

◆ Afterword

Tell Me How It Happened: Unbinding the Discourse on Memory, the Political Crimes of the Recent Past, and Human Rights

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Thirty, the title of Miguel Repiso's mural that commemorates and encapsulates in that number of frames the years of state terror in Argentina, is also the number of intervening years between the Argentinian coup in 1976 and the mural Repiso painted in Rosario, Santa Fe, in 2006. The year before the coup, in 1975, Franco died, and in 1976 Pinochet attended the ceremony in which King Juan Carlos I was asked to preside over a then-uncertain post-Franco era. Today, thirty years after the end of the dictatorship in Uruguay in 1985, every other evening or so, our family of four—including a son fifteen years of age and a daughter of six—sits glued to our thirteen-inch television to watch a rerun of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Tell Me How It Happened), a series that premiered in 2001 and went on for twelve seasons on Spanish public television (TVE) and that now, thanks to a favorable political context in Uruguay, is shown on our own Televisión Nacional, run by filmmaker Virginia Martínez.

Modeled after ABC's *The Wonder Years*—part nostalgic memoir, part bildungsroman—*Cuéntame* tells the story of an archetypical lower-middle-class family and working-class neighborhood in Franco's Spain, beginning in 1968 and through the transition in the 1980s, as remembered by Carlos, who was eight years old in 1968 (Carlos would now be somewhere in his early 50s).¹ Yet the various characters—grandmother, father, mother, sister, older brother, uncle, cousin, friends, neighbors, workmates—provide plenty of opportunities for all viewers—from every generation—to identify with and somehow “experience” and remember those years, as well as the fears

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and hopes of those times. As it goes back and forth between the microhistory of everyday life and the macrohistory of national politics, *Cuéntame* is able to capture an intricate, multilayered, and multifaceted historical process in all its complexity and contradictions. Therein lies, indeed, much of its appeal and productivity. Now, more than the series itself, or the stories it tells—part actual documentary footage, part historical reenactment and fiction—what needs to be noticed is that we are watching *Cuéntame* on television, the late-modern public sphere. Also, that this almost daily activity enables us not only to talk “naturally” about Spanish history—in so many respects so similar to our own—but also to evoke, compare, and discuss our own past and present situation. It is quite puzzling and yet rewarding to see my son being genuinely invested in the lives and misadventures of our characters and in Spanish history and politics as well, or to see my daughter taking in images of Franco’s coffin or of the Communist Party demonstrations of 1977 following the assassination of the lawyers of Atocha. I want to think that this is the kind of story that Brecht, Benjamin, and Marcuse had in mind when they grasped—and got excited about—the possibilities opened up by radio, records, and film; that captivated Williams’s imagination in *The Long Revolution* (1961); that led Arguedas to conceive of—and resort to—records and radio as allies to popular music and indigenous culture (García Liendo); and that even changed the late Adorno’s mind about the new media (Ortiz 65).

I began with the story of my family getting together to watch *Cuéntame cómo pasó* in part because it provides a social and cultural space—a here and now, in this torrid and calm January of 2013—from which I am reading and thinking the present volume, its subject and problematic, and in part to attest to, and somehow celebrate, the relevance and interest that “the history-of-the-recent-past”—as we call it in Uruguay—elicits today in second and third generations, perhaps even more so than two or three decades ago, when “people just did not want to listen” (Wang, qtd. in Kaminsky 108). But also to make the point that the more we talk about the past—and of our symbolic elaborations of that past—and the more we speak of human rights, both those that were trashed during the years of state terror but also those that we now embrace as a new foundation (ethical, aesthetic, political, etc.) for the present times and the times to come, the more we must reflect critically about these matters and be aware of the many risks, contradictions, and dangers that pave the search for truth and justice, the fight for human dignity and respect for human rights, seen as a means to transform and bring about a better society and culture.

