

Observing Memories

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*In the wake of the 24th - February
Russian invasion of Ukraine*



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DEEP VIEW

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Rose: Justice and
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Observing *Memories*

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The European Observatory on Memories (EUROM) is a transnational network of institutions and civil society organizations committed to research and promotion of remembrance policies and memorial initiatives. Its main goal is to promote collective and citizenship memories through a plurality of approaches and diverse perspectives. EUROM is led by the University of Barcelona's Solidarity Foundation with the support of the programme Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values of the European Union. Meet our partners at: www.europeanmemories.net/network

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COVER PICTURE

Wall painting “Human lives, migrant lives” (La Model, 2022), produced by the students of the Art Baccalaureate of the La Industrial High School in Barcelona within the transversal workshop “Historical memory, Rap and Graffiti” organized by the EUROM in collaboration with the popular school Versembrant. The painting has been coordinated by the urban artist Lucas Vico and was developed in parallel with the hip hop and rap music workshops the students went through in November and December 2021.

EDITORIAL

It was 2012, ten years ago today, when we launched a ground-breaking and certainly ambitious project: the creation of the European Observatory on Memories. The public presentation was in 2014, but in the background and with the support of the programme Europe for Citizens, we had started to sign the first collaboration agreements with different European members with a view to launching a programme and various projects in the framework of a new horizontal work network on memory policies on an international scale. Memory work in a transnational dimension and in a permanent exchange of experiences was a new method; not unprecedented, but essential after the first decade of the 21st century.

I still remember the first roadmap proposal, folder in hand, in a couple of offices in Brussels with the then director of the Bobigny Station Memorial, Anne Bourgon, defending that the network action of multiple European memories was a good way to generate a multiplier effect and a platform for learning and permanent growth. The other axis we defended was citizens' activity in memorial heritage processes or in inclusive proposals in the projects. European sponsorship was not only necessary for funding, but also for the political and structural framework of action, supporting the European Commission's synergy to promote memorial values within citizens' programmes. The Observatory's proposal was well received and it was a great success to be able to coordinate it from the Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona. The director of the foundation, Xavier López, immediately approved the creation of a memories work area in the framework of broader and more established cooperation and human rights projects such as those conducted by the university foundation. With the Solidarity Foundation we have been able to grow with autonomy and professionalism, and it has created a work synergy that straddles the academic world, organisations and civil society. We have also been able to develop the work of memories in plural, extensively, from small local projects to more ambitious international proposals. The activation of the concept "Glocal" was achieved partly thanks to the concept of plurality and multiplicity. The objectives, structure and design of the programmes have grown over time and have humbly consolidated our platform. The idea was also to establish relations with other networks, such as ICMEMO, with which we have worked intensely and, in addition, we have shared the golden rules (in 2012 we began writing a memorandum of "best practice advice" for the policies, actions and programmes of memory, considering the multiple failures, asymmetries, interference and political manipulation of museums, institutions and professionals that had occurred -or were occurring- in different parts of Europe -and not only-). Actually, and unfortunately, these golden rules are more necessary and present than ever in societies which, paradoxically, are continuously exposed to conflicts and crises.

Ten years have passed and we have survived and grown in size, and we like to think in content too. I want to publicly congratulate the whole team which, from the start, has collaborated on a permanent or temporary basis with EUROM. Vocation, effort and professional conviction are essential qualities when

EDITORIAL

dealing with sensitive and at times conflictive topics such as the field of memory practices and the uses of the past in contemporary societies. Without a human team, and without a diverse and therefore intensely rich network of members, this journey would not have been possible. We hope it will continue for many more years to come.

That is why this 2022 issue, after some strange and tumultuous years of pandemics and other nearby conflicts, we have decided not to present one single line of themed contents, and we have approached experts and professionals from different fields that we believe are key to address the present and the future in the debates and policies of memory. This is a current situation that affects us and tests us permanently and that in some way revisits some of the more classic problems (East-West, relativism and imperialism) or debates that have taken the public sphere by storm, such as colonial memories, gender, or the debates on values, rights and citizens that the CERV programme promotes from the European institutions.

Thus, as regards content, it is no coincidence that one of the magazine's long articles is written by the lawyer Reed Brody, also known as the "dictator hunter" as a result of his work defending human rights in various countries, denouncing human rights violations in Nicaragua, collaborating with victims in the cases against the dictator Augusto Pinochet of Chile and Jean-Claude Duvalier of Haiti, among others. In "Talking about Rose: Justice and memory in Chad", Brody brilliantly tells us how, with the cooperation of the victims, huge detective work was carried out to reconstruct in documentary form the repression of Hissène Habré, dictator of Chad between 1982 and 1990, and heroic episodes such as that of Rose Lokissim, which were fundamental to be able to put Habré on trial, years later, in Senegal. At a time like the present, when democracy is under threat in different parts of the world and certain leaders believe they can enjoy impunity, it is worth remembering and explaining how justice, sooner or later, reaches different parts of the world.

In the European section—and without straying too far from current impunity—, the renowned historian Georges Mink has put on his long distance glasses to describe the evolution of memorial components in the geopolitical strategies that have affected Eastern Europe, and how Vladimir Putin, at the head of the Russian government, is using a militarised collective memory and exploiting the mobilising capacity of the narratives of the past (especially of the Great Patriotic War) to fulfil his territorial ambitions for Ukraine. Furthermore, changing subject, but within the framework of European memory policies, Marie-Louise Jansen explains the project she coordinates: *Contested Histories in Public Spaces*, a project promoted by the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) and the EuroClio-European Association of History Educators. This project has collected more than 500 cases from 139 different countries, identifying statues, monuments, places and space names that make up an uncomfortable heritage that is being socially protested against (spaces linked to the memory of colonialism, imperialism, fascism, authoritarianism, communism, etc.) and in this article, Jansen makes us reflect on Europe's need to face its past through different spaces that remember slave trafficking.

This year we have dedicated the interview to one of the most influential

thinkers in the field of memory studies, professor Andreas Huyssen. We talk not only about his vast work and about the concepts he has created (such as urban palimpsests), but also about highly topical issues, such as the political situation in the United States, the role of memory to fight the far right, the debates stemming from current monumental iconoclasm towards statues that remember slavery or colonial rule, the relations between art and memory, the use of memorials in the public space and the impact of tourism in places of memory.

In the section of brief articles, there is an article by the curator and art historian Clémentine Deliss, who will make us rethink and reconsider the role of museums today; historian Keith Lowe analyses the role played today by monuments dedicated to the heroes and martyrs of the Second World War; historian Clàudia Wasserman talks to us about iconoclasm towards statues that remember slavery and colonial rule in Latin America; following the famous film *Great Freedom* (2021), alongside the director and screenwriters Bernhard Steinmann and Thomas Reider, we will explore the history of persecution and struggle of homosexual people in Germany; and, finally, historian Celeste Muñoz and anthropologist Sarai Martínez will share the first results of the Redress Network project for Spain, a project about reparation initiatives fostered by Columbia University and with participation from the NIOD-Institute of Holland and EUROM.

As with previous issues of the magazine, there will be reviews of books (in this case by Daša Duhaček and Ricard Conesa) and films, such as the recently released *Canción a una dama en la sombra*, written by the director, the Chilean film-maker Carolina Astudillo.

To conclude, historians Jose Miguel Gastón and César Layana, from the Navarra Institute of Memory, a member of the Observatory network, will explain the profound work being carried out by this institution, developing an intense public policy of memory that ranges from the creation of a network of memory spaces to a large selection of educational projects, and including the exhumation of mass graves and the creation of a large database of documentary research, among other lines of work. An example to be followed in terms of dealing with the memory of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship in Spain.

We have tried to maintain the informative and analytical level of previous issues. I would like to close this editorial by once again thanking the editing team for their work, and also the wide team of scientific and editorial advisers composed of colleagues who also represent inter-territoriality and multi-disciplinarity.

I hope you enjoy the read and that you join us, at least...for another 10 years!!!



Jordi Guixé

Director of the European
Observatory on Memories

Talking about Rose: *Justice and Memory in Chad*

Reed Brody*

Human rights lawyer and author of *To Catch a Dictator: The Pursuit and Trial of Hissène Habré*

***Reed Brody has worked alongside the victims of the former dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré –who was convicted of crimes against humanity in Senegal– and in the cases of Augusto Pinochet and Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, and currently works with victims of Gambia’s Yahya Jammeh and of Saudi Arabia’s Prince Mohammed bin Salman. His book about the Habré case, *To Catch a Dictator*, was published in November 2022 by Columbia University Press.**

As we descended the staircase into the most notorious underground prison of Chad’s former dictator Hissène Habré, I could tell from the pervasive cobwebs that no one had been down there in years. The “Piscine” had once been a colonial swimming pool, reserved for the families of French soldiers. Habré perversely had the pool covered with a concrete roof and divided it into ten cells where the “DDS”, his political police, crammed together hundreds of desperate prisoners of the Zaghawa ethnic group, men like Ismael Hachim, who was now leading me down the stairs.

Habré had taken power in Chad in 1982 with American support as bulwark against Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, and was finally overthrown in 1990 and fled across the continent to Senegal. Hachim had survived the Piscine and was now the president of the victims’ association, and I was representing the victims on behalf of Human Rights Watch. In 2000, inspired by the London arrest of the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, on whose case I had also worked, we filed a criminal case against Habré in Senegal. And now in 2001, we were looking to build that case and discover the truth about Habré’s crimes.

In a few cells, tally marks on the walls recorded the prisoners’ days in detention. In other places, detainees had written heartbreaking messages in Arabic or French, Chad’s two national languages. “Man is made for death and suffering”, one of the etchings said. The cells were twelve feet high, with a small opening at the top for air and light.

In theory, the macabre Piscine dungeon was now off limits because

1. The "Piscine" was a colonial-era swimming pool, which Habré converted into a secret underground prison. Photo by Reed Brody



it was part of an army base adjoining the presidential compound of Idriss Déby, who had overthrown Habré. But Hachim used his connections to Déby, a Zaghawa like him, to get me in, along with my colleague Olivier Bercault, Pierre Hazan, a Swiss journalist making a documentary, and Pierre's cameraman. Officials from Déby's office accompanied us on the visit. When we climbed back out of the Piscine into the daylight, I took the opportunity to ask them if we could also take a look at the abandoned headquarters of the DDS, whose distinctive circular fronting we could see just on the other side of a wall. Providentially, they agreed.

We walked through the dusty rooms of the DDS headquarters until we came to one strewn with documents shin-deep on the floor. Nobody had been here for a long time, and as I bent down, I had to wipe away

2. Reed Brody stumbled upon thousands of files of Habré's political police, the feared "DDS," at its N'Djamena headquarters in 2001. Photo courtesy of Pierre Hazan



the cobwebs. The first thing I scooped up was a file on a DDS detainee, the next a report on rebel activity. Olivier and I kept digging. We found lists of DDS prisoners, death certificates, interrogation and spying reports, identity cards. Once we'd waded through the first room, we found two more filled with the same discarded papers. By all appearances, these DDS files had been languishing here, unnoticed, for the past eleven years.

This was, as we recognized immediately, the mother lode. El Dorado. Nothing could be more valuable in the case we were mounting against Habré than the cold, bureaucratic records of his own underlings. Pierre's camera captured the moments of our discovery on film. Our escort from Déby's office said—also on camera—that the documents were ours if we wanted them. I could hardly believe what he was saying. But after saying it once, he said it again. In my mind, I had been plotting how to stuff some of the juicier documents into my pockets, but now, apparently, I didn't have to.

Taking official possession of the documents was still not easy. Nothing in Chad ever was. It took months of negotiations before Hachim and his victims' association were allowed to come on site and copy—not take—the documents. And it took months more for a team of volunteer victims to go through the offices room by room, sort the documents, and put through them through a manual copier that they brought on site each day. The leader of this recovery team was Sabadet Totodet, a former DDS detainee whose prison tasks included dumping the bodies of fellow inmates in a mass grave on the outskirts of N'Djamena. In an important sense, he was resurrecting the people he had previously been assigned to bury.

Sabadet and his fellow volunteers began work at dawn each day and worked until the heat became unbearable in the early afternoon. Once they had amassed their copies, the victims' association made another copy and sent it all along to my office at Human Rights Watch in New York.

The picture that the documents painted of the DDS and its inner workings was chilling. But it was also exactly what we'd been looking for. Among prosecutors, documents are

known as the king of evidence. The truths they reveal can't be cross-examined; their memories do not fade.

According to the wording of a 1983 decree establishing its existence, the DDS was directly responsible to Habré in person. Whatever the agency did, Habré knew about it, as we could tell from the hundreds of documents keeping him informed on a daily basis of even the smallest details of its activities. And the DDS was never less than proud of doing Habré's bidding. «Thanks to the spider's web [we] have spun over the whole length of the national territory,» the director boasted in one memorandum, «[we] keep exceptional watch over the security of the state.»

Arrest records documented the sorts of infractions that could land a citizen in serious trouble: making insulting remarks about the president, accusing the president of stashing money abroad, sorcery (maraboutage) on behalf of the enemy, possession of a photo of Qaddafi, possession of a letter describing the repression in the south of Chad, even being a member of a Rastafarian club.

Few documents explicitly mentioned torture, but the language did little to disguise what went on. «It was in compelling [the prisoner] to reveal certain truths that he died on October 14 at 8 o'clock», said one report. Another detainee «only admitted certain facts ... after physical discipline was inflicted upon him». In many places, the documents talked of “muscular” interrogations.

We found hundreds of death certificates. The causes listed included severe amebic dysentery, severe dehydration, arterial hypertension, severe edemas of the upper and lower limbs and what was often described as, «general deterioration of health». The vaguer descriptions could sometimes be just as sinister as the more specific ones. One document listed fourteen Zaghawa prisoners, arrested in April 1989, who «died due to illness» later that month. Another named 32 prisoners of war who all died «from their wounds» on the same day.

The bureaucratic language attested clearly to the waves of repression in the south of Chad and ethnic cleansing against groups like the Hadjerai and the Zaghawa. One report from 1989 was titled

«Situation of the traitorous Zakawa agents arrested for complicity» and it listed 98 people –shepherds, drivers, students and businessmen– who had been arrested as «suspected accomplices of the traitors».

One of the first documents that Olivier and I found on the floor was a report by twelve Chadian security officials, including several later accused of torture, which described a “very special” training they attended near Washington in March 1985. Another document spoke of a Chadian request to the United States for truth serum and a generator, to be used in “interrogations”. The United States had known about Habré's atrocities, of course, but to what degree did it actively participate? I would spend years trying to find out and never got as close to the truth as these documents were taking me. My dozens of Freedom of Information Act requests in the US only got back a lot of descriptions of military assistance and embassy meetings, but nothing regarding the training.

Habré's first and longest-serving DDS Director, Saleh Younous, had told Chad's Truth Commission in the early 1990s that «a certain John, an American, was acting as my advisor». Bandjim Bandoum, a former sub-director of the DDS, would also later tell me about “John”. The veteran French war correspondent Pierre Darcourt told me he'd heard of an American advisor to the DDS director called “Mr. Swicker”, an account supported by DDS logbooks that recorded visits by “Mr. George Swicken” and “Mr. Swica.” One such visit to DDS headquarters, on April 7, 1989, took place as the repression of the Zaghawas was at its height and the Piscine, only a few yards away (and across the street from the USAID office) was filling up with Zaghawa prisoners.

I checked the State Department's staff listings and found a George S. Swicker, who served as the political and military counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Chad in the late 1980s. His predecessor was James L. Morris, a possible match for a person described in a DDS document as the «American Advisor to the DDS, Monsieur Maurice».

I never found Morris, but I traced Swicker to an address in Virginia. He never returned my calls.

The documents also talked about a secret

U.S.-backed network called “Mosaic”, which linked the security services of the Côte d’Ivoire, Israel, Chad, Togo, the Central African Republic, Zaire and Cameroon. Mosaic’s apparent purpose was to make sure political opponents of one regime could find no haven in any of the other participating countries. One former DDS deputy director who was spilling secrets to Amnesty International, for example, was kidnapped in Togo in 1988, and delivered back to Habré, who threw him in jail where he starved to death. The model was strikingly similar to Operation Condor, the Pinochet-era alliance of Latin American intelligence services whose victims included Orlando Letelier, the former Chilean ambassador to Washington, killed in a car bombing in the U.S. capital in 1976.

The documents also revealed startling cases of heroism, like that of Rose Lokissim, who had been jailed in the mid-1980s for assisting southern rebels. Rose was legendary among survivors of the “Locaux” prison where she spent six months as the only woman with 60 men in Cell C, the “cell of death”, before being transferred back to the regular cells. She helped two detainees deliver babies in custody and was known for her ability to boost people’s morale. Clément Abaifouta, who would become the president of the victims’ association after Ismael Hachim’s death, remembered that in jail Rose would tell people, «Stay strong until we can get out of this prison. Then we’ll change the direction of things in this country. She was a revolutionary, because she had ideas that fired us up to revolt, to dream of a change. At that time, we were all afraid.» When prisoners died or were executed, Rose noted the abuses on scraps of paper and smuggled the information out to relatives. Ultimately, she was denounced by a fellow prisoner and killed.

What nobody knew until we found the documents was how bravely Rose had gone to her death. After she was betrayed, the DDS interrogated her on May 15, 1986 and recorded her telling them: «If I die here, it will be for my country and my family. History will talk of me. I’ll be thanked for my service to the Chadian nation.»

The DDS interrogators concluded that Rose was

«irredeemable and continues to undermine state security, even in prison», and recommended that «the authorities punish her severely».

She was executed that same day.

This story haunted me like no other, and I marveled at the fact that her words, spoken only to her tormentors, had found their way to me after fifteen years, like a note in a bottle washing ashore. Rose wanted history to talk about her, and now I had the material in my hands to make sure it would do just that.

At Human Rights Watch, a team of seven interns spent six months organizing the DDS files into a searchable database. Patrick Ball, the “statistician of the human rights movement”, who had assembled data for truth commissions and courts in Guatemala, Haiti, South Africa and Kosovo, gave us our first analysis of the extent of the Habré regime’s crimes. The documents mentioned 12,321 different victims and 1,208 deaths in detention. Habré received 1,265 direct communications about the status of 898 detainees.

We had a few documents bearing what appeared to be Habré’s handwriting, including one in which he refused a Red Cross request to hospitalize prisoners taken on the battlefield. But what was the most incriminating thing was the sheer number of crimes committed around Habré, their systematic nature, and the fact that so much information about them was being sent to him directly. Here, in black and white, was overwhelming proof that he knew what was going on and, at the very least, did not put a halt to the crimes. We could, in legal parlance, ascribe “command responsibility” to him and use it as a basis for charging and convicting him.

Despite this evidence, and Habré’s first indictment in 2000 by a Senegalese judge, however, the Government of Senegal refused for more than a decade to allow the case to advance. For that, it would take one of the world’s most patient and tenacious campaigns for justice by a group of survivors, a 2012 ruling obtained by Belgium from the International Court of Justice ordering Senegal to prosecute Habré “without further delay”, and the election the same year of a new president,

que la cause que j'ai défendu et continuera de l'être est juste et qu'en aucune manière je ne dois céder du moins que l'ennemi ne disparaisse.

S.I.R.
mort le 22.04
d'arme, du maq

S.I.R.
est le moment au
propos malveillant
ISSA ARWAI est un
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trouvant avec nous et

S.I.R.
de DJIM et moi non plus
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Mentionnons que LOKISSIM ROSE dans sa lettre à DJINTOLOUM Malimos, prouve qu'elle brave courageusement la prison car elle dit que sa cause est juste ; qu'elle a fait cela parce la nation Tchadienne l'en appelle.

Elle affirme que, même si elle doit mourir au cachot elle ne regrette pas car le Tchad la remerciera et l'histoire en parlera d'elle.

Mentionnons que pendant 2 ans de détention l'intéressée n'a pas changée de langage mais bien au contraire se glorifie. Etant donné qu'elle est irrécupérable et continue de porter atteinte à la sécurité de l'Etat même en prison ; il serait souhaitable que les autorités la pénalisent sévèrement.-

3. DDS prisoner Rose Lokissim smuggled out notes about the mistreatment of detainees before she was betrayed. Her DDS file showed that Lokissim told her interrogators that even if they killed her, «Chad will thank her and history will talk about her». The DDS recommended she be "punished severely" and she was executed that same day. Photo courtesy of the Lokissim family. Composition by Isabel Coixet

Macky Sall. Under Sall's leadership, Senegal and the African Union created special chambers within the Senegalese court system, which in July 2013 again indicted Habré and finally paved the way for his trial. It was the first time in history that the courts of one country, Senegal, prosecuted the former leader of another, Chad, for human rights crimes.

The victims' mobilization also led to a trial in Chad that, on March 25, 2015, convicted 20 Habré-era security agents on charges of murder, torture, kidnapping and arbitrary detention. The court sentenced seven men to life in prison, including Saleh Younous, the former director of the DDS, and Mahamat Djibrine, described as one of the "most feared torturers in Chad" by the Truth Commission. In addition to reparations, the court ordered the government to erect a monument to those who were killed under Habré and to turn the former DDS headquarters into a museum. These were both among the long-standing demands of the victims' associations. Seven years after the court decision, however, the Chadian government has not implemented any of these compensatory measures.

In the run-up to Habré's trial in Senegal, Spanish filmmaker Isabel Coixet produced the documentary *Talking about Rose*, narrated by the French actress Juliette Binoche, which told the story of the courageous Rose Lokissim. The film was first shown to a packed audience in Chad during the trial there and introduced Rose's story to a Chadian public that had not heard of her before.

After the film, the Humanity United Foundation in California created "Rose Lokissim Grants" for reporters to travel to Chad and Senegal and cover the Habré case. Their stories about the trial wound up in the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *El País*, among other publications, bringing Rose's story and the victims' struggle to an even larger audience.

Habré's trial finally began in July 2015 in Dakar, and was streamed on the internet, televised in Chad and uploaded and stored on YouTube.

The DDS documents we had discovered took center stage at the trial, buttressing the testimony of 98 witnesses. A court-appointed handwriting expert confirmed that it was Habré who responded

to a request by the International Committee of the Red Cross for the hospitalization of certain prisoners of war by writing «From now on, no prisoner of war can leave the Detention Center except in case of death». The statistician Patrick Ball presented a study of mortality in Habré's prisons, based on the DDS documents, concluding that prison mortality was «hundreds of times higher than normal mortality for adult men in Chad during the same period» and «substantially higher than some of the twentieth century's worst POW contexts», such as German prisoners of war in Soviet custody and U.S. prisoners of war in Japanese custody.

Numerous prisoners talked about sharing their cells with Rose Lokissim and the court received all the documents detailing her tragic and brave story.

The most dramatic testimony at trial came from four women sent to a camp in the desert north of Chad in 1988 who testified that they were used as sexual slaves for the army and that soldiers had repeatedly raped the women in the camp. Two were under 15 at the time. The recovered DDS documents confirmed that women were sent to the desert and record the imprisonment of the four former detainees who testified. One of the women, Khadidja Hassan Zidane, stunned the court when she testified that Habré himself had personally raped her four times in the presidential palace. Kaltouma Deffalah, one of the survivors of sexual slavery, testified defiantly that she felt «strong, very courageous because I am before the man who was strong before in Chad, who ...doesn't even speak now, I am really happy to be here today, facing him, to express my pain, I am truly proud». It was a sentiment expressed, in one way or another, by many of the survivors who testified.

One evening during the trial in Dakar, I had a chance to watch on satellite the Chadian television coverage of the trial and was struck by the idea of thousands of Chadians watching their former dictator in the dock. Habré wasn't in the dock because Chad's current strongman Idriss Déby had so decreed, which was the way things usually happened in Chad. He was there because a group of brave citizens, Ismael Hachim, Sabadet Totodet,

Clément Abaifouta and so many others, had fought furiously for years to get him there, because people like Rose Lokissim had dared to tell the world what happened in Habré's prisons. The power of their achievement was nothing less than revolutionary.

