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Thémata. Revista de Filosofía nace en el año 1983 con la intención de proporcionar a quienes investigan y producen en filosofía un cauce para publicar sus trabajos y fomentar un diálogo abierto sin condicionamientos ideológicos. En sus inicios participaron en el proyecto las Universidades de Murcia, Málaga y Sevilla, pero pronto quedaron como gestores de la revista un grupo de docentes de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Sevilla.

Una preocupación constante de sus realizadores ha sido fomentar los planteamientos interdisciplinares. La revista ha estado abierta siempre a colaboradores de todas las latitudes y ha cubierto toda la gama del espectro filosófico, de lo que constituye una buena prueba la extensa nómina de autores que han publicado en sus páginas. En sus páginas pueden encontrarse trabajos de todas las disciplinas filosóficas: Historia de la Filosofía, Metafísica, Gnoseología, Epistemología, Lógica, Ética, Estética, Filosofía Política, Filosofía del Lenguaje, Filosofía de la Mente, Filosofía de la Ciencia, Filosofía de la Historia, Filosofía de la Cultura, etc. También ha querido ser muy flexible a la hora de acoger nuevos proyectos, fomentar discusiones sobre temas controvertidos y abrirse a nuevos valores filosóficos. Por esta razón, los investigadores jóvenes siempre han encontrado bien abiertas las puertas de la revista.

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Monográfico. 'Los restos documentales del perpetrador: imágenes y textos'.

Irene Cárcel Ejarque, Juanjo Monsell Corts (Coords.)



The Documentary Remains of the Perpetrator: Images and Texts.¹

PRESENTATION_
MONOGRAPHIC
'THE DOCUMENTARY
REMAINS OF THE
PERPETRATOR:
IMAGES AND TEXTS'

Los restos documentales del
perpetrador: imágenes y textos.

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1 • Documentary Remains as Mnemonic Elements

A tendency to approach the past from the interpretative framework of memory at the expense of the classical historiographical approach emerged during the last decade of the 20th century in Western societies. This phenomenon was called memory boom and its *raison d'être* was related, on the one hand, to the belated acceptance of the survival of traumatic memories in all the subjects involved in regimes or episodes of perpetration of mass violence⁴ (Winter 384) – in this sense, the Shoah and its cultural repercussions

1 This text has been conceived and written in the framework of the following research projects: “Contemporary Representations of Perpetrators of Mass Violence: Concepts, Narratives and Images” (HAR2017-83519-P) and “From Spaces of Perpetration to Sites of Memory. Forms of Representation” (PROMETEU/2020/059).

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4 In addition to traumatic memories at the individual level, there is the persistence of institutional and social dynamics inherited from these systems and events within nations with a past marked by perpetration (Winter 384).

have been considered paradigmatic (Hirsch and Spitzer 151)⁵ – and, on the other hand, to the ontological insecurity derived from the conclusion of the century and the millennium (Landsberg 19). That is, the turn to memory was seen as the response to the confrontation with a series of historical conflicts not fully understood – and therefore not fully worked through – and to the sensation that a closure was inevitable due to the end of a secular cycle. In opposition to these simplifying explanations, there are numerous events and causes⁶ that, framed in the context of the dispersion of globalization, contributed in a multiplicative way to both the rise and the establishment of this contemporary obsession with issues of memory (Winter 364). One of the most influential events in relation to the emergence of the memory boom is the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9th, 1989. This is due to its temporal proximity and to the factual and symbolic repercussions it entailed at a historical and memorialistic level. The transcendence of the event can be found in two of the consequences it brought about, which are deeply connected, although at first sight they may seem contradictory. On the one hand, the Fall of the Wall meant, firstly, the possibility of coming into contact with historical-geographical realities that had been formerly isolated and, secondly, the disappearance of restrictions to access to a large number of documents previously unavailable in the West (Brockmeier 11–12).⁷ This started a process of recovery of experiences of several generations whose voices had remained inaudible (Winter 374) and triggered the need to rethink and reconstruct several national myths from the perspective of the

5 The reason for the preeminence of the relationship established between the rise of memory studies in the late twentieth century and the Shoah must be sought, according to Jay Winter (363), in the status of authority and reference work of Pierre Nora *Les lieux de mémoire*, published between 1984 and 1992.

6 These causes are not only historical, but also social, cultural, political, economic, scientific, judicial, philosophical, and artistic.

7 These facts are framed within a context marked by the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions and transitional justice processes in different states marked by histories of dictatorial governments – as in the case of Spain, South Africa, Chile or Guatemala, among others – and by the disappearance of a large part of the victims and perpetrators involved in episodes and regimes of perpetration in previous moments of the 20th century – such as, for example, the case of Fascism in Italy or National Socialism in Germany.

mnemonic act (Brockmeier 11). On the other hand, in opposition to this crude unveiling of History derived from the irruption of hitherto unknown materials and experiences, the mediatization of the event produced a phenomenon that distorted its historical transcendence. The television broadcasting of the demolition of the Berlin Wall in most Western countries represented the symbolic consolidation of a process of disconnection and abstraction from historical reality that had begun twenty years earlier.⁸ The historical event was replaced and obstructed by its mediatized expression. As a result of this phenomenon, historical reality ceases to precede its representation or reproduction and consequently loses its value as a reference and becomes what is produced by the media (Baudrillard 1995). In this sense, the growing popular obstinacy for the experiencing of historical reality – materialized in the compulsive approach to the historical document⁹ – collides with the theoretical affirmation of the death and disappearance of the real (Landsberg 33).

