

Signata

Annales des sémiotiques / Annals of Semiotics

12 | 2021

Sémiotiques de l'archive

Institutions et gestes de l'archive

Archive, Practices, and Memory Policies

The Centro Editor de América Latina from a semiotic perspective

Archives, pratiques et politiques de la mémoire. Le Centro Editor de América Latina d'une perspective sémiotique

ANDRÉS MANUEL CÁCERES BARBOSA AND CRISTINA VOTO

<https://doi.org/10.4000/signata.3071>

Abstracts

Français English

Le *Centro Editor de América Latina* a commencé ses activités afin de répondre à la violente intervention de la dictature de Juan Carlos Onganía à l'Université de Buenos Aires, en 1966. Il a survécu à la dictature militaire de Jorge Rafael Videla et a fermé ses portes lors de l'ouverture néolibérale en 1995. Les premiers tirages ont atteint les 20 000 exemplaires et, pendant la dernière dictature, les volumes confisqués s'élevaient à 3 000 000 exemplaires par titre. Reconnaître dans les archives que la Bibliothèque nationale Mariano Moreno a commencé à construire en 2006 les marques et les traces de l'éditeur et la signification de ses pratiques permet d'évoquer, à travers une opération de ré-énonciation, les symptômes de la mémoire des dictatures qui ont dévasté la région latino-américaine pendant la seconde moitié du xx^e siècle.

La construction et la circulation des archives du Centro Editor de América Latina sont ici considérées comme une pratique, c'est-à-dire comme une opération visant à transformer les connaissances, les technologies et les politiques éditoriales. Celles-ci constituent un prisme diaphane à travers lequel l'industrie de l'édition argentine est rendue lisible. Les matériaux qui composent les archives du Centre, les éléments effectifs — les documents sur la constitution et la persécution judiciaire de la société, les correspondances des travailleurs, les planches d'impression, les épreuves en couleurs, les interviews, la conception des collections et des articles de journaux — et les éléments absents — les disparitions de travailleurs et le magasin incendié en 1980 sous le jugement subversif — défient la pratique de la Bibliothèque Nationale, l'obligeant à combler les lacunes de la connaissance et à développer une énonciation appropriée par rapport au présent : la praxis de la maison d'édition s'oriente vers la conception et le montage d'expositions et vers des interventions dans le milieu urbain. Les pratiques — théoriques, matérielles et politiques — qui reviennent à propos du *Centro Editor de América Latina* font mémoire et cherchent à se constituer, y compris de nos jours devant les tribunaux, en dénonciations qui résistent au révisionnisme historique et au négationnisme sur les crimes de la junte militaire. En ce sens, les archives du Centre ne représentent pas seulement une énonciation de cette mémoire de destruction, mais surtout une action qui possède sa propre syntagmatique et qui peut agir sur un présent éditorial et collectif.

The *Centro Editor de América Latina* began its activities in response to the violent intervention of the dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía at the University of Buenos Aires, in 1966. It survived the military junta of Jorge Rafael Videla and closed its doors during the neoliberal turn in 1995. The first print runs did not fall below 20,000 copies and, according to the materials seized during the last military dictatorship, the confiscated volumes numbered up to 3,000,000 copies per title. Recognizing in the archive that the Mariano Moreno National Library began to build in 2006 the marks and traces of the publisher and their meaning allows us to evoke, through an operation of re-enunciation, the symptoms of the memory of the dictatorships that devastated the second half of the 20th century in the entire Latin American region. The construction and circulation of the Latin American Editor Center archive is understood as a practice, that is, as an operation to transform editorial knowledge, technologies, and policies that enunciate and perform on a diaphanous present for the publishing industry in Argentina. The materials that make up the archive of the Centro Editor of Latin America, the present ones—the documents on the constitution and judicial persecution of the company, the correspondence of the workers, the printing plates, the color proofs, the interviews, the design of the collections, and the newspaper articles, and the absentees: the disappearances of the workers and the deposit burned in 1980 under the subversion judgment—have offered resistance to the practice carried out by the National Library, forcing it to fill the gaps in knowledge and to develop enunciation in a manner befitting the present: curatorships and montages of exhibitions on the good praxis of the editorial are accompanied by interventions in the urban environment. The practices—theoretical, material, and political—which re-enunciate about the Centro Editor of Latin America are practices that make memory and that seek to build denunciations that resist historical revisionism and denialism regarding the responsibilities and crimes of the military junta, even today, in court. The archive of the Centro Editor of Latin America, in this sense, is not only the enunciation of that memory of destruction which it tries to remember but, above all, an action with its own syntax that can act on an editorial and collective present.

Index terms

Mots-clés : pratiques, énonciation, sémiologie, études culturelles, épistémologie

Keywords: practices, enunciation, semiosis, cultural studies, epistemology

Author's notes

For the construction of the article, Andrés Manuel Cáceres Barbosa wrote the first and the second section, while Cristina Voto the third and the fourth section. The conclusion was written jointly.