Some of these risks are, paradoxically, that of forgetting what we also need to remember; that of failing to understand the deep—and latent—causes and dynamics that led to the years of state terror that seem so distant and implausible now; that of not honoring the inalienable, indivisible, and universal character of human rights; that of not grasping the way in which

the culture—the violence, the social forces, the perversity—that led to the catastrophe of the recent past has metamorphosed into a number of present forms of social, economic, political, and symbolic violence—potentially encountered on any given street, at the high school front door, while driving, at a soccer game, or in a range of forms of exclusion, racism, xenophobia, and domestic abuse—that are not only the extension of the older forms of violence but are somehow waiting to revert to their earlier manifestations. Part of the problem may be in that a number of signifiers appear firmly bound—locked—to others, thus unwittingly blocking a number of territories of memory, countering the radical possibilities of human rights, and abandoning a series of political theaters.

Memory

Take, for example, the notion of memory. In political and academic contexts, memory has come to signify historical, *political* memory. It has become tightly, “naturally,” and almost strictly associated with a particular period, territory, and problematic—namely, the period and practices of state terror: censorship, repression, persecutions, incarcerations, assassinations, disappearances. This in turn leads to a demand for truth and justice (but only regarding that period and those practices). It is impossible not to understand the logic that mobilized three or four generations behind these goals and ideals to find out what had happened, to communicate to and teach others about it, or to remember the dead and the crimes committed, many still unknown and unpunished.

Yet making memory equivalent and metonymically interchangeable with this particular set of issues and problems also presents a set of dangers. The moment we illuminate one spot, we are bound to produce a corresponding zone of shadow. Recently, Susana Draper made a similar point regarding the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968: how the intense and powerful images and emotions triggered by that historical episode blocked—buried—a deeper and broader knowledge of, reflection on, and understanding of a dense, multilayered, and prolific moment and process that was also taking place in Mexico at that time. In particular, she focused on José Revueltas’s thought and writings while in the prison of Lecumberry.²

The moment memory is almost automatically directed and fixed upon just one thing, it eclipses other territories, episodes, and processes that should also be remembered. Of course we need to remember the dead and the disappeared, the crimes they were subjected to, and the circumstances, the criminals that were responsible for those crimes. But we also need to remember the dead and the disappeared as they were when they were alive. We need to recover their lives, their struggles, their thoughts, their dreams,

their plans. Their errors too. Sometimes I feel that even though we can produce long lists of persons assassinated and disappeared, long lists of criminals, mostly military but also civilian, both incarcerated and at large, we know nothing or too little about the actual persons who strove to change society—many in their twenties, often younger—the human beings and the lives behind a name, a photograph, a slogan. Thus, in her discussion of Dulce Chacón’s novel, I appreciate Ofelia Ferrán’s point, echoing Jo Labanyi’s concerns, that we must view these people as full agents, autonomous individuals engaged in all kinds of activities, sometimes legal, sometimes not—in any case, not merely passive or innocent victims. Their lives, thoughts, and actions—in all their complexity, messiness, banality, and contradictions—must also become a source of knowledge, of truth, of learning, of discussion. Likewise, I value Chacón’s recreation of life in jail, representing it neither as truly isolated from the outside nor as a parenthesis devoid of action and struggle, in order to overcome the problem of “el doble olvido” (Chacón “La mujer” 77) (the double forgetting). Jean Franco’s discussion of the photographs of the disappeared also emphasizes all that they are unable to capture or convey—sometimes because the photographs were taken at unrelated parties and social events and at first contained the possibility that the subjects were still alive, and at others because they were taken by the authorities and stand as a sign of defeat, lack of all hope, and death. (Is this what we wish to remember or how we want to remember them?) As a result, we lose sight of their lives and actions, the ideas that inspired them, the dreams for which they lived and usually died. Not only does remembering their lives rescue them from oblivion, it also exposes the immorality and perversity of state terror. Franco wonders: Does “distributing leaflets, taking part in shooting practice, joining small political parties, attending political meetings and study groups” (Fernando Brodsky’s secret dossier, in Franco 24) “merit their brutal extermination?” (25). Moreover, we could benefit from learning and remembering their actual worries and concerns: the content and purpose of those leaflets, the subjects and texts they studied, the kinds of meetings they attended, and so on and so forth—all of which is often blurred and missed. In the same way, the “interest in the night sky” of a survivor of the Chacabuco concentration camp who appears in Patricio Guzmán’s film, measuring history against the universe and embodying a human quest for the meaning of it all, also rescues and restores a fundamental and essential humanity that was denied by their imprisonment and suffering (27). Similar concerns motivate Vania Markarian’s exploration of the intersection of politics, youth, and culture—and counterculture—in activists of the 1960s. What is often obscured (in Uruguay) is the uneasy mix of radical politics and counterculture, an element that is often missing when we try to imagine the recent past, forgetting the many forms and layers of struggle, resistance, and defiance, the primary and ultimate objectives, that which was dreamed of and desired. I see similar efforts being made by