The revaluation of the historical document and its reconsideration as a privileged relic of History¹⁰ – and consequently as a means of knowledge and inquiry into the essence of the regimes of perpetration – does not imply that it provides easy access to historical reality. In fact, such access is generally deficient. This can be explained by the processes of commodification and reproduction that these documents undergo in the context of the symbolic

8 Baudrillard affirms that the beginning of this process, which he calls the entry into the orbital era, coincides with the television broadcasting of man's landing on the moon in July 1969.

9 It is no coincidence that this approach to the historical document coincides temporally with what has been called the *archival turn*, which consists of the process of moving from the consideration of the archive-as-source to the archive-as-subject. As Ann Laura Stoler (93) points out, this movement began to develop some time before the publication in the 1990s of what has been considered a reference text in contemporary studies on the institution of the archive, Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'archive* (1995).

10 The origin of the relevance of the connection established between the historical document and the perpetration regimes can be traced to the famous Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961. As Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (153-154) point out, this trial creates a radically original event. This is because in it there is a replacement of the testimony as judicial evidence by the videotape. That is to say, it originates a translation from the first-person account as reliable proof of a historical reality to the audiovisual document as a trace of that reality.

victory of capitalist values in the West and the consequent spread of consumer culture (Terdiman 12). Through such processes, historical documents acquire the status of commodities and, as a consequence, are separated from their origin, the memory of their history is suppressed, they mutate into icons, and they begin to circulate on a large scale (Terdiman 13; Landsberg 18). The immediate reference to the original event as well as their own evolutionary process is hindered because of their acquired condition of phantasmagoria¹¹ and, as a result, the identification of those in charge of producing and preserving the document is hampered, be they victims or perpetrators. Thus, the antithetical relationship that until that moment existed between document and memory is broken due to the friction between the compulsive desire to return to the documentary remains of the historical event in order to approach the historical reality – what Jacques Derrida (1995) called *mal d'archive* – and the turbidity that characterizes the documents through which it is sought to access this historical reality (Brothman 60). The documents overcome their reductionist consideration of mere historicized representations – given their condition of physical evidence – and are instituted as artifacts that, as a result of the loss of their temporal strangeness, can contain memory capable of contradicting or corroborating other memorial discourses, be they individual or collective.¹² These documents, marked by

11 The concept of phantasmagoria must be understood here along the lines of the conception of this phenomenon held, firstly, by Walter Benjamin and, secondly, by Georges Didi-Huberman (2000). That is to say, phantasmagoria opens up the possibility of a critical use. It is not a simple simulacrum that hides reality and, therefore, precludes the access to it, but it must be considered as a distanced expression of it. In this sense, working with the phantasmagoria is equivalent to working on its interpretation (Llevadot 111).

12 In this sense, they are prosthetic mnemonic elements that can articulate cycles of continuity, recurrence, and repetition while opposing the malleability characteristic of memory (Brothman 54). The concept of prosthetic memory comes from Alison Landsberg's *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004). Although it is true that the author alludes in her study fundamentally to the products generated by mass culture technologies such as cinema or television, the concept can be broadened and extended to all those artifacts that act as coadjutors in mnemonic processes. All these artifacts, regardless of their origin and intention of production, have the capacity to contain memory and, therefore, to activate the remembrance process in the subject who interacts with them.

persistence and immutability but also open to reinterpretation and continuous ideological investiture, must be seen as immanently contradictory: their origin anchors them temporally to the past of the historical event itself, but the resignifications to which they have been exposed throughout their existence place them in the present – and extend them into the future. That is to say, at the same time that these artifacts subsume the past and the present in their own signifying constitution, they are capable of showing the space that lies between both points in time.

The characteristics of this type of document make it clear that a detailed analysis of its contents is insufficient for an in-depth approach. To what is represented in the document must be added the identification of everything that has a decisive effect on its constitution without being explicit: its origin, its current meaning and, ultimately, the distance between these two points of reference. The origin of the document refers to its material conditions of production – by whom, where, when and for what purpose it was produced¹³ – and the current meaning refers to its contemporary uses and reproductions. Between these two terms there is a process that has determined the survival of the document over time and therefore has been essential for the semantic stratification it has undergone. This process, which is the guarantor of the document's evolutionary history, is closely related to the archive, whether directly – through inclusion – or indirectly – through exclusion.

2 · Relationships between Documents and Archive

The archive should be understood as a bidimensional entity in its constitution as an official institution: it inseparably combines the physical space – comprising the building and the documentary components – and the ideal space – comprising the meaning attributed to the building and the documentary components. On a material level, the archive is nothing more than

¹³ For a more detailed explanation on the analysis of the material conditions of production of a historical document – in this case, focused on the analysis of perpetrator images –, see chapter 2 of Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's *La muerte en los ojos. Qué perpetran las imágenes de perpetrador* (2021).

the space for classification, arrangement, and storage of documents and data (Ernst 3).¹⁴ Because of this, it has traditionally been regarded as a source of factual and positive knowledge (Brothman 59; Brunow 1). However, conceived as a metaphor the archive is a historical agent in itself and is capable of reflecting historical processes (Guasch 4). It is, in short, the foundation of how history is written (Brunow 5). This can be explained because, even though it is a mere repository of documents, the act that bases the archive – the act of registering – implies the production of an event that affects the intercrossing between present and past (García de la Sienna 92). That is to say, this act encloses a performative will to create a certain narrative and, therefore, to erase some traces of the past (Guasch 3). In this sense, the reflection, expression or documentation of reality made by the archive is never transparent, arbitrary or innocuous (Matienzo 7). The image of historical reality presented by the archive appears linked to the idea of tradition, which is never neutral with respect to the values it embodies.¹⁵ In this space everything has been formed, presented, represented, symbolized, semanticized and constructed with a determined intention (Jimerson 91; Cook 25). Since its very structure and technology determines what can be archived and

