

**LOS NUDOS DE LA MEMORIA: ACTIVISMOS SEXO-DISIDENTES Y DE
MUJERES INDÍGENAS POR UNA HISTORIA A CONTRAPELO**

**THE KNOTS OF MEMORY: SEX-DISSIDENT AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S
ACTIVISMS FOR A HISTORY AGAINST THE GRAIN**

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Resumen: Este artículo busca mostrar la compleja relación entre las políticas de memoria y algunas re-lecturas provenientes de activismos sexo-disidentes y de mujeres indígenas en Argentina. En un primer momento, presentamos lo que implica hablar de memoria en el contexto argentino, considerando la histórica lucha de los organismos de derechos humanos y cómo sus demandas fueron transformándose en política de estado durante los gobiernos kirchneristas. En un segundo momento, valiéndonos de la noción de nudos feministas propuesta por Julieta Kirkwood, analizamos las impugnaciones que determinados activismos hacen en torno a los modos hegemónicos de interpretar “la” memoria -en singular-: para el caso del activismo sexo-disidente, tomamos las intervenciones de Ivanna Aguilera y Eugenio Talbot Wright; mientras que para el caso del activismo de mujeres indígenas, nos detenemos en las intervenciones de Moira Millán. En base al análisis de las implicancias de la reivindicación del “30.400 desaparecidxs” en el primer caso, y del “doble genocidio” en el segundo, mostramos cómo ambas luchas se hermanan para demarcar dimensiones témporo-espaciales que invitan a repensar las fronteras de la memoria. En este sentido, indicamos que las lecturas a contrapelo que realizan estxs referentes pueden ser interpretadas como nudos

que, en tanto movimientos vivos e instancias de producción de nuevos sentidos, amplían la imaginación de lxs sujetxs reconocibles en la comunidad política.

Palabras clave: políticas de memoria; colectivos lgbtinb+; mujeres indígenas; tiempo; espacio.

Abstract: This article seeks to show the complex relationship between the politics of memory and a number of new readings of activism by sexual dissidents and indigenous women in Argentina. First, we explain what speaking about memory means in the context of Argentina, considering the historical struggle of human rights movements and how their demands became state policies during the governments of the Kirchners. Secondly, availing ourselves of Julieta Kirkwood's notion of feminist knots, we analyze the refutation by certain activist groups of "memory" in the singular: with regard to the activism of sexual dissidents, we analyze the commentary by Ivanna Aguilera and Eugenio Talbot Wright. In the case of activism by indigenous women, we examine observations made by Moira Millán. Based on an analysis of the "30,400 forced to disappear" in the first case, and the "double genocide" of the second case, we show how both claims mark out demarcations of space and time that call for a rethinking of the boundaries of memory. This leads us to note that these readings, that go against the grain, can be understood as knots, and, as living movements and instances of the production of new meanings, they can expand the way in which political subjects in the political community are imagined.

Keywords: politics of memory; activism of sexual dissidence; activism of indigenous women; time; space.

1. Memory in Argentina: hegemonic configurations and other possible readings

To speak of memory in the context of Argentina almost inevitably turns to the State terrorism of the nineteen seventies and the illegal actions that were taken in furtherance of the violation of human rights. The activist movements that arose during this period, to denounce the forced disappearances and kidnappings, played a central role in the configuration of this field of meanings, where certain expressions, images and symbols that evoke a particular stage of our political history, stand out. So it is that in today's Argentina, memory and human rights have turned into a past that never goes away: the last dictatorship, the drama of the forced disappearances, the tortures, the hidden concentration camps, the male and female political prisoners (*lxs presxs políticxs*)¹, and exile (da Silva Catela, 2008).

This field of meanings began to take shape with the active demands made by the relatives (*lxs familiars*) of victims of detention and forced disappearance (*detenidxs y desaparecidxs*), both against the abuses of the military government and against certain policies that were a priority for particular democratic governments. From the late seventies onwards their way of publicly denouncing illegal repression and the discourses that the dictatorship tried to bring in at that moment of our political history, implied, as noted by Barros and Morales (2017), that the language of human rights was beginning to form a new reality, making it possible to make readings of, have discussions about, and to articulate, various complaints. During the military dictatorship and afterwards, the duo of *human rights* and *memory* would be combined in different ways to give form to the promise of a democratic life, but it was only more recently, under the governments of the Kirchners – from 2003 to 2015 – that this combination became State policy.

Nevertheless, the relation between human rights and memory implied, from the start, a terrain full of tensions. Especially if we consider the doubts that certain sectors had about the politics of memory applied by Kirchnerism, and a number of discourses that still resonate today accusing such policies of promoting “partial views of the past” while demanding “complete memories” or “human rights for all (*todos*)”. In the framework of these positions, it was even claimed that the policies applied during the administrations of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner were part of a “human rights rip-off” (Rosemberg, 2014). As a counterpoint to these readings, we are interested in emphasizing that the images, symbols and names that are activated when we speak of memory in our country, rather than amounting to a partial reading of the past, are a condition for making current and subsequent extensions possible.