Manuela Fingueret—here discussed by Amy Kaminsky—whose character Rita illustrates the kind of complexity and integrity of a life and a person that we must account for, understand, make sense of, and remember. Rita: “woman, Jew, and Peronist” (Fingueret 78 in Kaminsky 111)—and also Argentine—daughter of an immigrant woman who survived Auschwitz, twenty-something, admirer of Camila . . . and of Evita, reader of Pizarnik and Plath, of de Beauvoir and Tellado (114), and more.

The systemic roots and dynamics accounting for these historical episodes are other territories of knowledge somehow eclipsed and displaced by predominant pursuits of “memory.” Indeed, tragic as they are, the manifestations of state terror cannot make us lose sight of or prevent us from learning, understanding, and teaching the discourses and practices framed by the so-called doctrines of “national security,” which, like Kaminsky, I would argue took their inspiration perhaps even more from France, the United States, Francoist Spain, and even neighboring Brazil than from Nazi Germany.³ Ideologies that go largely unquestioned and accepted in today’s world. Or the origin and characteristics of a “new form of authoritarian State” (O’Donnell), which seems to be dormant yet alive and latent, as Javier Sanjinés and Luis Martín-Estudillo alert us by questioning today’s developmentalist models and projects of national culture, the so-called “war on terror” (153), or “the predominant symbolic treatment of torture” in today’s Spain and in today’s world (147). So, while I find Ileana Rodríguez’s arguments about the perverse and abject nature of criminal, hysterical, and “phobic” states both persuasive and unsettling, in some respects echoing earlier efforts to delve into and disentangle the dark meanders of the Nazi psyche or Hitler’s madness—their mental structures, motivations, and fantasies (hard not to recall Puig’s *El beso de la mujer araña* in this regard)—one also cannot lose sight of—find out about, teach, remember—the factors that made state terror possible and even desirable: the socioeconomic interests at play; the self-replicating, irrational, immoral, depersonalized, faceless, and heartless logic of the state apparatus; the logic of counterinsurgency—above and beyond the law; the cult of war and the military that has become common currency—a commodity—in Hollywood; the overall complicity of civil society, which is sometimes supportive, sometimes indifferent. We see all of these elements reappearing in the many drone campaigns, civil wars, and terrorist states of today. They add up not simply to a political crime or a war crime but to a moral and cultural catastrophe—the collapse of an entire cultural model and model of production and accumulation. And we must also remember and think of this catastrophe when speaking of “memory.” This seems to be a point that Helen Zout is trying to make, according to Osvaldo Bayer and David William Foster, by portraying Cristina Gioglio standing amid “the graveyard of consumerism—the daily life of capitalism” (44).

Yet, while “memory” works as a catch-all word referring to all things having to do with recent history, this volume also makes a significant contribution by establishing a set of distinctions: between firsthand memories and testimonies—which have been central to Latin American literary studies for the past three decades and cannot be naturalized, and should instead be seen as symbolic, sociopolitically anchored genres—and “postmemory” (Hirsch) or “prosthetic memory” (Landsberg)—that is, a secondhand or “implanted” memory that is transmitted between generations; and between memory and “historical truth,” the latter of which is associated with “the right to truth” yet is distinct from “procedural truth” (Vidal 185).