14 It is essential to mention that for some years now the archive has been losing its status as a physical space and is being articulated digitally. In other words, the archive has gone from being a set of objects stored in different places to a continuous flow of data (Guasch, 2012: 5). The problem derived from this resides fundamentally in the fact that knowledge no longer appears contained in a singular system in which all the elements are articulated, so there is a degradation of the signifying structures that articulate the organization of documents. The archive appears in its digital dimension as decentered and in a state of radical instability, since the rationality that follows immaterial information is substantially different from that which can be found in material memory systems (Featherstone, 2006: 595-596).

15 Jacques Derrida, in his text *Mal d'archive* (1990), examines the etymological origin of the concept of archive to explain its connotations of origin and authority. According to the etymological analysis, the archive goes back to the Greek term *arkhé*. This term refers to the beginning – *commencement* – and to the commandment – *commandement*. Thus, the term combines two principles: on the one hand, the principle that alludes to origin, whether natural or historical – that is, the space in which everything begins –; on the other hand, the principle that alludes to law – that is, the space in which human beings or gods rule, where authority and social order are exercised.

how it should be archived (Derrida 33-34), the archive becomes the law of what can be enunciated (Foucault 170).

The shift from the consideration of the archive as a documentary source to the conception of the archive as a historical agent makes it possible to identify the remains of political power attached to documents during the process of producing knowledge of the past and consequently to unravel the different meanings acquired by them during their period of preservation in the archive (Cooke and Reichelt-Brushett 12). In fact, the moment of the document's inclusion in the archive is profoundly paradoxical: the immortalizing intention of the act of registering nullifies the original meaning instead of maintaining it intact. The privileged preservation of the document implies its exposure to the passing of time and, hence, to resignifications. The uniqueness of the event to which the document refers is eliminated at the very moment of archiving (Harris 100) and the document ceases to operate as a signifier of the historical fact and acquires the status of a signifier of historical time (Cooke and Reichelt-Brushett 15). That is, it begins to absorb and reflect a series of meanings derived from the historical processes to which it is exposed (Brunow 6).¹⁶ Since the archive is a constantly evolving production – and therefore indescribable in its totality – the number of meanings that archived documents can acquire tends to infinity (Hall 89). They become multidimensional artifacts in which different structures are intermingled, none of them original (Guasch 2), so that the scrutiny of archived documents is closely related to detail and discrimination (Ginzburg 1989; Osborne 58). Ultimately, in the very conception of the archive as an instrument whose function is to present history as a succession of linear moments accessible in a positivist manner – and, therefore, to feed a conception of historical time as progressive – opens the possibility of reading it as a device that wrest the significant moment from the historicist perspective – embodied in the document – and intersperses it with the rest of the ruins of the past, that is, with the present (Benjamin 1991; Cooke and Reichelt-Brushett 21).

16 In this sense, it is worth noting, as Stuart Hall (89) points out, that although there is a connection between the archive and tradition, this is produced in terms of contradiction: the archive must be conceived as an unfinished space open to modification, while tradition is a concept with a tendency towards stagnation and immobilism. This fact does not imply that tradition does not use the archive as a legitimizing space.

Rather than enabling direct access to the past, the archive offers a textual refiguration of it (Featherstone 596).

The genealogical study of the archive as a state institution shows that its capacity to intervene in the creation of historical narratives and to influence the meaning of the materials it preserves within it has existed from the moment of its consolidation. The generalization of the construction of archives between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe responded to the need to transfer symbolically the power and memory emanating, in the first place, from the figure of the monarch, and later, from the state itself to an external organism. At this point, the archive became a fundamental element in sustaining the national memory. However, the archive also emerged to fulfill the function of collecting systematic and measurable information on population and territory in a context of nation-state formation and exponential population growth (Featherstone 591-592). It expanded and established itself within European societies in order to cohere and control.¹⁷ In this sense, from the archive as a tool to record a past and determine a future for the construction of a solid national identity cannot be separated the will to regulate the internal – and in the case of colonial contexts also external – population and territories (Featherstone 592-593). Its use has always been linked to the legitimization, validation, and protection of hegemonic interests and activities. This fact is particularly relevant for the examination of the nature of totalitarian societies in the twentieth century. In a context of expanding state powers, world wars and international rivalries, dictatorial regimes make use of archives in order to mobilize the population through the exaltation of national values, as well as to surveil and monitor them in order to protect themselves from enemies and subversive influences. The apparatuses of surveillance and control deposit their documents in the archives under a logic which presupposes the indefinite temporal extension

17 The demographic growth of the eighteenth century was accompanied by a process of increasing disciplinary power. This process, while aiming to obtain docile bodies, also individualized them. That is to say, there began to emerge a desire to distinguish the individual from the rest of the population by his or her own history. The individual began to be formed as a category of knowledge through the accumulation in archives of documents that recorded individual life histories (Featherstone 591-592).

of the dictatorial regime (Osborne 56). In general,¹⁸ many of the documents generated by perpetrators remain in the archives once the regimes have been dismantled and are not publicly known until the archives are scrutinized. Accordingly, the archive proves to be a state institution with pretensions of exercising power over all aspects of society (Luker 2016). Precisely these pretensions generate a contradictory relationship between the entity that uses the instrument and the instrument itself: the state cannot exist without archives, but the very existence of the archive – given that it conceals within itself the operating logics of the state – constitutes a constant threat to the state (Mbembe 23). The tension between these two elements makes the archive, despite its apparent rigidity and immobility, a profoundly unstable space, constantly changing and open to the demands of the present and the future (Van Zyl 53). No document is exempt from the possibility of being discarded, destroyed, or replaced.