With this, we hope to make the place of our statement explicit, so as to situate our understanding of current readings against the grain that certain activist movements are making here today. Recognizing the radically contextual² nature of the link between memory and human rights, takes us away from a normative reading, in other words, from a position that evaluates the distance between the ideal of what a politics of memory should cover and what actually happens in a particular space at a particular time, going on to point out what would need to be included to bring us closer to the concrete realization of this ideal. A reading of this kind not only assumes the risk of reading social processes and practices from specific centrisms, but also does not allow observation of the possibilities that there might be for conditions that would make certain practices of opposition to the politics of memory, viable. For us, the link between memory and human rights characteristic of our present is not so much a stable fixture as a fabric showing an unexpected move³. Far from stifling debate, the disputes that some LGBTINb+⁴ and indigenous women’s movements have engaged in over

this link, may be interpreted as knots that add tension to the fabric. Reflecting on feminist politics, Julieta Kirkwood (2019) provided us with the metaphor of a knot:

The word knot also suggests to me trunk, plant, growth, projection in concentric circles, development – perhaps neither smooth nor harmonious but wrapping around an “intrusion” or a “wrong course” – [...] that forces the whole into a new geometry, to an unfolding of turns taken in a different, mutable, changeable, but essentially dynamic direction. The shapes that grow around and define a “knot” are distinct, different, and not congruent with other knots. But they all tend to fit, within the range of their own unfolding movement, in such a way that they will come together at some point at an unpredictable distance from the knot itself to form a new and single continuity of life. Through the knots in feminism we shall be forming feminist politics. Knots, then, are part of a living movement (p. 196).

The metaphor allows us to interpret the readings against the grain that are made of policies of memory in our country, as “intrusions” or “wrong courses”, that by setting up certain problems as knots, indicate the borders of exclusion and inclusion of such policies and require of them a re-orientation towards new geometries. We can see from these heretical, disturbing and inconvenient readings how the field of meanings that comes into play when we speak of memory, acquires its twists through these interruptions, which do not come from the outside but are internal and part of its own living movement. The richness of this analytical course allows us to point out two complementary processes: firstly, how these policies are open to incisive questioning by particular subjects (*determinadxs sujetxs*); and secondly how these critical interventions are part of the constituent ground of these policies, and of the extension

of their boundaries, in so far as their struggles invite an extension of the frames of intelligibility from which to read situations of injustice.

This way of analyzing also implies making certain methodological clarifications. If the idea of knots invites us to see the displacements that appear in a specific configuration of meanings, a number of questions arise: what materials should one's attention be placed on? What readings can we make of them, and in the light of which theoretical and ethical-political commitments? From our point of view, to center our attention on certain twists in the hegemonic configuration of memory does not suppose, agreeing here with Rufer (2010), a search for evidence in legitimated sources to re-establish an undocumented portion of the process of progress in the historical narrative, in so far as that would imply continuing to reproduce the fiction of a community settled in a linear, empty and homogeneous time. In other words, what is presented here as a problem is a question of the archive: what materials *might* form an archive? Rufer (2010) gives us this reading:

The archive creates silences and reproduces secrets; we can work on them, if at all, only by posing the question as an epistemic and political tool. In Latin America, the hierarchies of gender and race are probably the most reticent mark; they belong to the order of the point of view, to the grammar (and not the surface of the text); and yet, they are some of the most powerful formations of sign and distinction [...] They generally escape "the source", and the procedure that remains to us is to de-nature them by asking by means of whom does the archive speak and who to, what points of view does it legitimize, which bodies does it silence, which codes of value for bodies does it make invisible, for which lasting secrets does it work, and on which silences does its meticulous reproduction rest (p. 169).

Our choice of methodology is therefore to focus attention on the interventions by certain sex-dissident and indigenous activisms that circulate through various supports – social networks, digital journals, audiovisual productions – and to listen very attentively to the voices that are demarcated there, in so far as they are heterogeneous forms in the archive and materials not authorized by the hegemonic historical imagination, with the aim of identifying the fabrics of knowledge and power that sustain the current configuration of the politics of memory.

2. Time and space: a knot around memory

Placing the knots of memory marked out by the intervention of certain activisms formed of indigenous women and LGBTINb+ groups implies, to start with, reducing the problem on the basis of certain voices that made themselves heard in public debate and therefore do not represent a homogeneous whole. That is why we do not speak of “the” LGBTINb+ and indigenous activisms, but of certain individual histories that have actively disputed meanings in the field of memory: with regard to the former, we go along with the proposals of Eugenio Talbot Wright and Ivanna Aguilera; and in respect of the activisms by indigenous women, we focus our attention on the reference point of the Moira Millán Movement of Indigenous Women for Good Living, *Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir, Moira Millán*.