Full text

The Centro Editor de América Latina, a cultural positioning

- 1 The *Centro Editor de América Latina* (CEAL), the Latin American Press Center, began its publishing activities on September 21st 1966 and in December of that same year its first two collections of books appeared. In order to understand the history of the phenomenon represented by CEAL, it is necessary to go back to the Argentinean political and cultural context of the 50's. On the one hand, Argentina was in a period of economic and industrial development as part of the general climate of renovation present in Western countries after the Second World War. On the other hand, a political crisis fueled by the fall and exile of Juan Domingo Perón, the catalyst of the worker's rights in the 40's, brought to the Argentinian political scenario the components for a strong radicalization which led to four successful *coups d'état* between the 50's and the 80's and a failed one in 1951. On the cultural side, it is possible to identify three modernizing tendencies: the creation of new institutions for education, exhibition and cultural management (e.g. The Museo de Arte Moderno in 1956 and the Instituto Torquato Di Tella in 1958); the rise of new cultural production groups; and the appearance of a new and wider public (Longoni, Mestman 2008). Furthermore, the 60's were the years of the Latin-American literary boom, which represented not just the consecration of some authors, like Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, but also the growth of the circuits of publishing, distribution and consumption. It is in this context that the CEAL was founded. The very act of the CEAL's foundation is the consequence of

this context and, precisely, the consequence of the irruption into the national universities of the military forces of Juan Carlos Onganía's dictatorship. On the night of July 29th 1966, sadly known as the "*Noche de los Bastones Bargas*" [Night of the Long Batons], a forced removal of professors and students from the University of Buenos Aires drove the members of the academic community to submit their resignations. Among them were Boris Spivacow, general manager of the *Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires* (EUDEBA), the University Press of Buenos Aires, and a large part of his team. After that brutal event, Spivacow and the workers of EUDEBA announced their mass withdrawal from the University Press of Buenos Aires and the CEAL started to emerge in the shadow of the military junta.

2 Despite this violent foundation, the CEAL published until 1995 and, over almost three decades, 79 book collections appeared and some 5,000 titles, at the rate of one title per day. Many editorial series were composed of hundreds of titles. The first print runs did not fall below 20,000 copies and, according to the materials seized from the publisher's warehouses during the last military dictatorship in 1980, the confiscated volumes numbered 5,000, 40,000, 1,000,000, and 3,000,000 copies per title (Gociol 2017). The scope of this project is astonishing at first sight, especially if one considers that it arose during a dictatorship and that it concluded with the neoliberal opening that led to the 2001 crisis after Carlos Menem's mandate. Almost thirty years of activity marked by repression, censorship and different *coups d'états*, that of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970) and that of Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1983). After this initial impression, what is shown by the catalog of titles later published in 2007 by the *Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno*/the Mariano Moreno National Library—and titled *Más libros para más. Colecciones del Centro Editor de América Latina/More books for more. Collections of the Centro Editor of Latin America*—is another framework, even more valuable: a system of ideas, a mode of production, a form of cultural positioning. On account of all these aspects, the objective of this article is the unraveling of this framework and the understanding of the construction in 2008 of the CEAL archive as a process of significant editorial practice¹ in Argentina.

3 To understand the cultural impact of the CEAL, it is necessary to consider publishing as a field crossed by different forms of knowledge, a plural and collective dimension configured by technical and, at the same time, theoretical knowledge. Graphic Design, Linguistics, Law, Marketing, Systems Theory and many other competences are necessary so that, from the practice of publishing, a concrete catalog emerges which makes visible the circulation of publishing products in a given social context. In this sense, it is possible to consider the Publishing House as an imprint: a mark of design, (re)production and circulation of products; a production mark determined by knowledge and technologies, social and contextual matters and policies. The CEAL's slogan that a book cost less than a kilo of bread was not just a bet for the market, but a political vision reflected onto the price of the product. The possibilities generated by a reasonably large industrial graphic pool able to carry out a book reproduction enterprise on this scale is an important aspect in the analysis of the economic and political objectives of the CEAL. The average circulation of 3,000 to 5,000 copies demonstrates the size of the project which, compared to the present publishing industry, where circulation does not exceed between 1,000 and 2,000 copies, indicates significant editorial activity.

4 From these standpoints, understanding the construction of the CEAL's archive as a semiotic process implies, then, being able to recognize in its products the marks of an imprint and, from there, being able to put forward a critique of the current Press situation in Argentina. The archive—Michel Foucault (1969), Jacques Derrida (1995) and Georges Didi-Huberman (2007)—always preserves the good and a supreme good. This is not only constituted by the positive force of the statements it contains, but also the negative power of the mundane and provisional practice of the surrounding institutions, where the slow specific knowledge of the philologists intersects with the urgent worries of activism. In the Latin-American context the archive policies are based on a keyword: "democratization" (Giunta 2010, our translation) and have been studied for their political capacity to denounce and make visible repressive practices, censorship, and exploitation (Da Silva Catela, Jelin 2002; Ferraz Fernandes 2007;

Markarian 2016), which altered their status as “mere storage” to transform them into “places of dispute” (Balé 2018; Tello 2015). If the proper nature of the archive is the negative power of the lacunae, its hollow nature, when investigating the CEAL’s archive, what stands out are the symptoms of the absences, the forced disappearances of its workers, and the fire, the burning ashes of the CEAL depot in 1980.²

A social practice for the archive

5 The CEAL archive was founded in 2008 and hosted by the Mariano Moreno National Library. Its construction occurred under the direction of Horacio González, the director of the National Library between 2005 and 2015, with a team including Esteban Bitesnik and Jorge Coco Ríos y Cecilia Arthagan, among others. For the analysis of this archive this article proposes to conceive of the archive as a social semiotics practice due to its political capacity, the potentiality to render some aspects of action visible. In this regard, practices are to be found in the social sphere, although they are not processes which are already given but processes requiring a reconstruction of meaning, an operation of focusing. For semiotics, practices are not processes that are already packaged and “ready for analysis” in a culture, but rather constructed sociocultural objects. From this perspective, practices are constructed by the gaze of the analyst who selects them and collects them from the social sphere since it is always the gaze of an observer who interprets them. For the analysis of a practice it is not only the meaning that is the object of reconstruction, but also the very delimitation of what we consider to be the object (Violi 2005a).