The existence of the archive as a state institution, that is, as a legitimizing space and as an effect of sovereignty, implies the existence of a reverse side in which are included all those documents that, despite having been preserved, have been excluded from the official archive. This other space, called *counter-archive*, includes all the collections of documents that have been compiled in opposition to a specific hegemonic discourse for different reasons (Guasch 4).¹⁹ However, the logic that operates in them is not significantly different from that of the official archive. These documentary collections are also defined by the type of material collected, by the way it is grouped and described, and by everything that is being excluded (Hamilton, Harris and Reid 9). Thus, an examination of the reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of the document from the official archive or, failing that, from the

18 Some dictatorial systems made efforts to destroy official documents that could compromise them in cases where they could foresee the end of the regime. This usually occurred in contexts of war.

19 Documents stored in the counter-archive should not necessarily be considered in opposition to the official narratives constructed by the archive. In many cases, the reasons that lead a document not to be archived respond to personal issues, as may occur, for example, in the case of family documents – both textual and visual – of perpetrators. In this case, although the signifying structure of these documents corresponds to a large extent to that of perpetrator documents generated by an official organism, they remain in the private sphere and the access to them is, therefore, more complicated.

counter-archive can help in understanding the multilaminarity characteristic of these artifacts (Hamilton, Harris and Reid 9). Not surprisingly, the very space in charge of preservation inscribes the documents in a series of practices related to production, distribution and reception that reflect the construction of a historical discourse – or counter-discourse (Brunow 4). In short, while the recreation of the original meaning of archived documents is impossible, the unraveling of the mechanisms that sustain this very impossibility is a feasible task.

3 · Towards an analysis of the perpetrator's documentary remains

One of the strategies that could help in this unraveling would be to approach these archival documents from the perspective of postmemory proposed by Marianne Hirsch (2008 and 2021), according to which the generations after those who lived through the traumatic and violent episodes – the so-called postgeneration – take over the memory of the victims without appropriating it; that is, not using postmemory as an identity position, but as a generational structure of transmission of the past.²⁰ The work of the academic study is thus understood as part of the affiliative postgeneration²¹ that is aware of its

20 “Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection and creation” (Hirsch 2008 106–107). Although Hirsch’s concept focuses on and comes from the particular study of photographs, there is the possibility of applying it and extrapolating it to the study of textual documents. One must, however, be aware of the differences, both bridgeable and impassable, and not force adaptation by any means. This possibility is supported by the ideas of Anacleto Ferrer and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (47), according to whom it is illusory to think that concepts, narratives and images are spheres that live separately in our world, especially when it comes to areas such as mass violence. On the contrary, photographic images often condense an account of the events they supposedly represent, albeit in miniature and full of gaps.

21 Within postmemory, due to the different mechanisms of transmission of memories,

dependence on the images, narratives and documents that were bequeathed to them (Hirsch 2021 158). It tries to find a balance between the emotional force and the informative potential of the various documents and to prevent the former from overshadowing or excluding the latter. It focuses especially on the form and not so much on the content – infinitely more worked – and puts the focus, then, more than on what the documents reveal, on the manner in which they do so and the information they provide about the victims, the perpetrators and the context in which the documents emerged. Thus, postmemory is a starting point for establishing a connective analysis of the figure of the victims – much more studied in a canonical way – and that of the perpetrators²² through the study of the documents produced by them and their main characteristics.

The first of these, which is of crucial importance as far as perpetrator documents are concerned, is the performative force. In respect to images, this performative force can be observed in two senses. On the one hand, perpetrator images not only capture those who are in front of the camera at some given time, but they also contribute to the action that is about to be performed on them – to the violent crime that is going to be perpetrated. In a way, or at least partly, that violent action is carried out for the camera, because it was there to capture it. Thus, the images have created and generated reality.²³ On the other hand, this performativity becomes an additional – but

a distinction is made between family and affiliative postmemory: the former is the result of a vertical intergenerational identification that takes place within the family space itself, while the latter is presented as a horizontal intra-generational identification that exceeds the limits of the family institution, and is therefore accessible and extensible to a larger number of people (Hirsch 2008 114-115).

22 The study of this complex figure, argue Anacleto Ferrer and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (20), can be approached from a tripartite distinction: the *macro-level* of the *architects*, of those who conceive them [the perpetration processes] ideologically and hold the highest responsibilities in decision-making; the *meso-level* of the *organizers*, of those who, from offices or through specific orders, act and set the machinery in motion; and the *micro-level* of the *executors*, of those who pull the trigger or throw the pills into the gas chambers and consummate the passage from power to criminal act. The latter are the ones that receive the most attention in the current literature.