From the voices of these activists (*estxs activistxs*), we can see that there is a questioning of what has come to be called framed memory (Rousso in Pollak, 2006), that is to say, a memory that has points of reference: recollections, places, practices, symbols, dates and proper names. In our particular context, these points of reference would build a framework of intelligibility with regard to the past and the present, and in this process the conversion of the human rights cause into a policy of the State is a clue that it is impossible

to ignore, in so far as the expression of the new political language brought forward by the presidential administrations of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner supposed combining the ideals of inclusion, equality and social justice with demands for truth, memory and justice (Barros and Morales, 2017). This finding worked and continues to work as an anchorage for other points of view and readings that bring with them particular histories of oppression and inequality and make it possible to ask: which memory?

This question not only places the conditions for its possible emergence center stage, but also allows us to note that memory is at center a process of construction based on mechanisms for choosing what is to be remembered – that in certain situations become an object of disagreement from positions challenging their limits, censures, permissions and silences (Jelin, 2002 y 2005). In this framework, the question gradually opens the way to what we propose is a time and space knot of memory. To go further into this, we shall work on two sub-moments that will allow us to interpret certain aspects of the political practice of these (*estxs*) three referents that we are interested in getting to talk to each other, highlighting the twists, to which the problem of time and space is added, with their respective criticisms of the current policy of memory.

2.1. “*We want to talk about our dead*” (*nuestrxs muertxs*)

In the chug of a train that will not desist. In the wake of a
boat that runs aground. In a wavelet, that vanishes. On the
wharves loading docks trampolines piers there are cadavers.

Néstor Perlongher

(tr. Roberto Echavarren and Donald Wellman)

We could say, that to refer today to the junction between memory and sex-gender dissidences anticipates at least two reflections that are accompanied by a series of practices of dislocation: the first of these is linked to a steadily more popular image in certain segments of the LGBTINb+ and human rights movement and has to do with the figure “30,400”. For the moment we shall say briefly that it is related, as we interpret it, to the dislocation of certain spatial margins in the widest sense of the term. The second reflection that we may anticipate, arises from the idea that this junction between memory and dissidences implies, in its turn, a questioning of the selective reductions of the temporal configuration of the historical narrative, expanding it in two directions: towards the past, long before the *coup d'état* of 1976, and towards the present, long after the democratic re-opening of 1983. To put it another way: from the question about the intersection of memory and sex-gender dissidences, new intersections are born that require the spatial and temporal coordinates that reduce the present framing of memory, and thereby another set of possible and necessary perspectives on the policies of memories (this time, in the plural) is enabled.

In distinct public communications, both Ivanna Aguilera and Eugenio Talbot Wright have taken up a position that challenges the figure, associated with the last civic-ecclesiastical-military dictatorship, of 30,000 for those who disappeared (*lxs 30.000 desparecidos*)⁵. The two writers, picking up a thread in the weave of sex-dissident activisms, have appropriated the number 400 to express a challenge to the policy that from their point of view makes certain corporalities, subjectivities and non-hetero-regulated sexualities invisible. By actively signing up their militancy to the figure of 30,400 (as in: “*lxs 30.400*”), they have taken up the vectors of gender and sexuality forgotten by certain exercises of memory (Theumer, Trujillo and Quintero, 2020). This figure amply overruns the mere limits of a counting unit that would measure a specific quantity numerically. It sets itself up, rather,

as a strictly political act; in other words it is not enough to assume a particular interpretation of reality, as the interpretation itself assumes a common referent – here, that of the shared memory of the 30,000 men and women who were made to disappear.

It is also important to emphasize that the number “400” is not arbitrarily chosen; quite the contrary, it comes from the very heart of the debate on human rights and sexual dissidences in our country. It was Carlos Jáuregui, referring in 1987 to a discussion he had had with a member of CONADEP⁶, Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer⁷, who said:

It is very difficult to be sure whether someone disappeared because they were homosexual. There is no information and unfortunately there never will be. As we know, the murderers took care to remove the largest number of clues possible [...] The statistical figure is not official [...] but one of the members responsible for CONADEP has mentioned the existence of at least 400 homosexuals placed on the list of horror. The treatment they received was like that of Jewish companions who had been forced to disappear: particularly sadistic and brutal. Every one of them was raped by their moralistic captors (Jáuregui, 1987, pp. 170-171).

In this statement, what Jáuregui is highlighting is the spearhead of a policy based on the Walshian number, a notion we owe to María Moreno (2018). Analyzing the texts of denunciation against the dictatorship that the journalist and militant Rudolfo Walsh wrote in the late nineteen seventies, she shows us that “reading between the lines of the publications in the official press, [he] made his calculations until he was able to obtain information with a high impact that he would use with the force of a rhetorical figure as in his Letter to the Military Junta” (Moreno, 2017). By means of a piece of writing that allows quantities to be

figured out, she shows us how the number in Walsh comes up against the boundaries of arithmetic, and politically, passes over it:

Number for him is a rhetorical figure; it is correct, but neither truth nor a lie; it is immeasurable but does not exaggerate: it adds. And he could say it adds because in Walsh's calculations it was always a matter of denouncing and doing justice (Moreno, 2018, p. 110).