6 The reconstruction of the meaning and the delimitation of the CEAL’s archive by the Mariano Moreno National Library as a practice leads us back to the notion of practice as developed by Louis Althusser (1988, 1965 [1969]). That is, an epistemic proposal that does not only “make-see” certain structures under a certain mode of existence but also certain modes of production which carry out marks of the continuities and discontinuities of the sense of practice. Althusser understands by “practice” a:

process of transformation of determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of ‘production’). In any practice thus conceived, the determinant moment (or element) is neither the raw material nor the product, but the practice in the narrow sense: the moment of the labour of transformation itself (Althusser 1965 [1969], p. 166).

7 Or, as he continues: “The practice is a process of transformation subject to its own conditions of existence” (1988: 55, our translation). This notion postulates the concept of “archive practice”, that is, the practice of archiving as a social practice and as a process of transformation that demands the replacement of not only the constituent elements of the archive—as a product—, but also the raw materials that conform and the selection criteria involved in the process. In this way:

Various types of materials related to the work of the Centro Editor of Latin America and its director, Boris Spivacow. [...] [consisting of] books and fascicles, sheets, maps, letters, notes, digital and paper photographs, press clippings, interviews and other documents that cover a wide temporal spectrum (Digital Catalog of the National Library, our translation).

8 These are the materials that make up the CEAL’s archive. They need to be understood as the result of this process of transformation, which not only operates in the effective meeting and gathering of such elements, but in the very definition and understanding of those elements as raw materials. In this sense, the selection criteria are marks of the “official stance” (Caletti, Romé 2012, our translation) that operate in the constitution of the archive, since the archive practice as a social practice manages to guarantee those singular elements a certain value, a certain accessibility and a certain activation potentiality. As a practice, the archive is never limited to selecting its materials: what it

does is to transform them in a particular way, to certify them a certain status, a particular way of conceiving them.

9 Another contribution of the Althusserian proposal is the possibility to relate the notion of “practice” to the different instances recognized by this author as operative in a particular social formation, such as the theoretical or ideological instance, the economic instance and the political instance. It is in this way that “social practice” continues to take shape, that is, as a complex unit that operates in the theoretical, material and political instances. In this sense, our hypothesis is that it is possible to differentiate a theoretical archive practice, a material archive practice and a political archive practice. When wanting to articulate these three constitutive dimensions of social practice semiotically (Acebal 2016), we can appeal to the categories proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce corresponding to Firstness as an enabling instance of theoretical practice (CP. 1.418, 1.422), Secondness as an experiential and material instance of economic practice (CP. 1.419, 1.427) and Thirdness as a legal and argumentative instance of political practice (CP. 1.420).

10 In a first approximation we can say that the “political archive practice” embraces both those aspects related to the processes and the institutional objectives that construct a memory policy, an archival impulse that seeks to make present in a physical way information that is often lost, such as those aspects related to the archontic power (Derrida 1997) that regulates the modes of reading, selection and access to the archive. As a construction of a CEAL memory policy:

In 2006, the [Mariano Moreno National] Library decided to baptize with the name of José Boris Spivacow—the founder of CEAL—one of the two squares that surround its building. That gesture precipitated a chain of wills, solidarities and affections; essential scaffolding for the institutional project that was carried out from that moment [...] the recovery of documentation, bibliography, and testimonies of the pioneering experiences of EUDEBA and the Editor Center. The task that began with a sample on the day of the baptism of the square, extended for six years and included several exhibitions [...]. In addition, in 2012, several collections were digitalized by students of the career of Communication Sciences, based on an agreement with the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires (Gociol 2017, p. 7, our translation).

11 Following Althusser’s approach to the concept of social practice, the “material archive practice” alludes to the process of storage, gathering, safeguarding and, possibly, making certain elements, objects, documents and all types of support available, which is usually described as archive. In the case of the CEAL’s archive:

Copies of fascicles and books with corresponding edition marks are kept, for example, in the Biblioteca Básica Universal/Universal Basic Library—; annexes of the Suplemento de la Biblioteca Fundamental del Arte/Supplement of the Fundamental Library of Art—of the years 1971 and 1972; about 20 letters among those destined to Spivacow, those sent in relation to the tribute that is made to him in 1994, and those received by his relatives after his death; photographs of Boris Spivacow, his family, the celebration of the anniversary of the CEAL in 1993 and the burning of materials that the publishing house perpetrated in 1980 by court order. There are also 30 press clippings, including originals and copies, dated between 1966 and 1994; audio cassettes with 19 interviews conducted between 2006 and 2007 with different people linked to CEAL; and other documents such as contracts and remittances; catalogs; advertisements; press releases; and printing plates (Digital Catalog of the National Library, our translation).

