona State University. 1987. p1-6.

¹¹ Graham-Jones, Jean. *Broken Pencils and Crouching Dictators : Issues of Censorship in Contemporary Argentine Theatre*.

from the perspective of a newly freed repressed people was imbedded in their differing forms of expression. Among the varying manifestations that surfaced in 1983 and beyond, there was a visible disconnect between those Argentines who had remained in the nation during the military regime and those who left the country, with particular regard to the intellectuals.¹² Those exiled were critical of the intellectuals who remained in the nation, claiming they were inactive and submissive with regard to the dictatorship. The exiles had left to prove that they would not tolerate censorship of their values or beliefs, and also so that they would be able to continue their creative processes from abroad, reflecting on the situation within the nation, despite lack of correspondence between what was occurring within the nation and what was perceivable to outsiders. This was a result of the military misrepresentations of the reality within. The intellectuals who remained in Argentina throughout the turmoil accused the exiles of being ignorant to the situation occurring within their motherland. In their view, it was nearly impossible for the exiles to produce any literature regarding the situation within Argentina when they were not actually there to experience it firsthand. This is shown through the visible difference in the literature that was produced inside and outside. The works produced inside were highly censored, a major obstacle to an examination of the cultural production of the period because it was difficult for artists to express their true sentiments in any form of expression. These differing viewpoints created a new mold of representations throughout Argentine society during the period of Redemocratization, which evidenced the responsibility of the nation to

¹² One of the focuses of the cultural recovery process in the post-dictatorship period was to salvage literature that was produced in Argentina during the dictatorship, which proved to be a difficult task given that the texts were scarce and hard to obtain. The culture of the epoch was considerably disjointed as a consequence of censorship, this lack of coherence was made evident as texts were being brought to the public's attention not just from victims of the dictatorship, but also from exiled artists who were returning home.

change the passivity of intellectuals in a society that was once again beginning to encourage free thought.¹³

A Look at Argentine Film Production Post-Dictatorship; Camila and The Official Story

Despite the seeming lack of cultural expression and film production in Argentina at the fall of the military dictatorship, two films came out of the time period with as powerful a message as the protests in the Plaza de Mayo during the end of the junta. Camila, directed by Maria Luisa Bemberg, was opened to the public in 1984, telling a daunting love story of Camila O’Gorman and Ladislao Gutierrez in nineteenth-century Argentina. Released just a year later was The Official Story (La Historia Oficial) directed and co-written by Luiz Puenzo in 1985. Rather than telling the tale of a torrid affair, The Official Story takes a different direction telling instead the story of love and loss of a different kind.

Camila is a tale of Argentina under the severe dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1847. A story unfolds of a young woman from an aristocratic family, Camila (Susú Pecoraro), who is tortured by her sudden and overpowering love for a Jesuit priest, Ladislao (Imanol Arias), who has just moved into town. She is overcome with emotion and fully embraces her desires, boldly making her intentions obvious to the man of her affection. The young priest, who is already under the watchful eye of the city for being a new addition, at first avoids Camila and her inappropriate advances. He attempts to maintain a great distance from her and avoids one on one interaction as best he can, but Camila’s persistence and his own realization that he returns her affection causes a physical affliction on his part as he falls into a self-destructive pattern and romantic fever. Camila, realizing that Ladislao is equally tortured by his love for her, pursues him with even greater determination. This unconventionality was totally frowned upon not just

¹³ Marcos Arguinis. *Evolution of a Democratic Argentine Culture. The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture, 1983 and Beyond*. An International Research Symposium. Arizona State University. 1987. p7-9.

by the dictatorship, but also by society as a whole. The overly religious sentiment of Argentine far surpassed even that of Spain, as pointed out during one of the ending scenes of the film. Not only were priests seen as solely religious figures not meant to have love for anyone other than God, it was considered a crime and a sin of the greatest degree to embark on a such a socially unacceptable path.

Without knowing about Camila's undying love for Ladislao, her father Adolfo, (Hector Alterio) realizes that Camila is not upholding the values of the church. After a demonstration by Camila at a dinner held among members of the community where she reveals her disdain for the Rosas government, her father claims that "a single woman is a disorder of nature," insisting that since she would not be able to find order in a convent, Camila had to prepare herself to for marriage, ignoring her wishes and those of her mother. It is at this time that Camila and Ladislao realize that they are unable to maintain their relationship within the confines of their home and set off to a small town in the country under false aliases. It is there that they are able to recreate their lives, telling a story of love and marriage for their new neighbors and setting up a schoolhouse for the local children. The couple is openly accepted into the community until discovered by a fellow priest who reports them to the authorities. Rather than running even further, Camila and Ladislao realize that they must make things right, (for Ladislao it is particularly important to do right by God,) and allow themselves to be captured. They are then arrested for the crime of sacrilege and held prisoners to await their remorseless death sentence. As was the custom of the time period in the mid nineteenth-century severe crimes were punishable by death and often without fair trial. Under the regime, Rosas had the final word on such indictments involving sacrilege or anything else seen as immoral or against the view of Argentina that he wished to uphold.