On May 30, 2016, the court convened before a packed audience to deliver its judgment. It found Habré guilty of the commission of crimes against humanity, for the underlying crimes of rape, sexual slavery, the massive and systematic practice of summary executions, and kidnapping of persons followed by their enforced disappearance) and of torture. It also found him guilty of war crimes, including murder, torture and inhuman treatment, under the principle of command responsibility. The court found Khadidja Hassan Zidane's testimony that Habré raped her to be credible. The court's opinion cited the case of Rose Lokissim 15 times.

Noting that torture and repression were Habré's form of governing, the court sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The conviction and the sentence were upheld on appeal and Habré died on August 24, 2021, while serving his life sentence.

After Habré's conviction, several of the protagonists of the victims' campaign created a "Rose Lokissim Association", funded principally by the charitable foundation of the exiled Mauritanian businessman Mohamed Bouamatou, to carry on the victims' quest for full reparations and to carry the fight to other tyrants such as Gambia's Yahya Jammeh.

Rose was 33 years old when she was killed in 1986, but thanks to the discovery of her last words, and the tenacity of the survivors in bringing Habré to court, her memory lives on.

As Juliette Binoche says in the film, «Rose's chosen mission, for the world to know the truth about Hissène Habré's prisons, is finally being achieved».

And history is indeed talking about Rose.



4. Working Visit of President Hissène Habré of Chad and His Departure Statements at The Diplomatic Entrance, 6/19/1987. Series: Reagan White House Photographs, 1/20/1981 - 1/20/1989 Collection: White House Photographic Collection, 1/20/1981 - 1/20/1989. Public domain.



5. Khadidja Hassan Zidane holds a picture of herself before her arrest and another while she was testifying at the trial of Hissène Habré in N'Djaména, Chad. © 2016 Reed Brody for Human Rights Watch

In the wake of the 24th-February Russian invasion of Ukraine: geopolitics, history and memory

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Since 24 February 2022, Putin's outrageous distortion of Ukrainian history to justify the frontal attack on Ukraine raises questions over the relationship between Russian geopolitical continuity and historical justification. And thus what international law and world order means to the Kremlin. Indeed, since that fateful date, we have seen a sort of *globalisation of bilateralism* that has imposed itself as a new world order. For if Putin's historical revisionism was necessary for him, like a fuse to ignite the war, the historical argument rapidly gave way to the voice of weapons and the nuclear threat. The whole world was inevitably involved, either because of the blocking of foodstuffs, gas or fertiliser supplies, or because of the West's support to Ukraine in terms of military equipment and the support lent by certain autocratic countries to Russia. The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, through his communication policy, has largely contributed to the Europeanisation and globalisation of his country's cause. Therefore, we wonder about the role and the degree of effectiveness of historical revisionism and historical memory games in Putin's strategy.

The Russian attack was like a cold shower for our optimism as citizens of the European haven of peace, established during the last quarter of the 20th century.

But let's allow Putin himself to speak, whose historical and memorial conviction is summed up in an article from July 2021. This article, entitled "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians", makes the 9th-century Kievan Rus the integrating foundation of a people and the Ukrainian capital, the "mother of Russian cities", is the cradle. «Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are all descendants of Ancient Rus, which was the largest state in Europe (...) History has decided that the centre of reunification, continuing the tradition of ancient Russian statehood, should become Moscow», Vladimir Putin writes.¹

¹ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>



1. President of Russia Vladimir Putin at the 2022 Victory Parade in Red Square, Moscow, to mark the 77th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic. 9 May 2022. Presidential Executive Office of Russia (Wikimedia Commons)

Moscow is no longer the “third Rome”, but the new Kiev. In 988, it was the conversion of Vladimir the Great, Prince of Kiev (c. 955–1015), to Byzantine Christianity that sealed the spiritual fate of Russia. One strong hypothesis is that, eleven centuries later, Vladimir Putin’s reason for waging war on Ukraine is motivated by an absurd dream: to restore this original empire.

But is it operational enough to make Russians support the idea of reconquest? Isn’t it too abstract a reference point for collective memory? Later we shall see that Putin’s geopolitics needs a historical narrative that is not only based on collective cultural memory (for example, as defined by Aleida Assmann), but also on reactive memory (“communicative”, as Assmann would say). It concerns the memories of witnesses, which therefore still live on in the memory of elders.

This hypothesis must be subject to an analysis that addresses the concepts of geopolitics and the uses of history and historical memory. A second question must be asked at this point: can or should we observe a break in the evolution of the uses of memory between the 20th and 21st centuries? A conceptual clarification is also needed here: we cannot speak of memorial geopolitics but rather of a memorial component in the geopolitical strategy.

This observation invites us to explore the meaning of words, their narrative history and their relevance to factual history.



2. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy address the nation on 20th March 2022 during the Russo-Ukrainian War. (Wikimedia Commons)

Geopolitics between the 20th and 21st centuries

When the journal *Geopolitics* was founded in France in 1981, one of its founders, General Pierre Gallois, provided us with a definition of geopolitics to which we have adhered since the journal's inception. It is pertinent to recall the definition here:

«Geopolitics is a combination of political science and geography, but it also consists of a study of the relationships between the implementation of power policies internationally and the geographical context in which they occur.»²

We were in the midst of an international crisis linked to the story of the Polish trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity) and the declaration of martial law by General Jaruzelski. Memorial studies were missing from the geopolitical approach, even if the most astute analysts associated the idea of the existence of a more or less static mental map of “world communism versus Western democracy” in the European geographical arena.

Upon its conception, at the beginning of the 20th century, geopolitical thinking was based on a sort of Darwinian theory, i.e. weak versus strong states. It was dominated by the thinking of Friedrich Ratzel, who considered that the driving force behind the formation of states was the struggle for “living space”. The person who most inspired Germany's geopolitical strategies in the early 20th century was a geographer and senior officer, General Karl Haushofer, who was in close contact with the leaders of the Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). His relations with Nazi dignitaries, such as Rudolph Hess, gave him access to Hitler's politics. His geopolitical concept of reconfiguring Germany's living space, claiming to be a victim of the Treaty of Versailles, became an inspiration for war.³ (Jakub Potulski, Poznan, 2021)

² Karl Haushofer, *De la géopolitique*, quoted by Jean Klein, Fayard, Paris, 1986, p. 11

³ Jakub Potulski, *Kształtowanie się wyobrażeń przestrzennych w rosyjskiej myśli i praktyce politycznej (Formation of the Spatial Imaginary in Russian Thought and Political Practice)*, FNCE, Poznan, 2021, pp. 42-44

At around the same time, the Soviet geopolitical strategy of territorial conquest was developed, mystified by the messianic theory of the inevitable world revolution, notably by Lenin, which resulted in the failure of the Polish-Soviet war in 1921, in contrast to the Bolsheviks' intentions. We can say, in succinct terms, that the meeting of these two geopolitical approaches resulted first in the Treaty of Rapallo of 1922 (with a secret clause of military cooperation), and then in 1939, in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to which we will return later. Stalin, after the victory of 1945, pleaded the need to build a security belt around the only socialist state, obsessed by the memory of the threats posed to the young Russian revolution by the Western countries supporting the White armies. He was already justifying the conquest of the USSR's neighbouring states with history, interpreted in his own manner. In Stalinist rhetoric, the conquest was camouflaged by the notion of "friendly countries", friends forced to refuse the Marshall Plan and accept the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact.

As we have just seen, geopolitical conceptions are closely linked to the historical context, to the configuration of political geography as well as to the strategic constructions produced by the actors involved in international relations.

What happened in the realm of memory in the post-war period?

In the immediate post-World War II period, efforts were made to forget painful memories by adapting historical and memorial narratives to the idea of the necessary obliteration of traumas, as the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur would have said, who devoted most of his work to the link between history and memory, with memorial actions oscillating between over-valuing and obliterating memory.

The political dictate on the obliteration of memory is illustrated by the speech delivered by Sir Winston Churchill in 1946, highlighted by the House of European History on one of its walls in Brussels:

«We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future.»

The last two decades of the Cold War between the 1970s and the 1980s saw the emergence of manifold manifestations of memory. Paradigmatic studies are on the rise. These processes are just

3. House of European History in Brussels.



beginning to bear an impact on geopolitics and the state of international relations. Over these years, it is primarily in the realm of nation states that national memorial initiatives abound. In the West, the ongoing construction of Europe called for memory reconciliation among the countries, giving impetus to this construction, France and Germany, increasing historical memory policies with the apotheosis of the 1984 recollection of Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand, hand in hand, in front of the tombs of the soldiers of the two nations involved in the Battle of Verdun. Between East and West, the first embryos of Polish-German reconciliation appeared with the Letter of Reconciliation from the Polish bishops to their German counterparts in 1965 and the beginning of the diplomacy of forgiveness with Willy Brandt dropping to his knees in front of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw in 1970. This marked the period when reconciliationism reigned and memory games only served this purpose.

Soviet Russia, on the other hand, was affected from within by memory claims, very briefly during the so-called “Khrushchev Thaw” of 1956, then widely in dissident literature, culminating in the Gulag phenomenon, under the major impact of Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago. Here, memory helped civil society reveal the historical truth of Soviet crimes.



4. People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR V. M. Molotov (left) and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop shake hands after the signing of the friendship and border treaty between the USSR and Germany. 28 September 1939 Public Domain (Wikimedia Commons)

In the West, as if through the distortion of memory, among the young Germans of the 1968 generation, there was a demand to account for the crimes perpetrated by their forgetful grandparents. This was met by the revival of historical negationism in Western Europe, which focused on challenging the universally accepted narrative of the Holocaust, with the denial of the existence of the gas chambers. In France, the academic world was shaken, notably by the activism of the negationist academic, Robert Faurisson, as well as, in a different order, by the controversy sparked by Hannah Arendt around the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Soon Germany would face the so-called “historians’ debate” (Historikerstreit) surrounding the relativisation of the origins of Nazism on the one hand with the work of Ernest Nolte, and on the other, with the call to speak out against the Nazi criminals who found refuge in post-war Germany with the blessing of the Allies. This memory revival movement was symbolised by the slap given by Beate Klarsfeld to Chancellor Kurt Kissinger or by the revelation of the past of Kurt Waldheim, officer of the Wehrmacht, responsible for war crimes in Yugoslavia, but also former UN Secretary-General. In France, the ambiguities of the Gaullist narrative on the French Resistance and, in its wake, on the responsibilities of the Vichy regime, were tentatively put on the public agenda.

The French case is of interest to us here because of the growth of work on the politics of memory. Several facts are shaking the certainties of French memory by destabilising the balance of identity. This will be fertile ground for the birth of Pierre Nora’s paradigm of “lieux de mémoire” (sites of memory). France was still digesting the effects of its 1968 cultural revolution and was experiencing the oil crisis, which revealed to the French that the three decades of abundance and carefree consumption were over. It also marked the end of the empire, with the abandonment of Vietnam by the Americans, followed by the Viet Cong’s victory, and the somewhat chaotic withdrawal of colonial powers in North Africa. Pierre Nora and his team noted the need for a reference point in terms of memory identity, a reunion with a glorious past and its roots.

This would result in a monumental work listing the sites of memory. The model spread to many countries, notably to Russia, directed by Georges Nivat. The paradigm was implemented everywhere where a social need was felt in bilateral relations driven by the desire for reconciliation. Hagen Schultz and Etienne François also produced a monumental inventory of French–German places of memory. Hans Henning Hanf and Robert Traba co-directed an immense four-book challenge about the Polish–German “lieux de mémoire”. However, at that time, that wave of memorial commemorations did not yet intersect with international relations other than in an effort to appease conflicting pasts in bilateral relations.

An examination of state memory policies in the Soviet Union facilitates an understanding of the shift in memory from the 20th to the 21st century. Notwithstanding, or because of, the pre-eminence of Marxist–Leninist ideology, Soviet propaganda sought to consolidate a militaristic model in the collective memory.⁴ The discourse sources of Putinism, as diverse as they are, are obsessively aimed at two targets: the idea of empire and the apology of war. This is the common background to Sovietism, “orthodox” imperialism, Russian conservatism, Pan–Slavism and Eurasianism. But Putin can get on the bandwagon of this ideological mishmash because the collective memory of the Russians who support him was already preformed in the USSR and only then consolidated by the propaganda campaigns under Putin’s rule. The education of the Soviet citizen consisted of military preparation; their life was spent in various military–patriotic associations. The calendar was filled with military holidays, and honouring the fighters of the Great Patriotic War was a civic obligation. It was as if the Russian collective memory had been militarised.

⁴ Piotr Mickiewicz, *Rosyjska myślenie strategiczne i potencjał militarny w XXI wieku (Russian Strategic Thinking and Military Potential in the 21st Century)*, PWN, 2021, Warsaw, pp. 27–28

What happened in the 1990s in the relationship between memory, history and politics?

After the fall of communism and the disappearance of the bipolarity of two ideological blocs, memorial events strengthened and burgeoned, opening up a wide repertoire of actions and a vast space for competition around the painful past of the 20th century.

Memorial paradigms then intersected with geopolitics, becoming essentially defined by analyses of the reasons for and consequences of the Cold War. We know that the geopolitical axis structuring the Cold War period was East–West. It partially extended beyond this period when the calls for remembrance set European institutions on fire, the European Parliament and other executive bodies of the European Union, but also the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The 1990s and the first years of this century saw an escalation in the exchange of blows between the actors representing the interests of national or state groups that considered themselves robbed by the Second World War. In the field of memory, the battle for memorial adjustment between Russia and the countries liberated from the Communist Bloc took place, symbolically illustrated by the debate over the asymmetry of the EU’s memorial legitimisation, on the necessary reclassification of communism as a totalitarian regime in the same way as Hitler’s “never again” regime was. The battle would result in an attempt to enclose singular histories in a single museum narrative towards a transnational vision in a European House of History. It is far from fully satisfying the various entrepreneurs of European memory. Several transnational initiatives, reflecting both the East–West axis and the European Left–Conservative Right partisan divide, would attack the general design of the permanent exhibition in Brussels for being ideological, Hegelian and neo–Marxist.⁵ These initiatives highlighted voluntary gaps in

⁵ Paweł Ukielski, *Pamięć Polski, pamięć sąsiadów, pamięć Europy (Polish Memory, Neighbours’ Memory, Europe’s Memory)*, Teologia Polityczna, 2020, p. 228.

the museum narrative. After a study visit in 2017, an international group of historians and museum officials dedicated to the history of the crimes of communism or two totalitarianisms, organised in a “Platform of European Memory and Conscience” published a rich critical report.

Some of these entrepreneurs of memory achieved real legislative success in the European Parliament. In 2009, the European Parliament established the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes on 23 August. In keeping with this initiative, several EU member states added to the ban on symbols of the Nazi regime characteristic of communist propaganda. Controversy even flared up over whether to include a ban on Che Guevara t-shirts. The date of 23 August constitutes a strong memorial symbol, as it was the day the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed in 1939 with its secret annex postulating the invasion of Poland by the two signatory countries. This event in European geopolitical history will, to this day, continue to be the most mobilising point in international memorial relations between Russia and Western historians, especially in declaring when the war began for the Russians. In May 2009, the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, in the face of symbolic initiatives by the EU and the Council of Europe to equate Stalinism (and even communism) with Nazism, elevated history to the level of an attribute of national “sovereignty”. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the outset of the Second World War and the German–Soviet Pact, which Europe was

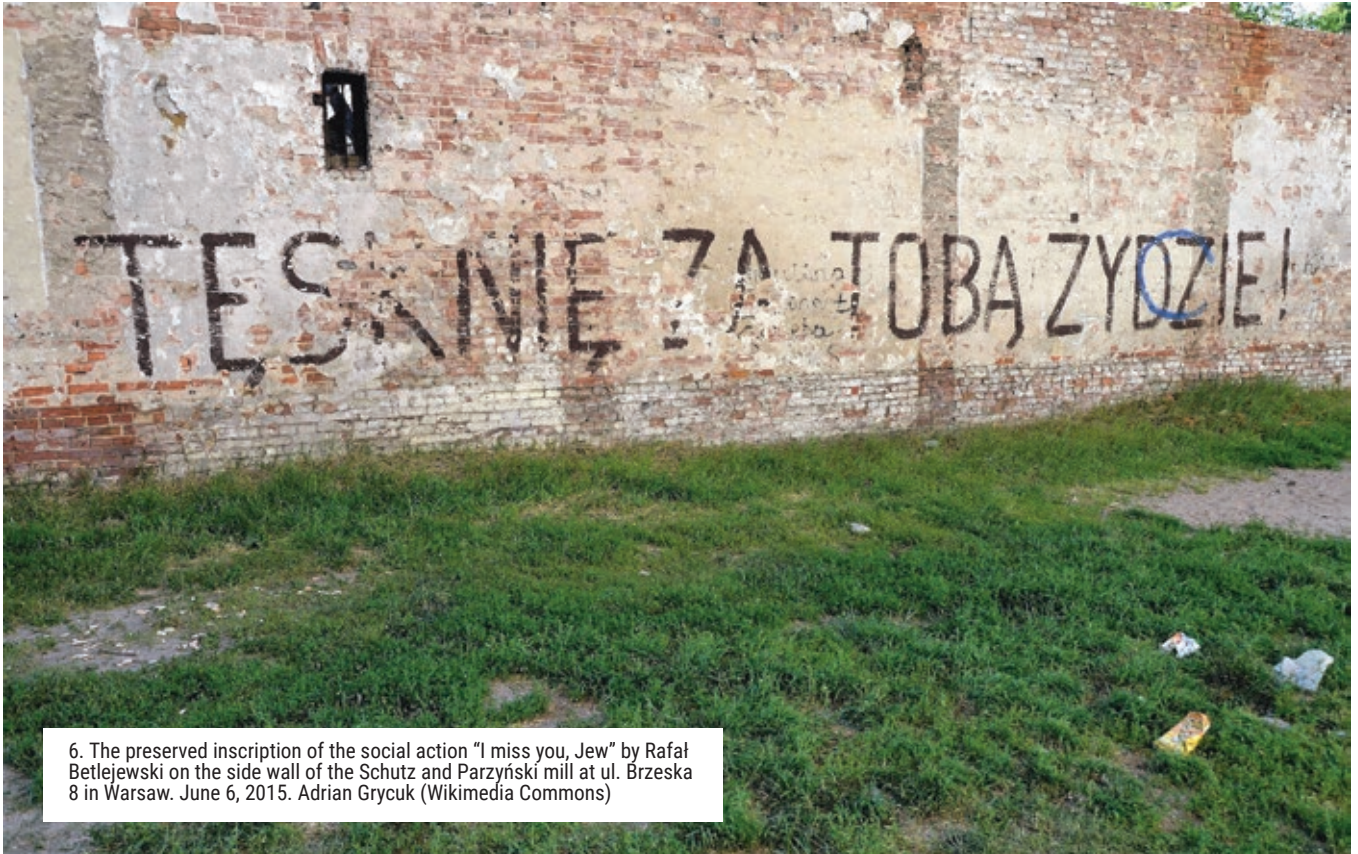
preparing to commemorate, the Russian President asserted: «One should not call black what is white, call the aggressor who was defending himself...». These words were accompanied by the setting up of a Presidential Commission to Counter Attempts to Falsify History. Many Russian historians protested at the time against the likely pressure of this supervisory body that, under the pretext of “tracking down and countering erroneous interpretations of history abroad”, would make the arbitrariness of political censorship official. The banning of the Memorial Association under a law that allows a local NGO to be classified as foreign-funded and therefore a foreign agency has undeniably corroborated these fears.

In fact, this phenomenon of state intrusion into the field of history is omnipresent in many societies.

The differentiated regimes of the uses of memory coexist during the post-Cold War years. On the one hand, commissions of historians multiplied, such as the one led by Anatoy Torkunov and Adam Rotfeld, with an optimistic message to neutralise contentious points in Polish–Russian history, such as the recognition of the elimination of Polish elites by Stalin’s NKVD in Katyn. Another commission of Polish and Ukrainian historians is endeavouring to neutralise fanciful or differentiated historical interpretations of the Volhynia Massacre or Operation Vistula, trying to quantify the number of victims on both sides and to understand the reasons for the massacres. At the societal level, installation artists revive the painful past of the end of almost the entire Jewish community in Poland with the intention of both civic awareness and



5. © UNHCR/Chris Melzer Refugees entering Poland from Ukraine at the Medyka border crossing point.



6. The preserved inscription of the social action "I miss you, Jew" by Rafal Betlejewski on the side wall of the Schutz and Parzyński mill at ul. Brzeska 8 in Warsaw. June 6, 2015. Adrian Grycuk (Wikimedia Commons)

memorial appeasement. One such example is the outdoor installation of a public bench with a kippah and the inscription "I miss you, Jew" by Rafal Betlejewski. On the other hand, and rather with the effect of aggravating Polish-Ukrainian relations, in Radzymin, the memorial reconstructions enjoy staging naturalistic pictures of Ukrainian massacres of Poles in the Volhynia region.

In Spain, a war surrounding memory is raging. The Pacts of Moncloa on the principle of amnesty/amnesia cracked when the PSOE's new generation of socialists took over. In the years around the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, memory laws revisited the past of Franco's crimes, and unpunished and forgotten assassinations. The archaeology of mass murders developed under the impetus of archaeological excavations on the mass grave in Srebrenica. In Spain, this was accompanied by collective actions called memory caravans, which sought to identify mass graves containing Republican victims.

What happened during this period for memorial studies?

This period is dominated by several conceptions that shed light on the processes of collective memory formation, which cannot be described in detail here due to space limitations. France witnessed the revival of Maurice Halbwachs' paradigm, explaining the formation of collective memory among social groups and classes, while Pierre Nora's paradigm has spread almost worldwide, and Paul Ricoeur's paradigm explores the psychological mysteries of memory processes. The duty to remember and the uses and abuses of memory (Tzvetan Todorov) are discussed. Normative judgements are made about good and bad memory work. Elsewhere, the work of Aleida Assmann and Jeffrey Olick, to name but a few, is also flourishing, focusing on the explanation of the processes of memory collection or the effects of the transition from individual "communicative" memory to what Aleida Assmann calls "cultural memory".

All these paradigms have limitations, the main one being that they explain what happens within the national framework, or bilaterally when it is a question of recalling an inter-state conflict, whereas memory games are becoming globalised and are becoming narrative supports of the new geopolitics. The logic of bilateral games of appeasement characteristic of the immediate post-Cold War period is being replaced by belligerent tendencies which, by means of the revival of contentious pasts, seek international competition, the stigmatisation of the adversary, the exclusion of political enemies and, for Russia, constitute the prelude to territorial conquest.

The revival of points of contention involving painful pasts are on the rise, as between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, Italy and Slovenia. Greece has made claims for war reparations from Germany, as has the Polish government. Spain faces reparations claims from certain Central American countries.

The avatars of colonialism are reflected in former colonies' claims for the restitution of cultural goods and material reparations. Since 2019, the resolution of the European Parliament obliges member states to take specific measures such as restituting looted goods or allowing free access to the archives of colonialism. The geopolitical memorial fault lines are being renewed, especially between African and Asian countries and former colonising states such as France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, etc. These discussions are the direct consequence of the proliferation of memorial laws that seem to impose censorship on historians' work. The burgeoning of historical memory policies launched by certain politicians on all sides irritates historians. Even more so when social activists, journalists, police officers, judges, diplomats or members of parliament interfere in the disciplinary field and when social media are inflamed.

It was in this period at the turn of two centuries, the 20th and the 21st, that we felt the need to reflect on concepts intrinsic to political sociology, including both the tactics of memorial actors and their actions in the internationalisation of memorial strategies.