23 In this sense, Judith Butler's reflections on torture photographs, the relations that according to the author are established, by virtue of the frame, between the camera, the photographer and the scene could help us to understand the idea that is defended here:

not secondary – act of violence to that which the image itself captures: the victims receive the shot from the camera before the final one, and that shot, unlike the one that follows it, has an unbearable continuity (Sánchez-Biosca 95). For their part, the textual documents, with their differences, respond to the same logic of performativity and the double moment of violence: their writing, elaboration or diffusion induces the criminal action in a manner analogous to that of the image. These documents will condemn, torture or murder the victim before he or she is condemned, tortured or murdered *de facto*. But what is paradoxical about both types of perpetrator documents is the ambivalence they contain, the dialectic that is born in or from them: even when the crime – the second and definitive act of violence – is narrated in past perfect, the images – literal or figurative – transmitted by the various types of documents remain in an intolerable present, in that Barthesian *ça a été*²⁴ that indicates a past future in a continuous manner.²⁵ Documents capture that instant in which that which has been, that which has happened, has not yet happened, hence the powerful impact of the preserved present. It is known what is going to happen – what happened – and this becomes, even if it escapes the explicitness of the document, its most visible and legible detail – the inescapable mark of time in it.

Not in vain, the first act of violence, the one that seemed complementary, is the one that is preserved²⁶ and that allows, again from the post-

the presence of an accomplice photographer – often unaware, due to the overwhelming nature of the image, of those who explicitly appear in it – and of a camera that prompts, frames and orchestrates the act as well as capturing the moment of its accomplishment (Butler 2007 959). That is to say, the image does not simply portray the event, but provokes and augments it –without intervening in it. Therefore, the interpretation of the image becomes essential for the interpretation of the event.

24 Is betting here for the application of an inexcusably photographic concept to the textual sphere, being aware of the problems it could entail, but emphasizing what it can contribute. Even so, the documents studied in this monograph do not represent entirely this temporal *punctum*, since sometimes the research focuses on texts or images produced after the death of the person who, in some way, is the protagonist.

25 Again, with Butler, and trying to apply her reflections on photography also to textual documents: “The photograph is a kind of promise that the event will continue, indeed it is that that very continuation. [...] Because of the photo, the event has not stopped happening” (Butler 2007 959, 961).

26 It is worth clarifying what this preservation refers to. Insofar as the moment of pro-

memory, to carry out the process of reappropriation of the perpetrators' vision, which is turned it against them – and this with a double meaning: because it helps to denounce their crimes and because it turns the focus towards them. Therefore, appropriating the documents of power turns them into documents of resistance and denunciation; it allows to see the different temporal layers of which they are constituted, thus showing that they can say one thing and the opposite (Peris 192).

On the one hand, they say²⁷ what the perpetrators who produced them intended to express with them and the perspective from which they wanted to do so (Sánchez-Biosca 31): that of the *perpetrator's gaze*. These documents had, among others, the function of facilitating the recognition of the supposed enemy and their essential and defining characteristics in order to be able to identify and denounce it for its undesirable behaviors. However, more than a description, it was a stereotyped construction through which a whole series of prejudices were established against a caricatured image of the victims – which may give more information about the perpetrators themselves than about the victims.²⁸ This constructive mechanism, in which the idiosyncrasy and ideology that led to the machinery of horror²⁹ can al-

duction of these documents contributes to and increases the scope of the crime, these documents are the trace that the crime leaves behind. But it is not a distant, external, alien trace; rather, the event itself is contained in the images and texts themselves. The event and its trace are the two parts of the same violence that emerge at the same time. **27** The use of the present tense in this case is neither casual nor unreflective: although there are several temporal strata that cross the documents and this is, chronologically, the oldest, they do not constitute a vertical linearity in which the appearance of one would cause the rejection, annulment or oblivion of the previous one – or the previous ones –, but rather they are superimposed. Thus, the documents did not say what the perpetrators wanted them to say, but continue and will continue to do so, causing the approach to them to be necessarily kaleidoscopic.

28 It should be noted that not all the perpetrator images have the victims as protagonists; the archives also have images in which they are the ones represented. However, the first type, the images in which the figure of the victim appears explicitly or implicitly, are the ones that provide the most information: the figure of the perpetrator is constructed in a negative way, as the obverse of everything that is attributed to the victims, as an ideal opposition to their vices and defects.

29 As Anacleto Ferrer and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (29), point out the words of the perpetrators, their rhetoric, their manifestations in the performative order, define their

ready be observed, served the propagandistic purposes of the regimes that held – or pretended to hold – power at the time, i.e., those that produced the documents. With images taken from the place where they wanted the gaze to be positioned, with texts plagued by a deeply pejorative and performative language, they carried out a double game of ostentation: internally, they were a symptom of the good functioning of the regime, of its power and of the tranquility and security they offered by controlling the adversary; externally, they served as a warning to those who were not supporters. In all cases, they justified criminal actions through the process they provoked and to which they contributed: the reification³⁰ and dehumanization³¹ of the enemy to be fought.

In a second interpretative layer, one can find what they say for the victims: these perpetrator documents are considered here primarily as evidence of the crimes and offenses committed and of the participation in them of the perpetrators. The documents thus respond to the desire for reparation and justice of the victims, who add to these images and texts their own gaze in order to subvert the point of view imposed on them. If it is a question of purging personal responsibilities and not only of reconstructing the history of the machinery of horror (Hirsch 2021 197), the extensive bureaucratization with which these events and regimes have usually counted could be of great help. All kinds of documents are preserved: images showing the perpetrators themselves or texts headed by the names of the people who held positions – of greater or lesser importance – within official institutions of the machinery that ordered and orchestrated the crimes; in these documents the hierarchy that operated is recorded and the signatures of those responsible, the bureaucrats, the executors and even the victims appear. Moreover, in many cases these documents are the only reliable proof of the existence of

acts.

30 An example of this process of reification can be found, according to Ferrer and Sánchez-Biosca (24), in the consideration of the thousands of people arriving at the Treblinka ramp as ‘cargo’.

