



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Polgovsky Ezcurra, Mara (2018) Beyond evil: politics, ethics and religion in León Ferrari's Illustrated Nunca más. *Art Journal* 77 (3), pp. 20-47. ISSN 0004-3249.

Downloaded from: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/26029/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

This is an Author's Manuscript of an article scheduled for the Fall 2018 issue of Art Journal; the final peer-reviewed and edited version will be available online in October 2018 at <http://www.tandfonline.com/>.

Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra

Beyond Evil: Politics, Ethics and Religion in León Ferrari's Illustrated *Nunca más*

On December 1, 2004, the former archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio (the current Pope Francis I), published an open letter in response to the Argentine artist León Ferrari's retrospective exhibition, which had opened at Centro Cultural Recoleta (CCR) the night before. Addressed to his dear *hijos y hermanos* (sons and brothers), the letter outlined concerns about certain "offences directed at our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Virgin Mary," resulting from public expressions against "moral and religious values." In particular, Bergoglio confessed to being *dolido* (hurt) by what he called a "blasphemy" perpetrated at Recoleta on the occasion of a visual arts exhibition financed with the money of "Christian people" and the taxes of "persons of good will." Yet the archbishop added that neither he nor Christians should be fearful, for Jesus had already warned them such things would happen. Rather, he invited the religious community to turn the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 7) into a day of penitence by fasting and praying, so the Lord might one day forgive their sins and those of *la ciudad* (the city).¹

By treating Ferrari's art as a religious offence for which Christians should do penance, Bergoglio triggered what may be considered the most important debate on the relationship between art and religion in recent Argentine history. This debate was accompanied by legal disputes to close and then reopen the show, recurrent bomb threats to Recoleta, and the destruction of some of the artist's works by religious fanatics, an act that caused minor injuries to a member of the public.² The exhibition venue was adjacent to the Church of Our Lady of Pilar in the historical Recoleta Plaza. Given the proximity of those buildings, one of the most striking

features of the conflict was the organization of mass prayers outside CCR in an attempt to exorcise “evil” from the venue. Aware that the artist, his work, and one of the most important exhibitions of his career were under threat, local and international artists, curators, academics, and art institutions organized a solidarity campaign to support Ferrari, Nora Hochbaum (then the acting director of CCR) and Andrea Giunta, the curator. A number of public demonstrations in defense of freedom of expression ensued. The Ferrari “affair” thus involved the temporary closure of the exhibition by judicial order, its later reopening following an appeal from the Buenos Aires city council, and its final, early, closure, when the artist decided to put an end to the scandal and the many risks to his life and works that it arguably entailed.³

Largely as a consequence of this series of events, but also as a result of the artist’s long-held critical attitudes toward church and state, Ferrari became widely known as one of Argentina’s *enfants terribles*, an artist who divided large swaths of society—going well beyond those who had seen and experienced his work first-hand—into two strongly opposed groups, those for and those against him. In the clashes between the two camps, commentators often reduced the meaning of Ferrari’s art to a single and transparent intention: that of wanting to launch an attack against the Catholic faith. The Argentine cultural historian Adrián Gorelik described this visibly simplistic understanding of a belated form of avant-garde art in Argentina as an unintended consequence of its incorporation into major exhibition spaces and other institutional dynamics of public recognition.⁴ Yet Ferrari’s strategies to critique and rework past and present relationships between politics, ethics, and religion require further discussion, beyond sheer processes of institutional appropriation. In particular, in this essay I seek to understand the visual strategies through which the artist intervened in the politics of memory in post-dictatorship Argentina. To do so I focus on the artist’s interest in the cultural conditions leading

to the singular brutality of the last dictatorial regime in the country (1976–83) and their relationship, in particular, to Christian iconography and belief.

I address this question by focusing on Ferrari's series of collages *Nunca más* (Never Again, 1995–96), named after the homonymous 1984 human rights report by the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, CONADEP). Crafted more than a decade after the report's original release, Ferrari's images provided a visual rereading of what had been the first extensive investigation of the human rights violations committed during the last military regime in this country (1976-83). In these works, the artist followed the tradition of political collage and photomontage, thus continuing his previous engagement with both assemblage and textual collage in works such as *La civilización occidental y cristiana* (Western Christian Civilization, 1965) and *Palabras ajenas* (The Words of the Others, 1967) respectively. Yet the artist also engaged with the punitive religious symbolism present in what are often considered to be the masterpieces of Western art, juxtaposing them with Argentine, as well as Nazi, political and church leaders. Taking into account both the artist's use of montage and these references to Christian iconography, I question below the reductive interpretation of these works as constituting, collectively, an attack on religion. Instead I posit that they articulate a critique of the vicious effects of practicing politics as a moralizing enterprise. Furthermore, I argue that despite the polemic nature of several of Ferrari's images, the reading of them as an attack on Christianity (as asserted in Bergoglio's letter) allows only a superficial understanding of the artist's use of collage as medium. Indeed, a religiously Manichean approach to Ferrari's art obscures the workings of this combinatory aesthetic in the shaping of the artist's penetrating critique both of the uses of religion and the uses of the image.

