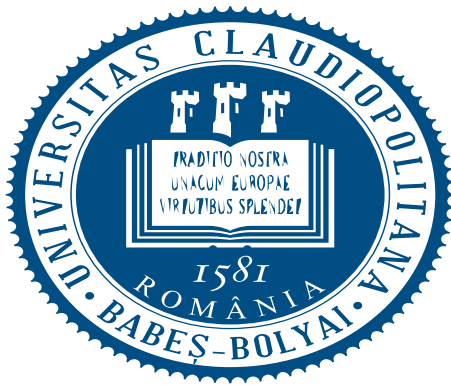


BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF THEATRE AND FILM
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND FILM
SCIENTIFIC DOCTORAL THESIS IN THE FIELD OF
CINEMA AND MEDIA



UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI
BABEȘ-BOLYAI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
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BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

TRADITIO ET EXCELLENTIA

Summary

THE PERCEPTION OF STATE VIOLENCE IN CHILE AND ROMANIA

An analysis through filmic evidence based on or inspired by real events

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Table of contents

Acknowledgments	6
Agradecimientos	9
Introduction	12
I Part	
Violence, banality of evil and mass control	18
Chapter 1. A general analysis of violence	19
<i>Theories in the study of violence</i>	19
<i>Biochemical theories</i>	20
<i>The important role of genes in the generation of violent behavior</i>	20
<i>Genetics of Behavior</i>	21
<i>Psychosocial theories</i>	28
<i>Psychological perspective</i>	29
<i>Psychodynamic perspective</i>	29
<i>Cognitive-behavioral perspective</i>	29
<i>Structural theories</i>	32
<i>Socio-cultural perspective</i>	32
<i>A comprehensive framework for analyzing violence</i>	34
<i>The influence of situational forces on personal and social actions</i>	38
<i>Rules and roles determine the nature of reality</i>	48
<i>Why systems become so important</i>	51
<i>Analysis of social dynamics: deindividuation, dehumanization, and the manifestation of evil through inactive behavior</i>	54
<i>Deindividuation</i>	55
<i>Dehumanization</i>	56
<i>Moral disconnection</i>	57
<i>Malice by omission: the passivity</i>	59
<i>Why situations and systems matter</i>	60
<i>Heroism and the heroic</i>	65
<i>A film inspired by the experiment</i>	69
Figure 1	

The Stanford Prison Experiment	72
Chapter 2. Hannah Arendt, the Eichmann case and the banality of evil.....	73
<i>The Zone of Interest</i>	82
Figure 2	
The Zone of Interest	88
Chapter 3. The Monoform and the media crisis	89
<i>The Universal Clock and the Pitching process according to Watkins</i>	98
<i>La Commune (2000).....</i>	103
<i>The project's concept and its distinctive attributes.....</i>	106
II Part	
Chile/Romania: a study of dictatorships as reflected in film	113
Chapter 4. The political timing of two dictatorships overlapped.	114
Comparative experiences and their influence on art in Chile and Romania	
<i>The Romanian dictatorship (1965-1989)</i>	119
<i>Videograms of a Revolution</i>	125
Figure 3	
Videograms of a Revolution	131
<i>The Chilean dictatorship (1973-1990).....</i>	131
<i>La ciudad de los fotógrafos</i>	138
Figure 4	
La ciudad de los fotógrafos.....	142
Chapter 5. Indoctrination, torture and its perpetrators.....	143
<i>The woman behind Bestia and her life.....</i>	144
Figure 5	
Porcelain doll inspired by Ingrid Olderöck in Bestia	151
Figure 6	
House of Ingrid Olderöck in Bestia.....	152
Figure 7	
House of Ingrid Olderöck at present	152

<i>Bestia</i>	153
Figure 8	
In front of the torture center “La Venda Sexy” in Bestia	156
Figure 9	
Outside the torture center at present	156
Figure 10	
Blue envelope in Bestia	157
Figure 11	
Street corner where Ingrid Olderöck was shot in Bestia	158
Figure 12	
The same corner, Coventry Street and Baden Street, nowadays	158
<i>MUGUREL!</i>	159
Figure 13	
Protest statement - Dosar Mugur Călinescu	166
Figure 14	
Message transcription - Dosar Mugur Călinescu	167
Figure 15	
Message transcription - Dosar Mugur Călinescu	168
Figure 16	
Panoul	169
<i>Tipografic Majuscul</i>	170
Figure 17	
The apartment of Mugur’s mother, as depicted in a sketch that was obtained through wiretapping	178
Figure 18	
Securitate Agents in Tipografic Majuscul	179
Figure 19	
Mugur with his father on set in Tipografic Majuscul	179