12 Finally, the “theoretical archive practice” involves both the theoretical and epistemological developments related to the organization, cataloging and systematization processes of the archive materials, such as the conceptual products that allow the elaboration of a certain knowledge from the same archive. In this sense, the National Library organizes, catalogs and systematizes the boxes that contain the materials of the CEAL’s archive under this epistemic lens:

1. Legal
2. Editing processes:
 - 2.1. Materials used

- 2.2. Books and preparatory materials
- 2.3. Fascicles
- 2.4. Catalogs
- 3. Publications:
 - 3.1. Fascicles
 - 3.2. Prints
- 4. Correspondence
- 5. Photographs
- 6. About Boris Spivacow and CEAL:
 - 6.1. Press cuttings, magazines, catalogs, and other documents
 - 6.2. Material produced by the “B. Spivacow Project” team (Digital Catalog of the National Library, our translation).

13 It is worth mentioning the theoretical-ideological decision of the National Library to place first in the archive the documents related to the legal dimension of the publisher. These refer both to the business constitution of the Center and to the judicial attacks suffered during the two dictatorships that spanned the CEAL’s lifetime. This order enables the reading of the archive as a conceptualization, first of all, of the legal and judicial statute of a publishing company that makes possible the case of CEAL as a model of publishing practice in Argentina. Box1 of the archive, in this sense, gives an account of what could be legally accepted or not as a production of the Press Center, what could be printed and what was prohibited, what was burned and what, or who, was made to disappear.

14 Here we can begin to glimpse the ash of the burned books and the vanished bodies. The hollow nature of the archive allows us to see what was saved from destruction and, through a political process, brings to mind the preservation of an absence, but also of a presence that in other times was uncomfortable. It is in this sense that the construction of the CEAL’s archive is, for those who write, a model for the recognition of the significant presences and absences that evoke the three practices previously mentioned.

15 The three practices operate simultaneously and interact in diverse ways throughout the archive practice. In this sense, it is relevant to investigate the influence that a material archive practice can have oriented, for example, around the exuberance and discontinuity of the collection, on the development of the cataloging and systematization criteria elaborated by the theoretical archive practice; or on traditional notions of aesthetics, such as the notions of work, author, and other subsidiaries like coherence and unity. In these cases, the dominance of the collection and accumulation of heterogeneous documents is able to put pressure on the theoretical practice to develop the notions that allow that heterogeneity to be “contained” and “given shape”. As Althusser points out:

It [a practice] may exist, survive and even progress without it [a theory]; just like any other practice—until the moment in which its object (the existing world of the society that it is transforming) opposes enough resistance to it to force it to fill this gap, to question and think about its own method, so as to produce the adequate solutions [...] and, in particular, so as to produce [...] the new knowledge corresponding to the content of the new “stages” of its development. (1965 [1969], p. 176).

16 To paraphrase Althusser, we can affirm that the presences and absences in the CEAL’s archive resist the practice carried out by the National Library, forcing it to fill the gaps and to think of its own enunciation able to perform a new knowledge that may arise from the research on the present of the Argentinian publishing industry.

The archive as a semiotic process

17 We have seen how the archive, as a social practice, is never limited to selecting its materials, but rather to making an effective transformation, an intervention on the conditions of existence of these materials, on their own statute and on their modes of reading. Thus, the archive practice can also be understood as a process of production of meaning, a proposal that complements Althusser’s approach with a semiotic theory that

allows us to account for the way in which the production of meaning is realized and which are the aspects that it involves. To open the Althusserian proposal we will use a conception of semiosis that favors its operationalization for the analysis of discourse and concrete practices (Guerra 2014, 2016).

- 18 For Peirce, the production of meaning necessarily involves the putting in relation of a representamen, an object and an interpretant, this last operating as a dynamizer of semiosis in that it is the one that manages to relate a certain representamen to an object and, in this way, to attribute a meaning. In the archive practice, the interpretant is that component which, through its intervention, manages to summon, transform and project certain singularities (“sinsigns”, Peirce CP 2,245) on the documents and materials collected by the archive. What the interpretant does when projecting these singularities is to produce the “differences” that allow the archive to become more than mere inert accumulation. Through this process, the archive is no longer experienced as: “The individual fact [that] insists on being here irrespective of any reason” (Peirce, CP 1.434) and is experienced as a coming into being in the meeting, more or less organized, of “different” elements. However, nothing in this process is identifiable if we fail to account for the “differentiation” that the interpretant produces regarding the conditions of existence of the materials that enter the archive. This is what Derrida alludes to when he points out that:

the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content *of the past* which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event (1995, p. 17 emphasis in original).

- 19 At this point, if we paraphrase Derrida using Peircean terms, we can affirm that in archive practice as a semiotic process, the archiving structure gives form to the representamen—as difference—, the archivable content constitutes the object of some of the available possibilities—as different—and the archivization represents the interpretant—as differentiation. In this sense, and as Claudio Guerra reminds us:

If the Firstness constitutes the difference and the Secondness the different, the Thirdness can be understood as the differentiation—cognitive, conceptual, cultural—that is, the value or the socio-cultural criterion by which, of all the possibilities available, one in particular has been updated (Guerra 2016, p. 8, our translation).