The change of scale in the first decade of the new millennium

But first, to better define the concepts we need, let's return to Putin's historicisation strategy.

Today, Putin appears to be an epigone and continuator of the visions of Ratzel or Haushofer, but especially of Stalin. In reality, Putin basically thinks the same thing but needs an additional justification. And this is where a memorial masquerade comes in: Nazism, racism, anti-Semitism and the reminder of the origins of Russia's greatness.

The portfolio of historical and memorial references does not stop for Russia at European history. Since Putin's speech to the audience of sad and empty-looking regime beneficiaries, except for the infantile excitement of Kadyrov, on 30 September 2022, after the counting of the so-called democratic referenda, to announce the annexation of the four oblasts of Ukraine, the Russian President has been emphasising the clash of civilisations in a Huntingtonian manner. He reminds the Russian generation that lived under Soviet rule of the prevailing ideology: the accusation of the colonialist West with the American devil and his axiological degeneracies as a main topic.

However, the core of the revisionist mobilising discourse is not Russia's thousand-year-old history, such as that recounted by Putin at the beginning of the invasion in February 2022, which I outlined in the introduction, nor that of the clash of civilisations. At the centre of the memorial device is the "Great Patriotic War". Why is this so?

In the early 2000s, and even more so since the annexation of Crimea, a "memory offensive" has taken place around the "Great Patriotic War", against the Nazism of 1941-1945, to the point that it is now "a kind of mystical cult".

In fact, in order to justify the reconstitution of the empire, necessarily by military means, Putin must not only have his army and generals behind him but also the population. It is a question of building legitimacy by resorting to a historical

vision. Putin's geopolitics of Russian conquest has nothing to do with a historical truth corroborated by a scientific approach. What counts is the mobilising effectiveness of the narrative.

To achieve this effect, a certain type of memory must be used, a "reactive memory" for the Russians. This is the memory of the Second World War. The Great Patriotic War is not a lieu de mémoire, even if it has several locations, such as the Battle of Stalingrad or the raising of the Soviet flag over the Reichstag in Berlin. It is rather, as I used to say, a "repository of memory".⁶ This concept designates, through its metaphorical connotation, more than a "lieu de mémoire", a stock of resources that can be recycled in the present political or geopolitical stakes. Various actors draw on these "territorial or imaginary event" repositories for the symbolic materials needed to fuel competitions. In the case of the Great Patriotic War, this is living memorial material. This material is based, as Adam Michnik metaphorically put it, on the "selfishness of pain" due to the human costs suffered by the Soviets, and on the exaltation of pride in victorious sacrifice. However, Putin still hinders these uses, namely the controversy over when the Great Patriotic War actually began and what actually happened between 1939 and 1941. But the Putin narrative does not need to explain itself to the Russian population. Exploiting this repository of memory is enough to gain the support of approximately 80% of the population for his strategy to include Ukraine in the empire.

Conclusion

But we can also see that Putin only needed historical justifications to justify the launch of a geopolitical adventure, but when the guns started talking, his memorial discourse became muddled and incoherent. Perhaps because remembering the tribute of blood paid by the Russian population between 1941 and 1945 revived the reflection on the meaning of today's sufferings, thanks to the Russian and Ukrainian blood that flows abundantly in the war against Ukraine. At the risk of turning the Russian population against the geopolitics of conquest and its memorial make-up. But that is another hypothesis.

⁶ Georges Mink, see for example my introduction entitled "Géopolitique, Histoire et Jeux de Mémoire: pour une reconfiguration conceptuelle", in Georges Mink and Pascal Bonnard (ed.), *Le Passé au Présent, Gisements mémoriels et actions historicisantes en Europe centrale et orientale*, Michel Houdiard (ed.), Nanterre, 2010

Legacies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Europe: *Time for a Continental Reckoning?*

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A continent-wide conversation on slavery-era legacies and the impact it has had –and continues to have– on European societies today is long overdue.

In 2012, the travel website Tripadvisor listed the Portuguese town of Lagos as the number one travel destination on a list of “15 destinations on the rise” worldwide. Known for its beautiful beaches on the Atlantic coast in the Algarve region, the tranquil seaside town of 22,000 inhabitants is an ideal enclave for a pleasant holiday. What is less known is that, in 1444, the Atlantic slave trade started in Lagos where enslaved Africans were bought and sold.¹

Over the next two centuries, other European ports –Lisbon, Seville, Cádiz, Nantes, Bordeaux, Liverpool, Amsterdam, to name a few– entered into an increasingly lucrative venture in what has come to be known as the “triangular slave trade”. A trans-Atlantic enterprise, it saw ships laden with finished goods depart from European ports for the African coast where their products –weapons, porcelain, cloth, etc.– were traded for enslaved people. In turn, these people were then transported across the Atlantic to the Americas, where they were again exchanged, this time for raw materials –sugar, coffee,

¹ Although Portuguese ships first landed in Lagos, by the 1480s, Lisbon took fiscal control of the slave trade and, in 1512, slave boats could only enter Portugal through the River Tejo into Lisbon. Estimates in the trans-Atlantic database indicate the number of enslaved Africans taken from Africa by European nations between the years 1501-1875 with Portugal/Brazil having the largest number of 5,848,266. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates> It should also be noted that slavery was not abolished in Portugal and its colonies until 1869.



chocolate, tobacco, among others— that were shipped to Europe for processing. The Slave Voyages database indicates that of the 12.5 million enslaved men, women and children transported from Africa to the Americas between the years 1501 and 1874, more than 5.8 million were carried on Portuguese ships as part of this triangular trade.

As one of Europe’s southernmost trading ports, Lagos holds the distinction of being one of the continent’s few places where enslaved people from Africa were known to be bought and sold. A small museum, the Mercado de Escravos (slave market), located on the edge of the square Praça do Infante D. Henrique, marks the site where, in 1444, Henry the Navigator traded the first African slaves on European soil. In 2009, excavations for a car park outside the old city gates unearthed remains of men, women

and children from the 15th century. Forensic experts determined that the way these bodies were inhumed in a variety of positions, some of them buried with their hands and arms shackled, and the artefacts found with them, revealed that they were some of the first enslaved Africans brought to Europe. This is the only known site in Europe where enslaved Africans were found to be buried.²

Despite the importance of the find, there is no mention of the history at that site and no memorial or plaque. The location is currently used as a mini-golf course. The Mercado de Escravos museum, which opened in 2010, displayed some of the remains

² S. N. Wasterlain, M. J. Neves, and M. T. Ferreira, “Dental Modifications in a Skeletal Sample of Enslaved Africans Found at Lagos (Portugal)”, *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 26, no. 4 (2015): doi: 10.1002/oa.2453, 630

in the second-floor exhibition space from 2014 until 2016, at which point they were removed following protests by members of the Afro-Portuguese community. Although the creation of a proper memorial and visitors' centre to recognise Lagos's role –and the broader role of Portugal– in the slave trade has been discussed, very little has been done to date beyond the small museum, which itself has a controversial history.³

The Lagos study on the Mercado de Escravos is one of the more than 500 case studies, from 130 countries, collected by the Contested Histories project since 2016, a joint initiative led by the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and EuroClio –the European Association of History Educators, in cooperation with the International Bar Association, Salzburg Global Seminar and Memory Studies Association, with research support from Harvard University, the University of Oxford and the Erasmus University, in Rotterdam, among others. The objective is to identify statues, monuments and sites, as well as place names, with complex historical legacies, ranging from colonialism and slavery to imperialism, fascism and communism, to authoritarianism, anti-Semitism, gender inequality and sexual violence.

Each case study examines the reasons behind the controversy, the historical background, the stakeholders involved and the decision-making process undertaken to address the contention, as well as lessons learned and best practices that could prove useful for stakeholders interested in these histories: local and national authorities, policy-planners, civil society activists, journalists and educators. The project has been supported by research and funding from a diverse range of sources, including the International Bar Association and the European Commission's Europe for Citizens programme.

Of the 500 case studies, 180 relate directly to colonial and slavery-era legacies. They range from the island of Gorée in Senegal, to the Coolela Monument in Mozambique, to the Josephine Bonaparte statue in

Martinique, to Valongo Wharf in Brazil, and more than a dozen sites in continental Europe. The case studies related to slavery can be divided into three categories: (1) contested statues and monuments erected in an earlier century that honoured discoverers, philanthropists, merchants who made their communities and themselves wealthier at a cost to enslaved and/or indigenous peoples; (2) contested sites linked to the history of enslaved people where that history is presented in a narrative that excludes or marginalises the larger multi-perspective reality of the time; and (3) contestations that are, in fact, an expression of underlying social issues such as racism and disenfranchisement that are linked to legacies of slavery-era injustices. While each case exhibits its own unique set of political, social, legal, cultural and even economic dynamics, they all have a common denominator: the contestation today is a reflection of a society in flux, where the values of the past are no longer broadly accepted without question or wider reflection.

Statues of historical figures tend to be the most visible objects of historical contestation, as has been seen in mass protests over colonial slave traders such as Edward Colston in the United Kingdom, and Jan Pieterszoon Coen in The Netherlands. Previously lauded for bringing riches to their homelands, both individuals have been reappraised in light of their role in how that wealth was acquired –namely through the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved people. Christopher Columbus has experienced a similar reappraisal. For centuries, Columbus was lauded as the “discoverer” of America, with cities, rivers, streets, schools, universities, public spaces –even the country of Colombia– named in his honour. Little was said about the atrocities perpetrated in the Americas under his command or the enslavement of indigenous peoples. As early as his first voyage in 1492, Columbus returned to Spain with six Taíno men he had kidnapped. By the mid-1500s, there were only a handful of Taíno people remaining on the island of Hispaniola, an eradication of the indigenous population that constitutes an act of genocide. One of the tallest Columbus monuments in the world is in Barcelona, where it stands 57 metres tall near the

³ For further information, see Contested Histories Case Study #130; 'Portugal: Old Slave Market, Lagos', available here: <https://contestedhistories.org/resources/case-studies/old-slave-market-in-lagos/>

2. Columbus monument in Barcelona during the protests of October 12, 2020. R. Conesa (EUROM)





3. Mauritshuis. The Hague. Rainer Ebert, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)

port. Despite protests calling for its removal, city officials have remained staunch, arguing that it is better to retain and contextualise the monument, although little has been done to do so.

The contested history of the Dutch Golden Age is gradually and increasingly acknowledging that monuments and public spaces glorifying discoverers and merchants who made their fortunes on the back of enslaved people need to be re-examined and explored through a more nuanced lens.⁴ The Mauritshuis, the museum in The Hague with the famous Vermeer painting of the *Girl with the Pearl Earring*, is named after its founder Johan Maurits, a 17th-century merchant who accumulated his wealth thanks to plantations worked by enslaved people in Brazil. In 2017, the removal of a bust of Maurits from the museum's lobby sparked a national outcry and debate. Erik Odegard, a scholar at the International Institute for Social History in The Netherlands, studied the history of Maurits in Brazil and contends that “[t]he societal debate is centred around the question: was the Mauritshuis financed with

money that Johan Maurits earned with slavery?” If so, “how are we supposed to deal with that now? My conclusion is that you have to look at it from different perspectives. Both sides of the debate have been presented much too simply.”⁵ The Contested Histories case studies reveal that it is precisely the multi-perspective view that is so often absent in all the cases, regardless of legacy.

The process of memorialisation of the victims and the coming to terms with national slavery heritage in Europe has been a slow, sporadic and contentious process. There has been some progress in commemorating the victims of the slave trade, beginning in the first decade of the second millennium but not without contestations. In France, Act 2001-434, also known as Taubira's Law, came into effect in May 2001, which recognises the trafficking of human beings and slavery as crimes against humanity. The law also specifies that the history of the slave trade be taught in schools, commemoration days be introduced, and a national committee –Comité national pour la

⁴ The Slave Voyages database estimates that The Netherlands brought 554,336 enslaved people to the Americas.

⁵ “A broader look at Johan Maurits and his role in slavery”, NOW (Netherlands Research Council), 3 November 2021: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/cases/broader-look-johan-maurits-and-his-role-slavery>



4. Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, Nantes. Flickr images uploaded by Flickr upload bot CC-BY-2.0.

mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage– be established with the responsibility to ensure that programmes, events, commemorations and research projects are organised and awareness of the history is raised publicly throughout France and its territories. The memorial *Le cri, l'écrit* by Fabrice Hyber, erected in the Luxembourg Garden in 2007, was one of the first actions undertaken.

Port cities such as Nantes, Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Le Havre were centres of the triangular slave trade, with Nantes being the largest. The city was the first to acknowledge its role by erecting monuments, organising museum exhibitions and tours of sites linked to slavery heritage, placarding streets named after slavers, etc. A walk along the former docks, known as the Quai de Fosse, was laid with more than 1,700 glass bricks inscribed with the names of the slave ships, the date of departure and the destination. There is also a memorial to the abolition of slavery, along with a small exhibition that was set up in 2012. Several of the streets named after slavers are placarded, and the Dukes of Brittany Museum has a permanent exhibition to the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

At national level, the story is more complex.



5. *Le cri, l'écrit: Hommage aux esclaves*, Luxembourg Gardens, Paris. Harmonide, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International.

In 2018, the Government of France announced plans to erect a national monument to slavery carved with the names of 200,000 enslaved people freed when France abolished slavery (for the second time) in 1848. The plans were met with controversy: the selection process of the winning design, the location size and, most of all, the concept. According to the Slave Voyages database, 1,381,404 Africans were enslaved by the French. Dr. Myriam Cottias, head of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, argues that recognising only 200,000 enslaved men, women and children freed with the abolition of slavery “celebrates the Republic that abolished slavery and emancipated slaves –and never mind all the others”.⁶ She contends that the victims should be at the heart of the narrative of France’s role in perpetrating the crimes against humanity, rather than focusing on the abolition as a great accomplishment for the Republic. For the time being, the monument is on hold.⁷

In the United Kingdom in 2007, on the bicentenary of the UK’s Slave Trade Act of 1807,⁸ the International Slavery Museum (ISM) was opened in Liverpool, a city with one of Britain’s oldest Black communities. Situated near the docks where slave trips began their voyage, it constitutes the one museum in the world dedicated exclusively to slavery heritage. Nevertheless, it grapples with its own controversial history. It is one of the seven National Museums of Liverpool (NSL), where only 0.5% of the NSL employees identify as Black, African, Caribbean or Black British.⁹ In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement that swept many countries after the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, NSL came under criticism for their lack of diversity and the systemic racism that polarises not only the communities in Liverpool but across the entire UK. The toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol was hailed by many as affirmative action against racist ideologies in the heated global debate over how to deal with monuments to historic figures who profited from African enslavement.

In Portugal and Spain, two of the largest former slave-trading countries have barely begun the journey to acknowledging that heritage today. Although plans for a memorial to enslaved peoples in Lisbon has been in the planning for almost a decade, little progress has been accomplished. In Spain, which took more than a million enslaved Africans into the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there is no monument commemorating the victims of its slavery-era heritage. However, there is some work underway to acknowledge Spain’s history in this realm. In 2016, Oriol López Badell, a historian at the European Observatory on Memories at the University of Barcelona, helped establish a

⁶ Benjamin Dodman, “Behind sketch of black MP in shackles, a French failure to confront slave legacy”, *France24*, 31 August 2020: <https://www.france24.com/en/20200831-behind-sketch-of-black-mp-in-shackles-a-french-failure-to-confront-slave-legacy>

⁷ For more on the Contested Histories project, see www.contestedhistories.org

⁸ More than 3.2 million enslaved Africans were brought to the New World by British ships. The Slave Trade Act of 1807 abolished the slave trade but not slavery itself.

⁹ Maya Wolfe Robinson, “Liverpool is built on transatlantic slavery’: how city’s museums are tackling race issues”, *The Guardian*, 26 May 2021: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/26/liverpool-is-built-on-transatlantic-slavery-how-the-citys-museums-are-tackling-race-issues>

slavery heritage tour in the city.¹⁰ The tour includes a stop at the statue of Joan Güell, who made his fortune in Cuba and led an association founded in 1871 to defend slavery in the Caribbean. (By that date, slavery had been abolished in European countries but the practice continued in places like Cuba.) In Spanish cities other than Barcelona there seems to be a marked silence on the subject, perhaps because the country is grappling with more recent traumas stemming from the legacy of the Franco dictatorship.

Other countries with a lesser-known history in the slave trade have also been relatively silent. Denmark, which held colonies with slave plantations in what is known today as the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, has only recently acknowledged its role with a public exhibition. In Copenhagen, on 26 September 2019, a replica of the 'Freedom' sculpture, created by Ghanaian artist Bright Bimpong, was permanently put in place at an official ceremony by the Minister of Culture at the Eigtveds Pakhus, a building along the wharf formerly used by the West India Company as a warehouse to store goods brought in from the plantations in the colonies.¹¹ In front of the Eigtveds Pakhus also stands a sculpture depicting a Black woman titled "I Am Queen Mary", a transnational public art project created by La Vaughn Belle of the US Virgin Islands and Jeannette Ehlers of Denmark in 2018.¹² But do these monuments foster a national dialogue? In 2020, students at the Nærum High School in Greater Copenhagen revealed an interest in learning more about their country's involvement in the slave trade. «We have tons about the Second World War or Romanticism», one student said. «And close to nothing about our past on the West Indies.»¹³ Erecting monuments is a first step, but whether there will be more public recognition of Denmark's historical legacy with slavery remains to be seen.

The traces and legacies of the slave trade reach far beyond trading ports themselves. The sale and consumption of slave trade-related products bore a social, cultural and economic impact across the continent. The shipping records from the port of Hamburg, a city with no immediately obvious link to the slave trade, suggests its commercial complicity in the triangular slave trade. In 1790 alone, for example, shipping logs indicate the importation of 28,665 barrels of coffee, 23,428 barrels of sugar, 1,559 bales of cotton, and 15,500 tons of rice from French colonies.¹⁴ These products, especially

¹⁰ Oriol López-Badell, "Guided tour 'The legacy of slavery in Barcelona'. Public history as reparation", *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology (IJTA)*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4, 2016: <https://www.inderscience.com/offer.php?id=81786>

¹¹ The original 'Freedom' sculpture created by Ghanaian artist Bright Bimpong is in the Virgin Islands. In addition, replicas of the busts by Bright Bimpong of two Virgin Islands heroes, rebel leader Moses "General Buddhoe" Gottlieb and educator Hamilton Jackson, are also on display respectively at the Holbæk Museum, Northwest Zealand, and the Arbejdermuseet (Workers' Museum), Copenhagen. See Amy Roberts, "Freedom Statues' From V.I. Make History in Denmark", St. Thomas Source, 14 November 2020: <https://stthomassource.com/content/2016/11/14/freedom-statues-from-v-i-make-history-in-denmark/>

¹² The government approved the request for the statue to remain permanently in 2020; See the I Am Queen Mary website: <https://www.iamqueenmary.com/>

¹³ Christian Thaaqaard Skov Sørensen, "Danish Students Want to Learn More About Colonial Past, Teachers Ready to Heed Their Call", St. Thomas Source, 30 October 2020: <https://stthomassource.com/content/2020/10/30/danish-students-want-to-learn-more-about-colonial-past-teachers-ready-to-heed-their-call/>

¹⁴ Jonas Ludwig von Hess, *About the value and importance of the freedom of the Hanseatic cities*, JGB Vogel Publisher, 1814: http://books.google.com/books?id=pERVAAAACAAJ&hl=&source=gbs_api



6. I Am Queen Mary, Copenhagen. Flickr Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)



7. Defaced Colston statue at the M Shed museum, Bristol. 8 June 2021. Adrian Boliston (Wikimedia Commons)

sugar and coffee, transformed social and cultural practices across the continent, along with helping finance the triangular slave trade, and creating an irrefutable if forgotten linkage to the legacy of the centuries-long trade in enslaved peoples.

In the case studies we have examined to date, the need for a continent-wide reckoning with the European legacies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade is apparent. Many of the descendants of those victims are citizens of European nations – British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Danish, Portuguese, Belgian, Italian, etc. – and still live with the knowledge and legacies of their ancestors' enslavement.¹⁵ While the situations can vary significantly from country to country, our case studies suggest that responsible acknowledgement of these legacies can help promote a sense of inclusiveness and can be used to confront and combat racism, inequality, injustice and intolerance.

Policy-makers, public intellectuals and educators have a pivotal role to play in fostering dialogue about past injustices in order to work towards building more inclusive and tolerant societies. It must be remembered that enslavement was a crime against humanity perpetrated and financed on a continent-wide scale, be it a slave market in Lagos or a sugar merchant in Hamburg. European societies can benefit from a continent-wide reckoning with this legacy and the impact it has borne and continues to bear on the nations of an increasingly diverse, multicultural Europe.

¹⁵ Belgium, although not complicit in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, has its own terrible history with enslaved people in its colonies, where an estimated 10-15 million people were killed by King Leopold's colonial forces. See Atrocities Watch Africa: <http://atrocitieswatch.org/king-leopold-of-belgium-in-congo/> Italy, not involved either in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, had slaves in Africa until 1935. See Matteo Impagnatiello, "When Colonial Italy Abolished Slavery in the Horn of Africa", Focus on Africa, 18 April 2021: <https://www.focusonafrika.info/en/when-colonial-italy-abolished-slavery-in-the-horn-of-africa/>

Interview with **Andreas Huyssen**

Trumpism as a social movement is a new form of fascism

Andreas Huyssen is the Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature at *Columbia University* and an essential reference in the field of memory studies. His work has been translated into several languages and counts with such important books as *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (1995), *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003) or *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani: The Shadowplay as Medium of Memory* (2013). In the following pages we talk with him about his career, about concepts like “urban palimpsests” but we specially deal with the current situation in the USA, the effectivity of the memory to face the extreme right, the relationship between art and memory (and its potentialities) or the current iconoclasm linked with colonial and slaver statues, among other actuality issues.



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1. Andreas Huyssen. Barcelona, 2016. Tere Estrada (EUROM)

2. Trump supporters storming the Capitol Building on January 6, 2021. (Wikimedia Commons)

1. You have explained how, in Germany in the mid-1960s, when the twentieth century was barely studied in academia, and the Third Reich or the Holocaust were barely mentioned, the reception of studies by the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Benjamin, Löwenthal, Kracauer, etc.) had a strong impact because of the way they related cultural expressions to politics, art and politics, aesthetics and politics and so on. On the other hand, we have seen how, today, more than half a century later, the extreme right, linked to “Trumpist” circles, uses Frankfurt critical theory as a scapegoat for the United States’ cultural ills. Why? What goals are they seeking?

AH: The West German reception of Frankfurt School Critical Theory in the 1960s, by the generation born during or right after WWII, was indeed a major stimulant to the development of what since then has become known as the much-celebrated German Erinnerungskultur. Adorno’s 1959 lecture *What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?* is the canonical touch-stone in this context, but Kracauer and

Benjamin had earlier already explored how modern mass media like photography and film affected the structure of memory and perception itself.

The ways we remember fascism as a mass movement, the Third Reich, and the Holocaust became a key theme for me and others in the United States in the 1970s. It shaped our journal *New German Critique*, dedicated to debates about 20th-century German culture and politics. You can imagine our surprise when we discovered in the last decade how Critical Theory, in a completely mangled and distorted form, has become the *bête noire* of the alt-right in the United States. The Frankfurt School is cited as the gravedigger of American democracy. American higher education has allegedly been taken over by Cultural Marxism, which to the right wing culture warriors includes feminism, LGBTQ rights and critical race theory. You ask why? Well, isn't it always the Jews who are first targeted when things are perceived to go wrong? 'Frankfurt School' has become a code word in anti-Semitism. The meme of "Cultural Marxism" in turn serves the right-wingers' clarion calls to purge higher education, major sites of cultural diversity struggles. Following Andrew Breitbart, they define politics as downstream from culture, thus the American Right's focus on cultural issues. The ultimate goal: re-elect Trump and assert white supremacy.

