

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

# The Politics of Memory: What Future for Transitional Justice?

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Sexual Violence during War and Peace: Gender, Power, and Post-conflict Justice in Peru.** By Jelke Boesten. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. ix + 231. \$100.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781137383440.

**Feminist and Human Rights Struggles in Peru: Decolonizing Transnational Justice.** By Pascha Bueno-Hansen. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 222. \$28.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780252081002.

**Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights.** Edited by Francisco Ferrándiz and Antonius C. G. M. Robben. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. Pp. vii + 257. \$59.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812247206.

**Reflections on Memory and Democracy.** Edited by Merilee S. Grindle and Erin E. Goodman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 260. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780674088290.

**Mining Memory: Reimagining Self and Nation through Narratives of Childhood in Peru.** By Mary Beth Tierney-Tello. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2017. Pp. 302. \$90.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781611487732.

**Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala.** By Kirsten Weld. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2014. Pp. xvi + 335. \$28.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822356028.

## Introduction

Much has been written about the aftermath of civil wars. The truth, justice, and reconciliation literature has been particularly robust in the last two decades as high-profile cases have generated numerous books on how societies rebuild,<sup>1</sup> who takes responsibility for the violence,<sup>2</sup> and how postconflict reconstruction meshes with democratization agendas.<sup>3</sup> In the 1990s, as civil wars in many countries were concluding with peace accords, people looked to transitional justice as a way to address impunity, heal from past violations,

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, ed., *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001); Rosalind Shaw, Lars Waldorf, and Pierre Hazan, *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities After Mass Violence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Susanne Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-genocide Rwanda," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 76, no. 2 (2006): 131–150; Rebekka Friedman, *Competing Memories: Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone and Peru* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Popkin, *Peace without Justice: Obstacles to Building the Rule of Law in El Salvador* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Omar Guillermo Encarnación, *Democracy without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Mneesha Gellman, *Democratization and Memories of Violence: Ethnic Minority Rights Movements in Mexico, Turkey, and El Salvador* (London: Routledge, 2017); Roberta Villalón, ed., *Memory, Truth, and Justice in Contemporary Latin America* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).

and create democratic societies governed by the rule of law moving forward.<sup>4</sup> But it seems we were hoping for too much from transitional justice, which has struggled to live up to unrealistic expectations. In reality, transitional justice is contingent on local “buy-in,” elite political will, and the rectification of the underlying drivers of conflict, which most commonly boils down to unequal access to insufficient resources. Without these elements, transitional justice processes may bring solace to a handful of survivors in specific cases, but such processes cannot solve the underlying drivers of conflict just because peace accords have been signed or the truth has been unearthed. Given these limitations, memory studies has grown as a new kind of postconflict scholarship that allows for more measured expectations as to how contested memories will be addressed at the state level and what we can expect from these efforts.

In this essay, I generally use the term “postconflict” to describe the status of countries like Peru and Guatemala that have formally resolved internal conflicts or civil wars through peace accords; this is in line both with convention and with many of the authors under review. But this usage is admittedly problematic for describing the post–civil war or internal conflict period, which frequently does not resemble peace in either positive (protection of rights) or negative (absence of violence) form. Yet terms like “postviolence” or “postwar” similarly do not capture the fact that violence against civilians often continues, or sometimes even increases, after armed clashes between militaries and insurgents have been prohibited through peace accords. As the transitional justice literature continues to grow and change, terms to describe the post–peace accord epoch need continual revision to most accurately distinguish the characteristics of the violent past from the violent present.

So how do postconflict cases illustrate the relationships between memory, democracy, and justice? Each of the six books considered here makes broader contributions to the memory and democratization literatures as well as to their disciplinary and case-specific arenas. The group of books, taken together, constitutes a tour de force in how memory, politics, and culture interact. Taken separately, most offer nuanced insight into how human rights can be addressed in the aftermath of major violence. Transitional justice may not have delivered in the optimistic ways once envisioned, but memory persists. The four subsections below represent both thematic and geographical grouping of the books to most clearly address their contributions.