Figure 20	
The real Mugur Călinescu in Tipografic Majuscul	180
Chapter 6. The different causes that lead to social unrest.....	181
Figure 21	
Un violador en tu camino. <i>Revista Némesis</i>	199
<i>Inside the Social Upheaval at Plaza de la Dignidad</i>	
<i>The unofficial record of protests in Chile</i>	205
Figure 22	
Un pays qui se tient sage	208
Figure 23	
Chile in Revolte	212
Figure 24	
Santiago Rising	213
Figure 25	
Plano Fijo, 100 registros en torno a Plaza de la Dignidad	215
<i>The monopoly of violence, the acronym A.C.A.B., and a non-violent form of resistance</i>	216
Figure 26	
March 8 Protest. On the shield it says: “The fight goes on”. <i>Revista Némesis</i>	224
<i>No</i>	224
Figure 27	
No	229
Conclusions	230
Bibliography	239
<i>Books and articles</i>	239
<i>Online sources</i>	242
<i>Filmography</i>	246
<i>Video-essay</i>	250
<i>List of figures</i>	250

The present research aims to explore violence through two case studies of the national film industries of Chile and Romania after the fall of their respective dictatorships. Although both countries began democratic processes simultaneously, their political and economic paths diverged significantly. This divergence is reflected in the films of the 1990s, during the transition to democracy, which dealt primarily with social and economic marginalization. Later films continued to focus on personal challenges related to the new political systems and unfulfilled promises.

On October 18, 2019, mass protests broke out in Chile against the government's failure to address the rising cost of living and stagnant wages, leading to extreme social inequality - the highest among OECD countries. In Romania, the case of Mugur Călinescu, who fought against the regime in Botoșani, highlights how young people are often the first to rebel against systemic abuses in both countries.

Both Romania's and Chile's political systems have institutions that use violence, such as Romania's Securitate and Chile's DINA (later CNI). Despite the democratic transitions of the 1990s, unresolved justice issues from the dictatorships continue to cause social problems. Today, institutions such as Chile's Carabineros are under scrutiny for their abusive methods of maintaining public order, highlighting the enduring links to past conflicts.

In Chapter 1, after a comprehensive introduction to violence, I aimed to highlight the complex nature of the phenomenon and the biochemical, psychosocial, and structural theories and perspectives for studying it.

Violence is defined as the intentional use of force with the intent to cause harm. Theories in the study of violence include biochemical theories, which suggest that violent behavior is biologically based, and behavioral genetics, which examines the interplay between genetic predispositions and environmental factors.

Non-biological factors such as emotional and social factors and contextual conditions, such as unemployment and social inequality also influence violent behavior. However, linking genetics to behavior can lead to dangerous social policies, and research in behavioral genetics must be conducted carefully and ethically. Understanding both genetic and environmental influences is crucial for developing effective interventions and ethical policies.

I opted to focus on investigating the impact of situational forces as proposed by Philip Zimbardo. My objective was to uncover the underlying factors that may have prompted the use

of violence in specific circumstances and to assess the legitimacy of the State's claimed monopoly on violence, as posited by the German philosopher Max Weber.

The chapter closes with an analysis of Kyle Patrick Alvarez's film *The Stanford Prison Experiment* (2015), which delves into the details of a famous experiment that received attention for its conclusions and critique for its methodology.

Chapter 2 focuses on the concepts presented by Hannah Arendt, particularly in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Arendt coined the term “banality of evil”¹ after witnessing Adolf Eichmann's trial in Israel. This term captures the notion that some individuals conform to the norms of their system without considering the repercussions of their actions, solely driven by the unquestioning execution of orders. The repercussions or outcomes of torture, executions, or the engagement in such acts are not taken into consideration, as long as they are ordered by higher authorities.

Arendt also discusses the context of Eichmann's trial, questioning Israel's jurisdiction and highlighting the controversial involvement of certain Jewish leaders with the Nazi regime. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the power of peaceful resistance, as exemplified by Denmark's actions during the Holocaust.

Arendt's concept of the banality of evil, while criticized by some, underscores the potential for ordinary individuals to commit atrocities under certain social conditions. Her work has inspired various filmmakers, who have explored these themes of moral complacency and the absence of empathy in their portrayals of historical and contemporary events.

In modern times, the term is used to refer to the activities of certain individuals in history who have committed horrific acts of violence and demonstrated a lack of empathy for others in their behavior. These individuals have not been shown to have experienced traumatic events or to have exhibited abnormal personality traits that could justify their behavior. In simple terms, regardless of their behavior, they were ordinary individuals.