2. Is Trumpism one of the fascisms of the 21st century? Where does that leave Republican conservatives?

AH: I think that the earlier debate whether Trumpism is a populism or indeed a 21st century fascism is over. Trumpism as a social movement is a new form of fascism. And terms like illiberal democracy, as championed by Orban in Hungary, are just verbal cosmetics. January 6, 2021 stands for what Hannah Arendt in her analysis of the Hitler regime called "the temporary alliance of the elite and the mob." Traditional Republican conservatives have been totally sidelined, even censored by the Republican Party, which is dominated by right wing

radicals and intent on minority rule via voting rights manipulations. One of the many signs pointing to fascism is the recently discovered script of a political take-over Trump has laid down in his elaborate plan to purge the non-partisan federal bureaucracy should he be re-elected. He called it Schedule F, which reminds me of Adorno's "F scale" in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), the fascism scale that identified key features of the potentially fascist personality. I'm not sure what the F stands for in the Trumpish mind. But Schedule Fascism is what it is. Under Nazi rule, it was called *Gleichschaltung*.

3. What tools can memory give us to combat the global growth of extreme right-wing parties and the democratic reversals they advocate?

AH: The major focus of memory culture in past decades were the victims of state violence, their suffering and trauma, and the transmission of that trauma to the post-memory of the subsequent generation. Witness testimony, mourning, memorials, counter-monuments and Truth Commissions were central to debates about dark histories across the world. Fascism itself seemed a thing of the past. At a time, however, when fascism is resurfacing in a new guise in many parts of the world, memory work has to turn to the figure of the perpetrator, to the structural dimensions which produce right wing radicalism grounded in everyday experience, and to the ways in which even bystanders are implicated in processes of cultural and political change they may abhor. Memory battles take a new, ever more antagonistic form. It is no longer just a question of unearthing an erased or disremembered past. It is a battle against right-wing historical falsification, illusionary nostalgias and conspiracy theories, in a word, against fake histories of past and present produced by right wing media top down, and social media bottom up.



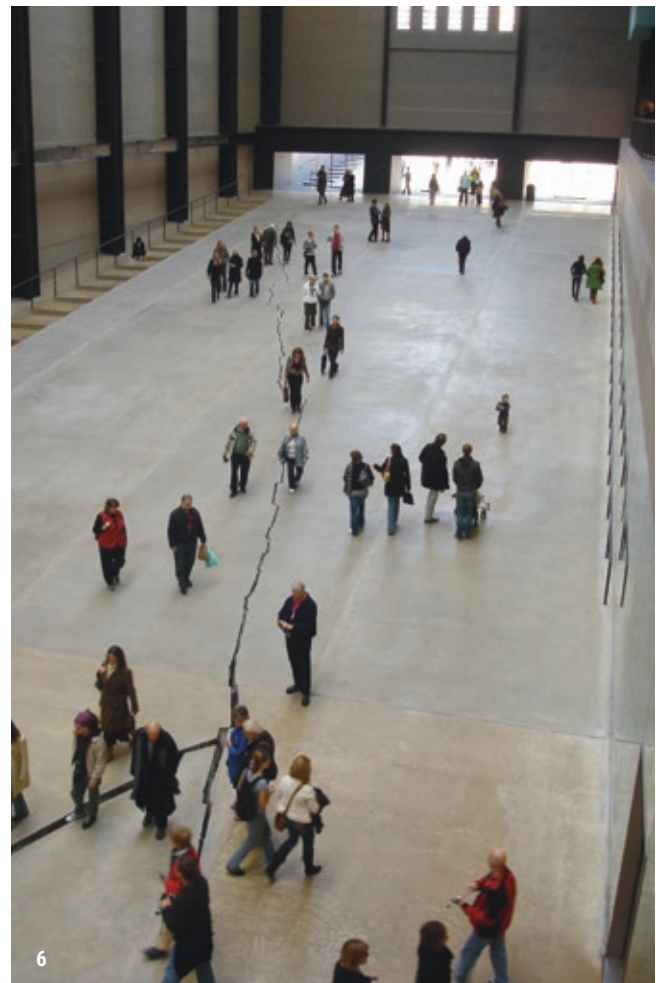
3. A supporter kneeling in prayer at a 2016 Trump rally in Tucson. (Wikimedia Commons)



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4. Andreas Huyssen delivering the opening keynote of the conference "European Citizenship in Challenging Times: Remembrance". Barcelona 2016. Tere Estrada (EUROM)

5. William Kentridge, "More Sweetly Play the Dance", 2015. Video installation © Studio Hans Wilschut. Eye Filmmuseum

6. Shibboleth, Tate Modern, London. 19 October 2007. Nuno Nogueira (Wikimedia Commons)

4. In the current context of the strengthening of nationalisms and the re-nationalisation of politics, how do artistic expressions linked to memory – such as those of William Kentridge or Doris Salcedo– open up an alternative horizon and teach us to be in the world in a non-identitarian way?

AH: Identity politics —sexual, political, ethnic, religious— has indeed become a plague today. The work of Kentridge, Salcedo and those other artists I discuss in my recent book *Memory Art in the Contemporary World: Confronting Violence in the Global South* is grounded in the memory politics of their countries, and thus national in this sense. But it stands against any and all nationalist phantasms, indeed against identitarianism of any kind, in the ways it opens up horizons of feeling and thinking that encourage cross-cultural connections and global solidarities. In the aesthetic forms, media and materials used, it makes us think differently about the world. While not activist in an agitprop sense of aesthetic production, it nevertheless confronts us with acts of memory that cut across cultural differences and are difficult to forget.

5. After your famous work *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003), the concept of “urban palimpsest” was very well received. How did this concept come about? What were its main ideas? What role does it play nowadays in discussions concerning urban and architectural structures?

AH: It was my visceral experience of Berlin in the years after the fall of the wall that made me think about city surfaces and structures as palimpsests, analogous to texts rewritten, erased, written over in light of political history and the demands of the present. With the disappearance of the GDR and the simultaneous obsolescence of West Berlin as an island in the midst of a communist country, the city had entered a phase of radical transformation in which the traces of the imperial city, of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the divided Berlin of the post-45 period were all up for grabs. Intense debates swirled around preservation, renovation, destruction, and tabula rasa new construction for what would be the capital of a reunited Germany. That led me to the idea of built space as palimpsest.

It indeed seems to be the case that the idea of the urban palimpsest has caught on in architectural and urban discourse. But I never considered it as a particularly original idea. The idea of historical layers resonated with Freud’s analogy of the human mind to the different architectural and historical layers of the city of Rome. Of course, there was the post-structuralist imperialism of the textual at the time. But I drew on a whole history of thinking the urban from Simmel via Benjamin to David Harvey. Applying a term from the realm of writing to built structure, however, was not an attempt to reduce the materiality of cities to mere text. Rather the opposite, it expanded the notion of text as palimpsest into material reality that demands to be read with all its gaps and erasures. The notion of the urban palimpsest permits us to read the seemingly static city as process and subject to permanent change.

6. What role do memorials play in urban space today? Are they useful for transmitting memories beyond the generation that raised them or, as Robert Musil said, are they condemned to invisibility?

AH: Memorials and monuments in urban space don't so much transmit memories as they point to memory clusters, conjure up past events, both triumphs and catastrophes, that still resonate in living memory in the public sphere. Since the 1990s, we have seen the rise of the counter-monument or counter-memorial that shunned traditional monumental form and commemorated not those who died for the glory of the nation, but those who were persecuted and murdered in search of political power, racial supremacy or nationalist phantasms of purity. But there is no reason why the counter-monument one day could not become as invisible as the traditional kings on horses or queens on thrones Musil had in mind.

7. What do you think of the iconoclasm that has affected different monuments dedicated to slavers and people from colonial history in various countries around the world in recent years?

AH: What is most interesting in the current iconoclasm directed against monuments to slavers and other figures representing colonial rule or, in the U.S, the confederacy, is that these are traditional heroic monuments rather than critical counter-monuments. They have probably been always more visible to people of color and former colonial subjects than to white citizens. The current iconoclasm is a sign of a healthy and robust debate about the injustices of the colonial past, which have recently been picking up in the U.S. as well as in Europe. Toppling a monument can be great fun, an urban celebration, a purging of a festering past, but eliminating it also makes it invisible, potentially eradicating a history from which one might still learn. I do think that celebratory monuments to

fascism, slavery or colonialism should be taken down. Otherwise, I favour strategies of redressing and refunctioning monuments in order to provide lessons of learning about the past. Certain monuments, as Paolo Vignolo has argued, can be turned into 'mockuments,' a counter-monumental practice, which colours a copy of the Statue of Liberty black, dresses a European queen up as an Andean woman or pokes carnivalesque fun at the heroes of Latin American independence struggles. They make a traditional monument productive for learning a history lesson by provoking its viewers to laugh and think differently about the figure on the pedestal and by undermining monumentalization itself. At the same time, neither destroying nor mocking monuments will ever be enough to deal with the legacies of colonialism and slavery. The debate about memorials and monuments may lead to difficult and urgent questions of restitution and repair and ultimately to demands for a different politics.

8. In the face of citizen protests, one of the most common responses by administrations is to opt for removing conflictive monuments from public space. These actions have, in turn, led to a trail of ruins, pedestals or empty, innocuous sites appearing in their place. What labour of memory is involved?

AH: As I suggested, eliminating a monument involves no real labor of memory. Removing a monument, say, to a museum may permit it to maintain its educational value. In itself, the monument is not a very subtle medium. It becomes successful only in relation to live memory debates in the public sphere. Thus one could say that the monuments to the confederacy in the United States, after slumbering for decades in blind oblivion, have become nationally successful in recent years to the extent that they trigger protest against the lingering racism in the United States. Their 'success' can be measured by the intensity of the demands to demolish them, which is in turn fed by the Black

Lives Matter movement, the 1619 Project, and critical race theory. And dismantled they should be to establish symbolic markers in the struggle against revisionist white supremacist nostalgias.

9. You have on occasion warned of the risks involved in transforming places of repression and torture into places of memory, which have then become enclaves for tourism—you have even spoken of “topolatry”. What are these risks? How should we treat these places so as not to fall into such risks?

AH: I do not underestimate the power of sites of torture, murder, and genocide to generate remembrance. The ESMA in Buenos Aires, Villa Grimaldi in Santiago de Chile or Buchenwald in Germany offer irrefutable evidence of state crimes. Memory culture in Argentina, Chile or Germany is no doubt stronger because these memory sites, created by pressures from civil society, prevent erasure and forgetting. Perhaps it was unavoidable that Auschwitz, given its centrality as a cipher for the Holocaust, became a center of genocide tourism. I would not want to disparage anybody who says they learned from their visit to the death camp, but we should be mindful that banalization and kitschification of historical catastrophes is an always present danger.

10. What do you think are the main challenges that a public policy on memory should deal with?

AH: I am deeply sceptical about legislating historical truth and I doubt whether public policy, articulated by a government commission, written into law, and designed to strengthen the memory of historical trauma, will ever be able to overcome the political battle lines in the present between those who want to remember past injustices and violations of rights and those who want to forget. Government supported memory politics may have worked in the past when public discourse was largely shaped by

mainstream print media and a limited number of radio and television channels. Prohibiting Holocaust denial and neo-Nazi propaganda has thus worked reasonably well in Germany over time in helping to create that *Erinnerungskultur* I spoke of earlier, but it has not prevented the recent rise of the AdF with its openly fascist vocabulary, dog whistle anti-Semitism, and unhinged conspiracy phantasies. The spread of hate speech and lies on social media platforms and right-wing news sites has required multiple legislative changes in Germany. Public memory policies seem even more necessary now than in the past. At the same time, we know that prohibitions always risk making the prohibited more attractive and more popular. And that popularity may grow exponentially via the internet and social media and create unwanted political backlash. The Janus face of public memory policy in Europe is even more evident if one considers how the nationalist government of Poland has enacted a law penalizing any mention of Polish complicity in Nazi crimes, thus distorting historical reality in the name of national honor and dignity. Here, public memory policy has been hijacked to support a radical historical revisionism rather than historical truth.

So let us not rely too much on memory legislation to determine public memory discourse. In the best of cases, it may yield its desired effects, but only if the agents of civil society, including public education, investigative journalism, and the arts, step up against attempts by right-wing historical revisionists to undermine democracy with denials of accountability, falsifications of history and nationalist nostalgias. Such are the memory battles of our time.

Counter-Conduct in the Museum, or the *Practice of Academic Iconoclasm*

Clémentine Deliss

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for Contemporary Art Berlin**

What I shall present below represents the current state of my work on counter-conduct as a performative instance, and academic iconoclasm as a methodological stance, and their significance for decolonial exercises performed as part of the redeployment and interpretation of museum collections. This is connected to models for a Metabolic Museum–University (MM–U) that I have worked on since I left the Weltkulturen Museum in 2015. I have been seeking to develop a new cross-sectoral method of interpretation by bringing the university into the space of the museum, and thereby translocating roles and practices. The background to this work can be found in condensed form in “The Metabolic Museum” (Hatje Cantz 2020, Garage Museum 2021).

The first exercise toward a museum–university took place in 2015 in Kiev at the Museum of the History of Ukraine. It involved a group of self-elected citizens who chose to accompany me to the flea-market. There they searched for artefacts of ‘contention’. Back at the Museum, we installed a table and several chairs in the entrance. Visitors were invited to take part in the elucidation of the diverse objects that had been purchased, and unpack their ambivalent and problematic meanings. A further model was developed with students at the University of Art and Design, in Karlsruhe. It was presented at the 33rd Biennial of Graphic Art, in Ljubljana, in 2019. Chairs were customised with small projectors so that visitors could “spam the hang”, projecting their own archival images between the paintings. During the sessions of the MM–U, a young faculty presented a wide range of lectures, which were attended by unsuspecting visitors. The result was rewarding for the museum, the participants, and the public. The latest model of the Metabolic Museum–University is being developed at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, and is based on a reassessment of Berlin’s collections.

BRAINDAY

Metabolic Museum – University 2019

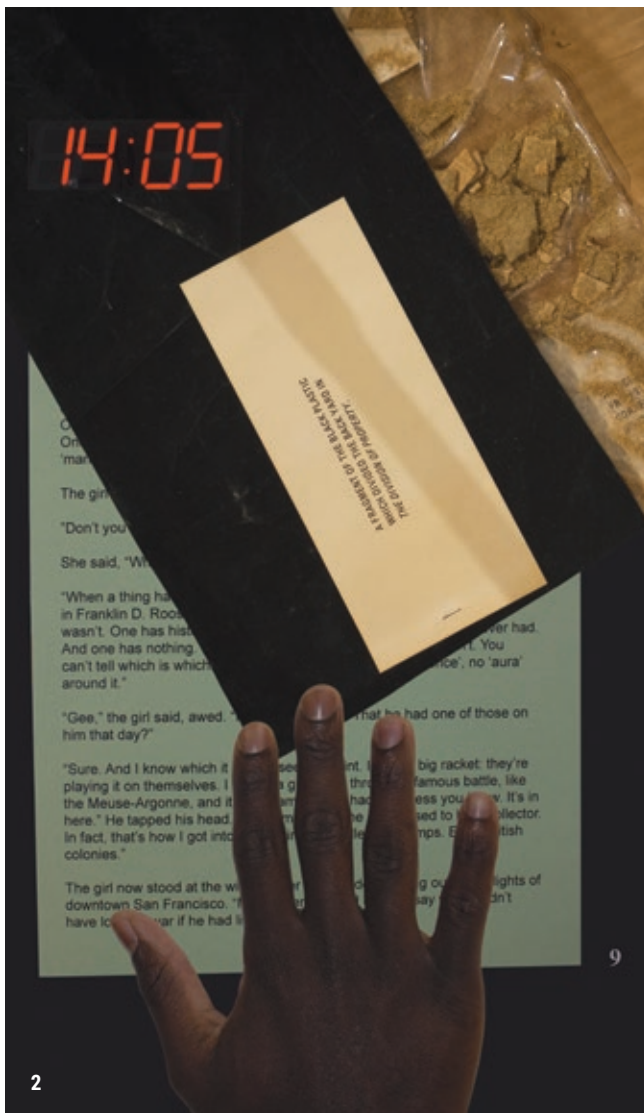
Tuesday 30 July
Slovenian Museum
of Natural History
2 – 6 pm

1. Brainday poster for Metabolic Museum-University, design Cécile Kobel, 2019

Alongside demands for restitution, collections in museums of the global north have become toxic witnesses to genocidal practices. Ethnology's claim is that it salvages the past but what it relies on and renews is the destruction–reconstruction–reification–scarcity sequence that we are currently witnessing through historicizing provenance studies—effectively going back to what was not written down when the objects were acquired, stolen, bought, or gifted, and subsequently inserted into an ethno–logical taxonomy, including race–led arguments and the ideology of conservation. Ultimately, ethnology has produced a cult of possession, an obsessive focus on determining and unravelling life's unknowns embodied in the religious objects of other people and embedded within the violent and racist dramaturgy of ethnographic museology.

Recent bio–medical analyses of collections are currently being performed in ethnographic museums using the same equipment deployed for human beings. This new “inner voyage” reveals initial knowledge about quasi digestive tracts carved or incised into solid wood by the artist, providing small ducts to be filled with content by a shaman or priest. I would argue that this is an infringement of ethical and intellectual rights for which the museum is to be held responsible. It cannot own the sole rights for reproduction! For indeed, ethnographic collections can be read as a library of organs, the vital matter, so to speak, of Black lives, and are significant repositories that need to inform decolonial practices, from art to design and engineering, and their respective epistemologies. Sadly, most, if not all museums, hinder physical access to their collections, thereby denying contemporary remediation and defining the conservationist role of the custodian or curator more than ever before.

This is where a methodology of academic iconoclasm supports the debate on the decolonial. Here, I wish to distil iconoclasm from its usual art–historical references¹, and retain the struggle it evokes for shifts in meaning and method, for new techniques that dislodge concepts of the masterpiece, the master narrative, the master institution (university, museum, academy) and their respective distinctions. Academic iconoclasm is the wilful suspension of normative discursive and architectonic structures that inscribe epistemic, bureaucratic, and legal rules to police others working with public collections. It is a form of counter–conduct that blankly refutes disciplinary departments inherited from 19th–century European scholasticism. In the words of Nigerian Nobel prize–winning author Wole Soyinka, it defies “species narcissism” or in those of British–Nigerian artist Onyeka Igwe, it requires “finding illegitimate ways of knowing”. In a series



2. Metabolic Museum–University KW, Berlin, 2022 Photo by Eva Stenram

¹ Finbar Barry Flood describes iconoclasm as follows “Derived from the Greek eik/noklasts (eik/n “likeness” + klan “to break”), first documented in eighth-century Byzantium, the term iconoclasm entered the lexicon of European languages only through the Latin iconoclastus late in the early-modern period (Bremmer). In modern scholarship it has assumed a capacious character and can refer to the defacement or destruction of artefacts, buildings, images, or inscriptions. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 3, Iconoclasm.

3. Metabolic Museum-University, Ljubljana 2019. Photo by David Kunc



of seminars held at the Collège de France in 1977–1978 entitled “Security, Territory, Population”, philosopher Michel Foucault describes counter-conduct as the first instance of critique and the “art of not being governed quite so much.” In the context of the museum, counter-conduct evokes a tension between emancipation (for example, from the yoke of consumerist exhibition-making, or the stultification of the art historical canon), and revisionism with the unabashed return of the universal museum for which the new Humboldt Forum in Berlin is a case in point. This ambivalence makes it confusing, as counter-conduct transports both the exhilaration of a defiant position, and the fear that resistance can turn into public-facing demagoguery.

As a methodology of research, academic iconoclasm generates a heteroclitic set of artefacts and artworks and constructs relationships of transgressive adjacency between them. These incite disorder in existing taxonomies and promote discordant readings, be this in terms of history,

body politics, gender, race, ethnicity, or diversity. It creates assemblages or constellations of such materials that together work to suspend the canonical reliance on context, and the specialism of the expert. At KW, I have put together a faculty that includes artists working in different media, situation designers, a composer, a lawyer, a novelist, and a feminist anthropologist. We work to develop a new set of analytical parameters by observing and discussing aggregates of ambiguous objects, artworks, and ephemera from different collections in Berlin.

Meanwhile, just as strategies and forms of control are updated and technologized, dissidence can acquire an anachronistic tinge. Terms like underground or subculture lose their salience and colloquialism, no longer evoking the seditious zeitgeist of the moment. If the European avant-garde and institutional critique of the 20th century deployed tropes of conceptual and performance art alongside agitprop, today’s broader manifestations of the decolonial are affiliated to ever-increasing demands for accountability and

4. Metabolic Museum-University, Ljubljana 2019. Photo by Urška Boljkovac, Archive, MGLC



self-representation. Art has become an extended debating chamber voicing controversies beyond walls and across disparate worlds, yet with very palpable consequences.

Museums are urged to negotiate acute disparities in employment equity, and to respond to demands for the returns of significant cultural heritage, extricated, albeit with some controversy, from an original environment and system of ownership. The falling of monuments, the defamation of board members and patrons, disputes over divisive appointments, petitioning, the wrangling around the new ICOM definition of the museum, the competition in Europe for being the fastest driver on the track of restitution politics; all of these situate critique within the broader public realm. Increasingly under scrutiny, the tax-funded museum monitors itself in relation to tightening protocols of behavioural management, economic imperatives, curatorial normativity, for which communication with consumers is regarded as paramount. At a moment when artists are pushed to provide transparency and follow a common standard,

transgressive, even heretic, exercises in radical dialogical thinking are necessary, but they cannot be easily shared with the public in the first instance.

Not responding to the command of public visibility and institutional auditing constitutes another form of counter-conduct, potentially suicidal when it comes to grant applications and funding, both individual and institutional. The refusal to respond to public transmission as required can constitute a stance, a *Haltung*, that is conceptual, aesthetic and form-giving, not to mention political. The museum in a post-pandemic context dispenses social medicine but it requires protection backstage, not front of house, in order for this complex institution to survive. This is counter-conduct as necessary *askesis*, as willful “communicational abstinence”, claiming the right to non-disclosure, to holding back contextual information. As Luke Willis Thompson, artist and faculty member of the MM-U asks, «Does digital hypervisibility serve the decolonial work we undertake? How can the institution become a channel for artistic interference and classificatory transgression?»



5. Metabolic Museum-University, Museum of History of Ukraine, Kyiv, 2015. Photo by Clémentine Deliss

What becomes clear as we proceed is the potential overlap between counter-conduct and the decolonial. Both reflect pressure exercised on the body. Both are time-bound, and contingent on place and history. Both ignite emancipatory exercises in unpredictable methodological arenas. From the literary, archival approach of “critical fabulation” (Sadiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe’s *Wake Work*), to the “sonic support” of artist Abbas Zahedi, and “quietism” of “Shy Radical” Hamja Ahsan, these positions demand a corporeal, ergonomic adjustment from the museum, a concern for the public’s ease, and the time that can be spent sitting and studying in the museum. «A body must be at stake for an exhibition to become legitimate» argued artist Abbas Zahedi recently.

Remediation corresponds to this decolonial procedure: it proposes a reconfiguration of collections and practices of display that expose, transfer, and propagate meanings and agency, while slowly addressing the violence inherent in the museum as a structure of holding. In his manifesto for *Aspergistan*, titled “Shy Radicals.

The antisystemic politics of the militant introvert”, Hamja Ahsan describes “culture” in a set of articles of which the following two ring particularly true: «The state shall guarantee twenty-four-hour access to all public libraries, museums, laboratories, book shops, tea and coffee houses, archives and cathedrals within its sovereign territory... The state guarantees twenty-four hour access to all objects of artistic, historical and cultural value.» (p. 24, Chapter 5, *Bookworks*, 2019).