## Memory and Democracy in Transition

*Reflections on Memory and Democracy*, edited by Merilee S. Grindle and Erin E. Goodman, presents papers from a 2013 conference hosted by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) at Harvard University. The keynote speaker of the conference, Elizabeth Jelin, matriarch of Latin American memory studies, posed the question, “What type of memory for what type of democracy?” (Grindle and Goodman, 257). Though Jelin’s speech is not included in the book, each of the contributions in the volume respond in some way to this fundamental question that guides many postconflict democratization studies: Which memories, and for what purpose? The responses to Jelin’s question are wide ranging. Sergio Bitar, a former high-level government official in Chile who spent many years in exile, resolves that while coexistence with past human rights violators is possible, reconciliation is not (Grindle and Goodman, 23). This points toward an arrangement of liberal toleration, a viable premise in Chile’s consolidated democracy in which a baseline of rights has been welded onto the post-Pinochet social contract.

In contrast, Michèle Montas, renowned Haitian journalist and former United Nations spokesperson, cites the utter lack of democracy in Haiti as a central issue in human rights protection, and views the labor ahead as transforming memory into functional institutions (Grindle and Goodman, 66–67). Iterations of Jelin’s question—which memories and for what purpose—appear throughout the volume. Salomón Lerner Febres, the former president of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reminds readers that “a false version of historical truth may be used to betray the lived experience of various communities, a way for the victors to prolong their violence through official narratives presented as truth” (Grindle and Goodman, 83). In this way, the subjectivity of memory can be seen as a liability for democracy. Without accurate representation of forensic truth in the national consciousness, she argues, there is little hope for a robust social contract that will ensure the benefits of democracy for all citizens.

In countries such as Guatemala, the truth of targeted persecution of indigenous citizens goes hand in hand with the struggle for special protections in the postwar period, points out Ava Berinstein in her contribution to the volume (Grindle and Goodman, 137–139). June Erlick documents the struggle for truth in Guatemala through the case of Irma Flaquer, a disappeared journalist, and shows how impunity curbs

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Popkin and Naomi Roht-Arriaza, “Truth as Justice: Investigatory Commissions in Latin America,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1995): 79–116.

freedom of expression and ultimately thwarts democratic aspirations (Grindle and Goodman, 51). In their own ways and with illustrations from a range of cases, each of the authors in this edited volume acknowledge the inherently political nature of memory and its implications for democracy. Within multiple disciplines, academics are firmly inserting the necessity of theorizing memory not just as a thing on which history is founded but rather as a political battleground to be navigated in the process of reweaving social connections and institutional politics after periods of violence.

### Archives as Memory Battleground in Guatemala

Guatemala's thirty-six-year civil war (1960–1996) left more than two hundred thousand people killed and more than five hundred thousand displaced. Kirsten Weld paints a picture of forsaken government papers holding clues to civil war violence in her book, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*. The book is a gripping account of the political context and the social and physical restoration of the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN, Historical Archive of the National Police) in the 2000s, and illustrates in depth the relationship between memory and democracy explored in the Grindle and Goodman volume. In a little more than a decade, the AHPN has become a prime site for truth and justice seekers as well as a new political battleground in the memory wars of Latin America. With more than eighty million pages of documents being processed after its somewhat miraculous and accidental discovery (2), surely there must be some answers in the AHPN. But can a space that is being restored as an archive, a repository of material truths to be preserved as part of Guatemala's historical patrimony, also satisfy the demands of human rights activists and aggrieved family members looking for evidence to bring their loved ones' killers to justice? Weld describes the paths being charted through these numerous roles for the archive, and the many pitfalls encountered along the way.

Weld discusses the tension between two vernacular definitions of history: history as physical truth that is written about, and history as a collection of numerous narratives (6). Not only what historians write *about* is controversial, but what they actually *write* is, too (6). For example, was there a genocide in Guatemala, or is it just a narrative of genocide that has been produced (6)? How do historical narratives interact with documentary evidence? Weld also reminds us of the dual meaning of the term "archives," which is not just the objects or documents themselves but also the highly politicized state institutions that hold them (13).