31 As Todorov (187–188) claims, to be classified as an enemy is enough to exclude him from humanity. An example of this is the fact that detainees are deprived of their names – the first sign of the individual – and given a number. When the guards talk about the detainees, they avoid using terms such as “persons”, “individuals”, “men”, and designate them as “pieces”, “chunks”, or use of impersonal expressions.

the victims or of their passage through the machinery of horror and death. Archival documents or even private documents from other cases can serve to approximate what happened, to reconstruct an account – uncertain but likely – of what happened to those for whom we do not know what became of them, of whom there is no further evidence of their existence or, of course, of their forced disappearance.³² Thus, an affiliative exercise is carried out: that of reading in those names or seeing in those faces the ones of all men and women who do not appear but could have appeared.

A final level in the stratification is the analysis carried out by academic studies that, in a way, brings together the previous ones and gives them a necessary distance to make the approach to the issue as objective as possible. Among the various tasks of this analysis, the critical interpretation of the frameworks that made possible, incited and justified the crimes to which the documents bear witness stands out. A close relationship or even feedback is thus established between the study and the documents since the latter are not only objects to be examined – study objects – but also valuable sources for the reconstruction of the framework in question – study tools. This ambivalence helps to unravel the official and hegemonic discourse that made possible the production of these documents – a discourse that these documents reinforced and perpetuated at the time they emerged.³³ And this critical interpretation of the imposed interpretation sheds light on perhaps the most striking feature of the perpetrator documents: their very existence. The purpose of these totalitarian systems in which perpetration occurs is none other than to erase entire peoples or sectors of the population from the pages of history, which is why the sheer number of documents they produced on these individuals is so surprising. Although this amazement is more easily identifiable – perhaps even greater – in the visual documents, since the only purpose they seem to have is to boast about their trophy or to exacerbate the feeling of comradeship among the perpetrators,³⁴ it can also be observed in

32 According to Hirsch (2021 335), the National Archives contain listings on microfiche, and in these impersonal inscriptions descendants seek evidence of the existence of those whose names appear only as objects of ownership.

33 In Butler's words, the photograph [like documents], "is not just a visual image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly" (Butler 2005 823).

34 See in this regard the considerations on the concept of comradeship by Anacleto

the textual documents. Even considering the bureaucratic and organizational function with which they arise – which could also be attributed to some of the visual ones –, it is still surprising the high number of documents that record the victims when this content could have been avoided.

4 · Case Studies of Perpetrator Documents: Images and Texts

This monographic issue arises from the problems raised with the aim of defining the fundamental role that visual or textual perpetrator documents play when it comes to an in-depth analysis of this controversial figure. This interest in the figure of the perpetrator and their documentary remains is rooted in the work of the REPERCRI research group, a transversal group of the University of Valencia, pioneer in the introduction of the field of *perpetrator studies* in Spain.³⁵ In accordance with the different, but synergistic, lines of research of the members and collaborators of the group, each of the articles in the issue presents a unique approach to the state of affairs and focuses on specific and diverse case studies. Thus, the articles will study the documentary remains of the perpetrator by addressing either the images or the texts.

The issue opens with the text by Natalia Taccetta and Mariano Veliz “La propaganda como imagen de perpetrador. Escorzos de la Guerra de las Malvinas”, in which the authors analyze of the audiovisual materials that constituted the television media coverage of the conflict that took place in the islands between dictatorial Argentina and Great Britain in the 1980s. The backbone of their study is Lucas Gallo’s 2020 documentary film *1982*,

Ferrer in *Facticidad y ficción. Ensayo sobre cinco secuencias fotográficas de perpetración de la Shoah* (2020).

35 The work of this interdisciplinary group can be consulted in collective publications such as *El infierno de los perpetradores. Imágenes, relatos y conceptos* (Ferrer and Sánchez-Biosca 2019) or *Geographies of Perpetration. Re-Signifying Cultural Narratives of Mass Violence* (Jirku and Sánchez-Biosca 2021) and individual publications such as *Facticidad y ficción. Ensayo sobre cinco secuencias fotográficas de perpetración de la Shoah* (Ferrer 2020) or *La muerte en los ojos. Qué perpetrar las imágenes de perpetrador* (Sánchez-Biosca 2021) among others.

which offers a critical review of the official Argentine archive of the war. The objective of the archive was none other than to reinforce popular support for the armed conflict and the dictatorship itself that promoted it by offering a certain perception of what was happening – a vision that was favorable to the regime. In choosing this starting point, Taccetta and Veliz focus on two interconnected issues: first, on the perpetrator images themselves and, more specifically, on the subcategory of propaganda images. The authors study their use in the specific case of the Malvinas War, the mechanisms of censorship and concealment on which they are based, but also those of exaltation and epicism, both purely visual – for example, the use of concrete shots – and those of a rhetorical or linguistic nature – highlighting the fundamental relationship between image and text. Moreover, they delve into the question of the archive that includes this kind of images. They examine its characteristics – defending that it is a constructed, fictional, and fragmentary element with agency – and the possibility of carrying out a process of reappropriation in order to, through artistic techniques such as montage, unveil the falsity of the hegemonic narrative they build and work towards memory and justice.