In other words, taking into account the context of state terrorism that prevailed at the time, his gesture looks like a resounding political action, denouncing the atrocities of the usurper government: "Fifteen thousand disappeared, ten thousand imprisoned, four thousand dead, tens of thousands in exile, is the stark total for this terror" (Walsh, 1977, par. 6). Texts by Walsh undoubtedly nourish the current field of defending human rights, and at the same time leaves a mark in which the number, the numbers, beat with an unarguably political character and work as a rhetorical figure whose strength it is impossible to ignore. We find a similar exercise in the 400 taken up by Jáuregui, on the basis of which certain contemporary sex-dissident activists (*ciertxs activistas contemporánexs*) add depth to a policy of numbers with 30,400 (*30.400*).

It should be mentioned that the 400 people detained and made to disappear that Meyer referred to were found in the context of the beginnings of the investigation that CONADEP was conducting, just when the approximate partial total of 10,000 was reached for people who had been identified as detained and forced to disappear. This gives us grounds for supposing that the number 400 actually represents barely a fraction of the total number of people who might have been detained for their sexual orientation or expression, or gender

identity, and had their tortures aggravated for the same reason, and who were in the end made to disappear and/or murdered. Therefore the demand for another way of counting (or telling) to counting in a narrative sense – counting in a quantitative but not literal sense – is part of an eminently political gesture. Or, in the terms used by Rancière, we are speaking here of the emergence of politics itself to the extent that a conflict is introduced over “the existence of a common scene, the existence and quality of those who are present in it” (Rancière, 2007, p. 41). As explained by Eugenio Talbot Wright (2019):

We are still trying to recover our recent history by re-signifying terms and meanings, appropriating symbols and building our own. 30,400 is not a debatable figure. It is a symbol that still tells us today that the life histories of our companions (*nuestras compañeras*) are missing from the books, and the spaces and sites of memory (par. 17 and 18).

In complete agreement with this idea, Ivanna Aguilera highlights the symbolic character and the political configuration of the 30,400. Independently of the clarifications made or to be made of the statements by Meyer, Aguilera allows us to understand that referring to this number works as a figure that gives a more complex political struggle backbone, as it points to an “LGTB memory” that would make it possible to make it evident that sexual dissidence *vis-à-vis* the heteronymous served as a cause for detention, disappearance, torture and/or murder:

We are speaking of 30,400 as a symbolic question and a political number [...] It is urgent for the LGTB memory to be reconstructed, because sexual dissidence should

be made to be seen for what it was, a cause of forced disappearance. It was not only that you might be a militant in some organization; they could kill you for being a queer (*puto*), a lesby (*torta*) or a queen (*travesti*). However, in the documents that come out every 24th of March, there is no mention of “*nosotres*”, [i.e. whatever our gender or sexual identity], there is no diversity in the balconies or on the stages. We want to speak of our dead (Aguilera in Cabral, 2019, par. 6).

What does the last sentence in this declaration tell us? To say “*Queremos hablar de nuestrxs muertxs*” (we want to speak of our dead), would be to challenge the referent. In effect, the proposition containing two verbs – to want and to speak – while representing an elliptic subject (*nosotras*, we the female sexual dissidents, we the women who wish to speak), is also accompanied by a nominal syntagma supporting an explicit subject, in this case one that is collective, an absence that makes itself present: the dead themselves (*lxs muertxs propixs*). We might think that in the very act of putting a wish into words (“wanting to talk”), Ivanna Aguilera is creating the first of the dislocations that, as we said before, this critique constructs: the one that operates on the symbolic limits of space.

In this sense, notice is given of an intention to narrate a memory, a bereavement, a conjunction of elements that are seen as absences in the hegemonic discourses about the recent past. By doing so, using the figure of *lxs 30.400*, Aguilera and Talbot Wright are denouncing the spatial boundaries that make the creation of shared meanings concerning memory possible, while taking by force the places that were not reserved for them to speak in and, from there, they dispute the right to build a common memory and to defy the boundaries in terms of which the legitimacy of any voice is defined. By disagreeing with such ideas they expand the frontiers of the hegemonic categorization of memory and commit

to being political subjects (*sujetxs politicxs*) with a capacity for narration. They intervene in the previously established geographies, and with the help of a numerical figure – so dear to the human rights cause in our country – and enrich the field of production of meanings for memory. They are definitely trialing a passage through which to coin a memory, that is trans, transvestite, homosexual, lesbian, intersex and more; and they also denounce the fact that to deny the political character of a body that goes against the norm is “to make invisible the fact that the hetero cis-gender is a compulsory regime that administers positions and acts of violence in a social field that is structurally inequitable and hierarchical” (Talbot Wright in Villafañe, 2020, par. 17)

After making the first of these reflections, we shall take up some elements that both referents (*ambxs*), propose, and that in our interpretation, produce a second dislocation, on this occasion, one that is temporal. In this way, we observe how this temporal dimension arises when the problem of memory is presented in relation to acts of violence against bodies and LGBTINb+ subjectivities, which acquired particular density around the last dictatorship but are not confined to this mark of time, as they preceded it and continued after it. In this sense, Ivanna Aguilera proposes:

Policies of persecution against the LGTB collective started in a systematic and generalized manner during the dictatorship of Félix Uriburu. A plan of extermination with practices similar to, or worse than, those applied by the Nazis, came in with the dictatorship of Onganía (Aguilera in Ludueña and Gutiérrez, 2019, par. 8).