As Chacón reminds us, questions of memory, postmemory, prosthetic memory, the “call” to memory (Kaminsky 112), or memorial sites have a great deal to do with the way each generation and involved party relates to or is asked to connect with the past—which is itself, we should not forget, subject to and mediated by a “politics of memory and oblivion” (Bergero and Reati; Vidal *Política cultural*). Discussing Giribaldi’s work, Margarita Saona points to yet another form of memory: “emotionally charged memories” (76) or episodic memories rich in phenomenological details that give “a *sense of reliving experience*” (Nalbatian qtd. in Saona 76, my emphasis) and can actually be induced and recreated with the favorable disposition of the viewer by means of mnemonic devices such as “little objects”—personal belongings—and “actual places”—or scenes of the crime—that stand as indices of lives and crimes past. Yet the passage of time and changes in context alter the processes of memory and remembrance. Jean Franco reminds us that pictures of the disappeared held by their family members can signify very different things as a consequence of time and context. Originally, the photographs were part of a consciousness-raising action, a form of protest used to denounce the disappearance of loved ones, to challenge indifference and civil society’s silent and passive complicity, and to demand of the state that they be returned alive. The pictures were taken at social events not long before, were filled with hope, and intended to change the present, and possibly reverse history. Thirty years later, the technologically antiquated images of the forever young, and the rituals built and regularly performed around them, signify other things: that their death is not forgotten, that the search for their remains is still on—as indeed it is, along with the search for truth and justice. As was already pointed out, these fixed images and rituals can also eclipse memory as political mobilizations and commemorations, even if unintentionally, pave the way to mythologies of various kinds—often tragic, sometimes epic stories of two-dimensional demigods—that can bury the real individuals and their real lives—the human terrain of tragicomedy, the antiheroic—and in the end making us unable to retrieve their memory so that they are lost to other forms of oblivion.

Luis Martín-Estudillo, Javier Sanjinés, and Hernán Vidal, for their part, take us well beyond memory and the past. Vidal bases the question of memory on international law regarding human rights, taking it to signify “historical truth”—something closer to history than to memory—“the right to the truth,” the possibility of truth, and even, contrary to a number of postmodern tenets, the possibility of universal truth—a truth collectively pieced together yet historically indisputable (Vidal 181–82). A (historical) truth made into a foundation and framework for a cultural hermeneutics. For his part, Martín-Estudillo points to the persistence of state crimes—political assassinations, disappearances, and torture—*well after* Francoism and into present-day Spain. He denounces the “symbolic management” of such activity, pointing to the existence of a prevailing culture that coexists comfortably, cynically, and even playfully with torture and ill-treatment, which are now seen as a natural, even necessary, part of life and the times.

Venturing beyond memory, Sanjinés tackles the very question of knowledge, opening the way to the possibility of *other* knowledges, and perhaps other epistemes—according to Foucault, the unconscious substratum that ultimately determines what counts as knowledge and what does not. These epistemes affect not only history and memory but the very notions of time, of progress and well-being, of rights, of the subject of rights, and so on. He then wonders about the actual capacity of the Bolivian Plurinational State and Constitution—taken as a paradigm of an emerging form of state—to accommodate, as it claims it intends to do, multiple experiences and forms of being in the world, thinking about it, and relating to it.

Here it may be appropriate to remind ourselves of the United Nation’s notion of development and human development. Working from the premise that “people are the real wealth of a nation,” for Mahbub ul Haq the aim of development is to secure “an environment that enables persons and peoples to enjoy long, healthy, creative lives” (14). From this it follows that

the basic purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices. . . . [T]hese choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. (“About Human”)

This concept of humanity and of human development, and of what states need to provide and guarantee, leads us in turn to the question of human rights, which is often also ill-conceived and misrepresented. As a narrowly defined notion of memory has become inextricably bound to the political

crimes of the recent past, thus preventing us from illuminating a broader region of the social process, historical truth, and life, similarly, a reductive notion of human rights and of human rights violations, framed by the same binding triad, presents its own series of weaknesses, problems, and perils.

Human Rights

When speaking of memory, we tend almost automatically to mean—and expect the reader to think of—the politics of the recent past, code for the years of state terror. Inversely, the term *human rights* has become mechanically bound to a denunciation and investigation of the political crimes committed during the past dictatorships—the search for “the truth,” the need—the call—to remember the disappeared and find their remains (“memory”), and the need to bring criminals to justice. At least in the Southern Cone, when we speak of human rights violations, these episodes of political repression are often what come to mind, as along with the names and faces of memorable victims and victimizers, detention centers, memorials and marches in their memory, and chants demanding *Never again*. And this is all quite reasonable and understandable, and we all take part in it and will continue to do so. After all, as Williams reminds us, words, and especially keywords—their uses, their meanings—have a history, belong to, and are intertwined with social life and people’s histories. And the past thirty years have produced and somehow “fixed” such meanings, while ironically blocking a more universal, comprehensive, and true meaning embodied in the very human rights charts and accords legislating this matter, agreed upon and signed by all.