The article by Marta Maliszewska, entitled “Remains of the World War I: *War against War* by Ernst Friedrich and Two Approaches to Reading Archives” studies a specific treatment of the images that appear in the aforementioned work of Friedrich. The first thing that stands out is the diversity of photographs included in *War against War* (1924): medical photographs and military photographs taken – stolen – from government archives, as well as press photographs – considered all three within the category of official photographs – and photographs taken by the soldiers themselves during the war, which would be included, not without problems, in the category of personal or private images. Following Friedrich’s comparative analysis of these images through a unique montage technique, Maliszewska explores two apparently contradictory but complementary strategies for dealing with the reading of archives: against the grain and along the grain. The first involves an exercise of reappropriation of the archive. The images are searched for what they say or can say and the logic and intention with which they emerged – that of the perpetrators – is set aside in order to give voice to those who were deliberately silenced. In this way, the struggle is fought against the hegemonic discourse that regulates the field of knowledge and in favor of

the victims, of the unraveling of their figure and their voice. The second possibility of reading, on the contrary, approaches the study of the perpetrator's figure. It is a matter of analyzing the framework that made possible the emergence of a discourse which justifies and provokes violence, including propagandistic images that, rather than showing reality, concealed it in order to raise an epic narrative. Maliszewska, therefore, advocates the combination of both strategies in order to obtain the widest possible visual field: without studying the figure of the perpetrator in depth, it will not be possible to study that of the victim, and vice versa.

“Nunca comprenderán que yo también tenía corazón”. Sobre el testimonio del victimario en el cine documental”, written by Lior Zylberman, is the third article of the issue. The author discusses different pieces of documentary cinema in which testimonies of perpetrators are collected. He establishes similarities and differences, and categorizes these fragments based on their narrative content. Thus, he divides these testimonies into two major groups: the interview and the confessional work. The first one offers a series of more objective data on the facts and not on the figure of the perpetrator himself, since he presents himself either as a mere passive witness of the atrocities or as someone who was unaware of what was happening. Zylberman thus finds in his testimony a “matriz narrativa ‘desvinculante’” (disengaging narrative matrix) or even, in several cases, a denialist one. The words of the perpetrators offer an approximate account of what happened, in addition to the fact that several techniques are implemented in order to bring to light what they try to hide or deny: cross-examination, ambush or montage. Digressing from this category of interview to the portrait and the encounter between victim and perpetrator, Zylberman arrives at the confessional work. The author emphasizes that this concept is the least frequent type of testimony in documentary cinema, since it necessarily implies a work of introspection on the part of the perpetrator, through which he will recognize himself as such and assume responsibility for his acts to a greater or lesser degree. In this way, this model of testimony implies that the perpetrator will give information not only about his acts, but also about himself: about his identity. The article also highlights the convergence and collaboration of images and texts – the testimonial discourses – and shows that

studying testimonies in a reductionist way, either by choosing the images or by choosing the texts, leads to a loss of valuable information.

The fourth article of the issue, «El ‘silencio’ de los perpetradores. Una aproximación a la literatura alemana de los perpetradores del Tercer Reich», signed by Brigitte Jirku, considers the problematic that arose between the figure of the victim and the figure of the perpetrator after the end of the Second World War within the German context. At the end of the war, victim and witness acquire a decisive role in the understanding of the Third Reich and occupy a central place in the memorial processes, so that the literature of the Holocaust is born from the perspective of the victims. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that the generation of postmemory approached the view of the perpetrator, in many cases through personal and official documents inherited from previous generations. In relation to the interest in the figure of the perpetrator, the author points out the need to differentiate between fiction written from the perspective of the perpetrator and writings produced by the perpetrators themselves. Among the texts belonging to the first category, Jirku refers to works produced in non-German contexts – the contextual distance facilitates the approach – such as Robert Merle’s *La mort est mon métier* (1952) and Jonathan Littell’s *Les bienveillantes* (2006), as well as literary works that are written by German authors and are thus indirectly linked to the conflictive past, such as Bernhard Schlink’s *Der Vorleser* (1995) or *Was mein Vater nicht erzählte. Geschichte eines Mitläufers* (2019) by Hermann Kurzke, among others. Regarding the texts in the second category, the author highlights the importance of silence as a rhetorical strategy aimed at self-protection. By way of example, Jirku refers to the autobiographical writings of figures such as Rudolf Höß or Kurt Waldheim and focuses on the analysis of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (1925). The hybrid nature of this work – an autobiographical, ideological and programmatic text with academic pretensions – complicates its categorization, but the genealogical study of its different editions and the examination of its linguistic aspects help to understand both the objectives initially pursued by the work and the processes of resignification to which it has been exposed since its publication.

The article «Léon Degrelle. Del silencio a la negación del Holocausto» by José Luis Rodríguez Jiménez examines the works produced by the Belgian Catholic politician and Waffen SS officer Léon Degrelle. At the beginning of

the article, the political path followed by Degrelle is presented in order to understand his position with respect to the National Socialist ideas and the context of production of his works. These works should be understood as an attempt to reconstruct the past based on denial and carried out from the perspective of a perpetrator of war crimes and crimes against humanity. *La campagne de Russie 1941-1945* (1949), an extensive and descriptive work, reveals Degrelle's initial ideas and purposes. Its racism is defined culturally and not biologically, so Degrelle occupies a distanced position with respect to the national socialist racial postulates. In *La cohue de 1940* (1949), the Belgian politician tries to exonerate Germany concerning the occupation of Belgium, to deny his own betrayal of his country and to accuse others of collaboration with the invaders. Later, Degrelle shows, in two of his works, his admiration and his willingness to approach Francisco Franco and Adolf Hitler. In *Almas ardiendo. Notas de paz, de guerra y de exilio* (1954) he defends the thesis that the only viable spiritual revolution is that of the mystical Spain of the moment. This gesture was never reciprocated by Franco. However, the attempt to approach Hitler, who besides receiving him on several occasions also decorated him, was successful. In *Hitler pour 1000 ans* (1969), Degrelle is ambiguous about the Holocaust and refers to genocides and exterminations in other contexts. A decade later, Degrelle changes his perspective and accepts that there were Germans who committed crimes, but asserts that the extermination camps were an invention. In these texts, he mocks the victims and justifies the murder of Jews on the grounds of historical pogroms. In the words of Rodríguez Jiménez, Degrelle's texts are marked by silence, denial and ambiguity and pursue the purpose of distorting history to justify his own past.