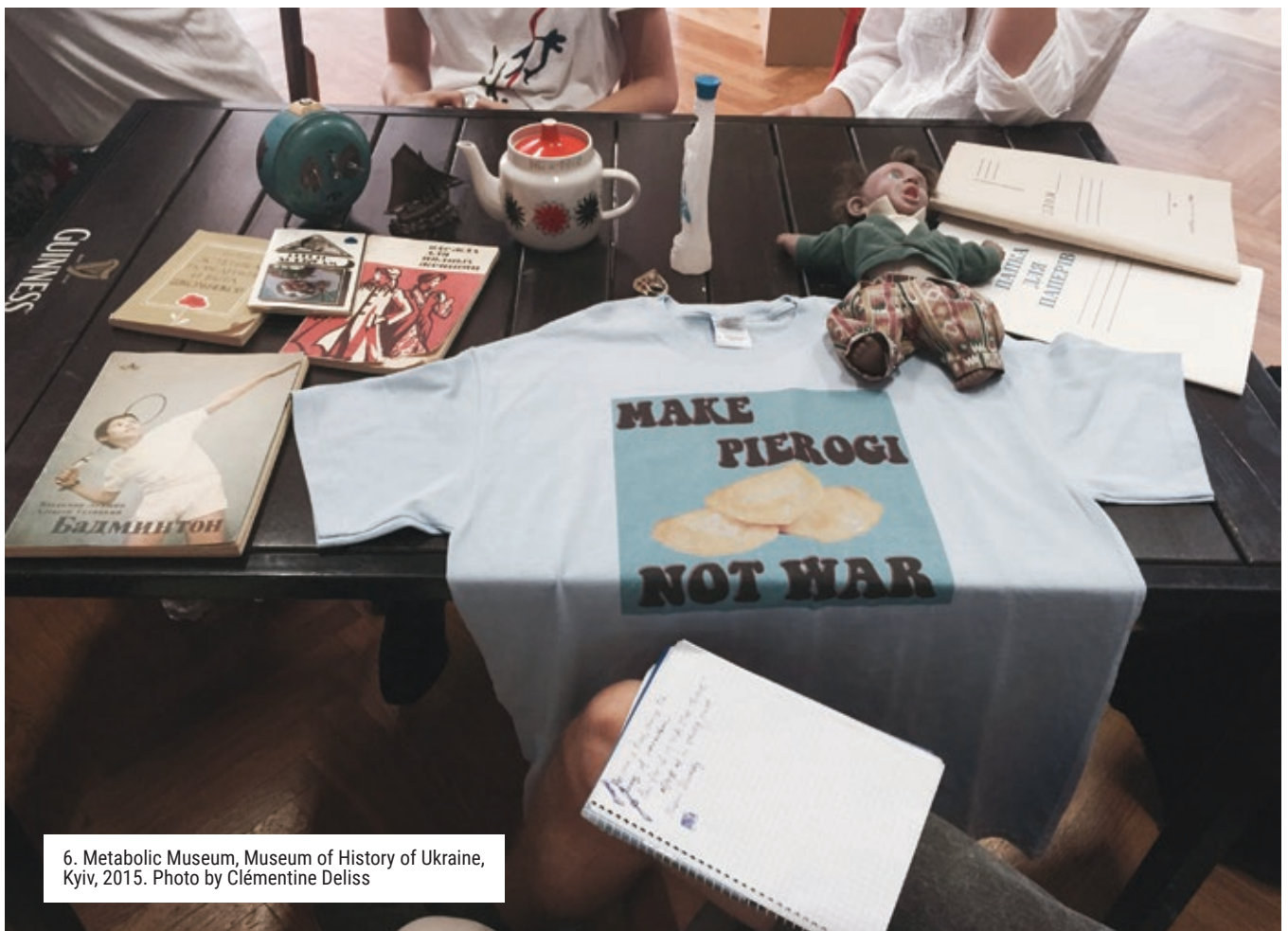
The question is, in what way can we introduce a certain heresy or counter-conduct into the process of knowledge production. Because if we just follow academically sanctioned forms of analysis, we are employing taxonomies that stem from colonialism, and with them, clear traces of racism, capitalism, and extractionism. When I talk about the decolonial, it is about chiselling away at these disciplinary borderlines, hence the position proposed by academic iconoclasm. This is where the potential can be found in icono-clashing the procedures of the museum with that of the university –in particular, the architectonics of the building– how

space is used –for example, the division between storage and exhibition, as well as the academic and curatorial inscription of collections into a time frame of permanent and temporary shows. For nothing any longer should be seen in disciplinary isolation, or be caught in the rut of academic divisionism and atomisation.

I wonder whether new formulations of higher education might extend more aggressively across the museum, the art school and the university? Imagine how storage depots could become like a greenhouse for the diasporic and trans-disciplinary student body to nurture and curate constellations out of diverse collections? Just like the interdependencies of the human metabolism, nothing would be seen in isolation; it would become a reflection of temporary mutualities between artworks, people, objects, media, experiences, observations, laws, economies, climates and affects that challenge the exclusive monopolies of the museum and university to produce and control new diasporic knowledge,

including visual representation. Moreover, today we can feel the palpable antagonism and impatience when adjacencies are performed that bring analogue materiality with its slow, stubborn permanence in proximity with digital speed. Frustration can often lead to a turn toward the immaterial, rendering collections practically obsolete except for heritage studies.

I would argue that all museum collections are like the liver, the earliest divinatory medium known to humankind. Everything passes through the liver; it is like the imprint of a relational experience. To be read as oracular, liver-like collections need to be excised from their existing corpus or discipline in order to acquire contemporary intersectional meanings. For these to emerge or be revealed, the liver has to be placed within a set of circumstances and problematics that can provide a symptomatic analysis of the future. For example, a country goes to war, a person battles with another, a family seeks solace after death, all look for a route to the



6. Metabolic Museum, Museum of History of Ukraine, Kyiv, 2015. Photo by Clémentine Deliss

7. MM-U at Museum of History of Ukraine, 2015, Kyiv. Photo by Clémentine Deliss



future. The organ, removed from its pulsating environment, becomes the testimonial that will lead to the enactment of human agency. Collections are also ominous vital organs for future knowledge. Their value lies in their mediatory potential and their diversity. While collections may denote the nomenclature of a given museum (art, natural science, anthropology, etc.), their semiotic and semantic potential exceeds this.

Academic iconoclasm incorporates a diagnostic, ergonomic, and agonistic stance. The diagnostic is the subject's alertness to changing conditions, the ergonomic speaks of the awareness of the subject's body, and the agonistic refers to the subject's mood of engagement and critique. Aspects of counter-conduct can be read in how we deploy ourselves in the museum and how we are made to engage with existing curatorial models, and their underpinnings in the canons and industries of art-history, ethnology, or the sciences. Counter-conduct also incorporates the subjective, the unfinished, the diffuse, and the desire to stimulate another

kind of focus, in our case, on what can be done with historical collections, how they impact on different people's lives, and how we can coax (or coerce) museums into becoming agents of inclusive transdisciplinary knowledge production for future generations. The democratic intellect is embedded within this process. It positions itself against specialisms.

Perhaps the questions we are looking for will come up once we have brought sufficient contentious materials together in both a prophylactic and iconoclastic manner. With contention, there is something that is both unclassifiable and which shouldn't be spoken or shown. And this goes to the heart of the colonial problem, the "nefandum".

Monuments and Protests: Disputed Memory in the Latin American Public Space

Claudia Wasserman

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The toppling, removal or resignification of monuments that pay homage to controversial historical figures has divided the opinions of politicians, heritage specialists, historians and the general population. Amongst the supporters of such demonstrations are those who defend the need to revise a colonial history narrated as heroic by monuments that, while honouring the conquerors, also conceal slavery, genocide and spoliation. Those who oppose the removal of statues deem it anachronism to judge, in the 21st century, realities and values from the 19th century and centuries before. They consider the protests to be an unjustifiable form of presentism, or an erroneous historical reinterpretation. The latest events were precipitated by the murder of George Floyd in the United States, at the hands of a white police officer in Minneapolis, on 25 May 2020. The movement, which began in the United States as an anti-racial struggle, has spread across Latin America and has become a movement of colonial history revisionism and colonial legacy confrontation. Above all, the protests are directed not only against Spanish figures (or against figures of Spanish descent) who were part of the conquest and colonisation of America, but also against the founders of cities during the colonial period, metropolitan political *proceres*, and the clergy who came to America in order to catechise the indigenous population, as well as the leaders of the independence movements, and the politicians who established the national foundations in the 19th century. The movement against the heroicised memory of the *conquistadores* has crossed national boundaries, countering the nationalist framework of the elites that erected monuments to affirm their nation-states. This movement has also reclaimed the memory of the indigenous peoples, of black people and poverty-stricken white people who live in all countries in Latin America, regardless of the territorial boundaries set by the independence movements.



1. The statue dedicated to the Spanish conqueror Diego de Mazariego is demolished in 1992. Roger Mazariegos (Wikimedia Commons)



2. Equestrian statue of Sebastián de Belalcázar in Popayán (Colombia), made by the sculptor Victorio Macho. It is one of the two statues of the Spanish conquistador Sebastián de Balaicázar toppled in Colombian cities. (Wikimedia Commons)

Since the end of the colonial period, around 1815–1825, the new Latin American countries have alternated between distancing themselves from and rapprochement with the Spanish culture—the monuments honouring historical colonial figures are proof of such oscillation. The newly formed countries’ adoption of the republican political system was an evident reaction against the imperial and monarchic metropolis. This rapprochement with Spanish culture began at the end of the 19th century. To the genocide and ethnocide committed by the conquistadores, we must add political, social and economic exclusion, as well as other forms of genocide, and the destruction of cultures, languages and traditions perpetrated by the Latin American elites, whose goal was to whiten the population of the new nations. Symbols of the metropolis were erected to represent the “arrival of the lights”, of civilisation against barbarism. The situation benefited Spain, which once more intended to reconquer America, this time from a cultural standpoint. In this particular case, the concept of Hispanicity (*Hispanidad*) bore more than just the colonial standpoint: it also contained the defence of the Spanish elite. This was fundamental in order to justify their authoritarianism during the 1920s and 1930s, and was intensified under Franco’s dictatorship. The monuments erected in Latin America in order to pay homage to the conquistadores, to the founders of colonial cities and villages, and the metropolitan military officers, comprised the historical narrative of the establishment of homogenous nations, founded under the ethos of whiteness, where the biography of the white elites represented modernity and progress, similar to the European standards, particularly in the former metropolis. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the “discovery” of America (1892), during the centennial celebrations of the independence movements (at the beginning of the 20th century), and upon the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the colonial cities (mid-20th century), dozens of monuments in honour of Spanish conquistadores, military officers and priests were erected in Latin America’s urban

spaces. Each and every one of these monuments is a document of the political decisions concerning which past was worthy of celebration. The language, the religion, and the “Spanish race” were evoked in order to ramp up the construction of the national state. Latin American rulers encouraged nationalism by means of Hispanicity, and the heroes were brought to the stage with greater intensity, summoned up to integrate the different regions into the nation, to reaffirm the power of the elites, and to exclude those who were unwanted. Historical figures who had been given no recognition during their lifetime, who had often been controversial, polemic (some of them banished), would be honoured and deemed heroes between 50 and 400 years after their death. In this regard, such posthumous honours may also express anachronism, that is, a lack of correspondence between what those historical figures actually meant during their lifetime and their subsequent celebration.

The revolt against the statues seeks to bring to light other historical narratives; it also aims to tell the story of such concealments. Toppling, substituting, and damaging the monuments that honour colonial symbols calls into question the founding narrative of the white, male, heroic and victorious nations against the barbarism, the backwardness, the underdevelopment. This contention with colonial figures demands visibility, in the public space, for those identities that have been consigned to oblivion, and those memories that have been erased and vanquished. Attacks on statues are not a novelty in Latin America, particularly on those monuments related to the conquest and the colonisation process. In 1992, upon the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ arrival in America, the Latin American and Spanish rulers named the celebration “A meeting between two worlds and two cultures”, a title that caused an uproar among some Latin American intellectuals and protests from the indigenous peoples. Several monuments honouring colonial historical figures became the target of popular anger; for example, the statue of Spanish conquistador Diego de Mazariegos, who founded the colonial cities of San Cristóbal de

las Casas and Chiapa de Corzo, in Chiapas (Mexico), was hammered down on 12 October 1992, before a crowd of 15 thousand people who had gathered to protest against the quincentenary celebrations that had been proposed to the American countries by Spain. On the same date, the Social Organisations Front from Chiapas (FOSCH) was created, uniting the associations of peasants and indigenous peoples.

Latin America, then governed by neoliberal politicians, saw the emergence of massive protests from the indigenous peoples, who had long been repressed and passive. Some native populations –who had bravely resisted slavery, annihilation, genocide, land expropriation and the destruction of their culture– erupted onto the Latin American political scene. In this part of the world, 500 indigenous languages are still spoken –a third of which are endangered. There are also more than 800 indigenous peoples, with a population of close to 45 million people, all of which are characterised by demographic, cultural, social and political diversity —from peoples who have chosen voluntary isolation to those who live in the great urban centres. Indigenous associations have been created and have spoken out in the political arena, such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in Ecuador (1986); political parties such as the Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement – *Nuevo País* (1995), also in Ecuador; the political movement Winaq (2007) in Guatemala; and the Alternative Indigenous and Social Movement (MAIS) in Colombia; as well as an indigenous army that demands recognition: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN, 1983). A number of experiences recognising autonomy and plurinationality have sprung from the struggle of indigenous peoples, allowing them to establish practices related to their cosmovision, the indigenous territories and their natural resources, their socio-political organisation, the administration of justice, education, languages, healthcare, medicine and the culture of the indigenous peoples. Among these are unprecedented constitutional experiences, such as that of Oaxaca in Mexico, autonomous indigenous regions in Nicaragua, autonomous indigenous territories in

Colombia, plurinationality in the Constitution of Bolivia, and multiculturalism in the Constitution of Guatemala. Politically active, the Latin American indigenous movements share similarities in different regions: they question the development model in force, and demand that their history and their memories, their historical figures and symbols be represented in the public space of Latin American cities. They also demand the demonumentalisation of the symbols of racism, prejudice, genocide and slavery. They spur on a fight that transcends national borders and is vested in an anti-colonial content of resistance against state power.

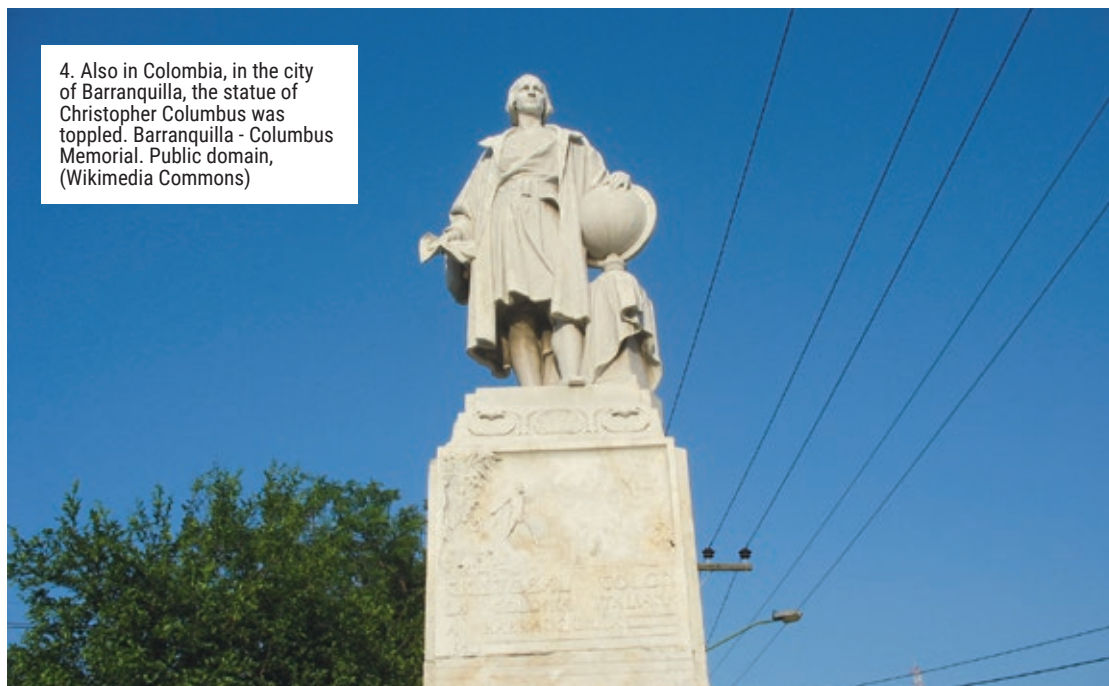
Between 2019 and 2021, due to the popular struggle and the disastrous management of the COVID-19 pandemic by the majority of Latin American governments, monuments became the target of protests once again. The 2019 protests broke out against conservative rulers who had come to power in the previous two years, or who had recently usurped it. At the beginning of the 19th century, most Latin American countries were governed by left-wing politicians (Lula da Silva/ Dilma Rousseff, Néstor Kirchner/Cristina Kirchner, Michelle Bachelet, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, Hugo Chávez, Manuel Zelaya, José Mujica, Fernando Lugo, and Ollanta Humala, among others) who, through social inclusion policies, strengthened and empowered popular social movements. Nevertheless, the return of conservative neoliberalism to the subcontinent through elections or parliamentary coups (Jair Bolsonaro, Mauricio Macri, Sebastián Piñera, Jimmy Morales, Juan Orlando Hernandez, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and Lenín Moreno, among others) represented not only an affront to democracy, but also the cancelling of inclusive public policies, which has brought back unemployment, poverty, and a disregard for those who are most in need. Demonstrations against the removal of subsidies, the increase in public transportation fares, the changes to the healthcare and education loan systems, etc., came together with protests against the regression of civil and social rights for the majority of the populations of Latin American countries. In the context of conservative

and neoliberal governments associated with austerity policies and violent repression against demonstrators, statues were once more targeted by the anger of social movements, directed against everything that represented a conservative, religious, retrograde, anti-intellectual and authoritarian ideology. For example, two statues of the Spanish conquistador Sebastián de Balalcázar were toppled in Colombian cities. The monuments, according to the Misak community (who claimed responsibility for the act) “are part of the symbolic violence” that “has oppressed them and put them in a place of oblivion”. The Mayor of Popayán regarded the act as vandalism, and offered a reward of 5 million pesos for anyone who would identify those responsible. In place of the toppled statue of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, founder of Bogotá, an image of Dilan Cruz was placed, a student who had been killed by the Colombian police while demonstrating for public education. Colombian demonstrators tried to topple and set fire to the statue of Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan military officer who fought for the independence of several Latin American countries. Also in Colombia, in the city of Barranquilla, the statue of Christopher Columbus was toppled. During the act, demonstrators shouted “Columbus, murderer” and flew the Wiphala, the flag of the indigenous peoples, which has increasingly gained prominence amid the demonstrations in Latin American countries. In Chile, monuments to conquistadores, military officers and colonial city founders –all of them Spaniards– were toppled, burnt, damaged, graffitied, or dressed in indigenous costumes; among them, Pedro de Valdivia, the



3. In place of the toppled statue, an image of Dilan Cruz was placed, a student who had been killed by the Colombian police while demonstrating for public education. Statue of Dilan Cruz in Bogota @NickMacWilliam. May 20, 2021 (Twitter)

4. Also in Colombia, in the city of Barranquilla, the statue of Christopher Columbus was toppled. Barranquilla - Columbus Memorial. Public domain, (Wikimedia Commons)



founder of Santiago and other colonial cities, who waged war against the native populations and died at the hands of the natives. Two of his statues were toppled by the Mapuches; on one occasion, a statue was beheaded, and its head was placed in the hand of the statue that pays homage to the warrior Caupolicán, a symbol of indigenous resistance. The statue of Francisco de Aguirre, an officer of the Spanish colonisation, was torn down from its plinth and in its place the cardboard statue of a Diaguita woman, “*La Milanka*”, was installed; the cardboard statue was later burnt by unknown people. The monument to Manuel Baquedano (a Chilean military officer and politician who became the interim president of the country in 1891, and was a commander at the War of the Pacific), erected in Italy Square, was repeatedly defaced, until it was removed by the government. In its place, the demonstrators placed the image of a dog, “*El negro matapacos*”, a symbol of revolt. The statue of the founder of San Juan, in Puerto Rico (and the discoverer of Florida, in the United States), was toppled by demonstrators a short time before the visit of the king of Spain, Felipe VI, to celebrate the ties that unite the island to Spain, and in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the city, founded by the Spanish in 1521.

Regardless of the polemic that has arisen between the advocates and the detractors of colonial monuments, I restrict myself to problematising the reasons behind the public anger against monumental heritage. The target of their protests are historical figures who have received homage as symbols of the arrival of the lights against the supposed darkness in which the aboriginal populations lived, and who, notwithstanding, committed atrocities in the name of civilisation and progress. In this regard, the removal of the statues is part of a reparation policy, through direct action by the victims themselves. The figures that have been honoured as symbols of the struggle for independence from the colonial yoke are now targeted by the demonstrations, as a way of bringing into the spotlight the dependence and underdevelopment that have persisted in the majority of Latin American countries. Finally, the figures who have been rendered posthumous homage, as symbols of whiteness, heroic masculinity and the identitarian homogeneity of the new nations, are targeted by protesters in order to reaffirm the absence of the memories of the natives, of black people,

women, the oppressed, the unemployed, the marginalised and the impoverished middle classes — who face racism, machismo and class prejudice on a daily basis— from the public space. Responsibility for the attacks has been claimed by the Mapuche, the Chapanecos and the Misak community, and also by students, professors and intellectuals, who seek to assert that other stories, other memories, other narratives are necessary in order to break the paradigm of civilisation versus barbarism. Attacking those figures that have, for centuries, embodied the yoke of the elites or the victory of the invaders over the indigenous population is, in this sense, the expression of a cultural dispute, a dissent that challenges the foundations of domination. It establishes a path to be followed, on the ruins of that which has been destroyed, as a form of reparation and cultural recreation. Such actions aim to reveal the heterogeneity and complexity of Latin American cultures and societies. In the face of the crisis in modern rationality, and the supposed cultural homogeneity of the nation, social movements demand not only the right to life, but also the right to health, education, a decent home, food security and the right to memory.

Statues were erected in Latin American public space as a way of showing reverence to progress, and to forge the image of power and strength of countries that were headed towards modernisation, for the purpose of projecting international relations with the hegemonic capitalist centres, particularly those in Europe. The monuments were also erected to affirm that those who were absent from the public space –the native peoples, black people and the poor– were unwanted, for they represented backwardness, and to affirm that the great mass of black people, natives and poor people hindered the progress of Latin America in the developed world. The statues were a way of colonising public space through symbols of power.

Those statues were destroyed in order to expropriate the symbols of power, to decolonise public space, to assert that there are other memories, other forms of narrating the past. They were toppled so as to show that another form of development is possible, that neoliberalism and the entry into the globalised world have only inflicted more suffering on the forgotten peoples, and that the countries that revere heroes from the colonial past and from the newly independent nations continue to be profoundly dependent, both economically and culturally, and still remain socially unequal.



5. The monument to Manuel Baquedano (a Chilean military officer and politician who became the interim president of the country in 1891, and was a commander at the War of the Pacific), erected in Italy Square, was repeatedly defaced, until it was removed by the government. Image: Baquedano monument restoration. 03/09/2021. (Wikimedia Commons)

Whatever happened to all the heroes?

Keith Lowe

Writer and historian, author of *Prisoners of History: What monuments to the Second World War tell us about History and ourselves* (William Collins, 2020).