The book's central axis is around what archives can tell us about a state's so-called peace process (14). Rather than simply more access to documents equaling more truth, the way states and society engage archives—in Weld's words, "the way it puts history to work"—makes the archive significant for understanding social contract negotiations in postwar democratization processes (14). Indeed, Weld characterizes the archive as another incarnation of a war tactic, with index cards and filing cabinets as weapons, not just guns and international aid (15). She also describes "historical myopia as a technique of governance" and argues that current Guatemalan political leaders, including accused war criminals, rely on narratives about the necessity of moving from the past, as well as a "great men" approach to the public education history curriculum, to obscure the necessity of access to the material truth of the civil war (51–52). In addition, arguments about the necessity of keeping state secrets to ensure state security are sometimes deployed to further deflect demands for information access.

There are numerous reasons why the AHPN, and the police themselves, have largely been overlooked in the wider memory and politics literatures. Weld identifies four: the absence of archived records of police actions until 2005; an emphasis on military, rather than police violence in scholarship on Guatemala's violent past; the focus on rural Mayan victims of war rather than urban victims in Guatemala City, where police violence was concentrated; and the fact that urban violence did not fit the same pattern of the rest of the Guatemalan civil war (11–12). For all these reasons, AHPN's "paper cadavers" sat uninvestigated for many years. Weld joined the team of project workers trying to salvage documents at AHPN in 2006 and performed much inglorious grunt work as she gained trust there. Because of this, like all good ethnographers, she has insight into challenges for the project across a range of issues, both tangible and theoretical. From threats posed by overflowing bathrooms to the long-term management of data access, Weld's ethnographic presence in the archives is vital to her documentation of the *process* of archival restoration (23). This different focus, on the process rather than archival objects themselves, sets this work apart from other books by historians, and also makes it more widely useful to a range of disciplines. Scholars across the social sciences working on postviolence governmentality can engage Weld's arguments on the role of history, proof, and accountability. In this way, Weld's arguments about Guatemala are highly generalizable. Control over archives is control over official agendas. Control over agendas translates into political power.

One of the disturbing theories concerning political power put forth in *Paper Cadavers* is the claim that procedural democracy, meaning free elections and the institutions that support them, was embraced in Guatemala not as part of a well-meaning democratizing turn, but as a calculated counterinsurgency strategy (149). In this light, the rhetoric of democratization is used by Guatemalan officials as a smoke screen for continuing authoritarian rule, including the practice of arbitrary execution, but is whitewashed for outside consumption, especially by funders, through tokenistic *depuración/reciclaje* of police reform and reform of other institutions responsible for human rights violations (148–149). This is hardly unique to Guatemala, but places Weld's book in the literature of antidemocratic democratization in numerous Global South countries.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years there has been attention in Global North social science research for researchers to be self-reflective<sup>6</sup> and aware of their potential impact beyond academia. This “decolonizing methodology” turn<sup>7</sup> continues to gain momentum and is felt by many, myself included, to be a welcome relief.<sup>8</sup> Honesty about challenges in the work as well as explicit discussion of power dynamics at play are much more insightful than high claims of scientific neutrality. Weld demonstrates these attributes in meaningful ways by writing about her own experience in becoming involved in the archive restoration. She also discusses the impact of the archives on both young and older Guatemalans working there, and goes deeper into the personal stories of numerous youth to illustrate the social and political dynamics at play. Weld notes the perils of social impact scholarship as she documents how different stakeholders navigate both access to and interpretation of the “paper cadavers.” By bringing the AHPN into public light, the restoration project itself stands to challenge military and state-promoted versions of the violent past.