In the same vein, Talbot Wright makes an inference about the practices of making the sex-dissident population invisible in the field of human rights, maintaining that the existing

machismo does not bring it into view, even though “Since the nineteen thirties there have been attacks and persecutions of the LGTB+ collective perpetrated by the State. A lot of blood has been shed. And we are still burying female companions (*compañeras*).” (Talbot Wright in Ludueña and Gutiérrez, 2019, par. 15).

In these two fragments, we find with absolute clarity the continuity of repression that we have been referring to. The two referents (*lxs*), are dislocating the framing of memory in time, in two directions: towards a past that goes back to before the dictatorship, and towards a present that reaches into our days. The former referring specifically to the dictatorship of Uriburu which started in September 1930. It is worth saying that it amounted to the first of various events in Argentina, and in this context, by presenting it as a forerunner of the practices of detention, forced disappearance and murder of the last military dictatorship, both Aguilera and Talbot Wright are expanding the frontiers of time, by at least 46 years back. But at the same time they are expressing its continuation by using a present continuous tense: “we are still burying our companions (*compañeras*)”.

Without ignoring the struggle, and giving due recognition to human rights organizations, Talbot Wright, who had been a member of HIJOS⁸, suggests going farther than recognition, encouraging an epistemic reflection on memory, by proposing to us other ways of knowing and recognizing the memories, pointing out that “we should understand memory as a dynamic process should to incorporate, without excluding, things. It ought to incorporate problems, incorporate subjects who were and still are victims of a State that continues to apply practices of extermination” (Talbot Wright in Villafañe, 2020, par. 8).

Ivanna Aguilera in turn warns about a continuation of the practices against the LGBTINb+ population after the dictatorship, under different procedures or even applying the same forms which were used during the *de facto* government, such as raids, detentions and

murders. She does this by appealing to the category of genocide which, before being used in its judicial sense, was valued for underscoring the acts of violence that a particular population had to go through or was subjected to. Through this exercise of re-semanticizing suggested to us by Aguilera, new questions and complexities in the framework of the knot of memory are enabled:

Between 1983 and 1990 and thereabouts we had a terrible genocide against the trans population and transvestites. The police used agents left over from the dictatorship who formed different groups like the “butterfly chasers” (*cazamariposas*) (Aguilera in Cabral, 2019, par. 4).

We can see how, from these accounts, which we can also read as the politics of memory, a living complex is re-articulated of critiques and meanings, that fight for another way of recounting or telling (in the two senses explained above) the history that produces a shared memory. If we assume that the proposals by Ivanna Aguilera and Eugenio Talbot Wright can be analyzed as having provoked two dislocations – one spatial and one temporal –, we can then refer to what they present, for the problem between memory and sex-gender dissidences, as a repressive temporal-spatial cis/heterosexual continuum. This then allows us to note that: firstly, as anticipated earlier, the repression perpetrated by the State against the LGBTINb+ populations precedes the 1976 military dictatorship, and also continues into the present even after the recovery of the rule of law (temporal dimension); and secondly, that the geographical demarcations in the symbolic space of the places of enunciation that have been enabled – and are therefore restricted – for the creation of an LGBTINb+ memory, keep

realizing their problematic status every time a critique of the figure 30,000 (*la figura de lxs 30.000*) is placed on the agenda (spatial dimension).

2.2. “*Doubly disappeared (desaparecidxs)*”

Whole families were dismembered, separated never to come back together again. Mothers who lost their sons, men who would never return to see their wives and children. It was a time of obscurity and pain, so our elders told us. If they didn't die of hunger, they died of shame.

Moira Millán

As regards Moira Millán, to discuss the framing of memory implies bringing in, in the first instance, a question about the temporal frame in which the violence of the State is made a topic. From her particular point of expression, to speak of memory supposes questioning the exclusive association of State terrorism with the last military dictatorship, in so far as this involves circumscribing the violence to a stage of history and leaving out other periods when equally reprehensible practices took place. In this context, using the category of genocide⁹ in many of the cases makes it possible to the direct involvement of State of and the temporal variable of framed memory, because there is a demand for recognition of the practices of subjugation, exploitation, deportation, appropriation of boys and girls (*niñxs*) and a deconstruction of the community and/or family, that were carried out in the process of forming and consolidating the nation state from the end of the nineteenth century till half way through the twentieth century.