Never Again

Ferrari's *Nunca más* responded to an invitation by the left-wing newspaper *Página/12* to create an illustrated version of the text that has come to be most closely associated with the last experience of military rule in Argentina: the 1984 human rights report by CONADEP, which investigated the practice of “forced disappearance” during a seven-year suspension of democracy in the country.⁵ Recognized today by international law, forced disappearance refers to a specific form of repression that the Argentine military systematically practiced during the years of military rule.⁶ It involves the simultaneous violation of several human rights, beginning with the suppression of the victim's freedom and often leading to his or her murder, followed by the eradication of any traces of the corpse. Disappearances were often carried out in broad daylight by heavily armed military or paramilitary groups dressed in civilian clothes; those who were disappeared (the *chupados*, or those sucked up) were taken to clandestine detention centers to be tortured, enslaved, and, in the case of pregnant women, deprived of their offspring. Thousands of disappeared people were thrown into the River Plate, dead or alive, while others were buried anonymously in mass graves. Despite local protest and international pressure, the military government continuously declined habeas corpus petitions; a number of relatives involved in the search for their loved ones were disappeared too.⁷

Although many of those forcibly disappeared were people engaged in political activism, many were not. According to CONADEP, the majority of them were working-class men in their twenties, 30 percent of the disappeared were women, a third of whom were pregnant. The seemingly random selection of men and women as victims of authoritarian violence was part and

parcel of a repressive strategy that sought to generate fear among the populace, a strategy that turned out to be infamously effective.⁸ Studies and opinions differ with respect to the total number of people forcibly disappeared in Argentina during the years of military rule, yet human rights organizations have stated that up to thirty thousand people went missing during that period in which the entirety of the country was living under a state of exception.⁹

Formed by well-known members of civil society including religious authorities, and led by the writer Ernesto Sábato, CONADEP was instituted during the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín, only days after the country's return to democracy in December 1983.¹⁰ The commission's original objectives were: 1) to establish the whereabouts of the victims of forced disappearance after the 1976 military coup, 2) to receive complaints by victims of human rights violations and refer them to the judicial system, and 3) to identify children born in clandestine detention centers and illegally "appropriated" (that is, given up for adoption). The final five-hundred-page report contained hundreds of testimonial accounts, a provisional list of disappeared people and detention centers, an analysis of the profiles of the victims, and a detailed description of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations, including physical and psychological torture. This makes reading the document an emotional and often shocking experience.

Sábato handed the completed report to Alfonsín on live television on September 20, 1984. As the sociologist Emilio Crenzel documents, the text was initially rejected, not only by the military but also by members of the Peronist party and some human rights organizations. Among the latter, Peronists claimed the report favored Alfonsín's administration, thus questioning the authority of CONADEP; human rights organizations, in turn, opposed the report's defense of the "two demons" thesis, whereby left-wing groups, such as Montoneros and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), were deemed just as responsible as the military for

the violence that struck Argentina in 1976.¹¹ Yet *Nunca más* gained legitimacy when it formed the main corpus of evidence in the 1985 trials of the three military juntas that ruled Argentina during the entirety of the dictatorship. Indeed, regardless of its possible omissions, biases, and flaws, the text provided the first wholesale account of the systematic violation of human rights by the military regime and, despite new and revisionist readings, it remains the most widespread narrative of those years.¹² By 2007, the report had been edited multiple times and translated into several languages; it had also sold more than five hundred thousand copies in book form, reaching an outstandingly large readership for a publication on human rights.¹³