The chapter concludes with an examination of Jonathan Glazer's film *The zone of interest* (2023), which depicts the life of the Höss couple living quietly near a concentration camp. This film is a clear application of what happens when the banality of evil is installed in the heart of a

¹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann en Jerusalén. Un estudio acerca de la banalidad del mal*, Carlos Ribalta (trans.), Barcelona, Editorial Lumen, 1999, p. 477.

family and a society, and a poignant reminder of the possible consequences when society begins to tolerate the intolerable.

Chapter 3 presents the approaches of director Peter Watkins to the use of the Monoform in today's audiovisual language and offers a sharp critique of MAVMs (Mass Audiovisual Media)² for the way they exclude the audience from the communicative act they should enable. He also criticizes the processes he calls Universal Clock and Pitching, through which the industry unilaterally sets its terms and excludes different languages and modes of communication.

This chapter aims to elucidate the primary components of the Monoform, a concept that I argue has had a significant impact on critical thinking in Chile and Romania. I want to understand Watkins' attempt to explain the media crisis and apply his theory of refusal to the conception of audiovisual content in his film *La Commune*.

This chapter discusses Watkins' view of the world, his collaborative approach, and the goals he pursued while working on the production of *La Commune*, a film that uses a dystopian narrative to depict the struggles of a group of villagers who rise up against the oppressive actions of a privileged class. Watkins aims to document a lesser-known aspect of history using his theories and methods.

The first section of this dissertation, entitled *Violence, banality of evil and mass control*, is now complete. In this section, I have attempted to provide an overview of the principles used under the dictatorships of Chile and Romania, which continue to have an impact on the societies in which we live today.

The dictatorships of Romania and Chile are dissected in chapter 4, along with their different conceptions of what they wanted from artists and the artwork that was created while they were in power. It is impossible to separate the political from the creation of some works of art, whether political art in the case of Romania or apolitical art in the case of Chile.

While Chile's authoritarian regime and Romania's totalitarian rule both sought to monopolize cultural activities and impose official art in line with political goals, their approaches

² Peter Watkins, *La Crisis de los Medios*, Juan José Pulido (trans.), Ciudad de México, Editorial Mangos de Hacha, 2015, p. 7.

differed significantly.³ In Chile, art became a medium of political resistance despite attempts to depoliticize it, while in Romania art was overtly politicized and tightly controlled.

The chapter examines Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, noting its shift from initial reformism to severe repression, and contrasts this with Chile's experience under Augusto Pinochet, marked by brutal repression and neoliberal economic reforms. It is here that the foundations are laid for the political and economic frameworks within which our contemporary societies attempt to pursue elusive development. This legacy continues to shape our daily lives, even after the passage of time. After the overview of the Romanian regime, the documentary film to be analyzed is *Videograms of a Revolution*, directed by Andrei Ujică and Harun Farocki. The film shows footage from several cameras that depict a violent televised revolution that Romanian viewers find hard to believe, highlighting the tension between media democratization and manipulation

After a description of the Chilean dictatorship, where the role of the Catholic Church and independent photographers in resisting and documenting repression in Chile is covered, the film analyzed is *La ciudad de los fotógrafos*, which rescues the images that were taken by a group of photographers who lived through those difficult times. These artists left their photographs as both artistic testimony and historical record. The chapter highlights the complex relationship between political power and artistic expression in authoritarian contexts.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of a Chilean short film and a Romanian feature film, both of which depict a local case of human rights violations in the countries in question.

Concerning Chile, I present the life of Ingrid Olderöck, a former police officer who was recruited to join the DINA, the agency responsible for the persecution and elimination of opponents of the Pinochet dictatorship. Olderöck gained notoriety for training a dog named Volodia to engage in sexual violence against detainees.

In Romania, I introduce the story of Mugur Călinescu, a 16-year-old who, in 1981, wrote political messages on the streets of Botoșani with the aim of inciting a sense of resistance among the inhabitants. Mugur was subjected to investigation, interrogation, and harassment by the Securitate, together with his family, for a duration of two years due to his audacious actions.

³ Caterina Preda, *Art and Politics under Modern Dictatorships. A Comparison of Chile and Romania*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2017, p. 6.

These circumstances persisted until his passing, which continues to be surrounded by uncertainty.

The short film *Bestia*, directed by Hugo Covarrubias, and the film *Tipografic Majuscul*, directed by Radu Jude, are analyzed in this chapter, which tries to show how the banality of evil was applied in both countries during a period when detainees lacked basic guarantees of respect and protection.

Chapter 6 delineates the numerous variables that triggered the October 2019 protests in Chile. It incorporates an extensive number of cinematic references to document these events and societal issues in both Chile and Romania. This is done to underscore the shared characteristics between the two countries, despite their different social contexts.

In a subsequent section of the chapter, I highlight a collection of documentaries and short films that specifically tackled the matter of the Chilean uprising. These works underscore the significance of promptly documenting events as a means to challenge the official narrative.