## Necropolitics and the Rights of the Living

Edited by Francisco Ferrándiz and Antonius Robben, *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights* brings together mainly anthropologists to talk about the role of exhumations in an array of case studies, including Argentina, Chile, Peru, Greece, Korea, and the Balkans. Similar to Weld's book above, this volume forces engagement with the tangible remains of human rights violations in order to envision justice or democratization. Several interesting case pairings bring comparative leverage to the volume. The political and cultural implications of displaying human remains in Cambodia and Rwanda constitutes one such chapter, while in another chapter renowned Argentine forensics expert Luis Fondebrider addresses the intersection of forensic anthropology and political violence in Latin America and the Balkans. This volume engages the politics of the dead body and in this way connects with and furthers the postviolence memory politics literature exemplified by scholars such as Elizabeth Jelin, Katherine Hite, and Omar Encarnación.<sup>9</sup>

The volume's primary contribution is in explaining, through local and detailed case studies, how “necropower,” or the exceptional power over life and death, interacts with territoriality, or state control over a given space (in Ferrándiz and Robben, 55). In this way, the volume situates exhumations as a material manifestation of nationalist politics. States and civil society vie for control over narratives of the violent past, and bodies are the currency that determines truth from fiction. Argentina's “dirty war” (1976–1983) left between seven thousand and thirty thousand dead, with this range of casualties alone showing considerable narrative contestation. Chile's “dirty war” (1973–1990) resulted in more than thirty thousand people being detained, tortured, or killed, along with two hundred thousand seeking safety in exile abroad. Robben, in his own chapter on Argentina and Chile, argues that mass grave exhumation is a means to reclaim territory from military and dictator control, ultimately unseating necropower through the accountability of perpetrators

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Dennis C. Canterbury, *Neoliberal Democratization and New Authoritarianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Elena Martínez Barahona and Sebastian Linares Lejarraga, “Democracy and ‘Punitive Populism’: Exploring the Supreme Court's Role in El Salvador,” *Democratization* 18, no. 1 (2011): 52–74; Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding in Central America: Reproducing the Sources of Conflict?,” *International Peacekeeping* 9, no. 4 (2002): 39–68; Jo Tuckman, *Mexico: Democracy Interrupted* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Cramer, “Transparent Explanations, Yes. Public Transcripts and Fieldnotes, No: Ethnographic Research on Public Opinion,” *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association, Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-method Research* 13, no. 1 (2015): 17–20; Timothy Pachirat, “The Tyranny of Light,” *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association, Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-method Research* 13, no. 1 (2015): 27–31.

<sup>7</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Gellman, *Democratization and Memories of Violence*, 196–198.

<sup>9</sup> Omar Guillermo Encarnación, “Justice in Times of Transition: Lessons from the Iberian Experience,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2011): 1–14; Katherine Hite, *When the Romance Ended: Leaders of the Chilean Left, 1968–1998* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

(Ferrándiz and Robben, 56). The process of reburying with dignity thus undermines military “victory, territorial control, and the incapacitation of political agency” (Ferrándiz and Robben, 62). In other words, exhumations challenge the state-as-victor-writing-history paradigm, as the reburial with dignity process enables communities and families to regain agency not just in deciding what to do with their deceased loved ones but by calling attention to their legitimacy as political and social actors.

The notion of dignity is central in this volume. Surviving family members yearn for it. States and their associated militaries and paramilitary forces have done their most to deny it both to victims and to surviving relatives. Exhumations serve as sites for redignification, giving dignity back to the body. Because reinscribing dignity in this way fundamentally challenges past decisions by state actors, it is politically contested terrain, both literally, in the cases of grave sites, and figuratively, regarding what the body and the reburial process represent to all involved.

An overall contribution this volume makes is to scale up the role of memory in politics. This transpires by documenting how individual mourning rituals operate as elements of political transformation first locally, but then more broadly as states navigate the aftermath of mass atrocity. Exhumations, and the legal, spiritual, social, political frameworks they entail, are a means to wrestle with not just the violent past, as represented by physical bodies, but the future social contract. How will divisions between state actors and their opposition be managed moving ahead? With mass human rights violations, or through democratic deliberations? This volume doesn't tackle these questions, but defines corporal terrain to be considered in the asking.