On 7 April this year, a group of unknown vandals entered the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park in East Berlin, and began spraying graffiti on the statues and memorial stones. Their protest was deliberately provocative. The park is not only the site of several large monuments, it also serves as a cemetery for 7,000 Soviet soldiers who died in 1945 during the battle for Berlin. The graffiti consisted of red paint reminiscent of blood, and slogans that ranged from “Putin = Stalin” and “Death to all Russians”, to more direct references to the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine.

It would be easy to dismiss this as a one-off attack on Russian culture sparked by current events, but actually it demonstrates a series of shifts in popular memory that have taken place over the last 20 or 30 years.

In the first place it shows a conflation between Soviet and Russian history in the popular imagination. Treptower Park was built to commemorate a Soviet victory in 1945, in which Ukrainians and Russians fought side by side as part of the same army; and Stalin, their wartime leader, was not Russian but Georgian. Such subtleties have been lost today: the Red Army is now often remembered exclusively as a Russian army.



1. Panorama of the Soviet War Memorial at Treptow (Treptower Park). (Wikimedia Commons)

Secondly, it reveals how comprehensively the meaning of a memorial can change over time. During the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 we saw this in action: monuments that were put up in the 18th or 19th centuries to symbolise virtue and heroism had, by the 21st century, come to represent a completely different set of values: slavery, racism and oppression. A similar thing has occurred to monuments from the Communist era, including monuments to the Second World War. Soviet soldiers were once considered the greatest heroes of the war; but now, because of revelations in the 1990s about how they behaved during the liberation, particularly in Berlin, they are considered amongst the war's worst perpetrators.

Thirdly, this event shows how the memory of the Second World War has been weaponised in the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Vladimir Putin has repeatedly drawn on Russian memories of the war in order to galvanise his country. He routinely refers to Ukrainians, and indeed their supporters in the West, as "Nazis". The attack on Treptower Park was partly a reaction to that: in the battle for hearts and minds, our memories about the Second World War have become the central battleground.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates a wider shift in society which prioritises the memory of victimhood over that of heroism. Putin paints his country as a victim of the EU, America and NATO. Ukraine, a little more plausibly, portrays itself as a victim of Russian aggression. The population of Europe have also become the "victims" of food and fuel shortages, and higher inflation caused by

2. Oradour-sur-Glane. South entrance to the village in ruins, seen from the esplanade of the church on the left. The main street then goes on the left. On the right, the Limoges tramway track. Dna-Dennis (Wikimedia Commons)





3. RAF Bomber Command Memorial, Green Park, London (interior). Beata May (Wikimedia Commons)

the current conflict. Everyone claims victimhood status for themselves. Meanwhile, the German press universally lamented the vandalism of Treptower Park: a memorial site once dedicated to the heroes of the war had itself become a victim.

The death of the hero

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the cult of the hero and the cult of the martyr were two strands of memorialisation that grew up together. In the celebratory atmosphere of VE Day in May 1945, everyone wanted to be a hero. Allied soldiers found themselves being bought drinks and kissed by girls everywhere they went: the Dutch historian Ian Buruma has described it as a kind of “Beatlemania”. Military parades in London, Paris and Moscow were cheered by vast crowds. This was also the era when the myth of the Resistance was born in France, Italy and the Netherlands. One of the first monuments to the Holocaust after the war was the 1948 Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw: Jews, like everyone else, did not want to view themselves as victims but as heroic resisters.

The Soviets, especially, liked to commemorate their heroism in bronze and stone. They built monuments to their soldiers all over eastern and central Europe, proclaiming themselves the liberators who saved humanity from Nazi tyranny. The main monument at Treptower Park is a perfect example: it features a 12-metre tall bronze statue on

top of a man-made hill. In one hand he carries a rescued child, while in the other he holds a sword that is cleaving through a swastika at his feet.

The Soviets knew exactly what they were doing with such monuments. Each was built to symbolise the friendship between nations, or triumph over tyranny; but the sheer scale of some of them is also a rather unsubtle demonstration of Soviet power and invincibility. The vast monument complex at Treptower Park is not unique in this respect. The Slavín Memorial in Bratislava sits on a hill above the city, and includes a 12.5 metre statue of a Soviet soldier standing on a 42 metre-high obelisk: from wherever you stand in the city, it dominates the skyline. Similarly huge war memorials were built in Sofia, Budapest, Vienna and many, many other cities.

Unfortunately, with the collapse of European communism in 1989, many people in Eastern and

Central Europe began to see such monuments not as symbols of liberation and shared victory, but as symbols of the Soviet oppression that came afterwards, during the Cold War. In 1997, the Victory Monument in Riga was bombed by a far-right Latvian nationalist group, and since then veterans of the Second World War have repeatedly called for it to be taken down. In Estonia, in 2007, the Bronze Soldier memorial to the “liberators of Tallinn” was removed from the city centre and relocated in the military cemetery a few kilometres away, sparking two days of protest by Tallinn’s ethnic Russian minority. In Vienna, the Monument to the Heroes of the Red Army is regularly vandalised. The Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia has repeatedly been daubed with paint –sometimes in jest, but more often in protest over recent actions by the Russian government. It was vandalised again this year, around the same time as the monument in Treptower Park.



4. Auschwitz Memorial Museum, Main entrance of the former extermination camp. (EUROM)

Perhaps the greatest protest against Soviet war memorials has occurred in Poland. The first casualty in this battle of memory was the Monument to Brotherhood in Arms in Warsaw – a memorial that was erected in the suburb of Praga in 1945 to symbolise a shared Polish–Soviet victory. It featured statues of Polish and Soviet soldiers standing side-by-side, and an inscription on the plinth that read: “Glory to the heroes of the Soviet Army, comrades in arms, who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of the Polish nation.”

The first calls to tear this statue down came in the 1990s, but were seen off by local people, including one of the original Polish sculptors of the monument, who pointed out that tearing it down would be an insult to the Polish soldiers who were also commemorated here. Despite this, however, the monument was taken down ‘temporarily’ in 2011 while improvements were made to the city square

where it stood; and in 2015, under considerable pressure from a new, right-wing populist government, the city council announced that the removal would be permanent.

In the following years, dozens of other statues followed all across Poland. The government, which since 2015 has been dominated by the populist Law and Justice Party, embarked on an official program to remove *all* Communist symbols from the country, including Soviet war memorials. (This is the same government that sacked the director of the brand new World War II Museum in Gdansk on the grounds that the exhibition he had produced was “not Polish enough”; and which passed a law in 2018 making it all-but-illegal for historians to write about Polish complicity in the Holocaust.) The very idea of Soviet heroism during the Second World War barely exists any longer in Poland.



5. Warsaw Ghetto Heroes Monument. (EUROM)

6. Marzabotto. Remains of the San Martino di Monte Sole Cathedral. NicFer, (Wikimedia Commons)



The rise of the martyr

Alongside the cult of the hero in 1945, there also grew up a parallel cult of the martyr. The celebrations of VE Day were often overshadowed by the memory of the countless millions who had been killed during the war. Many of the largest Soviet memorials, including Treptower Park, also mark the burial sites of thousands upon thousands of people. The most visited memorial to American soldiers in Europe is the cemetery in Normandy, where US presidents regularly come to commemorate American sacrifices on the anniversary of D-Day. The most sacred war monument in Britain is the Cenotaph in London, where politicians gather on Remembrance Day each year to honour “the glorious dead”.

Amongst the most moving of monuments to the dead are those to the martyred villages where whole populations were massacred by the Nazis during

the war. There are countless examples: Lidice in the Czech Republic, Distomo in Greece, Marzabotto in Italy – the list goes on. In central France, not far from the city of Limoges, lies the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, where 642 men, women and children were massacred by the Waffen-SS in 1944, before the whole village was put to the torch. In the immediate aftermath of the war the remains of the village were declared a national monument, and the ruins preserved exactly as they had been on the day of the massacre. One can still walk through it today and see the pathetic relics of that tragic day: the abandoned car of the local doctor, the skeleton of a baby-carriage in the ruins of the local church, the old bicycles, and sewing-machines, and pots and pans – all the machinery of everyday life that was snuffed out in an instant.

Easily the most common monuments to martyrdom, however, are those to the murdered Jews of Europe. Once rare, they are now ubiquitous. They

range from the tiny Stolpersteine that can be seen in more than 500 towns and cities across Europe – simple brass cobbles set in the street outside houses where Jews once lived; to the gigantic monuments and museums in Berlin, and vast memorial sites like Auschwitz and Dachau, which attract millions of visitors every year.

Unlike monuments to the heroes of the war, monuments to its martyrs have rarely been attacked by protesters or by governments. When they are – for example, when the famous wrought-iron gate of Auschwitz concentration camp were stolen by a far-right collector in 2010 – the attacks are greeted with universal, international outrage.

If you wish to create a monument that will stand the test of time, it is clearly much safer now to build a statue devoted to a martyr than one devoted to a hero. While real-life heroes can never live up to the ideal values we ascribe to them, martyrs do not need to: it is their suffering that is being commemorated, not their moral virtue.

Monument builders appear to have taken note. Even in the nations that traditionally consider themselves the heroes of the war, the idea of victimhood has become a much more central motif. In Britain, for example, the change has been dramatic. In 1992 the British were still commemorating heroes like Sir Arthur Harris, the wartime head of Bomber Command who had been responsible for the bombing of hundreds of cities across Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, demonstrators turned out in force during the inauguration of the statue. Twenty years later, however, a separate Bomber Command Memorial was erected in central London. This monument was dedicated to the 55,000 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives (almost no mention was made of the 600,000 who had also died beneath Allied bombs). Furthermore, it was inaugurated after a campaign by several British newspapers claiming that the veterans of Bomber Command had been treated unfairly for decades. The message was clear – this was a memorial to victims, not heroes.

The Russians have also learned their lesson. The brand new Memorial to the Soviet Soldier, unveiled by Vladimir Putin in 2020 at Rzhev, looks a little like an old school Soviet monument. The main statue, which stands 25 metres tall, is a square-jawed hero whose face looks like an image from a 1950s Soviet poster. But his body is made up of a flock of flying cranes – symbols of the souls of those who died in battle. The rest of the site is dominated by broken walls inscribed with the names of the dead. This is Russia reimagining its past: if it can no longer be the greatest hero of the Second World War, it must stake a claim to being the war's greatest victim.

Herein lies the reason why monuments like those at Treptower Park should be protected now more than ever. Not only are they reminders of the greatest European war in history; they are also a reminder of a time when we still allowed ourselves to believe in heroes. That time, like the wartime generation itself, is slowly slipping away.

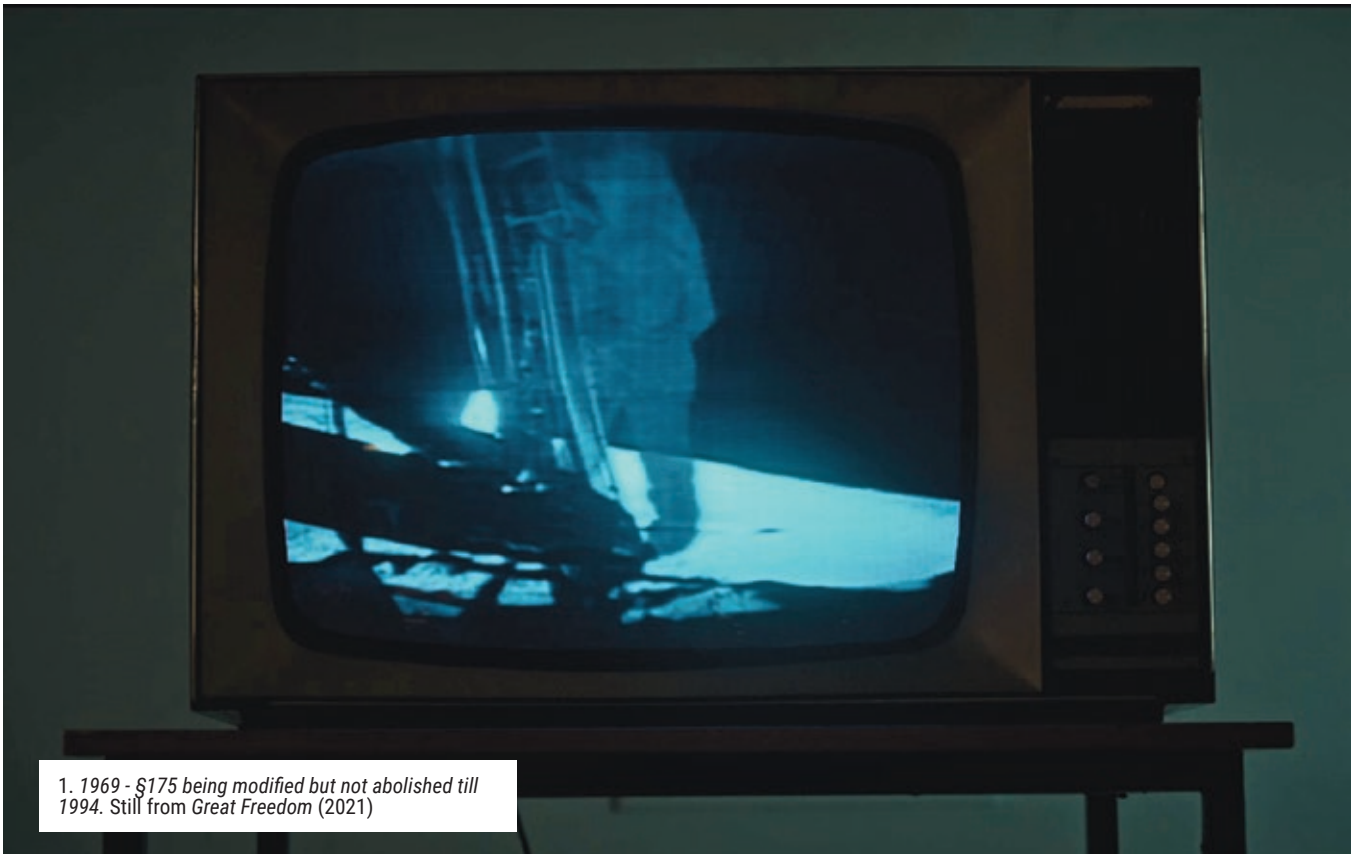
DARKROOMS- BRIGHT MEMORIES

Thomas Reider (scriptwriter) and Bernhard Steinmann (filmmaker)

Reflexions on the movie *Great Freedom* (Große Freiheit), 2021.

“A man must dream a long time in order to act with grandeur, and dreaming is nursed in darkness.” Jean Genet

For 123 years, Paragraph 175 banned homosexuality in Germany. Those convicted were sentenced to prison terms of up to ten years. Surveillance, blackmail, denunciation, torture, and murder were daily threats. In Nazi concentration camps, gays were a special category, being made wear the insignia of a pink triangle (*Rosa Winkel* in German). The “liberation” by the Allies in 1945 did not bring freedom for homosexuals. The National Socialist (tightened) version of Paragraph 175 continued to apply without restriction. Thus, after the end of the war, gay concentration camp prisoners were even transferred directly from the concentration camps to prison, to serve their remaining sentence. “Pink Lists” (*Rosa Listen* in German) from the Third Reich continued to be used and helped to track down the “perverts”. The infamous Paragraph 175 gave generations of gay men a name: *175!* was synonymous with homosexual. The total ban on homosexuality remained in place until 1969. But it would take another 25 years for Paragraph 175 to completely disappear from the German Civil Code in 1994. This paragraph did not continue to exist out of oversight but was, over the decades, re-examined, recertified and reconfirmed. During the post-war years, 100,000 men were brought to trial in West Germany alone. Paragraph 175 allowed authorities to intercept and confiscate love letters and submit them to court as evidence and to install cameras behind mirrors, encroaching on the privacy of these men, revealing their intimate lives, and exposing extremely personal details to the public.



A scenario reminiscent of George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984.

Faced with the impossibility of socially accepted sexuality, we homos, sodomites, urnings, fags, queers, psychos, heretics, asocials, perverts, or however we were called throughout history, sought alternatives. We met away from the controlling collective eye in the bushes of public parks, criss-crossing the nocturnal darkness in search of brief moments of intimacy. We added a transgressive sexual layer to established utilitarian architectures. So public restrooms would always satisfy a broader range of needs, and offer different kinds of rests. In the United Kingdom, toilets used for sex are called “tearooms”, “cottages”, “beats” or “bog-houses”. In Germany, the name “Klappe” is common, while in Vienna men meet in the “Loge”. The diversity of names for those places of desire shows what importance they represent for “outcasts” worldwide.

In times of criminalized love, homosexuals have become experts in stealing moments of privacy and discovering cracks within society that offer the possibility of a sexual encounter. They take refuge in the city's darkness and anonymity, because the public sphere paradoxically offers more privacy than their private ones.

Gays got used to being given wicked names and to live and survive in wicked situations. The definition problem was followed by the challenge to find a place to love. In the absence of options provided by society, these were abysmal, underground and hidden places. People whose sex had been persecuted, forbidden, and brought into the public eye over the centuries, had no choice but to seek out places within society, but beyond the bounds of society's perception.



2. *Controlling Eye - Solitary confinement for a gay man in total darkness. Still from Great Freedom (2021)*

The quest for sexual encounters in public spaces is called “cruising”. Despite being historically characterized by dependant relationships, over the centuries it has established itself as an equal, democratic, intimate encounter outside the norms of mainstream society. Unnoticed by the general public, a homosexual underground emerged that met the need for closeness and intimacy. The search for confirmation of not being alone with one’s desires and needs, one’s love and lust. Men would meet in secluded parks, in public toilets, in theatre boxes and the last row in a cinema. Mostly under the cover of the night.

The historical circumstances provide an understanding of the need for these sexual encounters between men: fast and fleeting, anonymous and in the dark. Because their actual private spaces were disqualified on account of social restrictions. What in the general understanding would in fact have to be qualified as public sex was thus one of the few forms of possible privacy within a hostile society. This also led to a quickening of the actual sexual encounters, because no one wanted to be caught, given the threat of punishment—from imprisonment, internment, loss of honour, stigmatization, humiliation, to death. In light of this fact, the superficially easy separation of the “private” and “public” spheres appears to be a shaky construct of a fearful society, which further confirmed the already attested perversion in the cruising men.

A darkroom is a place for developing film material. A darkroom is also a room that a persecuted community built, filled and claimed for itself. The history of this room, specifically dedicated to sexual encounters, is closely tied to the history of emancipation of modern homosexuality itself. Emerging from the margins of post-war America, this enchanted space took root in the heart of the homosexual underground, waiting to move towards the light. Despite the most strenuous attempts, the basic need for sex could be forbidden, but never eradicated.

Informal and illicit encounters in the darkness of the cities also gave rise to qualities to which people thought to pay tribute in a fetishized way even after repression had ceased. All these secret spots became the blueprint when it came to hosting the public gay sex culture in darkrooms.

Turning a swear word into a self-designation and elevating symbols of oppression to a fetish is both a coping strategy and one for self-empowerment. A darkroom can therefore be seen as the epitome of a freedom movement of all the battered gay generations who had been robbed of their youth and are old enough by now to appreciate the dimmed light. The stolen loves, the forbidden lives, all the offsites, all the banished identities gather here in the darkness of this museum-like space of contemplation. Thanks to darkrooms, “cruising” has not only been given a structural framework, but also an interactive memorial space



of the history of involuntarily stolen, public sex culture, assembling a broad repertoire of elements and situations that reference persecution and emancipation.

With the first structural manifestation of darkrooms as “blackrooms” within the American gay biker scene of the 1950s, numerous future constants of these sex rooms were established. The black paint, their raw aesthetics and the darkness can be directly traced back to their predecessors. The gay biker gangs represented an antithesis to the then-common stereotype of the effeminate homosexual. A new gay ideal of masculinity was brought into being: you no longer dressed up as a woman just because you wanted to get fucked. You posed as a tough guy in black leather and faced society with a humming machine under your ass. A wild reputation preceded the bikers and the new style was both a rejection of “weakness” and an affront to homophobes.

The associated masculine self-image of homosexuals coincided with a time of extreme prudishness. Post-war American society was less committed to individual self-determination than to the goal of a homogeneous, morally and ethically superior society. The American Dream had precise ideas for everyone, and queers didn’t fit in.

The development and dissemination of the first “blackrooms” took place at a time when homosexuality in America was not only stigmatized but also a crime. The meticulous methodology of this obscure persecution (spying, surveillance and decoy

tactics) thereby fulfils the definition of perversion far more than the scenarios observed. The same applies to Europe. In Germany, the police would hide behind mirrors with their cameras rolling. Filming the cruising men and arresting them. Directly from the toilet to jail. From one shithole to the other. The question remains: Who’s the pervert here?

We all spend the first nine months of our existence in darkness. The last sense to form is sight. Modern cities are brightly lit at night. To take people out of anonymity and facelessness as well as to tame the potential for aggression. The fear of darkness is one of man’s most common phobias. On the other hand, scientists already presented studies in the 1970s that indicate the opposite: Mary and Kenneth Gergen took eight strangers and shut them inside a darkroom for an hour. What happened next? Infrared-cameras would show: People were constantly moving around, but the conversation diminished after the first 30 minutes, paving the way for other forms of interaction: about 90 per cent of the participants touched each other intentionally, with half of the participants hugging each other in the dark. This study was conducted in 1973. What would be observed in such an experiment today?

The bedroom is one of the few places where the absence of light is considered positive. Apart from the cinema, our society knows no such dark meeting places. At the cinema, all attention is focused on the screen, whereas in the darkroom it’s focused on the people present.



4. Darkroom with fetishized elements of a former persecution. Still from *Great Freedom* (2021)

Thomas Edison and William Dickson make one of the first movies ever, featuring two men dancing with one another, and a third guy playing his violin. That was in 1895.

Two years later, a young doctor named Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (WhK) in Berlin, the world's first movement for homosexual rights. The doctor and his students chose a catchy motto: *Per scientiam ad justitiam* (Latin for "Justice through science"). With scientific research into homosexuality as the basis for media-effective, political actions, they endeavoured to achieve legal progress. This was followed by extensive publishing activity, not only of scientific papers, but also of simple educational pamphlets, of which almost 100,000 (by 1914) were sent specifically to newspapers, civil servants, lawyers, doctors, university professors, church dignitaries and teachers.

It is amazing how freely and unhindered the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee was able to operate in Germany. Similar journalistic activity would have been unthinkable in Britain, for example—there, around that time, the trials surrounding the famous writer Oscar Wilde were making waves. In France, on the other hand, homosexuality had already been decriminalized and censorship was relatively mild. The portrayal of homosexuality in literature was

often direct and blunt. Nevertheless, the discourse of academia and homosexual subculture was non-existent, or characterized by ignorance.

Hirschfeld succeeded in winning over the leadership of the Social Democratic Party to support a petition against Paragraph 175. The proposal was considered in the Reichstag in 1898, but failed. Undeterred, the WhK continued its propagandistic activities. Dozens of public lectures in Berlin and other German cities were held to inform the people. They would collect statistics on the proportion of homosexuals in the German population. This earned Hirschfeld criminal charges for defamation.

In the early 20th century, Berlin was something of a laboratory for sexual deviance. The media presence reinforced Berlin's reputation as a gay Eldorado. In Italy, people used "berlinese" synonymously with homosexual, the French knew a "vice allemand", and the English agreed on "German custom".

In 1919, Hirschfeld opened his Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, the first institution of its kind in the world. This Institute was dedicated not only to providing medical and psychological counselling to both homosexual and heterosexual people, but also sought to further establish sexology as an academic field of research.

That very same year, Magnus Hirschfeld and

the Austrian film director Richard Oswald also released the first gay movie in film history: *Anders als die Andern* (“Different from the Others”). An older musician is blackmailed by a younger hustler. At some point, the musician refuses to pay. The hustler turns him in, and the homo ends up in court for violating Paragraph 175. In the ensuing court proceedings, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (who plays himself) makes a two-minute plea (to be read in white on black) for acceptance and tolerance that defies all conventions. The blackmailed gay man is sentenced according to Paragraph 175. The resulting shame will lead to his suicide.