- 20 Now, while social conditions leave marks of meaning, they can be reconstructed from certain traces of production or recognition (Verón 1993). What is the difference between a mark and a trace? The mark has the vagueness of the *representamen*; the trace, on the other hand, implies an indexical relationship. Meaning cannot be isolated from the circumstances in which it occurs to carry out an analysis: “analyzing products, we point to processes” (Verón 1993, p. 124, our translation). Analysis consists, then, in establishing what relationship exists between a mark and its production conditions, and this relationship results in a trace: the mark is an “operator”, the trace is “operating” and the relationship that unites them is a “relational device” (Verón 1993).

- 21 Recognizing marks makes it possible to read technical imprint in the terms we are seeking to define and recounts, in addition to history, the production conditions of the CEAL’s catalog. At first, the CEAL’s archive as a mark tells us about the legal constitution of the company, then goes back to the conditions of the editorial practice: printing plates, galley proofs, guidelines for proofreaders and translators, catalogs intended for the purchase of rights and other elements that are assumed as indices, traces, of the concrete practice. But it also narrates the relational level, a stratification, a thriving graphic industry, available technologies that made possible the creation of a company of this size: “‘Look, dear’ explained Spivacow once, ‘we are going to discontinue this collection because only 3,000 copies are sold per week’. Ricardo Figueira recalled that response with amazement: ‘today the print runs are 1,000 or 2,000 copies’” (Gociol 2017, pp. 20-21, our translation).

- 22 The dictatorship, the quotation of a book for sale to the public at the price of 1kg of bread³ and the slogan “more books for more” are some of the marks that left traces in the CEAL’s archive:

Although many of the strategies addressed by the Centro Editor of Latin America were aimed at daily survival, rethought at a distance, they left cultural marks that transcended these conjunctural efforts. Practices such as the reuse of materials, grouped into volumes, gave durability to the fragile and ephemeral life of fascicles. The need to make use of the sheets of paper up to the last millimeter prompted the invention of new formats; the difficulty of obtaining the copyright for certain works (because they were not available, the publishing house which had them did not give them up or gave them in exchange for figures that were impossible to pay) caused others to be put into circulation, forgotten or not recognized, which the CEAL offered the public for the first time; the reissues over time approached generationally new readers, who could not access old collections (Gociol 2017, p. 51, our translation).

- 23 The CEAL’s archive, as a mark of imprinting, enables us to view the books that still circulate, the prints left by the writing workshops, the work tables full of corrections and translations, the linotype workshops, the printing presses, the collection sale projections, the agitated accountants, and also allows us to recreate the conditions of production related to these activities. But, as has already been said, the archive always relates significant presences with significant absences and the CEAL’s archive immediately evokes a symptomatology. The archive tells us about the dictatorship that had prevailed since the birth of the publishing house. After a short period of democracy, there was another coup d’état and, because of that, we find symptoms of political situations in the aforementioned workshops. From the ashes of these symptoms the archive is born, for a recognition of the CEAL as a mark of certain technical aspects and as symptomatology of certain political situations that tend to capture both the publishing work and the denunciation of a past that made the workers of those workshops disappear. In this sense, the archive is a content that performs.

Raising memory

- 24 The CEAL’s archive, thus understood, not only makes sense but also makes things, it performs (Austin 1962, Taylor, Fuentes 2011). Considering the proposal of the descriptive fallacy of language that John Austin sought to point out, this entails investigating the testimonial fallacy and the memory of the archive since, as Didi-Huberman (2007) reminds us, the essence of the archive is the lacuna, its lacunary nature. Just as language does not have the sole purpose of describing reality (Austin 1962) but there are enunciations that make things—performative enunciations—which carry out more or less ritualized or conventionalized actions, so too, the archive does not only archive. Against any skeptical approach⁴, in the CEAL’s case, the creation of the archive by the National Library focuses on curing—as the result of an action of curatorship—the destruction of the books and of the lives of the workers with the circulation of the indestructible memory of destruction.

- 25 The main depot of the Centro Editor was completely burned in the year 1980 by the dictatorship: 24 tons of books were destroyed in a vacant lot on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. When the depot was requisitioned, several employees were arrested and, after Spivacow spontaneously declared himself to be solely responsible for the materials, they were released. But the memory of that destruction is long and cruel; between 1974 and 1976 twelve⁵ of the CEAL’s workers were arrested and only two, among them, survived and went into exile. Now there is an archive under cur(e)atorship. The archive cured by the National Library not only re-publishes the contents of the CEAL but also produces new material and new knowledge about the Center’s editorial practices. At the same time, the curatorship of the archive always evokes an absence, that of the missing workers and the tens of tons of books burned.

- 26 Arlette Farge (1989) describes the difficult materiality of archives. In this sense the archive is constantly a lack, more the impotence of not knowing what to do with that

materiality rather than a stock from which to draw for pleasure. The archive does not give memory a fixed meaning. It is always a story under construction whose result is never entirely understandable. It destroys the stereotyped images, breaks the historical conception by its fragmented appearance and gives access to an unknown world; it liberates an absolutely unpredictable reality effect that holds out to us the living outline of the interpretation to be made. It is about hands-on experience, not only through the positive power generated by the contents which survived destruction, but also in the negative power, in Derridian terms, that demonstrates the lacunary nature of the archive and, through its action, it is a cur(e)atorship.