Ferrari's was the first "illustrated" version of *Nunca más*, and its publication took place at a time when the problem of political disappearances had acquired renewed importance. This return of the traumatic past responded to the shocking confessions of Adolfo Scilingo, an ex-navy captain, in March 1995. Breaching the military pact of silence for the first time since the end of the dictatorship, in a series of long interviews with the journalist Horacio Verbitsky, Scilingo described in detail the process by which presumed political activists were kidnapped, tortured, and thrown alive from aircraft into the River Plate. These descriptions of the cruelty and magnitude of such ruthless practices—which, evoking the Holocaust, Verbitsky published with the title "La solución final" (The Final Solution)¹⁴—generated public distress, "throwing into relief not just the day-to-day methods of the repression but also the wide spectrum of *internal* factors that enabled it."¹⁵ For Emilio Mignone, a high-profile human rights activist and father of a *desaparecida*, the "Scilingo effect" led society at large to "confront its own denial" or "tacit approval" of clandestine state crimes, and was accompanied by a growing consciousness of the need to construct a lasting memory of the recent past, given the ongoing process of generational change.¹⁶

In view of these circumstances, between July 14, 1995, and February 2, 1996, the newspaper *Página/12* offered its readers the *Nunca más* report in thirty fascicules (of seventy-five thousand copies each), accompanied by Ferrari's images. This new publication not only represented the largest reprint of the report but also included materials that had been omitted after the first edition, such as a list of names of disappeared people. More important, according to Crenzel the coming together of text and image in the illustrated *Nunca más* "resignified" the canonical text, by inserting the dictatorial past into a larger history of crimes perpetrated in the name of morality and civilization. This process of historical resignification resulted from the artist's use of what Crenzel calls "historical collage"; an aesthetic strategy which, he claims, led to the creation of a series of images grounded in a "philosophy of history where present, past, and future have one and the same meaning."¹⁷

Crenzel's interpretation of these images signals a thought-provoking visual reworking of historical time in Ferrari's work. Yet it also fails to account for important temporal contrasts within singular panels—manifest in the juxtaposition of different mediums, such as Renaissance painting and late twentieth-century photojournalism. Before looking at these images in detail, however, it is important to note that resignifying *Nunca más* was not Ferrari's original or stated intention when he accepted *Página/12*'s invitation to illustrate the report. His selection from among other artists was not only the result of his artistic talent and left-wing political sympathies, but also reflected his status as a victim of the dictatorship.¹⁸ In October 1976 Ferrari and eight members of the family fled Argentina after receiving threats against the life of his son Ariel, and fearing for the safety of the family as a whole. Once established in São Paulo, they continued to live with fear, as Ariel had refused to leave the country and could send them letters only occasionally. In February 1977 Ferrari stopped receiving news from his son; after a year of

silence, in 1978 he learnt Ariel had been shot dead by a high-ranking member of the navy, and his body then taken to Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA), Argentina's largest clandestine detention center at that time.¹⁹ After the loss of his son, Ferrari became a vocal member of the human rights movement, showing in this context deference for the CONADEP report, and viewing it as a vivid account of a shared traumatic past: "I think *Nunca más* is untouchable," wrote Ferrari in a newspaper article; "I'm only adding a graphic commentary."²⁰

Crafted more than a decade after the establishment of CONADEP, this "graphic commentary" was also meant to provide an up-to-date vision of the years of dictatorship, incorporating new knowledge—notably Scilingo's revelations—and new perspectives. "In this way," Ferrari continued, "one can produce a book that is still the original version, while adding a contemporary perspective on what happened almost twenty years ago. This indicates that despite the passing of time, we do not forget and we bring the past into the present."²¹ As he described his artistic intention and politics of memory, Ferrari did not raise the question of whether political disappearance could indeed be illustrated or whether this condition belonged instead to the realm of the unrepresentable. For him, the central problem was how to combat historical amnesia and "keep the past alive."²² Yet in his interpretation of the series Crenzel argues that

Ferrari's intervention challenged and *desacralizaba* (de-sacralized) the supposedly "ineffable" or "indescribable" character of the horror in two ways; by illustrating an extreme process in which all representation could appear insufficient or inadequate, and, at the same time, by doing this on the very text that provides the canonical narrative of this past.²³