In 1920 –founding of the NSDAP (National Socialist Party) in the Hofbräuhaus in February– the film was already banned.

It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives (“Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt”) was the programmatic title of Rosa von Praunheim’s film that gave impetus to the German student gay movement of the 1970s: “Out of the toilets, into society” was the new battle cry. The emphasis was on visibility and attacking bourgeois society. The so-called “homophiles” of the post-war period were said not to have the balls for this. Maybe they really had lost them as a result of “voluntary” castration under Hitler. The homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s had until then consisted of men who had suffered persecution and terror and continuous criminalization on their own bodies.

History is full of black holes. *Great Freedom* (directed by Sebastian Meise) is full of black holes. The pitch dark solitary confinement cells, which in prison jargon are called “the hole”, act as wormholes into different times zones: 1945 –the war is over, but not for homosexuals; 1957 –love is banned; and 1969 –first men land on the moon and homosexuals still land in jail.

“I’ve been on the run all my life!” Such lines sound edgy in a prison movie, but actually, they are the brutal reality. Even today, with homosexuality being punished by repression or death, depending on geography. In one out of three countries, homosexuality is still illegal.

The film’s protagonist Hans Hoffmann is a cipher. A synonym for the persistence of the oppressed. Hans is the fusion of countless real persons who gave their lives in cells and concentration camps and who also gave their voices in diaries, books, interviews, or their bare existence.

Worldwide, the suicide rate among adolescent homosexuals is as high as ever.

Because freedom is not only something filigree, but vital.

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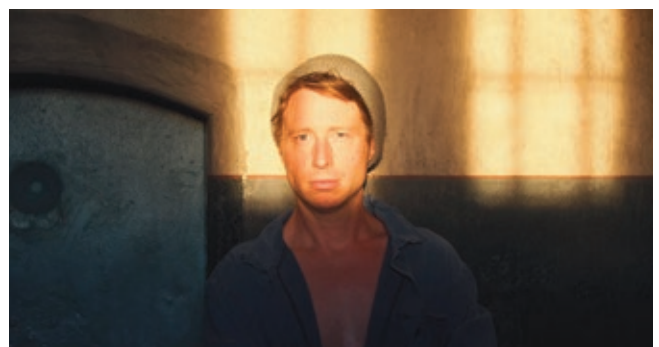
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Un chant d’amour / Song of Love (1950). Directed by Jean Genet

Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt / It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives (1971). Directed by Rosa von Praunheim

Große Freiheit / Great Freedom (2021). Directed by Sebastian Meise



5. Thomas Reider - Screenwriter of the film *Great Freedom*

Reparation for colonialism?

The long road to historical justice in Spain.

Celeste Muñoz (historian, professor at the UNED and EUROM collaborator)
and Sarai Martín (anthropologist, University of Barcelona)

For decades, racial and colonialist reparation has occupied a prominent place on the political agenda of anti-racist and decolonial movements, and demands and initiatives for a new transitional justice have multiplied throughout the Atlantic area. Without elaborating on the characteristics of these movements, it is clear that the pressure exerted by them has made possible one of their main objectives: that these demands form part of the political plans of the different states that have been called upon to adopt measures that address reparation. One example is the European Commission's resolution of 26 March 2019 on the "Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent", which recommends that member states take measures to make reparations for colonialism—heritage restitution, declassification of archives, increasing the visibility of people of African descent, and so on.¹ In this context, and taking the "African-American Redress Network" initiative² as a reference, EUROM and the NIOD-Institute of the Netherlands set out to map and analyse reparation initiatives in the Spanish and Dutch contexts. The experience was developed throughout 2021 and 2022 and we can now provide some results, while also launching questions that we hope to answer better in the coming years.

The Spanish and Dutch maps have forced us to open up debates that allow us to situate the singularity of reparation demands in Europe, distancing us from simplistic approaches that seek a homogenous transatlantic approach. Historical, socio-demographic or academic processes must be delimited and taken into account, without denying that reparation movements share an agenda or constitute a global movement. The main questions raised

¹ See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019IP0239&from=ES>

² A project led by Columbia University (NY) and the Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center at Howard University, whose objective has been to map and promote reparations for individuals, families and groups who suffer or have suffered historical racial injustices in the US. See: <https://redressnetwork.org/>

were: (1) **Does a state-level map make sense?** Unlike the US, the consequences of Spain's slave-owning and colonial past materialise both internally and externally—with much greater weight outside its borders. For this reason, we consider that a project of these characteristics needs to triangulate the phenomenon and take a transnational approach that involves an area of action greater than that of the state itself. The fact that many of the victims and descendants of these crimes do not live or have not lived in Spain does not dilute its responsibility as a power, and for this reason this project must include all the responsibilities demanded from abroad and facilitate dialogue with the former colonies. However, the narratives and demands in each geographical context respond to their own history (colonisation, decolonisation...) and coordinates (social conflict, inequality...), and so, great effort, coordination and discussion must be added to the task of mapping so that these are dealt with adequately. (2) **How important are historical and socio-demographic differences in these movements?** Spain has also been a country of a colonialist nature. This is different from the case of the United States (which was a colony and then a state), and allows us to locate the socio-demographic contrast—also linked to the previous question, since the human flows (forced or otherwise) were located in the peripheries of the empire and not in its centre. This situation changed from the 1950s onwards, when migratory flows to the peninsula from the few African colonies began to increase, giving way to the first organised groups of African descent in the contemporary state. From the 1980s onwards, they were joined by new migratory processes of various kinds. Therefore, the political subject that leads these movements at the Spanish level is created through its own life experience, despite the obvious dialogue with Afro-descendant or native groups from all over the world and their connections. This contextualisation has also forced us to establish our own reference chronologies. (3) **Who is the holder of reparation rights?** The adaptation of the Afro-descendant category operative in the case of the USA is complex for the Spanish case due to the geographical diversity of its colonial and slavery processes. It is for this reason that we have dispensed with this category and taken into account the group of people and/or communities that have suffered processes of slavery, colonisation or discrimination that involve Spain in one way or another.



1. Withdrawal of the monument to Antonio Lopez. Barcelona 2018. (EUROM)

2. Protest in Barcelona demonstrating against the monument to Columbus and against racism, 2020. (EUROM)

The results and their key points.

In view of the debates that will accompany the analysis of the movements for the reparation of colonialism in Spain over the coming years, it is also necessary to explain what the demands of these movements are. Colonialism reparation includes numerous demands ranging from the symbolic (removal of statues, memory policies, etc.) to the economic (economic compensation, development plans, etc.) and the political (laws or heritage restitution). This diversity is another sign of the regional particularities of this global movement, as the emphasis on one demand or another varies according to the context. For example, for the Spanish case, six categories were established, with varying results—although they are still in the process of construction and therefore subject to modification.

Category	Number of initiatives
Legislative bills that include colonial and slave-owning historical memory, as well as formal petitions from third countries.	7
Removal/Request for removal/Resignification of monuments/ addition of new monuments/ restitution	9
Renaming of streets, squares and buildings/ institutes	6
Curricular adaptations and implementation of education plans that integrate matters concerning colonialism and racism.	4
Protest movements, entities and associations promoting visibility and advocating for reparations for Spanish colonialism, slave-owning and racism (hate crimes). In addition, movements, entities and associations promoting visibility and advocating for reparations for hate crimes and historical injustices in the present day.	2/19/24 ³
Exhibitions or other cultural awareness-raising initiatives	19

³ 2 protest movements; 19 organisations or associations; 27 hate crimes.

Once this first mapping has been carried out, the detailed results of which can be found in the report published in April 2022,⁴ it is interesting to provide some qualitative perspectives from the research.

The first is the scope, because if we directly assess the initiatives that respond to a direct request for reparation or restitution (excluding hate crimes), we can identify fifteen actions. Most of them concern the re-signification of public or heritage space or space in the legislative sphere. Of this amount, nine have concluded with the demands being totally or partially satisfied; six, on the other hand, have not been successful. However, what is really noteworthy in terms of scope are the few initiatives—not so much in comparison with the USA, but with the Netherlands. The second is territorial, especially because of the enormous geographical imbalance in the weight of specific reparation initiatives. However, this reality is modulated or minimised in some categories. In this sense, we see that Catalonia—and more specifically Barcelona—assumes an indisputable leading role in terms of the re-signification of public space. In fact, the first institution to make a public apology for the colonial issue was the Catalan Parliament. Likewise, we must also incorporate a chronological perspective into these trends. We place few initiatives before the arrival of the 21st century, although the impetus clearly came even later, specifically from 2016 onwards. Although it is difficult to clarify the absolute reasons for this increase, we dare to suggest some key explanations from this point of view: on the one hand, the influence of the push for reparations in the USA; and on the other hand, the rise in reparation initiatives in Africa and the Caribbean, and especially the creation of the CARICOM (Caribbean) Reparations Commission in 2013. The difference between these movements and those of the US is that their narrative orchestration places Europe and its powers at the centre of responsibility, a fact that for our study we must assess at a differential level and connect with the previous considerations that recommend a mapping based on a transnational dialogue. Finally, it is worth mentioning

⁴ See: <https://europeanmemories.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Redress-Network-2022-Spanish-Case.pdf> (written by Celeste Muñoz, Oriol Lopez, Sarai Martín, Marc Riu and Maria Pereira).

the relevance of the rise in decolonial movements in Europe driven by people of migrant or racialised origin. These movements have been in dialogue with the aforementioned phenomena and have incorporated into their practice the denunciation of the persistence of symbols and narratives of colonialism and slavery. Their action has been the main driving force behind this issue, putting reparations for colonialism on the political and social agenda.

Some reflections on the Spanish case.

Although it is too early to draw consistent and definitive conclusions, and although a second sampling phase is needed to complete the results, some more concrete interpretative key points can be considered on the status of the issue in Spain in relation to the management of colonial memory:

- The “law of historical memory”: reference to this law passed by the Congress of Deputies in 2007 is obligatory, not because of its contribution to the colonial issue, but because of its contribution to disavowal.⁵ This law, which establishes measures in favour of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and dictatorship, does not once mention the word “Africa”; “colony”; “Guinea”; “Morocco”; or “Sahara”. The first law passed in Spain, more than 30 years after the death of dictator Francisco Franco, on the memory of its victims, forgot—or chose to forget—that Franco’s Spain had colonies in Africa that suffered the dictatorship as much as the Spaniards on the peninsula. The regime also had deep colonial roots. However, despite pointing out this missed opportunity, we believe that the colonial question deserves its own law of memory—something that has not yet been raised in any instance.

⁵ Although it is popularly known as the “law of historical memory”, its correct name is “Law recognising and extending rights and establishing measures in favour of those who suffered persecution or violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship” (Law 52/2007, 26 December).

- Few reparation and recognition initiatives and colonial nostalgia: Spain has been one of the world’s major colonial powers in the modern era, the third most involved nation in the Atlantic slave trade and a minor colonial power in contemporary times. For this reason, one would expect to find in this context movements for reparation and remembrance similar to those found in the US, France and Britain. It would also be logical to find a political debate around demands, revision of school curricula, symbolism and recognition of responsibilities. But as the particularities of the “law of historical memory” already anticipate, the colonial issue is ignored, even when not claimed. There is an absence of memory to which nostalgic memories are added—an upsurge that can also be detected in the Dutch study, although reparation initiatives have been more numerous there, even with the emergence of an anti-colonialist political party. This comparison with what is happening in other European contexts is a task that needs to be further explored.
- The academy’s lack of attention to the colonial issue is reflected in the scarce presence of subjects such as African history in state universities—it is only compulsory in three history degrees. Nor are there any chairs or areas of colonial history or colonial studies. Likewise, colonialism barely features on school curricula in the compulsory stages. These elements must also be taken into account when analysing the absences, disavowals and lack of interest.

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REVIEW

BOOK

Memory Activism and Digital Practices after Conflict.

Unwanted Memories.

FRIDMAN, Orli. Amsterdam University Press, 2022

Dasa Duhacek

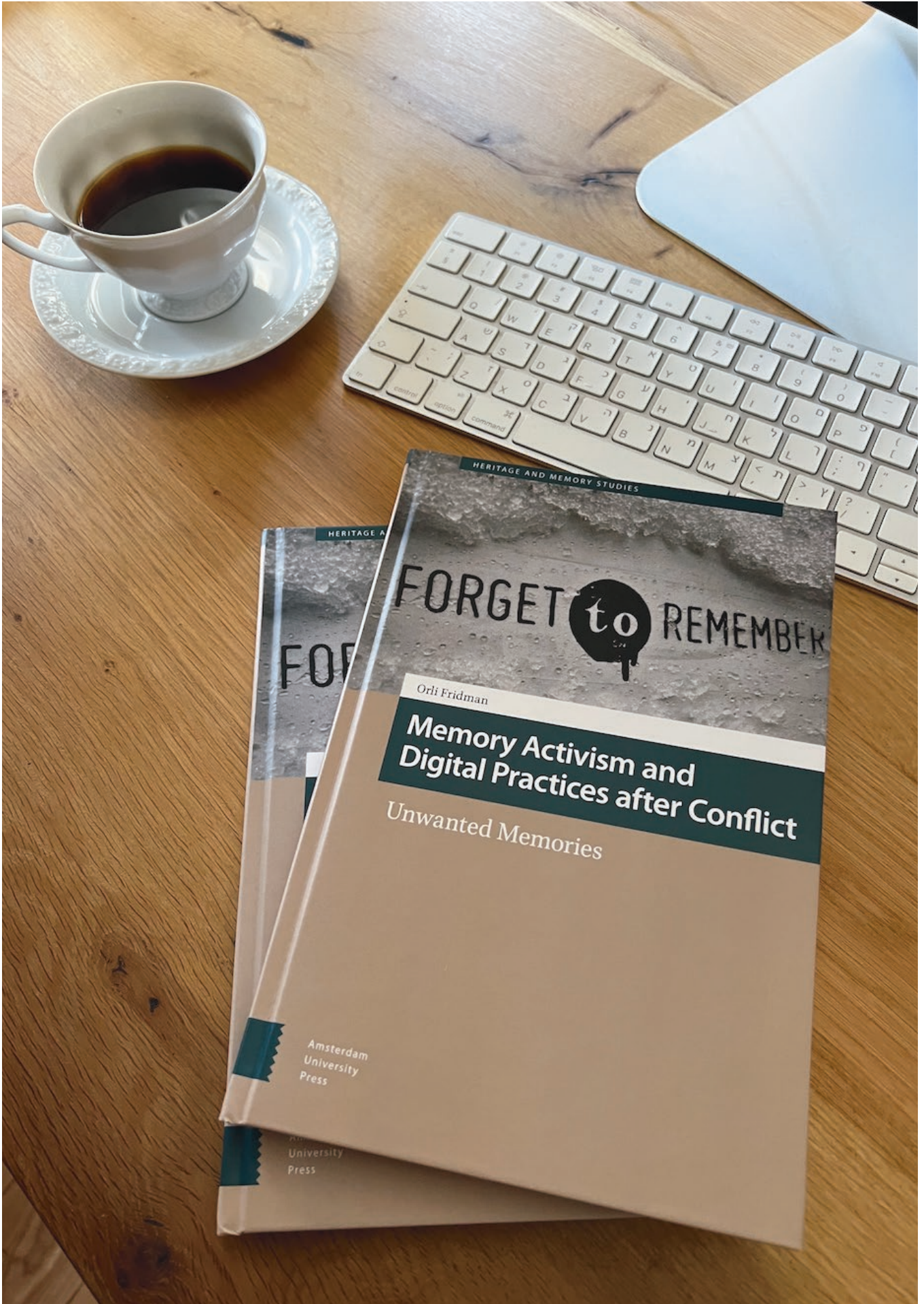
Professor, political science department
of **Belgrade University**

The book on Memory Activism by Prof. Orli Fridman is an outstanding contribution to a «growing body of literature exploring the social construction of collective memory... the role of commemorative rituals and narratives... and their *impact on the political sphere*».¹ Relying on remarkable knowledge of the field and on extensive, in-depth research, this book is notable precisely because it is both a detailed case study of one of the most devastating conflicts at the end of the 20th century and an exemplary work in memory studies.

Orli Fridman is not new to the field of conflict and memory studies. Besides insights into two international conflicts, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the conflict following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, she has, in over two decades, closely followed the complex unravelling of the aftermath of wars fought in the 1990s in Serbia, despite the official denial. Her research has resulted in a series of academic studies on the topics of assessing memory-building processes. Importantly, her academic research has been interwoven with her observation of and experience in peace activism.

The book, *Memory Activism and Digital Practices after Conflict*, provides the framework so as to grasp and present the complexity of the memory-building process. Given that the process lasts for decades, the author, in central chapters, analyses memory activism among two generations. The first generation was actually an active participant in the events themselves, events that in subsequent decades they would refer to and reflect on while building memories, which is why this generation was engaged in *memory activism*.

¹ Orli Fridman, *Memory Activism and Digital Practices after Conflict*. Amsterdam University Press, 2022. p. 23, (emphasis by DD)



Here the book is quite rightly focused primarily on the Women in Black anti-war movement, on whose tireless activism the whole peace movement of the first generation is grounded. The tenacious, on-going commitment of these feminist peace activists starting from the early 1990s is carefully documented and analysed: the relentlessness of pursuing unwanted memories, formatting calendars alternative to the state, publishing annual agendas accordingly, commemorative rituals, and so on.

The second generation is continuing the memory-building process as *the memory of activism*, adding new activities and organising joint activities with the Women in Black movement and others. In addition, Fridman perceptively comments and elaborates on millennials, who have harnessed the advantage of having the tools of the digital world at their disposal, creating thus the #hashtag #memoryactivism framework for online commemorations. When speaking of the upcoming generation(s), we can recognise the political significance, as well as the ease with which these generations enter the digital world to make use of the available tools, which, according to Fridman, are utilised as additional mnemonic practices.

Like a thread that runs throughout Orli Fridman's book is the important recognition of the significance of the political, following on from the acknowledgement of memory activism. Orli Fridman, while telling us the story of *Memory Activism* in Serbia, connecting the dots of the events, has created a mosaic of what the sad reality of our present actually is – as well as the gloomy outlook for our future. Unfolding the results of the meticulous, carefully articulated research described throughout the book, it becomes difficult, for anyone focused on understanding Serbia's recent past, and especially for anyone who has taken part in those events – even if marginally – to face this reality; it can almost be painful, not only to accept the succinct and undoubtedly credible presentation of our “history of the present”, but also to realise that the future can, at best, just rest on questions: «What place will commemorative solidarity have?... what role will memory activism scholars play?»² and, what is the future of this political community that lives in perpetual denial?

How do we measure time, from one date to the next, from one holiday to the other, which calendar do we follow in our everyday lives and which dates do we single out, and why? Orli Fridman has walked us through the calendars of Yugoslavia(s) and how the calendar that the Serbian state officially acknowledges today has been constructed so as to deny its responsibility for the wars of the 1990s. What becomes

² Orli Fridman, p. 202

obvious as we follow the timeline is that the calendar Serbia follows today is a calendar that obliterated, not only the history of Yugoslavia's real socialism, but also a testament as to how Serbia officially came to accept interpretations of the wars of the 1990s based solely on Serbian nationalism and ethnocentrism. This means that the calendar was built around the complete denial of war crimes, the genocide in Srebrenica, the shelling of Sarajevo, the destruction of Vukovar, etc. It was built around Serbia's apparent victimhood. The monuments erected and rituals introduced, often celebrating war criminals, are thus an adulteration of historically well-documented events.

Although the book is focused on memory activism, and consequently analyses the building blocks, such as calendars, commemorative rituals, mnemonic devices, it also offers an excellent insight into the political context of the 1990s in Yugoslavia, and the events immediately following the end of the wars – all these events that form the decisive framework for memory activism and show an in-depth understanding of the historically important contextualisation.

The context is also provided by a shared past of Yugoslavia's successor countries. Although respective strong ethnic and national sentiments are also prevalent in these countries, a space of counter memories is also created, a space of shared anti-war, peaceful and, predominantly feminist, activism.

Since the author has consulted numerous sources, the book has a rich bibliography, photographic illustrations of events and appendices of relevant documents.

To conclude, Orli Fridman's book on *Memory Activism* is an indispensable book, not only for the subfield of memory activism, but also for memory studies as a whole.

REVIEW

BOOK

La secreta de Franco. *La Brigada Político-Social durante la dictadura.*

ALCÁNTARA, Pablo. Planeta, 2022

Ricard Conesa

Historian, project officer at the [EUROM](#)

Barcelona, August 2022. The information panel in front of the police station at No. 43 on Via Laietana was vandalised again. Nothing is legible. What did it say? Who poured paint on it? And why? In the spring of 2019, Barcelona City Council decided to put up a panel a few metres away from the building telling the frightening story behind its walls. The Barcelona headquarters of Franco's political police, the Brigada Político-Social (BPS, the Political-Social Brigade), its premises were used to torture and systematically violate human rights during the Franco dictatorship. Today, different associations of ex-political prisoners, former deportees or relatives of victims of Franco's regime – such as those gathered under the umbrella of the *Ateneu Memòria Popular* (Popular Memory Atheneum), among others – recall the facts and call for this police station, still in operation, to be turned into a centre of memory.

It's hard to understand the reason why a study on the role played by Franco's political police in Spain had not been carried out until now. While other countries have seen the publication of books, articles, reports by human rights institutions and even the release of films dedicated to the political police and secret services, Spain still lacked such a study. Historian Pablo Alcántara sought to fill this gap with his book *La secreta de Franco. La Brigada Político-Social durante la dictadura* [Franco's Secret Police. The Political-Social Brigade during the Dictatorship], a publication resulting from his PhD thesis.

As a result of the restructuring of the Public Order Forces between 1938 (still at war) and 1942, the BPS emerged as the dictatorship's "true praetorian guard". To this end, it had the invaluable assistance of H. Himmler's Gestapo and from 1953, in the throes of the Cold War, the CIA's cooperation through collaboration in international operations and the training of Spanish agents. Alcántara delves into the working methodology of the BPS and its role in major acts of repression, such as the fight against the anti-Franco guerrillas, the workers' movement, the student movement, clandestine political parties (especially Spain's



1. Book *La secreta de Franco. La Brigada Político-Social durante la dictadura*



2. The police station of Via Laietana in Barcelona, 2021. R. Conesa (EUROM)

Communist Party), cultural sectors, professional associations and the actions executed against the armed struggle and terrorism in the final stages of the dictatorship and the transition.

One of the strong points of the research is undoubtedly Alcántara's work on the personal files of BPS members kept in the Ministry of the Interior's Archives or the Social Investigation Bulletins kept in Spain's National Historical Archive. By consulting them, he has managed to compellingly describe the different profiles of the police force members and to reconstruct the careers of the most feared commissioners and inspectors throughout the dictatorship, namely, Roberto Conesa, Eduardo Quintela, Pedro Urraca, Pedro Polo, Antonio Juan Creix, Melitón Manzanas, Antonio González Pacheco (alias) "Billy el Niño", etc.

The Amnesty Law passed in October 1977 spared the agents who had been reported, and the very agents who had acted as forces of public order during the dictatorship continued to work under democracy (some of them being decorated and promoted). In 1986, the BPS was replaced by the General Commissariat of Information, a body which, since its creation, has had

a staff and budget considered "classified information". Despite the "querrela argentina" (Argentinian complaint), the attempt by the dictatorship's victims to bring several of the police torturers (Antonio González Pacheco, Jesús Muñecas, Celso Galván, etc.) before the Argentine courts, Spanish justice has protected them, reaffirming a model of impunity that not only affects justice, but also historical research. Alcántara has had to overcome the many stumbling blocks posed by Spain's Official Secrets Act of 1968 and the Historical Heritage Act in order to gain access to certain documents. Today, many associations of archivists, historians and memorialist organisations are calling for greater transparency and a much more courageous reform of the Official Secrets Act than the one currently being considered by the Spanish government.