### **Sexual Violence, Human Rights, and National Identity in Peru**

Two of the books in this review focus on corporal terrain, specifically on sexual violence, as a human rights violation with major implications for postconflict justice in Peru. The civil war in Peru took place from 1980 to 2000 and resulted in the deaths of more than seventy thousand people, as well as the forced displacement of nearly half a million Peruvians. In her book, *Sexual Violence during War and Peace: Gender, Power and Post-conflict Justice in Peru*, Jelle Boesten chronicles many cases of sexual violence both during Peru's civil war and also after it, rooting the cases in the quest for justice in the face of an institutional and cultural commitment to impunity. She defines sexual violence as one type of gender-based violence, which more broadly refers to any violence towards any subgroup, including men, women, and children, because of gendered behaviors or gender identity (147).

Boesten's is a painful but necessary book. It is painful in that the vignettes she shares cut to the core and remind those of us who theorize about, but do not live violence in its overt forms, how truly devastating violence is. The book is necessary in its central contribution, that sexual violence, rather than operating solely on a rape-is-a-weapon-of-war premise, in fact reflects the normal structures of race, gender, and class hierarchies in a society and therefore cannot be excused as an aberration of violent conflict.

Instead, Boesten confronts us with the theory that sexual violence in war is an exaggerated demonstration of sexual violence during peacetime (151). This argument moves us away from dealing with rape as a political tool uniquely deployed in specific, historically bound moments, and toward the systematic analysis that rape is culturally sanctioned within certain guidelines. Therefore, addressing sexual violence in postconflict reconstruction actually necessitates addressing sexual violence as a culturally embedded phenomenon all the time. In this way, her claim that sexual violence during the conflict reflects, produces, and normalizes inequalities across gender, race, and economic lines (154) calls for a deep structural analysis that the rape-as-weapon-of-war thesis does not necessarily require.

There are clearly similarities between sexual violence during war and peace, including rape as an act of male domination of women, domination of indigenous women by mestizo men, and domination of the peasant class by the working and middle to upper classes (Boesten, 43–63). However, Boesten identifies two ways in which wartime sexual violence is different from that occurring in peacetime: prevalence and impunity (122). While Peru ranks high on world lists for documented cases of sexual violence without war as an aggravating factor, the prevalence of sexual violence during war is extremely high (122). Similarly, impunity for sexual violence, while already a part of Peru's legal and social fabric during peacetime, rises to astronomical levels for such violations that took place during wartime (122–123).

One of Boesten's case studies in the book used to illustrate the sexual violence as a problem of both war and peacetime is the way that Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (PTRC) dealt with gender-based violence. In Boesten's words, while the PTRC did make “a concerted effort to include a gender perspective in its investigations and report, this was not followed by accountability of perpetrators or adequate reparations” (153). She identifies the ongoing strength of the military in politics as a central reason why accountability

has not been achieved, but also “persistent peacetime ideas about gender, racialized sexuality, and violence,” including within the commission itself, towards the generally poor, rural, Quechua-speaking women who were giving testimony (151).

The prejudice and paternalism that came through from some commissioners toward the women giving testimony embodies the larger societal structures in which sexual violence is being addressed. Without “institutional receptivity,” a term Boesten borrows from legal scholar Sally Engle Merry, it is hard for victim-survivors even to see themselves as “rights-bearing individuals” (143). But without that deep cultural and institutional shift, it is unlikely that norms of sexual violence will decrease or be any better dealt with by state entities moving forward. This should make us gravely concerned about the potential to address ongoing sexual violence in postconflict Peru.

Pascha Bueno-Hansen’s book, *Feminist and Human Rights Struggles in Peru: Decolonizing Transnational Justice*, draws on the scholarly foundation laid by Boesten and works to further integrate feminist analysis into Peru’s transitional justice process. In essence, this book provides an intersectional analysis of how feminism and human rights perspectives have struggled to legitimize their agendas within the postconflict transition. Like many democratization scholars,<sup>10</sup> Bueno-Hansen sees Peru’s postconflict status as making it ripe for social contract renegotiation (18). In this transitional moment, her claim is that Peru is open to a feminist intervention in its standard social hierarchies, making it more possible that social patterns can be remade more justly as Peru works to consolidate postconflict stability (18, 155).