As we have shown in another study (Soria, accepted for publication), the denunciations made by this leaderess in the field of memory, underscore time and again the persistence of a State machinery that brings in a hegemonic temporality, in which certain practices of the State are obscured and others are brought to light. In relation to which, in her declarations, genocide is linked to racism, precisely because the critique of the temporal framework that associates the memory with the dictatorship of the nineteen seventies involves making the charge that that association is due to a racist structuring of our society, that is, to the impossibility of valuing other deaths and disappearances as worthy of remembrance. Structural racism is linked to the impossibility of seeing and recognizing other forms of genocide that claim a different status in the shared memory. In an interview, Moira Millán points out this impossibility of recognizing the genocide of the indigenous peoples:

Many things have happened in Argentina. There is a resistance. We (*nosotras*) say there was a process of Argentinianizing that was effected through a genocide. They do not want to be the result of a bloody laboratory, no one wants to think of themselves like that. The de-colonial perspective does not appeal to patriots. De-colonial is used to refer to the invasion of America by Europe. Sometimes to US imperialism, and no more. After the disappearance and murder of Santiago Maldonado in Wallmapu¹⁰ part of the Argentinian population discovered that there was a conflict over lands in the south of the country, and that this conflict was questioning the latifundia created by big business people, many of them foreigners (Millán in Fornaro, 2020, párr. 12).

These words show how hard it is to call genocide a series of practices that from the perspective of certain narratives associated with the history of the nation cannot be seen as such because of their value to the constitution of the nation state. Although the fact that the history of the nation has undergone significant revisions cannot be ignored, this has not meant necessarily that practices and facts linked to moments in the constitution of the nation have been covered by the concept of genocide. For this reason, Moira Millán denounces the impossibility of placing in this category many of the practices that she calls “party of a bloody laboratory”, because to do so would imply destabilizing the most intimate fibers of the national imaginary in which even today the indigenous components represent an exception that proves the rule, that is to say, they express a stereotype constructed by the sovereign power of the State which identifies them as a potential threat to the integrity of the nation (Delrio, Escolar, Lenton, Malvestitti and Pérez, 2018)¹¹.

The dispute over memory, therefore, amounts to a struggle to broaden the margins of the memorable and to re-signify the events that are remembered, and this is conducted through a re-reading of history from two angles: racism and genocide. This broadening and re-signifying form, in effect, a commitment to reading against the grain which results in two complementary effects: on the one hand, a de-structuring of the image of a white Europeanized Argentine nation; on the other, a re-inscription of the indigenous histories in the past and the present. Such a re-inscription sheds light not only on the practices of the past, that made the indigenous an object of persecution and repression, but also undoes the assumption of an extinction by making a voice heard in the present that may also be a legitimate and authorized instance of the historical account. Questioning the fiction of an Argentina “that came off the boats”, Moira Millán puts it this way: “we need to do much deeper work [...] if we are to be able to get back to recovering historical truth, recognition

of the indigenous nations, and be able to continue to build a different account” (Millán on TeleSURtv, 2019).

This insistence on broadening the temporal margins in relation to which the practice of the State is defined as genocide is not, however, limited to the simple question of reframing the facts of the past, but concerns a dispute from and by the present, in the sense that genocide is not only what happened but what continues to happen: “mega mining, hydroelectric projects, fracking, the stealing of community lands, institutional violence, racism, judicial persecution, harassment, para-police violence, feminicides and femicides, indigenous infanticide, violation of constitutional rights, all of them genocidal practices and policies that have been perpetuated for over 500 years” (Millán, 2019a). From this perspective, then, we can interpret the problem as not being just a dispute over another version of history, but a dispute in which a political subject (*un sujetx políticx*) seeks to *make a place* for him or herself in the present, so as to radically rearticulate from there the relation between past, present and future.

This last point allows us to highlight the spatial dimension that is linked to the temporal dimension just described, and gives a form to what we have called the temporal-spatial knot of memory. From the margins – to which the racialized bodies of the nation were historically expelled – breaks in this voice, that challenges the hegemonic cartography and redirects its constitutive fictions to the center of the debate. From this place of enunciation, space works as the metaphor of a gesture that makes itself into a place, and moves other common (sacred?) spaces of the political community. When Moira tells us that “the territory has a memory” she condenses the force of this gesture, moves, pushes, dislocates and disarms the order of what is possible, disorders and restores the pieces of shared memory. On the occasion of the commemoration of the 24th of March¹², in 2019, she would say:

Of two genocides, the first unpunished, and not even questioned by the governments in power that have followed it, we remember the second today, and a large part of Argentine society condemns it. Not so the genocidal campaign of Julio Argentino Roca, who even today still has a great monument set up to honor him [...] But the territories have a memory and it is cyclical; everything comes back to repeat itself if it is not repaired, that is justice. For us the original peoples have never had memory, truth and justice. That is why the genocide continues [...] A while back I visited the Museum of Memory for the first time, and there's a computer there where you can write the name of a male or female disappeared person (*algún desaparecid@*) and then this person appears on the record with their personal data, age, political activity and the day they went missing: I wrote three Mapuche names for whom I have the year and the circumstances in which they were made to disappear, from what I was told by their relatives, some of them working men, others fighting for their territories, and I even put in the name of a *lamngen*¹³ who was dragged off during the dictatorship and tortured and imprisoned for a while and then released. To my surprise, these names were not among the 30,000, and it hurt my spirit like a blow, they are doubly disappeared [...] Is the list of 30,000 only of white victims? (Millán, 2019b, par. 1, 2 and 3)

The disappearances were also of indigenous people, Moira reminds us, and by doing so she weakens the idea of *our* forcibly disappeared people (*nuestrxs desaparecidxs*) that is associated with the 30,000 (*lxs 30.000*). And to the extent that this piece does not find its place in the puzzle, the shared memory will still remain, not so much incomplete, as unjust.