Books such as *La secreta de Franco* shed light on the impunity enjoyed by Spain's forces of public order and help us understand why, in 2022, in front of the police headquarters on Barcelona's Via Laietana, there are still those who vandalise information panels and endeavour to conceal from the public the fact that the BPS practised torture there.

REVIEW

DOCUMENTARY

Canción a una dama en la sombra [Song to a lady in the shadow]

Carolina Astudillo Muñoz

Filmmaker

My work as a filmmaker focuses on collecting stories featuring women in different eras, generally marked by war, exile and/or dictatorship.

In my films I use materials that were for many years considered to be secondary, as they are related to private life: letters, diaries, family films and photographs.

The British theorist and filmmaker, Laura Mulvey¹, states that while it is true that oral history has not been exclusive to women, and that documenting and narrating the past through interviews is one of the favourites formats of the feminist methodology, so too is the reconstruction of the past through letters, diaries and other objects.

These necessarily informal sources can reveal an image of the past in which women were central as opposed to marginal and in which –in the absence of public events– their daily struggles defied the frontiers that were created.

In 2015 I produced *El gran vuelo*, a documentary that tells the story of Clara Pueyo Jornet, an activist from the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC), who –having been sentenced to death in the prison of Les Corts in Barcelona– escaped with a false release order in June 1943. Since that moment, there has been no trace of her.

¹ *Where Is History Today? New Ways of Representing the Past.* Marcel Arbeit / Ian Christi.
Women Making History: Gleaning and the Compilation - Laura Mulvey.



1. Still from the feature film *Song to a lady in the shadow* (2022)

In this documentary I used photographs, letters from activists –including those that Clara herself sent to her friends and party comrades–, family films from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s (filmed by people from the Catalan and Valencian upper middle class as a means of contrasting and reflecting on the lack of images of the protagonist) and the witnesses who knew her.

Clara had two brothers: Salvador –who died in the Battle of the Ebro– and Armand, who at the end of the Civil War began the route to take up exile in France. He enlisted as a worker in a French company and after being sent to two Stalags, he was sent to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. He was murdered in Gusen, in May 1941.

The years went by and I decided to rescue the valuable material I had about Armand Pueyo Jornet. Not only the testimonies from his children (Albert and Eugenia) and the photographs, but all the letters he sent to his wife Soledad Tartera i Vilanova.

Canción a una dama en la sombra situates us in the Spanish Civil War and in the Second World War through twenty-eight letters that Armand Pueyo Jornet wrote to his wife Soledad from when the retreat began to his time in the last *Stalag* –between 1939 and 1941– and fragments of *El dolor* (War: A Memoir) by Marguerite Duras, adapted by the Chilean playwright Marcela Torres.

In the films I have produced the family archive is used as a counter-shot to History told with an uppercase H. A family image does not only reveal the mood of those who appear in the film, but it also sheds light on the relationship between a document and its political context. The person filming has a perspective of class and genre that can be discovered in the images. That which is personal can also reveal that which is political.

Taking ownership is a subversive act. Assigning new meaning attacks images created by power. The trace of intention is erased when the images are taken to be re-edited and

dissolved in another discourse different to that originally intended by means of a new approach in the editing proposal.

In *Canción a una dama en la sombra* the family images from the 1930s and 1940s are of Catalan families who lived a different post-war period to the protagonists, as they belonged to the upper middle class. At that time, a camera was the equivalent of three average salaries in Spain. For that reason, like in *El gran vuelo*, the images cause a fracture between image and word.

This reflection on the images is explicit in the film through the off-screen choir that shows that there are no images in movement of the protagonists of the film as they belonged to a social class that could not afford that luxury.

*Oh! Soledad, Armand,
Eugenia, Albert!
How we would love to see
your bodies moving!
To hear your voices!
Impossible.
Our only consolation:
Alas here: Images
borrowed, robbed,
orphaned.
Anonymous faces that do
not conceal the privileges of
their class.
And that despite
everything, can illustrate
an imaginary Sunday.*

About Armand Pueyo Jornet

Sunday 19th November 1939

To Soledad Tartera – Caldes de Montbui

Dear wife and children: like every Sunday, I will spend, in my imagination, a little while with you.

At the end of the 1920s, Soledad Tartera i Vilanova, from Caldes de Montbui, met Armand Pueyo Jornet, a young man from Vilanova who had arrived in Caldes de Montbui a few years previously to start a job as a foreman. After some time, they got engaged.

Armand was part of a group of friends and intellectuals who revolved around the figure of the Catalan painter and sculptor, Manolo Hugué, and he was known for his talent as a writer. As a result of this he began to write in the local newspapers: *Farell* and *Esbarjo*. In some of his political and philosophical articles he highlighted the importance of education for any labourer. He also advocated for the creation of a free school for labourers and illiterate women. He also apparently wrote some plays. But there is no record of them.

With the advent of the Civil War, the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and the General Union of Workers (UGT) organised the Carlos Marx column, which initially had 2,000 troops. Armand enlisted in this column with other party comrades. His first destination was the Aragon Front.

The Republic defeat forced 453,000 Spaniards to take refuge in France. One of those men was Armand. It was the beginning of a hard journey in a foreign country of which the majority did not speak the language. In addition, they had to cope with the harsh attitude of the gendarmes, the colonialist troops and the French army.

At the end of March 1939, the Spanish refugees settled in camps in different French departments: Argelès-sur-Mer, Saint-Cyprien and Barcarès, Judes in Septfonds, Sant Cebrià, Vernet d'Ariège, Agde and Rivesaltes.

Of the exile route that Armand Pueyo Jornet took, there are only letters from Septfonds and Vernet d'Ariège.

In May 1939, France extended the proposal to regiments in operation and companies of foreign workers. Armand Pueyo enrolled in one of these foreign companies, doing manual work in different towns in France.

In June 1940, when France was occupied by the Nazis, one million political prisoners occupied the *Stalags*, the name Nazi Germany gave to the camps of war prisoners, where there were 1,000 Spaniards.

Armand Pueyo was sent to *Stalag VIII C*, near current Zagan in Poland, and from there he wrote a letter to his daughter Eugenia. It was the last missive his family received.

About Soledad Tartera i Vilanova

*No one will know more of you, Penelope, than the design
Homer and the mythologies forged for you*

Olga Zamboni

Canción de una dama a la sombra (title of a poem by Paul Celan) dismantles the story of Penelope, narrated by Homer three thousand years ago in *The Odyssey*. This myth tells the legend of Odysseus –a magnificent hero who fought in the Trojan War and who took twenty years to return home– and his wife, the Queen Penelope, who waited for him all that time in her house –weaving and unravelling a shroud on a loom–, rejecting a group of suitors who relentlessly pursued her. Historically, Penelope has become the female ideal of the passive wait, marital fidelity and absence.

The Spanish Civil War transformed the lives of thousands of women in many aspects. In the words of the historian Mary Nash: it gave them autonomy of movement and decision which they used immediately. The new participation of women in male tasks such as trench warfare, community service and social work, work in factories and on transport, was for many women a liberating experience.

Civilian resistance and everyday survival during the war can be explained by the enormous effort and

energy of thousands of anonymous women, whose voluntary aid work was a major contribution to the war economy and the functioning of civil society.

The experience of the war brought with it a new dimension to the classic functions of a mother, housewife and household provider, because now women provided food, care services and basic needs for the daily survival of the entire civil population.

All of these women shared the experience of waiting for their husbands, lovers, sons, fathers and brothers who had been sent to the front.

With the end of the war and the arrival of the new regime, a tremendously conservative female ideal was imposed. Under the Franco dictatorship, the main social function of women was to be mothers, which is why work, education, social activity and emancipation were considered to be threats to “their biological destiny as procreators of the future generations of the Spanish homeland”.

The repression of the Franco dictatorship brutally closed off women’s path to freedom. However, there were many women who secretly fought against fascism, or who reverted the prototype of “the angel in the house” as they needed to continue working.

I wanted to construct an account from the perspective of the women who waited, focusing on the figure of Soledad Tartera i Vilanova, Armand Pueyo Jorner’s wife.

For obvious reasons, I managed to gather more information about the life of Armand, than that of Soledad. Even the twenty-eight letters that have been saved from their epistolary relationship, are his, logically kept by Soledad. Those that she wrote, were probably destroyed when Armand entered Mauthausen.

Armand Pueyo Jorner was murdered in Gusen in May 1941. Soledad found out that her husband had died almost ten years later. For her whole life she had to live with the stigma that it meant in Franco’s Spain to have a “commie” husband, a sister-in-law who escaped from prison, and was “under search and arrest” and to be a woman who worked, contradicting the ideal of “the perfect wife” and the “angel in the house”.

For me it was important not only to tell Soledad Tartera i Vilanova's story, but also to bring attention to the stories of other women through intimate micro-stories and testimonies from their relatives, mainly their children and grandchildren. These personal stories have been silent and invisible, and so, by bringing them together, they become the story and voice of a collective. And that story and that voice, combined with the reflection on certain issues, make *Canción de una dama a la sombra* a piece about absence, courage, the right image and oblivion.

The diary of Marguerite Duras, which she wrote in April 1945, in the weeks prior to and following the return of her husband, a prisoner in the Dachau Concentration Camp, moved me deeply.

For the first time I read a corporeal and emotional description of what it means for a woman to wait for her husband not knowing if he is alive or dead. This story connected me with the story of my country and the women who still do not know where the bodies of their disappeared, arrested husbands are.

We're in the vanguard of a nameless battle, a battle without arms or bloodshed or glory: we're in the vanguard of waiting.

Behind us is civilisation in ashes, and all the thought, treasured for centuries—writes Duras—. Words that in the current context echo like waves.

APPENDIX

No date

My dear Eugenia

How it made me feel to hold a letter written by you I think you have learned to read enough to understand my handwriting, and you will know how to answer me, by yourself.

I want you to write to me, without your mother dictating what you have to write. I want you to tell me what you and Alberto do, how you live, what you play, what you do at school, everything you have learned.

I also want you to send me a drawing, I really like them.

I would love to be with you to make you into a diligent and hardworking young woman, but you know that now that is impossible. I am very far away, in Germany, and to come back, it would take me at least a week by train....non-stop. It is very cold here. We have already had snow. But I'm fine (...)

Sunday, 18th February 1940

My dear Soledad,

In the small café in the town there is a jukebox and they often play a song, French of course, and when I hear it, it always feels as if it is you singing it. The song goes like this:

"J'attendrai, le jour et la nuit . J'attendrai toujours ton retour. J'attendrai ..."

Which means:

"I will wait, day and night. I will wait for you to come home. I will wait..."

I can see you, with our children, thinking about me, almost pronouncing the same words as the song.



2 | 3. Stills from the feature film *Song to a lady in the shadow* (2022)

Franco's repression in Navarre through its spaces of remembrance

José Miguel Gastón Aguas and César Layana Ilundain

Navarre Institute of Memory

Government of Navarre

Political cleansing in Navarre, *dismemory* and family resistance

On 18 July 1936, a military coup against the Second Republic was successful in Spain. The uprising had been forged in a small city in the north of the peninsula: Pamplona, where General Emilio Mola had been transferred months earlier. From then on, the violence unleashed by the rebels in Navarre became very intense, acquiring a multifaceted nature.

Thousands of people were detained in municipal and district prisons, in the Provincial Prison, in detention centres set up by the nationalist political forces (in particular the schools of Escolapios, occupied by the Carlist Central War Junta, and Salesianos, taken over by the Falange) and in prisons such as the San Cristóbal Fort. But the most terrible expression of this political cleansing was undoubtedly the planned and controlled murder by the principal military authorities, of nearly 3,000 people who ended up being buried in clandestine mass graves. Just when it seemed that the mass murders had come to an end, 795 prisoners escaped from the prison at San Cristóbal Fort, on Mount Ezkaba, on 22 May 1938. 206 of them, once captured, were murdered and buried in new clandestine mass graves. These burial sites were designed as places of *dismemory*, shielded by a regime where it was forbidden to remember, and which sought to erase the republican memory from history.

In the face of this calculated policy of disappearances, a determined, albeit silent, resistance emerged from the families of the murdered people who kept the memory of these places alive. One particular action occurred in the early 1960s at the pit cave Raso de Urbasa, where the bodies of three Amescoans murdered in 1936 had been dumped, and the plaque



1. Etxauri Memory Park. Navarre Institute of Memory.

placed in their memory was one of the first public symbols of remembrance in the whole of Spain, if not the first. From 1977 onwards, and for at least three years, an intense social movement flourished in Navarre, driven by relatives, neighbours, some local politicians and a considerable number of priests, in favour of locating and opening the clandestine graves in which the victims of the repression were buried. Their remains were taken to their hometowns to be given a dignified burial in the pantheons that were built to commemorate all the victims of the repression unleashed by the rebel factions in each locality. These pantheons have since become true places of remembrance. In 1980, furthermore, the sculpture of José Ramón Anda which commemorates the victims thrown into that pit cave in the Urbasa Mountain Range was installed, and tributes began to be paid in their memory. A resilient memory that took a vindicating step forward calling for public recognition through acts of homage and in the funeral space with the construction of pantheons and other memorial symbols. A collective memory interwoven by multiple memories and narratives, obstinate to policies aimed at annihilating all traces of those murdered, echoed in the numerous places of remembrance that were constructed and sustained by the results of new lines of historical research that questioned the fate of the vanquished.

The creation of the Sartaguda Memorial Park was undoubtedly a qualitative leap forward. As of May 2008, Navarre finally had its own space of reference in terms of remembrance. The Park brought together the collective efforts in the fight against *dismemory* in Navarre and strengthened the memorialist work of the associations. In the

years that followed, they continued to open mass graves, in the absence of institutional Navarrese support; developing projects for the recognition of forced labour; marking the homes of the murdered victims of reprisals or the places where they were buried; and raising awareness about one of the most emblematic spaces of repression in Navarre: the Fort of San Cristóbal and its Cemetery of the Bottles.

The Navarre Institute of Memory and the regulation of places of remembrance.

From 2015 onwards, there was a new memorialist revival, consequence of the new government taking on the agenda of the memorialist movement, which prompted a series of public policies on memory, based on six themes: the organisation of institutional acts of reparation for various groups of victims; the implementation of a plan for the exhumation and identification of disappeared persons; the removal of Francoist symbols and the democratisation of public space; the preservation and dissemination of the memory of the victims; the development of an educational programme for the intergenerational transmission of memory called Schools with Memory; and the promotion and preservation of places of historical memory in Navarre.

Over the following three years, a considerable number of plaques and monuments installed by the Government of Navarre commemorated civil servants, elected public officials, teachers, those interned in Gurs, those who worked on the construction of the road from Igal to Vidángoz or those who were murdered in Torrero cemetery in Zaragoza. Expressions of remembrance in which, similarly, memorialist associations and local entities proliferated with signs and monoliths in municipal buildings, in streets and squares or in places where repressive events took place.

The proliferation of spaces or places of remembrance in Navarre has kindled an awareness of a dual need: on the one hand, to transmit this

legacy of memory to society as a whole, paying particular attention to the younger generations; and, on the other, to protect this memorialist heritage from deterioration due to the passing of time or vandalism; also from politically motivated attacks as occurred at the end of the first decade of this century with the actions of the extreme right-wing group *Falange y Tradición*.

The Foral Law of Navarre 33/2013 echoed the term “places of remembrance” in article 9, although without elaborating on its definition, contemplated the recognition of places such as the Sartaguda Memorial Park and the Fort Alfonso XII prison. This generic protection, however, did not provide sufficient legal framework or sufficient regulatory procedure and for this reason, the Navarre Institute of Memory promoted the development of a specific law to remedy these shortcomings.

In November 2017, the Technical Coordination Commission for Historical Memory approved a provisional census of places of remembrance that should be given special protection by the administration. In it, the Sartaguda Memorial Park was highlighted for its emblematic nature. It also included several mass graves and the Cemetery of the Bottles; numerous places of detention and executions, including the Fort of San Cristóbal; sites of forced labour; memorial spaces or commemorative plaques, including the “*tropezones*” [sidewalk remembrance plaques].

Finally, the Foral Law of Navarre 29/2018, of 26 December, on Places of Historical Memory of Navarre received the endorsement of the Navarrese legislature with 48 votes in favour and only two abstentions. From the outset, the text expressed the commitment of Navarrese society to the memory of the victims of Franco’s repression. It is based on the conviction that memory –their memory– must become an essential tool when it comes to making progress in the construction of a real, fair and peaceful coexistence, critical of all processes of human rights violations, in the past and in the present. A memory, based on empathy, that encourages the development of public policies that respond to the right to truth, justice and



2. Olabe mass grave. Navarre Institute of Memory.

reparation with a view to the future, emphasising the establishment of guarantees of non-repetition.

During the first six months of 2019, thirteen places were entered in the Register, taking as a starting point the provisional Census of Places of Remembrance that had been approved by the Technical Coordination Commission on Historical Memory. These first inscriptions reflected a significant part of the multidimensional nature of Franco's repression. The first inscription, the Sartaguda Memorial Park, a meeting place for victims, relatives and associations. It is made up of a series of large sculptural pieces designed by artists such as José Ramón Anda (Atariaren Besarkada), Joxe Ulibarrena (Los Acribillados de la Santa Cruzada) and Néstor Basterretxea (Como Hoz Atávica y Mortal). In addition, these sculptural elements contain various texts reflecting on that tragedy, by authors such as Bernardo Atxaga, Castillo Suárez, Jokín Muñoz and the late José María Jimeno Jurío and Pablo Antoñana. All of them frame the great wall where the names of the people murdered in Navarre are written.

This was followed by places of mass murders, such as Bera quarry or Valcaldera in the area of las Bardenas where one of the most deplorable massacres took place in August 1936, when fifty Republican prisoners from the provincial prison were taken out and executed by firing squad. There are also emblematic pits, in terms of their number, such as La Tejería of Monreal, where around one hundred Republicans were murdered in successive round-ups; or in terms of their characteristics, such as the pit cave of Otsoportillo, where dozens of Republicans were dumped, or that of Legarrea, where Juana Josefa Sagardía and her six children were tossed. Somewhat different is the escape from San Cristóbal prison, marked as it is by the GR 225 footpath that follows the escape route of 22 May 1938, from the Fort of San Cristóbal on Mount Ezkaba to Urepel, the French village where one of the escapees, Jovino Fernández, managed to get to, and the pit of Olabe, a village in one of whose gullies sixteen young escapees were murdered. Forced labour was another of the repressive aspects

contemplated by the Foral Law and, in this sense, the road between Igal and Vidángoz was declared a place of remembrance, where a barracks similar to the one occupied by hundreds of prisoners has been reconstructed. The sculpture placed on the Arga Riverside walk in Peralta is a remonstrance against the repression of women. It represents three women in an embrace, and in their skirts depicted by an endless number of stones are the testimonies written by the memorialist universe of Navarre. There were memorials in memory of the victims erected by town councils, such as those of Etxauri and Ibero; also by associations, such as in the Sierra de El Perdón, where the stones forming a kind of cromlech recall the origin of those murdered in the many graves on the mountain. Finally, approaching the end of the time frame of the Foral Law, the stele in memory of Germán Rodríguez and the sculpture Gogoan, in Pamplona, which commemorate the dramatic events of the San Fermin festivals of 1978.

Once they have been declared and entered in the Register, the Government of Navarre undertakes to protect, conserve and, above all, publicise them. The latter is undoubtedly one of the great challenges and aimed especially at young people. For some time now, the Sites of Historical Memory of Navarre have a graphic identity, two letters “m” facing each other like a mirror image, symbolising the memory

underground (Lur Azpian) which exemplifies the clandestine mass graves dotted around the territory and a memory that emerges from that darkness, represented by the work of the families and associations, keeping alive the presence of those murdered and their values. A graphic identity that marks each of the totems or lecterns that have been erected in the Places of Remembrance, as well as the signs that mark the roads of Navarre and lead us to these places.

Once the mechanism for declaring a Place of Historical Memory in Navarre had been set in motion, it was necessary to reach a consensus with the associations of historical memory on the scope of the official Register. It seemed obvious that wherever Francoist repression took place, of one kind or another, with greater or lesser intensity, it was necessary to mark the terrain. However, we were aware that not all places could be included in the official Register. So, with the agreement of the associations, a website was designed, www.espaciosdememoria.com, where all the spaces, places, corners or spots where repression occurred are listed. In addition to a wide range of repressive typology, this website remembrance space expresses a series of thematic or geographical routes throughout Navarre. A first route, by way of example, crosses the Navarrese Pyrenees from west



3. Sartaguda Memory Park. Navarre Institute of Memory.



to east. A series of routes where Border and Memory meet. Along these routes we can draw upon the traumatic experiences of the forced labour prisoners who built roads and bunkers; and the dramatic experiences of those who had to cross the mountains to save their lives, echoing their forced exiles.

Spaces of Remembrance has an integrating component, where families and memorialist associations feel acknowledged. It becomes a mantle that encompasses the whole of Navarre, from which, on occasions, places of a more emblematic nature emerge, where different peoples, families or associations feel impugned; also society itself, obliged to incorporate them into the sphere of reflection and the transmission of democratic values, based on a critical view of the processes of human rights violations.

It is not easy to reconvert a space of horror into a place for coexistence, but this does not prevent us from continuing to strive to achieve it. The Navarre Institute of Memory, in collaboration with local bodies, memorialist associations and schools, has been promoting a programme for the transmission of memory which is making it possible, on the one hand, to learn about those events and, on the other, to generate consensus around the need to foster a culture of peace and democratic understanding, as well as criticism of human rights violations, both past and present.

In this direction, the programme *Schools with Memory* has made it possible to develop a series of activities focused on recovering the memory of what happened in Navarre from 1936 onwards in order to become an educational device. The programme draws inspiration, on the one hand, from the most innovative tradition of the social sciences education, which aims to problematise the curriculum and tackle relevant social problems in the classroom and, on the other, from the experiences that have been developed in schools in Navarre for some time. With one and the other, interspersed with government action, a space has been designed for encounter and dialogue on public memory policies that converge with educational proposals. A collaborative space where leafy shoots have sprouted that will form an ecosystem of their own in which critical memory is the air that is breathed. Shoots such as the intergenerational meetings in the Sartaguda Memory Park or walking the GR225 trails with our Freedom Bottles.

In short, they are spaces that warn us of the expansion of intolerant ideologies which, unfortunately, have once again re-emerged and which endanger the convictions and attitudes that were thought to be well established in democratic societies. Places of remembrance that engage in dialogue with others, dotted around the world in an attempt to consolidate a cordon to halt fascism.

Other EUROM Publications:

Sarajevo, amor meu. Jovan Divjak. Entrevistes (amb Florence La Bruère) [Bellaterra Edicions, 2022]

Diez años de leyes y políticas públicas de memoria. Jordi Guixé, Jesús Alonso Carballés, Ricard Conesa (Editors) [Catarata, 2019]

Past and power. Public Policies of memory. Jordi Guixé (Editor). [Edicions UB, 2016]

Commemorative books

Ventotene 80. 89th Anniversary of the Ventotene Manifesto. [EUROM, 2021]

Schuman 70. 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. [EUROM, 2020]

The Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: History and Cultural Memory. Vjieran Pavlakovic and Oriol López Badell (Editors) [2020]

Along the wall strip. Berlin, 30 years under transformation. [El Globus Vermell, 2018]



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Route to exile 2022. The Rivesaltes Camp Memorial. Drone image by Ángel Álvarez de Lara, Be Wild be Proud. Further information: rutaalexilio.es



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