

Griselda Zuffi. "*El arte de no olvidar. Literatura testimonial en Chile, Argentina y Uruguay entre los 80 y los 90*". *Hispanamérica* 36:108, 2007: 127.

Translation of the review:

In this book of Nora Strejilevich there is a deep analysis of the period and of the genre and, at the same time, a testimony of the author that gives personal meaning to the research. "The art of not forgetting" attempts to comprehend what the post Auschwitz thought defined as the impossibility of narrating. There is no way to tell atrocity, states this philosophy. "No literary genre was enough for me, none of the learnt philosophies helped me thinking," points out the author in the final chapter (115). There is a search for meaning in the face of this impossibility which, in this case, is shaped as a recovery of testimonial narrative.

This book of Nora Strejilevich is, then, a challenge to the dictum that limits the possibility of naming horror.

In order for us to understand the meaning of the camp, the place of extermination, we will have to allow first to what emanates from the voice of the survivor –intertwined with the density of thought that we've inherited from other past experiences of horror: the "Preliminary note" and "My own voice rebels" are the para-texts which provide meaning to the corpus, and allow a dialogue with current and past thought --both witnesses and thinkers. Primo Levi, Giorgio Agamben and Hanna Arendt nourish the truth of the witness, enlighten her/his survival, do not substitute the experience, lived and transmitted by the survivor.

The object of study is testimonial literature in the Southern Cone between the 80s and the 90s, but the object is in this case, --as always has been and even more so today-- also the subject.

In order to understand the events of horror that affected subjectivity under the Southern Cone dictatorships, Strejilevich uses her philosophical knowledge and her own experience as a survivor and sister of a "disappeared." The study assumes, with this turn, the shape of a testimony, interweaving the memory of terror and the personal and collective demand for justice (7).

This text could not have started better: the crux of this study is *testimonio* –to start with the book situates the reader in the experience of her abduction and disappearance in the Athletic Club where her brother was also taken. Her mapping of testimonial literature becomes clear. The voice of the survivor and witness overflows philosophical and academic knowledge, the other substance of the selected corpus.

The texts cover a crucial period in the story of the continuous struggle of human right movements and of survivors in order to find out what really happened and to obtain justice. Each chapter is intrinsically connected, starting with a theoretical framework that engages in testimonial writing, the core subject. The analysis is framed, in each chapter, with a historical context (the coup and the pos-dictatorship in each country), and a

literary corpus, mapping testimonial production in the Southern Cone which proves that horror *can* be narrated.

*El arte de no olvidar* (The art of not forgetting) is an essential reference for studies on testimony in Latin America, which pivot on the possibility or not of narrating atrocity. The author presents the corpus of a literature where the intimate dimensions of experience become accessible through writing and subjective memory becomes the means to recovery for those affected by repression and the society at large. The search of what we *were* and what we *are blends into a form: testimonial narrative*.