However, as I have argued elsewhere (Remedi, “Skeletons”), to metonymically reduce human rights to a limited set of rights—an “*a la carte* approach”—contravenes the spirit and the laws related to human rights (Bernard), by definition not only *universal* and *inalienable*—Vidal reminds us of their absolute, indisputable, imperative, *jus cogens* character (181)—but *one* and *indivisible*, just like the person who is endowed with those rights. In other words, there is no such thing as more or less “fundamental” rights that allow us to disregard or do away with the supposedly less fundamental ones. Nor is it possible to selectively, and conveniently, choose to promote and respect, say, political and civil rights while ignoring economic and social rights, cultural rights, and so on. Similarly, to privilege so-called first-generation rights (the rights emerging from the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century) over the second- and third-generation rights (those fought for and won in the past two centuries by the working classes, the peoples of the Third World, indigenous populations, ethnic and other minorities, and so on) does not correspond to a radical agenda. On the contrary, the appeal and “edge” of a human rights agenda

and discourse reside in the way they address the totality and unity of a person's needs, capacities, and privileges—universally. Thus, it is imperative to restore the broader significance and the utopian dimension of the concept of human rights in such a way that when we think of human rights or are invited to attend a human rights march or meeting or to sign a human rights petition, we think of the entirety of human rights—that is, of the whole of the human person. This means putting as much emphasis on political and civil rights as on economic, social, and cultural rights; people's rights; the right to peace; or environmental rights.

Now, it is also evident that human rights are not observed universally—not even political and civil rights. When we think of human rights, we have tended to privilege not only *certain rights*—say, certain political rights—but also the rights *of certain individuals in certain places*—the affluent nations of the West—and only *in certain cases*—the political activist and actor whose rights are curtailed by the state because his or her social and political actions are perceived as a threat to the state. Aldo Marchesi (“Derechos humanos”) wonders—we should all wonder—what happens with the political and civil rights of the armies of people that for various reasons—sometimes by accident, circumstance, or error; usually without a proper trial, defense, or sentencing; more often than not coming from the lower classes—populate our overcrowded detention centers? Or, for that matter, what happens with the abject criminal, whether a serial killer, a cruel tyrant, a terrorist celebrity, or a war criminal: Are they entitled to human rights? Should their rights be honored? Who is going to fight for their rights to be respected? And what about the rights of persons in faraway places such as Iraq, Palestine, Libya, and Afghanistan—largely out of sight and drone ruled—that have become the stage of contemporary civil and neoimperialist wars, where human rights of every kind are plainly disregarded?

Moreover, societies and polities—and even “Leftist subcultures” (Vidal “La noción”)—that are allegedly highly sensitized with respect to human rights matters, such as those of the Southern Cone, often remain largely insensitive and indifferent to matters of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination; to torture and ill-treatment deployed against vast sectors of the population, as Martín-Estudillo stresses; to violence against women, children, immigrants, or people who look or behave differently; indeed, to violent behavior in general, whether real or symbolic, that appears both in the mass media and in everyday life; or to the rights of entire peoples in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, or the more remote areas within our own national territories, an issue that concerns Sanjinés.

The point is that today we do not immediately or necessarily associate the question of human rights, or mobilize for human rights, in relation to all these other people and circumstances. Yet not only does this go against human rights, but it also feeds a culture in which human rights are used or disregarded at our convenience, somehow falling within the very same logic

of the authoritarian culture and practices of state terror of the recent past. (Here, one could come up with a number of variations on Niemöller's verses: "When they came for . . . I remained silent. I was not one of them.")

The present volume is valuable and thought-provoking like much of today's discussion of and mobilization for human rights. But, linking memory with the political crisis of the 1970s and the violation of the civil and political rights of a particular group of political actors indirectly and unintentionally operates on the basis of an episteme and reproduces a mindset and cultural model that is unconcerned with a larger universe of (equally fundamental) human rights and also excludes vast sectors of the population from the province of human rights. This is not to say that one cannot focus on a particular period, place, and subject. Yet the challenge remains to dismantle a number of automatic metonymic substitutions and reductions that end up undermining the human rights project, promise, and pact—and with it, its political *edge*.