Three theoretical threads are woven together to form the core of this book. The first is the role of intersectional analysis as a key tool for understanding the conflict and potential space for collaboration between feminist and human rights agendas. The second and third threads are linked to factors that undercut the ability of international human rights regimes to address sexual violence in Peru: “the binary of consent/coercion and conceptual myopia around sexual violence” (Bueno-Hansen, 110). The second thread, the consent/coercion binary, refers to the presumed mutual exclusivity of each mode—in other words, consensual sex is presumed if evidence of fighting off the perpetrator is not clear. As Bueno-Hansen puts it, “consent requires the possibility and relevance of individual free will, which comes under question in the context of rural Andean-highland, Quechua-speaking communities with long-term military occupation” (110). The third theoretical thread in the text, “conceptual myopia,” refers to the reduction of women to sexual violence violations (111). Bueno-Hansen argues that, though it is the norm for human rights regimes to reduce people to the violation they have experienced, conceptual myopia “denies recognition of the way victims of this violation understand and express themselves” (111).

Several insightful examples are employed to illustrate Bueno-Hansen’s key thematic points. She examines the way the PTRC made meager attempts at gender mainstreaming that were generally undercut by the reality of gendered issues being treated as an afterthought (127–128), a theme that similarly was emphasized in Boesten’s work. One particularly interesting thread of the book addresses the role of language, and how language choice and access reflect power hierarchies, including within the PTRC. Bueno-Hansen describes the unidirectional use of translation in the PTRC, meaning that translators were on hand to make sure that Quechua-speaking witnesses could be understood by the Spanish-speaking commissioners, but there was little to no effort made to make the proceedings available in Quechua for comprehension in the other direction (88). The lack of effort put into hiring competent translators, and the impatience with the time necessary to translate detailed descriptions of violence from Quechua to Spanish, point to continual colonial linguistic dynamics (87–88) furthering unjust postconflict dynamics. This linguistic colonialism is described in the context of “El Patrón,” the abusive landowner of feudal times who committed sexual violence against his servants, now reinvented as a new kind of perpetrator in the armed conflict, but expressing a kind of continuum of sexual violence against rural Quechua-speaking women (115). In this way, readers should be clear that the issues Bueno-Hansen describes are deeply structured and generationally continuous, and will require major labor to undo.

A project centered in the highlands by a Lima-based feminist group serves as a second case study and brings to light many of the problems with implementing transitional justice projects in the midst of pervasive social inequality. The Manta project carried out by the Study and Defense of Women’s Rights (DEMUS) intended to promote *convivencia* and ultimately legal and cultural transformation, but again,

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?,” *Annual Review Political Science* 2 (1999): 115–144; Gellman, *Democratization and Memories of Violence*, 11; Desmond King, Robert C. Lieberman, Gretchen Ritter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

language obstacles proved formidable. Many of DEMUS's Lima-based activists did not speak Quechua, and organizational priorities of meeting and working with women in the community was therefore not possible. Rather than changing personnel, DEMUS reformed its strategy to work with bilingual high-schoolers in Manta. However, the programmatic revision did not solve the underlying issue that intercultural optics were lacking on the part of DEMUS staff, even as they tried to serve the community by creating therapeutic and legal resources for women (134–148).

Bueno-Hansen tries to end the chapter describing this problematic intervention on a positive note, although at times her optimism about DEMUS's work seems too robust given the severe linguistic and cultural flaws in the program design. She nonetheless offers important insight on facilitating the reflectivity of others in a report back to DEMUS (148). Her ability to critique as an ally, even as she clearly is invested in the work of the organization, is delicate. In the book's conclusion, she addresses this situation, and there, as well as in the introduction, Bueno-Hansen is able to articulate her personal positioning in the field. She describes the way her Peruvian-American female identity informs her study, and explicitly theorizes the impact this positioning has, through Walter Mignolo's notion of "epistemic disobedience" (17), or calling the bluff of objective truth and reinserting the biography of the researcher into the frame of what is being researched.