The political statement in *Camila* was as obvious in 1984 as it was when the couple embarked on their affair in 1847. Driven by the desire to conquer love despite the repercussions brought forth by a repressive society told a very similar tale in the Argentina of Rosas as in the one of the most recent military dictatorship. Puenzo's *The Official Story* told a more modern story of love in a different light, which was propelled forward by the secrecies of the dictatorship. Alicia (Norma Aleandro) is the wife of an aristocratic businessman, Roberto (Hector Alterio). Her status in society prevents her from learning the reality of the situation within Argentina, and leaves her blind to the devastation caused by the military junta that, unknowing to Alicia, her husband helped to create and maintain. As the dictatorship begins to fall, Argentine society begins to open up about its suffering and fights to win back that which was taken from it. Oblivious to the state of affairs in Argentina, Alicia does not believe her students at the university when they speak out against the government, claiming that "assassins" were the ones who wrote history. Alicia misunderstands their words to be reflecting a youthful ignorance, not realizing that she, in fact, was the ignorant one. While consulting with a fellow professor, Alicia begins to open her eyes to a plausible alternate reality from that which she has experienced. It was not uncommon in Argentina for those of the upper class to be so far removed from the reality of life within their own country that they had no knowledge of what was really going on. This was due in part to the strict censorship enforced by the dictatorship, which did not allow for even the slightest mention of censorship or of the Dirty War, which was strangling society. Alicia was kept particularly in the dark due to her husband's position and role as a torturer, as were many of the upper class that were not experiencing the disappearances of their loved ones firsthand. It was easy to ignore any cries for help they might have heard for lack of knowledge of their actual existence.

The realization of her own lack of mindfulness coincides with the return of Alicia's best friend, Ana (Chunchuna Villafane), from exile. Alicia never understood why Ana had left so suddenly without even a note and not until Ana reveals her agonizing story of detention and torture does Alicia begin to question her own life and unknowing participation in the wrongdoings of the country. In her tale Ana reveals the fact that many young and pregnant women were held in the detention centers and were forced to give up their children to military personnel to be raised as children of aristocratic society. This was the first true awakening for Alicia as to her lack of knowledge regarding the origin of her own five-year old adopted daughter, Gaby (Analia Castro).

Alicia, at first innocently, questions Roberto as to where Gaby came from, asking to know more about her birth mother. When Roberto's responses are evasive and unsympathetic, Ana looks to hospital records and the kind help of one of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Sara (Chela Ruiz), to track down Ana's birth mother. Misleading Sara into believing that Alicia too has lost a child, Sara helps her to locate numerous albums full of information of children born while in captivity. Sara soon discovers the existence of Gaby and also notes the remarkable resemblance to her own daughter at the same age who lost her baby to the military. In a poignant scene at a café in Buenos Aires, Sara shows a series of photos of her daughter as a young girl and then as part of a couple before she was disappeared during the dictatorship. The semblance is undeniable and Alicia is no longer able to refute that she was unknowingly complicit in the situation in Argentina. This discovery, as was the case throughout Argentina's upper crust, was heartbreaking to Alicia, as she genuinely had no knowledge of the circumstances surrounding Gaby's adoption. Though sympathetic to her ignorance, Sara too is

distraught by the discovery. How does one move forward in a 'normal' manner after discovering such powerful evidence of deception?

Through the discovery of Sara, Alicia's knowledge of Roberto's position within the destruction of the nation is too much for her to withstand. When she brings her newfound awareness to Roberto's attention, he lashes out on her exclaiming "What am I, a torturer?" as is made obvious in his cruel and violent reaction, striking Alicia in a passionate scene which was the end of the road for Alicia. Her woeful final embrace with Roberto as their daughter Gaby happily sings a song over the phone in the background leaves more questions unanswered in this sadistic account of the reality in Argentina at the fall of the military junta. What will become of Gaby? Where will Alicia go? This ending, though typical of Argentine film to leave so many questions unanswered, was also illustrative of the situation at hand at the fall of the dictatorship. Where do you re-begin your life after such torment? How do you move forward knowing all that has been left behind?

Both *Camila* and *The Official Story* represent genuine accounts of misery in Argentina. Despite the given time frame for *Camila* of 1847, the viewer can easily see the parallels between the despair during Rosas and during the military dictatorship of the seventies and eighties. The film gave, for some, a chance to escape the present-day circumstances in 1985, as well as the dim future that lay ahead, but for most it was the chance to tell the story of today through a romanticized version from the past. The nation was, perhaps, still too vulnerable to deal with the reality within and so they looked to the past to tell the story for them. *The Official Story* came about a year after the release of *Camila* and showed a harsh portrayal of what was happening in actuality in Argentina at the fall of the dictatorship, (just two short years before the actual

production of the film.) The story of Alicia was not a unique one, but overall was a definitively original script of what could have happened to any aristocratic family.