In other words, the problem is not how to complete it, but how to disarm the very framing of memory: its spaces, its names, its marks of intelligibility, its devices for making things visible. Who and what is talked about in the shared history? Through which procedures is the visibility of the tortured and forcibly disappeared bodies instituted? In these questions, which resound like an echo of the experience of Moira in the Museum of Memory (Museo de la Memoria), the figure of *lxs desaparecidxs* as a term condensing the horror of a historical time has imploded, but it is an implosion that does not seek to destroy it just to reveal the foundations and the materials it is made of, rather, in order to be able from there to place within their own boundaries *other* people who were forced to disappear (*otrxs desaparecidxs*).

In this regard, the metaphor of space allows us to name the exercise of a practice that presses to make a place for itself in the field of disappearances that we remember as a political community, but in this case, rather than a computation, what is claimed is the possibility of telling the horror and the pain, and other horrors and pains that also speak of disappearances. It is as though in this exercise the extension of a longitude or a geometry – that of the disappeared of both sexes (*lxs desaparecidxs*) –, were called for, in order to redefine the boundaries that allow other victims to cry, now that the rhetorical question “is the list of 30,000 only of white victims?”, can no longer refer only to the well-known image of the “militants of the 1970s”.

3. The conclusion so far (or: notes on the time and the space between one knot and another)

Taking up again the image of a knot that Julieta Kirkwood was able to give us for thinking about the fate of feminism, and bearing in mind that this evocation makes it possible to

understand the relation between growth and transformation, in this closing section we would like to pause on the richness of this image for problematizing the policy and the policies of memory and memories of the time we are living in. When she spoke of knots, the Chilean thinker mentioned trunks, plants, growths and projections; in this sense, trees and plants have a common feature: every knot is at the same time the birth of a corner. It is known that from the knots that plants have on their stems, new buds grow; that the space on the stem between one knot and another is called an internode, and therefore all the stems of a plant are united by knots and internodes; at the same time we know that in certain conditions, the knots on some trees – even fallen ones – if placed in water are very likely to produce new shoots. Also if a knot is cut out of a tree it is very likely that the tree itself will die.

Hence the vitality of the knot, its indispensable character for the living movement of that which, even though it has an orientation, depends on the “wrong courses” that the knots trace out, because in this dependency lies the re-orientation of a geometry that does not have its meaning prefigured. In effect, these ideas or images encourage a way of thinking about the politics of memory in our particular context: its actual configuration, far from representing partiality or an incorrect reading of the rights it covers, is the product of hegemonic expressions open to discussion and re-signification. The particular ties between space and time suggested by Eugenio Talbot Wright, Ivanna Aguilera and Moira Millán are just that: uncomfortable knots that are however necessary for re-thinking the politics of memory in terms of sex-gender and anti-racist dissidences.

On the basis of our interpretation of the interventions by these three male or female activists (*estxs activistas*), we intend to show how their readings against the grain in the field of memory show space and time as knots that work like folds, from which a question springs up: “which memory?” The dimension of space comes into play where – each in his or her

own way (*cada unx a su modo*) – the body comes on the scene, and animates itself to live in the space of what has been instituted as shared in order to test bringing in what Rancière (2007) calls the geometry of the political community, that is, the sharing out of the “parts” of the community. By occupying public space and challenging the spatial organization of rights, the voices of Eugenio Talbot Wright, Ivanna Aguilera and Moira Millán, introduce a break-up of the perceived order. In other words, they *make politics* to the extent that they “displace a body from the place it had been assigned to, or change the destiny of a place; make visible what there had been no reason to see, and make a discourse to be heard where there had only been noise” (Rancière, 2007, p. 45).

This making of politics is also making themselves political subjects (*sujetxs políticxs*); because while they displace the sacred sites of memory, they also (*ellxs mismxs*) are displaced to other sites, sites that had not been assigned to them but that they occupy all the same, in order to fill them with a voice that proclaims their right to speak. Doing this, the gesture is twofold: they change the account of the parts of the political community in order to be able at the same time to say that something else counts. What counts? These bodies, not hetero-regulated and not whitewashed, that reclaim their place in the shared memory, an appeal that is not made from the multicultural discourse of celebrating and welcoming diversity, but from a dislocation of the times of history and the equipped spaces of the political community. Following the same line of thought, the discussion goes beyond simply incorporating minor histories into the shared memory, in so far as the way of timing, of establishing the limits and periods of time, is disarmed, so as to be able from there on to get other times, those of the experiences of injustice, to gain entry.