In the next part of the chapter, I try to clarify the concept of the “monopoly of violence”⁴ as defined by Max Weber, while also introducing a form of non-violent resistance proposed by the philosopher Judith Butler.

The film to be analyzed is *No*, directed by Pablo Larraín, which examines the production of television propaganda during the 1988 plebiscite in Chile. This plebiscite marked the restoration of democracy and the end of the military dictatorship.

Chile/Romania: a study of dictatorships as reflected in film is the title of the second part of this work, which has now been completed.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the background of the feature film *Tipografic Majuscul* and the short film *Bestia*, both testimonies of life during dictatorship in Chile and Romania. It explores the complex nature of violence and how situational forces influence its use. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of comprehending the political environments in which these incidents took place as well as the requirement that judicial systems carry out their responsibility to stop impunity. The modus operandi employed by Ingrid Olderöck and by the Securitate demonstrate the use of the banality of evil in both cases analyzed.

⁴ Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*. „*Science as a Vocation*” „*Politics as a Vocation*”, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 2004, p. 33.

The Monoform significantly influences the population's critical thinking abilities and media language, which can influence viewers to vote based on content they have seen on television or the internet. News coverage can marginalize certain segments of the population, contributing to increased violence within societies.

During the Pinochet dictatorship, television stations were managed with political influence, leading to the promotion of entertainment-focused programs and increased advertising time. This led to the pervasive use of television in Chile, particularly in the reception and response to state propaganda. Television continues to have a significant impact on Chilean households today, playing a role in the dissemination of propaganda and the handling of scandals.

The principles employed under the dictatorships in Chile and Romania continue to exert influence on societies today. The concept of the banality of evil continues to inspire artists and filmmakers, particularly in the post-pandemic environment with the growth of extreme right and left ideologies.

Both dictatorships instilled fear in the population through physical repression, threats, and propaganda, causing a rupture in the social fabric. To overcome the legacy of fear, societies must subject the state apparatus to social and political oversight, ensure respect for human rights, and strengthen the judicial system. The film industry has an important responsibility to expose and publicize the truth about abuses and crimes committed.

The cases of *Bestia* and *Tipografic Majuscul* illustrate the importance of historical memory and the impact of their narratives on audiences. *Bestia* was the second Chilean short film to be nominated for an Academy Award in the United States, and the story of Ingrid Olderöck is now known in Latin America. The film based on the story of Mugur Călinescu will endure and attract scholars and Romanian viewers.

Conspiracy theories can be refuted through cinematic works, as they bring audiences closer to the country's history. Both works received support from state institutions, which should be maintained as a long-term commitment.

Eugenio Tironi indicates:

“Peace and social order are always unfinished conquests, fragile and subject to their own destruction.”⁵ The anger seen in the protests shows that Chilean society has become politicized, and citizens have understood that protesting is a democratic right. Every crisis unleashes creativity and reflection, leading to cultural ruptures that open up new possibilities for society.

Social problems have been reflected in the cinema of Chile and Romania. In Chile, low-budget documentaries and short films emerged to record the street protests, while in Romania, the politicization of art during the dictatorship led to the opposite effect. Nevertheless, there are works that portray the problems of the population and, in recent years, we have seen much more politicized works, such as the latest films by Radu Jude and, perhaps, the most internationally famous example: the documentary *Colectiv* (2019), directed by Alexander Nanau.

The cinematic medium is not the sole conduit for documenting of social issues during social protests. The performance *Un violador en tu camino* by the collective Las Tesis has had a significant international impact, effectively combining gender-based violence with a direct and critical discourse in an accessible and replicable way.

Terence, the ancient Roman playwright born into slavery, expressed:

“Nothing human is alien to me.”⁶

This statement seems to correspond to Judith Butler's proposed approach to dealing with violence. In order to coexist harmoniously in our societies, it is crucial to maintain a steadfast dedication to equality and the recognition of the value of each individual's existence. This is essential if we are to continue to live together in our societies, where inequalities in various aspects of life are becoming increasingly evident and difficult to tolerate.

⁵ Eugenio Tironi, *Autoritarismo, Modernización y Marginalidad. El caso de Chile 1973-1989*, Santiago de Chile, Ediciones SUR, 1990, p. 13.

⁶ Philip Zimbardo, *El efecto Lucifer. El porqué de la maldad*, Genís Sánchez Barberán (trans.), Barcelona, Paidós (epub), 2012, p. 767.

Keywords: *violence, Romania, Chile, Carabineros, Securitate, Mugur Călinescu, banality of evil, Monoform, film, repercussions, Bestia, Tipografic Majuscul.*