The article «Los sacrificados y la resignificación del Valle de los Caídos como símbolo de reconciliación (1958-1959)», written by David Tormo, focuses on the the process of transferring the mortal remains of Republican victims to the Valley of the Fallen, which began in 1958, and the documents produced during this process. This space, originally conceived to receive only the bodies of those *caídos* (fallen) by the *cruzada* (crusade), excluded according to the rhetoric of the regime all those bodies belonging to the *enemigos de la anti-España* (enemies of the anti-Spain). However, as Tormo points out, the Valley of the Fallen also received the mortal remains of civilian and

military republicans. Because of this, the Franco regime claimed the monument as a space for reconciliation. The author presents two hypotheses that could explain this claim: on the one hand, it is possible that the regime used the bodies of the Republicans buried in the Valley to gain the confidence of the Western democracies; on the other hand, it could be that the regime was pressured by the Vatican to do so and thus obtain the recognition of the temple of the Valley as a basilica. The analysis of some of the documents produced after 1958 shows this process of resemanticization of the Valley. In a circular sent by the Minister of the Interior to the Civil Governors, it is stated that the mission of the Valley was “to bury those sacrificed for God and for Spain without distinction of the side in which they fought”. However, this terminology was applied in this circular because of its public nature – which differentiates it from the rest of the circulars that Tormo analyzes –, since other documents that deal with the transferring of corpses show no intention to change the orientation of the monument. In this sense, at the public level, Francoism coined new terms to include all the victims under the *abrazo de la cruz* (embrace of the cross), but the committed crimes were never acknowledged, and the murders were justified as the means to achieve the salvation of Spain. The victims of the Republican side were qualified as *sacrificados* (sacrificed) or as *inmolados* (immolated). In this sense, there was never the will to equate victims of both sides, but simply to use the victims of the Republican side to resignify the original meaning of the Valley and thus benefit the regime in the international sphere. Ultimately, the victims of Franco’s repression always remained in the anonymity of the records.

The seventh article of the issue, «Memorias, genealogías femeninas y lugares de perpetración. Etnografía de las exhumaciones contemporáneas de fosas del franquismo en el cementerio de Paterna», written by María José García and Isabel Gadea, approaches the cemetery of Paterna (Valencia) – a site of memory that represents the repression of Franco’s dictatorship and the suffering of the war – through the collection of testimonies in order to trace genealogically the different meanings acquired by this site and the connection that the different agents that have intervened in the processes of recovery, resignification, and reclaiming have maintained with the cemetery. As the authors indicate, studying the biography of the cemetery helps to make visible the women, who were always present and turned the cemetery

into a place of memory and yet were relegated to the margins of silence. García and Gadea indicate that in relation to the Paterna cemetery there are three generations of women: the first generation is marked, in addition to unresolved mourning, by a double subordination derived from their gender and their disaffection with the regime; the second generation of women suffered various social difficulties generated by the absence of a father and inherited the memory of the dead of the previous generation – which they were in charge of preserving – through silences, whispers, letters, photographs, and objects; the third generation has been in charge of transferring these peripheral memories, relegated to the domestic and family sphere, to the public sphere. The article indicates that this last generation, the generation of postmemory, uses in the processes of rehabilitating the memory of their grandparents, on the one hand, documents belonging to the culture of the perpetrator, such as the Causa General and the summary trials – which are required in order to identify the identity of the corpses of the mass graves and which are generally read without contextualizing them in their frame of reference – and, on the other hand, objects, letters, and photographs from the culture of subversive mourning of the widows and daughters.

Finally, the reader will find reviews of two books closely related to the topic of the issue, specifically to the question of images of the perpetrator. First, Melania Torres writes about *Facticidad y ficción. Ensayo sobre cinco secuencias fotográficas de perpetración de la Shoah* (2020) by Anacleto Ferrer. The book examines the figure of the perpetrator through the five sequences mentioned in the title: images of the Westerbork camp, photographs from the Auschwitz Album, the four snapshots taken by the Sonderkommando in Birkenau, the aerial photographs taken by the British military forces, and the images from the Höcker album. Ferrer proposes to look at the images from the perspective of the montage in order to see what they do not say, but show; to discover the figure of the perpetrator in them, either directly – as in the photographs of the last of the sequences in which they are the protagonists – or indirectly – through the study of the images taken by them in which the stereotyped figure of the enemy, that is, of the victims, is constructed.

The issue concludes with Rafael Rodríguez Tranche's review of Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's study *La muerte en los ojos. Qué perpetrar las imágenes de perpetrador* (2021). The book examines different cases of perpetrator im-

ages taken by the perpetrators themselves as an extension of the violent act. In order to face the great complexity the images entail – due to their authorship, their fragmentary nature, their state of preservation in which they are found –, Sánchez-Biosca recurs to a variety of methodologies adapted to each specific case. Nevertheless, he finds commonalities in the performativity of the images and the plurality of lives that they have, that is to say, the different temporal strata in which these images acquire importance.

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Thémata.

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