In this way, these activists (*estxs activistxs*) do not seek to institute themselves as voices within the discourse on diversity, but as voices with a right to tell. Thus to speak of

the 30,400 (“*lxs 30.400*”) and the doubly disappeared (“*lxs doblemente desaparecidxs*”) is actually much more than it seems to be at first sight, because its effect is to trace a wound in the field of the meanings of “the” memory – singular –, to introduce a twist, a knot, a growing corner, which then makes it possible to speak of memories, this time in the plural. Whether by marking out the fiction of race or of gender, the struggles of Moira Millán, Ivanna Aguilera and Eugenio Talbot Wright are on the same team in this endeavor pushing from the margins towards a center – The Center – in order to provoke the “flash” that illuminates our present, as aptly noted by Benjamin .

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¹ As an exercise in politically inclusive language, and in order to avoid reducing the categories and/or identities of sex and gender to a binary scheme of male and female, in the original Spanish the letter “x” is used, to stand at the same time for the masculine ending “o”, and the female ending “a”.

² To support this claim we have had recourse to the concept of radical contextualism (Grossberg, 2006 and 2009) and to a particular re-reading of the concept of articulation (Hall, 2010). In this framework, the notion of context supposes starting from a postulate of the priority of the relation, which implies that no practice or event may be thought of outside a series of historical and political relations and/or articulations.

³ The place of our reading is in conversation with and is inspired by the work of Barros and Quintana (2020). Thinking of the unanticipated displacements of the human rights movements in our country, these writers highlight the heuristic value of the category of political promise of the performative, from Butler and Athanasiou (2017), for pointing out the meanings not imagined in advance that lodge in the political.

⁴ We use the abbreviation LGBTINb+ to refer to people who feel themselves to be either lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transvestite/transsexual, intersex, non-binary and/or of any other assumed identity at odds with the modern pattern of cis- or hetero-sexuality. As noted by Vaggione (2008):

“Although like any acronym it reduces the multiplicity of identifications, this one has a history of being inclusive which is why it has developed variations.” (p. 13)

⁵ The number 30,000 corresponds to the officially estimated quantity of people who were detained, forcibly made to disappear and/or assassinated at the instigation of the last civic-ecclesiastical-military dictatorship, in the framework of state terrorism and a plan of systematic detention, disappearance and torture.

⁶ *La Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, The National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, was a decentralized organization, depending on the National Executive Power, created in 1983 by the president of the time, Dr. Raúl Alfonsín. Its objective was to investigate the disappearances perpetrated during the last military dictatorship. Personalities from different sectors took part in the CONADEP, and the final report, called *Nunca Más*, Never Again, was submitted to the presidency of the nation in September 1984, which made it possible to prove the existence of a systematic plan of disappearance, torture and death developed by the terrorism of the State.

⁷ Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer was an outstanding figure recognized internationally for his decisive commitment to the defense of human rights in general, and of the Jewish community in particular. Recognized by broad sectors of international politics, from his place of residence in Argentina he devoted himself to the defense of democracy and a repudiation of the dictatorships that fell on our America. He was the only foreign member of the CONADEP, and it was he who suggested that the title of the final report should contain the motto used by the men and women who survived (*lxs sobrevivientes*) the ghetto in Warsaw established by Nazi Germany: “Never Again”.

⁸ Argentinian human rights organization “*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*”, Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence, most of whose members are the sons and daughters of men and women who disappeared (*hijxs de desaparecidxs*) during the last dictatorship in the country.

⁹ In the context of the re-opening of democracy, many indigenous militant groups and organizations began to use the terms genocide and ethnocide in their political demands. The academic world in turn also began to discuss the implications and the scope of these concepts for giving an account of the relation between the State and indigenous peoples. However, as was shown by Delrio, Escolar, Lenton, Malvestitti and Pérez (2018), the term genocide has come up against greater resistances, because its popularized meaning associates it with physical extermination, and this would require a radical questioning of the imaginaries sustaining the formation of the nation-state. For a detailed approach to these discussions, it is possible to consult the studies compiled in Delrio, Escolar, Lenton and Malvestitti (2018) and Lenton (2011).

¹⁰ In Mapudungun, this term refers, in general, to the territory inhabited by the Mapuche-Tehuelche people before the military campaigns and the process of installing the nation's borders.

¹¹ In recent years we have seen how various situations of conflict have encouraged political and media constructions promoting the idea that the indigenous peoples are a threat. Let us remember, for example, how, during the government of Mauricio Macri the idea was fomented that particular Mapuche militant groups were "terrorists" (Briones and Ramos, 2017; Lenton, 2017; Muzzopappa and Ramos, 2017a y 2017b; Soria, 2019). Also in the current context of a global pandemic and compulsory social isolation, there is no shortage of stigmatizing constructions that have arisen around the idea that the indigenous people of either sex (*lxs indígenas*) are virus transmitters, or of examples of institutional violence that found their justification in the supposed violation of a compulsory quarantine (La Nación 2020; Página 12, 2020; Huerquen Comunicación, 2020).

¹² The 24th of March 1976 is the date on which the last military dictatorship in Argentina began. In 2002, law N° 25.633 made it the National Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice, *Día Nacional de la Memoria por la Verdad y la Justicia*, to commemorate the victims of acts of State terrorism.

¹³ In Mapudungun, sister.