27 In semiotic terms, to archive means to re-enunciate, that is, to produce a new enunciation; in this sense, it can be approached from the aspect of performativity. Archiving is the production of what we want to do with a memory: it produces a positive and negative memory, a dialectical support and a container of the presence and absence caused by destruction. In this sense, the archive is not the reflection of the reality that it seeks to remember, but an action, a writing with its own syntax and an ideology. It is about exhibiting what is present to show what is absent. The archiving of those books, documents, letters, photographs, interviews and audiovisual materials displays a convergence between the technical and political practices of CEAL and, at the same time, the archive constructs anti-denialist enunciations so that the voices of those who are absent can be heard. Their practices can be revived, the sweat of their work revealed in the galley proofs, the color tests, the corrections and translations, the collection design.

28 In this sense, the construction of the CEAL's archive involved the design of an archiving structure—a theoretical practice—in terms of a performativity that makes the difference by its ability to make-see the whole of the archive relationships while outlining the gap between what is present and what is absent. This gap achieves materiality in archivable contents—a material practice—as a performance that constructs the different. When the materials are transformed, the whole of the archive is inscribed in a specific way in a specific context of circulation. From 2006 to the present, the construction of the CEAL archive acquires materiality in different performative events, such as exhibitions: “A factory of culture”—an exhibition with its own catalog—and expositions “Watch it until you like it”, “Homage to Oscar ‘el Negro’ Díaz”—CEAL's illustrator—, “Ink on paper. Original prints and drawings of EUDEBA books and the Centro Editor of Latin America”. Others events include a public commemoration in honor of Aníbal Ford—director of some CEAL collections—and the publication of two compilations of the catalogs of both publishers—the CEAL's one entitled “More books for more”⁶. In addition, a commemorative plaque was placed on the site of the burning of the tons of books and the square adjacent to the Library was named after Boris Spivacow.

29 But the gap between what is present and what is absent from CEAL also marks a tangent—in terms of an incision, made by the archiving, on a context—that performs and projects its capacity to produce effects on the entire archive. The projection of the gap leaves symptoms in the denialist debates about the crimes and responsibilities of the military junta during the last dictatorship in Argentina. The books—present and absent—, the workers—survivors and missing—, the photos, press clippings, interviews, but also the working documents, minutes and copies of the judicial processes contained in the boxes of the archive open to the public, according to different curatorships and montages, as well as the interventions in the urban environment and the editing of new materials by the Library re-enunciate a memory, in the sense of the evocation of a memory that tends toward the future but touches both the past and the present, a contingent editorial policy where, as we are reminded by Ricardo Figueira—editor and also photographer of the burning—the average print runs, in the present, are between 1,000 or 2,000 copies per title.

Conclusions, towards a memory under cur(e)atorship

30 The Centro Editor de América Latina was founded on a conjunctural situation determined by the dictatorship; however, there was something else that allowed its vast production: the presence of an industrial graphic pool that allowed numerous print runs and a work network that drew certain know-how from the workers. These aspects made possible the generation of this cultural production plant that was the Centro Editor of Latin America. In this sense, the archive practice of the CEAL is a re-enunciation of certain discontinuities and continuities between the technological and gnoseological possibilities, certain changes and permanencies in political situations.

31 The intermittencies that re-enunciate and de-enounce the CEAL's archive elicit a memory in opposition to the denialist debates, even institutional, about the responsibilities and crimes of the military junta. On the one hand we have the traces left by the policies of sale prices to the public and the efforts to circulate "more books for more". In spite of more than twenty years having passed since the publishing house closed, the CEAL's books are still circulating in low-cost bookstores, flea markets, public libraries and readers' homes. These are the positive enunciations that are plotted along with the negatives which, from the hand of the dictatorships, shape the lacunary nature of the archive in its symptoms: the destruction of the books and the disappearance of the workers. But these symptoms mark certain absences, even for the actuality of the publishing practice: the absence of technologies for production, the breakdown in the relationship between know-how and occupation and, finally, the incursion of large foreign companies that monopolize the offer.

32 "One thing does not exist: Oblivion". The opening words of the poem *Everness* (1964) by Jorge Luis Borges—written two years before the establishment of the Onganía dictatorship—tell us about the construction of memory in similar terms to those we are thinking of for the construction of the archive of the Centro Editor de América Latina. The materials that make up the CEAL's archive, due to their heterogeneous nature, continue to plot relationships of succession, domination, implication, compensation and coincidence. And it is on account of this plotting that the archive is both a discursive production and a performative possibility. The archive practice, until finding its own archivable object, is forced to fill the gaps, to propose and to reflect on a method and a theory of its own. In this sense, studying the construction of the CEAL's archive as a semiotic process, and as a curator of the National Library, makes us see the continuities and discontinuities suffered from a diaphanous present so that they can act on (not only) Argentinian editorial practice. The CEAL's archive is thus a cur(e)atorship that, ultimately, makes the performativity of a memory.