A close reading of Ferrari's collages effectively suggests that they perform a critique of the purported unrepresentability of extreme political violence. This aesthetic-political operation develops by means of three central strategies, which articulate important shifts in narrative from the original *Nunca más* report. First, the works move away from an understanding of the dictatorship as a singular historical "event" by situating it within a wider and continuous history of violence against bodies in the West. Second, they posit a close relationship between Christian morality and religious art, on the one hand, and the forms of physical punishment enforced by the military, on the other. Finally, by decontextualizing and recirculating photographs that were originally published in the media, these works highlight the complicity between church and state during the military regime, while challenging the idea that this union was invisible to society at large.²⁴ These strategies reflect formal and conceptual preoccupations that are present in earlier approaches to collage by the artist, such as the 1967 literary collage entitled *Palabras ajenas: Conversaciones de Dios con algunos hombres y de algunos hombres con algunos hombres y con Dios* (often translated either as *Alien Words; Listen, Here, Now!*; or *The Words of Others*) and the 1976 archive of newspaper cuttings *Nosotros no sabíamos* (We did Not Know).²⁵ *Nunca más* must also be understood in relation to the visual rereading of the Bible which the artist developed during the second half of the 1980s, involving illustrations of biblical passages that combine—by way of montage—works from the European artistic canon with photographs of world history, particularly World War II. (Figure 1) However, the singularity of the artist's illustrated *Nunca más* lies in its direct critical engagement with the text of the CONADEP report. Moreover, these images give visibility to what the artist understood as a sort of "ethical Zeitgeist" leading to the brutal forms of repression which characterized the last military regime in Argentina—and their

implicit or explicit approval by large sections of society, including high-ranking members of the Catholic Church.

Ferrari's *Nunca más* collages totaled between seventy-five and eighty, two or three per fascicule. These images stand in stark contrast with the twenty-seven photographs included in the original 1984 publication, taken by the CONADEP with the strict purpose of documenting the existence of clandestine detention centers.²⁶ When asked by a journalist how he chose the graphic materials to create his works, Ferrari responded:

Since the dictatorship declared itself Catholic and enjoyed a close relationship with the church, it occurred to me to illustrate the crimes described in the book, the crimes of the Catholic dictators, alongside the crimes of their religion, the crimes and exterminations described in the sacred scripture: the Flood, the Egyptian firstborn, apocalypse, hell, etc. And also to connect the conduct of the dictatorship with that of the Christian authors of historical exterminations: the conquest of America, the Spanish Inquisition, witch-hunting, Nazism, and discrimination against homosexuals, women, Jews, heretics, unbelievers, and so forth.²⁷

With these words, Ferrari positions religion center stage in his collages. He defines the last Argentine dictatorship not on the basis of its economic or social policies but on the basis of the Catholic beliefs that shaped official discourses as well as educational and cultural programs. Along the same lines, the historians Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo have identified conservative Catholicism as one of the most “stable components of military culture in Argentina” throughout the twentieth century and have also deemed traditional religious values as

instrumental in the definition of the last military regime's ideological orientation.²⁸ Catholicism was intrinsic to official rhetoric and was often mobilized to discredit political opposition as “degenerate,” immoral, and/or anti-Christian. However, a direct association between the Argentine military and Catholic religion risks simplifying this political history and sidelining the hierarchical and punitive character of the institution of the army itself, the problems associated with this institution heading an unelected government, and the role played by other doctrines, such as the National Security Doctrine, in the definition of the actions and programs that shaped the last Argentine military regime. This view also fails to account for diversity in belief and practice within the Catholic faith. Aware of the necessity of considering this larger context, in the following pages I argue that a close visual analysis of the artist's images can move beyond a Manichaeian and strictly antireligious reading of Ferrari's art and reveal complex relationships between, on the one hand, Ferrari's critique of the entwinement of politics and religion, and on the other, his critique of “high art,” continuing a denunciatory tradition of avant-garde collage. I will also argue that Ferrari's collages are themselves a revision of certain strategies commonly used by human rights organizations to represent the disappeared. Ultimately, the artist's treatment of religion in these images constitutes the axis guiding his interest in understanding the sociocultural conditions leading to the military's rise to power.

Beyond the Unrepresentable

On the cover of the first fascicule of the illustrated *Nunca más*, Ferrari fused a reproduction of Gustave Doré's *Great Flood* (1865–66), from the French artist's illustrated Bible engravings, with a picture of the military junta that seized power in 1976. (Figure 2) Doré's apocalyptic

image portrays a fearful and seemingly indivisible collectivity in which naked men, women, and children embrace one another to avoid falling victim to the monster-inhabited waves. This landscape of despair thus becomes the background against which the military chiefs Emilio Eduardo Massera, Jorge Rafael Videla, and Orlando Ramón Agosti—pictured in black and white and appearing from left to right in the foreground—perform a rigid salute in their gala uniforms. The generals turn their backs on the anguished bodies, seeming indifferent to their cries for mercy. At the bottom of the collage, Argentina's upturned coat of arms serves as their pulpit. The organization of this collage is noteworthy in that the generals' salute is directed straight at the contemporary reader of *Página/12's Nunca más*. The iconographic choice to open this new version of the human rights report therefore reveals a sense of urgency not only to come to terms with Argentina's history of state violence, but also to examine the cultural conditions that rendered repression, disappearance, and the systematic use of torture possible (and even acceptable, among some). Confronted anew with this military salute, how would the Argentine population respond? This is the provocative gesture of Ferrari's initial collage.