The final book in this review is Mary Beth Tierney-Tello's *Mining Memory: Reimagining Self and Nation through Narratives of Childhood in Peru*. It is set apart from the other books discussed here as a literary studies work focused on the way memory and national gazes are captured in literature and film. While the other five books are written by social scientists explicitly engaged in theorizing about the relationship between memory, human rights, and justice, Tierney-Tello's work looks at how "the other" is constructed in the first place. By analyzing the works of generally white, upper class *limeño* authors, or authors of other backgrounds who write main characters fitting that description who are interacting with indigenous or nonwhite people, frequently servants, *Mining Memory* presents vignettes of the racism and inequality that have formed the national psyche in Peru. Through engagement with the work of other Peru scholars such as historian Jorge Coronado, Tierney-Tello also matches her literary criticism with contextual explanations to provide analysis on how, for example, *indigenismo* served as "a method of refashioning the national project" (42).

Similarly, with her analysis of gender in selected writings, Tierney-Tello shows how girls and young women serve as a "cultural ballast" that perhaps indicates future struggles to come (69). The characters of girls in the novels selected for analysis show the limitations of female agency as well as the stereotypes that confine them, and these parameters are parallel to experiences of other actors in Peru more broadly. In this way, Tierney-Tello scales up from the intimate world of novels to comment on how Peruvian identity, and specifically the adolescent sense of self and nation, is created. Together with Boesten's and Bueno-Hansen's books, Tierney-Tello's work represents a contribution to the documentation of Peruvian memory processes.

While the human rights implications of *Mining Memory* are subtler than those outlined in the previous five books discussed, the link between them is the search for how memory informs contemporary reality. The social science books above overtly frame the role of memory in relation to justice for human rights victims and survivors. Tierney-Tello saves her aspirational politics until the last paragraph of the book, where she links aesthetic analysis to Peru's future politics. Referring to two young female characters from contemporary films she has critiqued—one focused on class and race relations in Lima, and the other on the gendered effects of Peru's internal conflict—Tierney-Tello defines the girls as "representative of the nation and a new mode of cultural citizenship" (236). Rather than strict binary divisions across race, class, and gender articulated in older literature, the films considered in the concluding chapter point the way toward shifting national identities. The characters are described as "new political agents" who "can point the direction toward a more inclusive cultural imaginary" (236). In this way, *Mining Memory* contributes to the discussion on how memory, politics, and human rights are intertwined.

## Conclusion

As Peter Winn so poetically writes, "the politics of memory reflects the memory of politics" (in Grindle and Goodman, 208). A common theme of the six books considered here is the manner in which history, in this case referring to material or forensic truth, essentially operates as another tool of state governance, to be molded and modified to suit state agendas. In this way, transitional justice mechanisms fail to include state domination over memory, where institutional agendas are put to work serving national myths rather than reflecting popular memory or even basic facts. From national cemeteries consecrating performances

of death that serve nationalist projects, to state control of public history education regarding the teaching of the violent past, the ability to form narratives about the past represents a concrete method of social formation and control.

To be clear, transitional justice has not failed because of any fault with individual or community memory. Rather, memories are failing, fading, or being relegated to obscurity because, as the cliché goes, victors still write history. Societal transformation requires something broader than the scope of what transitional justice projects can offer, not least because the aspirational end point in transitions, namely a generic electoral democracy, is baggage-laden. The six books, taken together, document means of community resilience in the face of this reality. From communities working to reclaim history through exhumations and reburial rituals, to the pursuit of retributive justice through courts and archives, to the therapeutic storytelling of testimony, actors navigate the matrix of memory and politics as they go on living in the face of immense sorrow and a redefining the political world. The quest to remember is fundamentally about redignification, and human rights rest on a foundation of human dignity. Memory, especially its recognition and validation, has the potential to grant survivors this basic right and, with it, hope for the more robust palette of rights that come with transformational justice.

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