Politics and Power

When we talk about memory and human rights we have also grown accustomed to—automatically, and almost naturally—meaning and thinking of politics. And more specifically, the political crimes committed during the dictatorships of the recent past. Indeed, the essays in this volume can be offered as examples of a positive and welcomed "restoration of the political dimension" characteristic of sociohistorical approaches to literary and cultural studies, and thus as an implicit critique of and response to the depoliticized, dehistoricized, sanitized, and technocratic forms predominant in most literary analysis and cultural studies.

While one cannot but endorse such an approach and effort, the problem lies in what we think of and what we associate with "the political." On the one hand, there is a conventional, limited concept of politics and power associated with and confined to the public realm, explicit or formal political identities, institutions, and activism (political parties, unions, nongovernmental organizations)—the practices and discourses engaged in by conscious and willful political actors. Yet we also know that everything is political, that power does not reside solely in the government or the state, that it is more diffuse and slippery, and that it permeates it all. This has to do with the "politics by many other means" such as "the guerrilla warfare of everyday life" (de Certeau qtd. in Ferrán 123) and the oppositional and transformative "tricks of the weak" (120) referred to by Ferrán (following de Certeau and Ludmer) that take the political to the territories where weaker political actors are stronger. In other words, there is an alternative and more comprehensive notion of politics and power that includes but goes beyond explicit political activity or the realm of formal political institutions and

extends it to the realm of everyday life: social relations, culture, values, meanings, purposes in life, attitudes, behavior. In fact, today becoming a government or running the state has become less of a challenge than achieving real power and effecting real change, which are shown to be associated with other forms of power and politics. These are rooted not only at the economic but also at the social, cultural, symbolic, ethical, and aesthetic levels. And the latter can prove to be as much an obstacle to changing society—either from above or from below—as a means to effectively challenge, achieve, and exercise various forms of power.

Now, at least theoretically, a cultural hermeneutic based on human rights, as envisioned by Vidal, does not preclude either notion of politics and power, whether narrowly defined or embodied in the realm of the everyday, the cultural, the symbolic, the ethic, and the aesthetic. Indeed, since it situates itself within the field of the humanities and of cultural and symbolical production, it seems to lean on and favor the latter—that is, on revealing the political dimension of elements at first not seen to have one. Here resides the strength and use value of such a cultural hermeneutic. As Sanjinés (161) notes, Vidal defines the field of the humanities as “the study of the ways in which human beings create analogical, symbolic systems to give meaning to their environment, relationships, and purposeful actions therein” (Vidal, “An Aesthetic Approach” 14). According to Vidal, human beings experience their aesthetic acts as “coherent fields of intellectual-emotionally-bodily responses to the problems they encounter in society” (14). The production and construction of narratives are also read “politically,” for they are used for and meant to result in the mobilization of a national culture project that favors one model of society and culture and blocks others (Vidal, “La noción”). Within such parameters, Vidal conceives his practice as “a cultural hermeneutic based on human rights” (Vidal 182) that “opens the possibility of practicing a symbolic anthropology to study both literary fiction and symbolic/metaphorical production in daily life” (183).

Now, as a norm, the essays assembled in this volume work with a notion of politics that is still centered around political history and processes—the political crisis of the 1970s, Francoism—and political actors—the state, the political opposition, the disappeared. Important as it is not to lose sight of this more overt territory of politics and power, such an approach undervalues and leaves unexamined a vast and equally politically relevant universe of social and symbolic practices and actors that are not necessarily centered on politics (in its traditional sense). These practices and actors are political in their own special way, carrying the question of power into other realms—the everyday, social relations, values, perception, consumption, behavior—and are sometimes even more politically effective and determinant.