Camila and Alicia are both victims of their own circumstances. While the government actively pursues Camila as an enemy of the state, Alicia is victim to her own ignorance and compliance to her husband and the country. Both women are controlled by the lead male of their respective households. Camila's father, Adolfo, is a severe man who is a firm believer in Rosas, while Camila herself sees the injustices and deaths imposed on society by the tyrant. When Camila speaks out against Rosas and the unjustifiable deaths of innocents, her father sends her away from the table, trying to effectively eradicate her opinions and freewill. Alicia's husband, Roberto, does the same to her whenever she attempts to explore Gaby's origins or to express her doubt in her mother's willingness to give away her daughter. He simply tells her to stop asking and refuses to give explanation for that which she wants to know. Both men are attempting to maintain control in a family that is bound to stray off course, as well as in a society that is doomed to fail. They represent the dictatorships themselves while effectively rejecting the views and queries of their families (primarily Alicia and Camila), rather than producing justifiable and believable explanations they simply tell the problems to go away. Both of these stories are told during a time that represents the beginning of the end of each dictatorship. Roberto and Adolfo end up losing Alicia and Camila, respectively, as well as the respect of their families while trying to protect them from reality by denying their suspicions. These two men are representative of each dictatorship in their respective time period. As the dictators try to "protect" society from the harsh realities of everything that freedom entails, they are really just choking it, thus causing it to stray further rather than to be appreciative of the efforts. They effectively take away the choice for society, and for Alicia and Camila, who struggle to regain their independence. This

demonstrates that no relationship or dictatorship can be maintained forever, as people will always fight for freedom, in turn destroying the control that sought to stifle them.

Alicia and Camila are both relatively modern women for the time periods they represent. Alicia is not progressive throughout the majority of the dictatorship or her marriage, preferring rather to listen to and believe that which she was told unquestioningly. When it was brought to her attention, however, that something did not add up she began to examine the role of society around her, opening her eyes to contemporary thought, which was quite unusual for a woman of her social status at the time. While the average Argentine was questioning authority, the aristocrats closed their eyes and ears to it in a false attempt to maintain their position above the rest. Camila was undoubtedly beyond her time as an individual, particularly as a woman. She spoke out against her father, rejected the role she was expected to play, and openly deviated from the church. She followed her passions regardless of their consequences and dealt with the repercussions when necessary. She represented everything that was a threat to Rosas' regime being that she was willful and devastatingly independent. In a sense Alicia was more independent than Camila solely based on the fact that there was no precedent for her to follow in her personal situation. She had to figure out how to deal with her circumstances without any help from outside, while Camila had her grandmother in whose example she was able to follow. Though we are not told directly, it is implied that the grandmother had an affair with the viceroy of Brazil, and as her punishment was restricted to house arrest while Camila was a young girl. As a result, Camila, despite her father's disapproval, continually sought stories of love and passion from her grandmother, who was an eager participant in the conversations.

The stories of Camila and Alicia both end in tragedy, each with everlasting consequences. The two women are very strong-minded and unrelenting in their quest for love

and for truth. For Camila it is her search to be with Ladislao regardless of the consequences from a society that tells her it is wrong, and for Alicia it is the mission to discover her daughter's true history and to understand her husband's role in robbing her of it. As is commonly seen in Argentine film, there is no unrealistic, "Hollywood" ending. The viewer leaves the theater with a sense of deep understanding and compassion for the situation, but still with no resolution to the problems at hand. The method of leaving conflict unsolved inspires one to delve into further study of the problems in order to expand their knowledge of the situation, which was particularly important with *The Official Story* in 1985, because it opened the eyes of international audiences to the horrors of Argentina from 1976-1983. Both films attained international recognition, *Camila* nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1984, and *The Official Story* winning the award in 1985.

Conclusion:

As is demonstrated through the production of *Camila* and *The Official Story*, Argentina's redefinition of culture was contingent on dealing with the issues from the past. Before they were able to move forward with innovative forms of expression, there was a necessity to redefine society based on a renewed system of values, taking into account the anguish of a nation on the rebound. Through an analysis of the historical context of the military dictatorship of 1976-1983, it is evident that the history preceding the newly independent state played an enormous role in the path it took upon completion. Though Argentina's reaction to freedom appeared to be a subtle one, it is apparent that this was due primarily to the continued repression throughout the country and to the freshness of their wounds, which were still actively distressing society. Argentines did not quite know how to handle a life in the wake of such tyranny that the country was turned completely up side down. There were too many questions left unanswered, and

justice was sought from a military of oppressors who had not only taken away their children and their young, but who could not give them the answers they desired. Through an analysis of *Camila* and *The Official History* we see that for Argentina, it was not a simple question of regaining social liberties, but rather one of learning how to rebuild their lives from the emptiness they were left with. In the wake of disaster, Argentina demonstrated itself to be a country held prisoner by its continued suffering and mourning as is shown in its inability to completely recreate and remold its cultural empire.