Positioning Doré's anguished bodies behind those members of the army who led the dictatorship during its bloodiest, initial years produces a visual analogy between the victims of this regime and those who, according to Scripture, were punished by God during the biblical Flood. This reference to the Flood narrative evokes, in particular, Silingo's confession that the disappeared were thrown alive into the River Plate from Air Force helicopters. Doré's well-known engraving is part of a series of nearly two hundred fifty images commissioned in 1865 to become an illustrated version of the Bible, a work that has, in turn, been considered to be "of prime importance in the history of nineteenth-century art."²⁹ These illustrations were indeed reprinted to accompany versions of the Bible in several European languages as well as in

Hebrew. The French artist was himself a Catholic and has been described as making a conscious spiritual effort when drafting his illustrated Bible to study the text carefully, refusing to follow accepted iconography and always reimagining directly from the holy book.³⁰ Both the social and aesthetic results of his efforts were momentous; according to Millicent Rose, “Doré’s illustrations of Old and New Testament scenes became the formative visions of Scripture in innumerable homes, particularly in the New World.”³¹

The engraving that figures in this initial collage is entitled *The World Destroyed by Water* and refers to Genesis 6:7. In Doré’s original, it is accompanied by a biblical passage that reads: “And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” Commentary on this text describes the rightfulness of God’s decision to devastate a wicked world; Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary, for instance, speaks of “God’s just wrath, and his holy resolution to punish.”³² Accordingly, Doré’s image contrives to figure the weakness of humankind before the wrath of God, together with the immense suffering caused by this divine sanction. None of the human or animal creatures that appear in the picture seem to have any possibility of salvation, nor does the natural world that surrounds them; Noah’s ark appears in the background, engulfed in an atmosphere of darkness and despair. In the use of this image for his collage, it was crucial for Ferrari to evoke the biblical rendering of the Flood as a “just punishment.” Here, as Derek Kidner states in his commentary on Genesis, the sin of some “must bring forth death.” For Kidner, God’s divine will is not only always just but also beyond human rationale or argument, since “with God the truth of a situation prevails, regardless of majorities and minorities.”³³ Ferrari’s selection of this image to open his illustrated *Nunca más* therefore suggests that the Argentine military fully appropriated this logic. For the artist, the

generals' self-definition as the voice of righteous Christianity resulted in the adoption of a fierce and shameless punitive model, unresponding to any civil law and disposed to wipe out those considered to have sinned against the nation and many more "collateral" victims—equally deserving of military wrath, according to this same rationale.

The junta's seeming obeisance to religious law rather than civic rule figures in a second collage. (Figure 3) This image establishes a direct dialogue with the series' initial collage, this time portraying a member of the army who does not face but instead turns his back against the spectator. That is, here, Ferrari depicts an officer—possibly Massera—from behind as he performs a military salute before the Christian cross. Surrounding the image is the macabre medieval engraving *Infernal Tortures*, from *Le grant Kalendrier des Bergiers*, printed by Nicolas le Rouge in 1496. In Ferrari's chosen detail of this work, which occupies a large area of the pictorial space, we can observe demons brutally torturing female and male bodies. The forms of abuse portrayed recall those described in the CONADEP report, in which those who survived after being taken to detention centers tell of having been fettered before being subjected to rape and merciless attacks on their reproductive organs.³⁴

Ferrari's suggested analogy between the victims of the military regime and the anonymous anguished bodies experiencing the consequences of God's rage is not without consequences in relation to the narrative of the CONADEP report. Emilio Crenzel argues, for instance, that the correspondence between Doré's drowning bodies and the victims of state repression "offers a representation that shatters the unrepresentable and intangible condition of the disappeared, granting to disappearance an epic and grandiose quality that is absent in the dehumanization of death implicit in this crime."³⁵ While I question Crenzel's observation that Ferrari's illustrated *Nunca más* suspends the oft-alleged dehumanization of victims of human

rights abuses during the military regime, the critic signals a fundamental political-aesthetic operation present in Ferrari's images: that of critiquing the purported singularity of the Argentine dictatorship and the accompanying belief in the unrepresentability of its crimes.