Thus, Ferrán’s discussion of the “adoptions” and “adaptations” performed by the characters in Chacón’s novel, such as their transformations

and theatrical manipulations of family relationships, or their challenges to established gender roles and mores, stand as examples of politics by other means and of bringing the question of power down to the sphere of the social, the cultural, and the everyday. The same can be said of the aesthetic—cognitive, empathic, political—aims of Zout’s photographic rhetoric, discussed by Foster. Her use of blurred, unhomely, and disturbing-looking images intended to capture and speak of vernacular and still-present forms of horror, but also to trigger more productive memory processes, away from the forensic “sharp and clear”—yet sterile—approach to truth. In her portrait of Nilda Eloy, which parodies the way nineteenth-century travelers (“the civilized,” naturally) portrayed the natives of Argentina (“the barbarians”), she questions a regime that saw itself as the spearhead and “last trench in defense of Western Christian Civilization” (Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared 442). Similarly, the “other stories” that emerge as a result of Guillermina Walas’s human rights-minded wandering through La Plata point to a politics that spills all over: stories of kids who were sent to, and died or were crippled in, the Malvinas War; of the unemployed and other victims of the economic collapse of 2001; of the new immigrants and the plague of discrimination they must surmount; of recurring episodes of femicide. These stories reveal that the city is alive, a text and site of an ongoing and collective struggle for human rights, and a reminder of the struggle’s all-encompassing nature. The same could be said of Sanjinés’s essay revolving around the tension between mestizo cosmogonies, modern highways, and an “amphibian” way of being in the world vindicated by the first peoples of the Sécure River basin of the Bolivian Amazon. Likewise, following Madelaine Hron and aware that we are living in the era of Abu Ghraib, of off-shore detention and torture centers such as Guantánamo, and of summary surgical, remote-controlled, targeted executions (no trial or accounting needed), Martín-Estudillo warns of the dissemination of torture and ill-treatment into the realms of haute couture, pop culture, and even porn—and of how they have “become a cliché if not a commodity” (Hron, cited by Martín-Estudillo 145). More importantly, he stresses that while originally applied to and associated with political detainees, today torture and ill-treatment are widespread, targeting immigrants, petty criminals, women, youth from working-class neighborhoods, or any group perceived as deviant or culturally threatening (152).

In sum, while theoretically a cultural hermeneutics based on human rights is not restrictive at all (and indeed should be the contrary), in practice, outside the examples just mentioned, the emphasis is still placed on a traditional notion of politics associated with frontal encounters and clashes—of unequal character—between political actors and the state, thus missing the opportunity to deploy a cultural hermeneutics over a wider range of territories and practices and struggles of memory, human rights, and

politics. We need to see these territories and practices as both roots and branches of those episodes of state terror of the past that we cannot afford to lose sight of and forget. This I gather from Repiso's last mural *Twelve*, painted at the University of Minnesota, which addresses human rights violations *today* (in 2013), occurring *everywhere*. These abuses go well beyond the dictatorships of the recent past and include present-day torture, injustice, genocide, modern forms of slavery, human trafficking, cultural war, and more (Repiso 200).

Indeed, by questioning languages, cognition, values, and behavior, art is one more example of politics by other means and of bringing the issue of power to realms closer to us. In discussing Zout's photographs, Foster notes that her aesthetics, which are militantly opposed to the transparent realism of journalism and the clinical depictions of forensic photography, "imply a particular ethics" (Foster 44)—an ethics that differs from the one implicit in the journalistic enterprise or forensic research and documentation. According to Foster, the legitimacy and effectiveness of her images are grounded in other codes and significations that open the way to other aesthetic experiences and realizations. As Cortázar's *Blow Up* reminds us, there is nothing natural or neutral in taking, developing, or printing pictures: the artist is making decisions, taking sides, and affecting reality at every turn. This applies to Zout, to Giribaldi's works—discussed by Saona—and to Félix de la Concha's portraits of victims of the Spanish Civil War (in his series *La historia más larga de Bilbao jamás pintada*) and of the Holocaust. De la Concha is aware that making portraits, interviewing his sitters, and filming the sessions are all politically charged and oriented acts in which he exercises a series of powers: choosing whom to paint, how to paint it, why and what for, and so on. Like Zout, he also rejects the goal—and even the possibility—of producing an eidetic memory by means of a realist, objective portrayal (193). Following Deleuze's dictum that "humanity is in the face" (193), he seeks through his portraits to humanize a number of persons previously dehumanized by Francoism and the Nazis. His choice of subject and treatment reflects his political stance. He invests himself emotionally, consciously takes sides, and concentrates on the perspectives of the victims. But he wonders: Would it be right to paint the portrait of a Nazi? Would he treat that sitter the same way? (192) As part of the Bilbao series, de la Concha "oddly" (195) wanted to interview the abbot of San Isidro, a sympathizer of the uprising against the Republic who told the artist about living through the assassinations of his fellow priests (195). He also discusses "a person who shift[s] between the two sides according to necessity" (196) and claims that so-called "apolitical people comprise a significant portion of the population in every conflict" (196). De la Concha's hesitations, personal feelings, and even fears—for example, that he might be misunderstood to be glorifying victimizers or the apolitical—highlight another key ethical and political facet of his art. Like Repiso, de la Concha