Bibliography

ACEBAL, Martín (2016), "La Retórica inagotable. Práctica social y proceso semiótico", in *Retor. Revista de la Asociación Argentina de Retórica*, no. 6, Vol. 1, Buenos Aires, pp. 1-27.

ACEBAL, Martín, BOHORQUES NATES, Miguel, GUERRI, Claudio & VOTO, Cristina (2014), "La manumisión de las imágenes", in *Lexia. Efficacious Images*, Vol. 17-19, Torino, Aracne, pp. 71-90.

ALTHUSSER, LOUIS (1965), *For Marx*, London, Penguin, 1969.

ALTHUSSER, LOUIS (1988), *Filosofía y Marxismo. Entrevista por Fernanda Navarro*, México, Siglo XXI.

ARFUCH, LEONOR, CHAVES, Norberto, LEDESMA María (1996), *Diseño y comunicación. Teorías y enfoques críticos*, México, Paidós.

AUSTIN, John Langshaw (1962), *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

BALÉ, Cinthia (2018), "Usos del archivo y políticas de la memoria: un análisis del proceso de 'apertura' de los archivos militares en Argentina (2003-2015)", in *Nuevo Mundo. Mundos Nuevos*. <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/73860>.

CALETTI, Serigio & ROMÉ Natalia (dir., 2012), *La Intervención de Althusser*, Buenos Aires, Prometeo.

- DARNTON, Robert (2010), “¿Qué es la historia del libro?”, in *El beso de Lamourette*, Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- DA SILVA CATELA, Ludmila, JELIN, Elizabeth (2002), *Los archivos de la represión. Documentos, memoria y verdad*. Madrid.
- DELEDALLE, Gérard (1996), *Leer a Peirce hoy*, Barcelona, Gedisa.
- DERRIDA, Jacques (1995), “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression”, in *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2, The John Hopkins University Press, pp. 9-63.
- DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges (2007), “Das Archiv brennt”, in DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges & EBELING, Knut (dirs.), *Das Archiv brennt*, Berlin, Kadmos, pp. 7-32.
- DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges (2013), *Cuando las imágenes tocan lo real*, Madrid, Círculo de Bellas Artes.
- FARGE, Arlette (1989), *La atracción del archivo*, Valencia, Ediciones Estudios Universitarios, 1991.
- FERNANDES FERRAZ, Joana D’arc (2007), “Os desafios da preservação da memória da ditadura no Brasil”, in ABREU, Regina, DE SOUZA CHAGAS, Mário & SEPÚLVEDA DOS SANTOS, Myriam, *Museus, coleções e patrimônios: narrativas polifônicas*, Rio de Janeiro, Garamon.
- FOUCAULT, Michelle (1969), *L’Archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard.
- FOSTER, Hal (2004), “An Archival Impulse”, in *October*, Vol. 110, Massachusetts, MIT Press, pp. 3-22.
- GOÑI, Uki (2016), “Blaming the victims: dictatorship denialism is on the rise in Argentina”, in *The Guardian*, August 29th 2016.
- GIUNTA, Andrea (2010), *Objetos mutantes. Acerca del arte más contemporáneo*, Palinodia, Santiago de Chile.
- GOCIOL, Judith (2007), *Más libros para más: Colecciones del Centro Editor de América Latina*, Biblioteca Nacional, Buenos Aires.
- GOCIOL, Judith (2017), *Centro Editor de América Latina. Una fábrica de cultura*, Biblioteca Nacional, Buenos Aires.
- GUERRI, Claudio et al. (2014), *Nonágono Semiótico. Un modelo operativo para la investigación cualitativa*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA / Ediciones UNL.
- GUERRI, Claudio et al. (2016) *Nonágono Semiótico. Un modelo operativo para la investigación cualitativa. Edición corregida y aumentada*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA / Ediciones UNL.
- LONGONI, Anna, MESTMAN, Mariano (2008), *Del Di Tella a Tucumán arte: vanguardia artística y política en el ’68 argentino*, Buenos Aires, Eudeba.
- HARRISON, Alisen (1997), “Innovación y creatividad en la edición” in *Libros de México*, no. 46, México.
- MARKARIAN, Vania (2016), “Los documentos del pasado reciente como materiales de archivo. Reflexiones desde el caso uruguayo” in *Contemporánea. Historias y problemas del Siglo XX*, Volumen 7, pp. 178-191.
- MONTES, Graciela (2006), “Amigos” in *Treinta ejercicios de memoria, a treinta años del golpe*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación Argentina.
- ONG, Walter (1999), “Lo impreso, el espacio y lo concluido” in *Oralidad y escritura*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- PEIRCE, Charles Sanders (1931-1958), *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- SCHUWER, Philippe (1997), *Traité pratique d’édition*, París, Éditions du cercle de la librairie.
- SMITH, Keith (2000), “The book as physical object” in ROTHEMBERG, Jerome & STEVEN Clay (dirs.), *A Book of the Book*, New York, Granary Books.
- STJERNFELT, Frederik (2011), “Everything is transformed. Transformation in Semiotics”, in *Diagrammatology. An investigation of the borderlines, Phenomenology, Ontology and Semiotics*, Denmark, Springer.
- TAYLOR, Diana & FUENTES, Marcela (2011), *Estudios avanzados de performance*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- TELLO, Andrés Maximiliano (2015), «El arte y la subversión del archivo», in *Aisthesis*, (58), pp. 125-143.
- VIOLI, Patrizia (2005), “Il soggetto è negli avverbi. Lo spazio della soggettività nella teoria semiotica di Umberto Eco”, in *E/C Rivista Online dell’Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici*
- VERÓN, Eliseo (1993), *La semiosis social: fragmentos de una teoría de la discursividad*, Gedisa, Barcelona.

