

What We Remember. The construction of memory in military discourse by **Mariana Achugar**. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008, 247 pp. Hardcover.

Astonished by the way the experiences of her father and likewise victims of the last Uruguayan dictatorship (1973-1985) have been to a large extent silenced in public debates over the last 30 years, Mariana Achugar decided to start a PhD program at Southern Cone. Instead of being a sole struggle against forgetfulness, the book which grew out of her doctoral dissertation offers a detailed analysis of the military discourse in Uruguay in order to point to more general mechanisms of collective memory construction and its interplay with politics. As such, this interdisciplinary work is of relevance for a wide public of historians, sociologists, linguists and scholars working on transnational justice.

Although discussions on how the last dictatorship should be remembered are nowadays very vivid in Uruguay, they only took a real start when Leftist parties won the 2004 elections. Their victory formed the end of a period of re-democratization lasting almost 20 years, in which the omnipresent military of the dictatorship from before continued to hold considerable political power enabling it to construct and enforce a dominant collective memory through discursive practices. Only since 2006, the Uruguay judicial system provides means to investigate military involvement, which enhances the military's activities to be placed under scrutiny.

Achugar meticulously examined the current double discourse of the military, which on the one hand wants to keep the past remembered in the present, since its members still see themselves as the ones who defended their fatherland and represented the people's will, but on the other hand feels uncomfortable now that more details about its past are revealed and as a result, also strives for forgetting. Moreover, she searched for the origins of the installation of that dualism through an in-depth analysis of linguistic patterns and combines that with an examination of their transmission through politicized institutions. As such, she puts forward ethical questions on the power of discourse to violate international laws supporting human rights.

For that purpose, the author started with a theoretic chapter on the construction of collective memory and a methodological chapter on the duality of language, seen as both a social and discursive practice. What follows, are three chapters chronologically analyzing the construction of memory in military discourse by means of texts of different genres. Later, Achugar shifted her point of analysis to what she calls the Others, the families of the disappeared and Left wing social partners. In two chapters, she goes into the struggle for memory as it takes place in the public sphere. Her conclusion zooms out and formulates interesting thoughts on the struggle on the remembering of a traumatic past.

Dr. Machteld Venken