overcomes, or at least attempts to overcome, the binary and Manichean logic implicit in “the dilemma of the two evils” (*la teoría de los dos demonios*) (Remedi, “Nos habíamos”) that reduces history to a confrontation between two warring parties (the military and the armed left) and is therefore unable to account for the bigger picture, for the part played by society as a whole, to focus upon the various contexts and dynamics in which hegemony was achieved and challenged, and to render visible the many other actors and practices involved. Troubling and risky as it is, acting otherwise—that is, subordinating and reducing memory and human rights to a selective partisan and empathic position—would contradict the *erga omnes* character of international law on human rights, and certainly would not contribute to historical truth and universal truth (Vidal 181). Once again, however, a restricted notion of the political preconditions de la Concha’s projects, thus preventing him from portraying other persons who have been equally dehumanized: *otras historias jamás pintadas* (*other stories never painted*). He is aware of it and struggles against it. The same kind of objections could be raised about the objects and places selected and exhibited by Giribaldi as a way of inducing memories, the stops included in Walas’s itinerary, the choice of oppositional practices depicted in Chacón’s novel, or the human rights addressed by Rep’s murals.

By way of providing arbitrary closure for an epilogue whose purpose was, in fact, to prolong the arguments and discussions in the present volume, I endorse Rodríguez’s assessment of one of the many merits of Francisco Goldman’s portrayal of the phobic and perverse inner core of state terror in Guatemala: as she puts it, his chronicle places historical truth “on the stage of public discussion” (99). Indeed, this is a trait shared by all of the works discussed: the photographs theatrically deployed by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo; the murals, stencils, and sites of memory of La Plata; the March for Territory and Dignity of the Mojeños. And the same can be said of the plebeian series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which reminds me of the late Adorno coming to terms with the new media: “Si hoy podemos ver en Alemania, en Praga, incluso en la conservadora Suiza y en la católica Roma muchachas y muchachos besándose es que ellos aprendieron esto y probablemente *más* con los filmes” (qtd. in Ortiz 65, my emphasis) (The fact that today it is possible to see girls and boys kissing in Germany, in Prague, even in conservative Switzerland and Catholic Rome, is because they learned that behavior—and probably *more*—from the movies).

Today, somehow, we have succeeded in placing questions of memory, of human rights, and of politics on the stage for public discussion, both within academic circles (Marchesi et al.; Rico et al.; Demasi et al.), and far outside them as well, in the form of novels, photo exhibits, comic strips, murals, sites of memories, documentaries, feature films, and even television series. And we should welcome and congratulate ourselves for this success. Yet the challenge remains: that of disentangling the intricate interweaving of

memory, politics, and human rights to avoid unintended blind spots and shadows, to open up new perspectives on the complexity of both past and present. In failing to do so, we risk ending up like Rep's "Mutyladitos"—the crippled ones.

Notes

1. Television series of the late 1980s that looked backwards to the turbulent yet exciting 1960s in the United States from the perspective of an archetypal middle-class suburban family and addressed a number of economic, political, social, and cultural processes and changes, including the Vietnam War, student protests, counterculture, the sexual revolution, the civil rights movement, family/gender roles and relations, intergenerational conflicts, and more.
2. Conference by Susana Draper, "¿Antes o después de Tlatelolco? O cómo pensar el 68 desde otros sitios," Archivo General de la Universidad de la República, December 2012.
3. This is explained in the report by the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared, "The Doctrine Behind the Repression," (442).

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