Notes

1 In 2017 the National Library organizes the exhibition *Una fábrica de cultura/A culture factory* on the CEAL's archive in the Book and Language Museum of the City of Buenos Aires. The catalog of that exhibition states: "The link between the National Library and the Centro Editor of Latin America is the corresponding love and, in a way, this exhibition is a reunion. [...] [The good practice of the CEAL consisted in] the creation of a collection and the elaboration and discussion of its contents; the commission of the works; the research and / or writing of each title; the reception of the original and its reading; the design; the correction; the composition of a linotype workshop; the printing; the bookbinding. A round trip between the newsroom and the workshops, not without friction but enormously active judging by the results" (Gociol, 2017, p. 7).

2 The CEAL's archive also includes press clippings about the disappearance of the workers and photos of the burning of the depot on June 26th 1980, by the Videla dictatorship. Twenty-four tons of editorial material considered to be subversive.

3 The mission of the Centro Editor of Latin America was that the sale price of a book could not cost more than 1kg of bread.

4 In August 2016, the president of Argentina, Mauricio Macri, interviewed by the US media, BuzzFeed, said he did not know the number of the desaparecidos under the last military dictatorship, expressing, in addition, his lack of interest in the debate. A few days later the Guardian titled as follows: "Blaming the victims: dictatorship denialism is on the rise in Argentina" declaring that the "President's recent comments doubting number of deaths during dictatorship rattle human rights activists and survivors—and mark first time denialist rhetoric has entered mainstream political discourse" (Goñi, 2016).

5 "Daniel Luaces, a psychology student and one of the youngest members of the Editor Center, went to vote against Ottalagano [the designated rector of the University of Buenos Aires in 1974 under the military junta] as auditor of the University of Buenos Aires. He did not return to his home nor the next day to the publishing house where he worked. On December 13th, 1974, his body appeared riddled with bullets. "We spent that afternoon sitting on the sidewalk—I remember that sad meeting—until Boris Spivacow and Negro Díaz go out and say yes, he is Daniel, our Danielito Luaces. Next day we buried him in the cemetery of Avellaneda. We made hundreds of calls we wanted everyone to know. But many were afraid: terror was already installed" (Montes 2006, p. 42). Claudio Adur, Martha Brea, Atilio Cattaneo, Conrado Ceretti, Diana Guerrero, Ignacio Ikonicoff, Graciela Mellibovsky, Carlos Pérez and Susana Lugones Aguirre are the others CEAL workers who disappeared during the military dictatorship. Matilde Milesi and Graciela Taddey managed to survive and went into exile (Gociol 2017, p. 59, our translation).

6 In the catalog of the exhibition "A factory of culture" *Nobleza Obliga*—curator of the exhibition—writes: "I must admit that in the catalog *More books for more* I referred to seventy-eight collections and I made a mistake. After the launch, Graciela Montes consulted the catalog for the *History of Argentine Cinema* and I realized that, despite having the catalog for months on the desk, even more than one, the book did not appear in the catalog. It is a good opportunity to make amend for other possible mistakes. I am comforted, half-heartedly, by the words of Anibal Ford: 'It is proof that this work was done by human beings and is not a divine work'" (Gociol 2017, p. 10, our translation).

References

Electronic reference

Andrés Manuel Cáceres Barbosa and Cristina Voto, "Archive, Practices, and Memory Policies", *Signata* [Online], 12 | 2021, Online since 31 May 2021, connection on 08 June 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/signata/3071>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/signata.3071>

About the authors

Andrés Manuel Cáceres Barbosa

Andrés Manuel Cáceres Barbosa was born in Colombia in 1993. He is an editor, book designer, and proofreader for different publishing projects and university presses. He has carried out a research project at the Mariano Moreno National Library on editorial policies. He has studied editing at the University of Buenos Aires and history at the University of Santander in Bucaramanga, Colombia. He has specialized in graphic tools at the IED, European Institute of Design.

Email: [andresmc_92\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:andresmc_92[at]hotmail.com)

Cristina Voto

Cristina Voto is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Turin (as a member of the ERC-funded project FACETS), where she is also an adjunct professor. She teaches at the University of Tres de Febrero, Argentina, and works as a curator for the Biennial of the Moving Image of Buenos Aires. She is a member of IASS (International Association of Semiotics Studies), FELS (Latin-American Federation of Semiotics), and SIGRADI (Ibero-American Society of Digital Graphics). She has written articles for peer-reviewed journals and has given lectures in Italy, Spain, England, Argentina, and Colombia. She was a lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires

and at the University of La Matanza, Buenos Aires. She was a visiting professor at Jorge Tadeo Lozano University (Bogotá) and a visiting researcher at the National University of Colombia. She has worked as a programmer and as a curator in film festivals and biennials.
Email: crivoto[at]gmail.com

Copyright



Les contenus de la revue *Signata* sont mis à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.