The characterization of this bloody political experience as a form of unrepresentable human suffering largely results from its association with Nazi Germany, and the depiction of the Holocaust by Jean-François Lyotard and others as unrepresentable. As Andreas Huyssen suggests, "The Holocaust has provided a prism through which to read other cases of genocide, State violence, specters of destruction, and national and racial purity."³⁶ Reading the Argentine experience in the light of the Holocaust has not only been commonplace, but, according to Hugo Vezzetti, has had major consequences for how the dictatorship has been memorialized: rather than accounting for the actions and failings of competing groups, testimonial and historical narratives of the Argentine dictatorship have tended to focus on the repressive actions of a fascist state, the experiences of its victims, and the voices of those who witnessed horror.³⁷

Lyotard discusses "Auschwitz"—his metonym for the Holocaust—in relation to his concept of *différend*, namely, as "the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase."³⁸ The impossibility of presenting Auschwitz "according to the rules of the cognitive genre"³⁹—thus making it "unrepresentable"—results from the senselessness of the concentration camps, which interrupt the possibility of experience, in its Hegelian conception as the dialectical movement of conscience or history. "Nazism cannot be placed into a universal process" because it does not lead to dialectical synthesis and cannot be positioned within a general logic of representation.⁴⁰ By describing Auschwitz as an "occurrence beyond the powers of representation," Lyotard connects this experience to the philosophical category of the

“event.”⁴¹ An event is fundamentally de-linked from an organic unfolding of History in the sense that, in Lyotard’s understanding of the notion, its manifestation disrupts “pre-existing theories, frameworks, models and experience through which it might otherwise be understood.”⁴² It is in light of this conceptualization of an event’s radical singularity and the limits to representation that this entails, that Ferrari’s images may be said to contest the status of the last Argentine dictatorship as a historical “event.” That is, contrary to the Lyotardean narrative of unrepresentability, Ferrari’s works inscribe the Argentine dictatorship—together with the Holocaust—in a larger historical process: the ideological conception of grand political projects that involve the mass annihilation of human lives in the name of defending Western Christian civilization. For the artist, therefore, neither the dictatorship nor the Holocaust are singular events, or expressions of absolute evil. Rather, these murderous political projects belong to the long history of the West, which is marked by conquest, imperial expansion, religious conversion, racist dehumanization of the Other, and, as I will detail below, aestheticized punishment to uphold family, morality, and nation.

By inserting the Argentine dictatorship into a historical continuum, Ferrari introduces an element of *dissensus* into the CONADEP report, which, as stated by Sábato in the prologue, views the acts of the military regime as not only exceptional but also going against the ethical principles of all major religions.⁴³ With the use of the category of dissensus here I refer to Jacques Rancière’s writings on the politics of aesthetics. Revising Marxist approaches to the notion of aesthetic resistance, as well as an arguably postmodern position of melancholic disillusion, Rancière suggests that “dissensus is not a conflict of interest, opinions, or values; it is a division put in the ‘common sense’: a dispute about . . . the frame within which we *see* something as given.”⁴⁴ It is therefore my contention that the politics of Ferrari’s art precisely

entail questioning the “givenness” of the received narrative of the military regime, even if this narrative is cherished by human rights organizations. The consequences of this dissensual visual discourse are noteworthy; Ferrari’s take on the *Nunca mas report* lays the foundations for the idea that the critical work of memory should not only be oriented towards gaining discrete forms of reparative justice, but should also examine the cultural conditions and religious or moral convictions that allowed the Argentine generals to imagine and justify the military regime—conditions that arguably led broad sections of society to support it.

Ferrari’s revisionist politics of memory in post-dictatorship Argentina stems from the visual strategies he used to represent the disappeared in his collages. Returning to “*Great Flood*” by Doré + *Military Junta*, one immediately notices a difference between the artist’s rendering of victims of forced disappearance—through the use of Doré’s engraving—and the imagery with which the disappeared are most commonly represented in protest iconography, namely, black-and-white passport or ID-card pictures (4 x 4 cm). These pictures were first used by the relatives of the disappeared as an *herramienta de búsqueda* (search tool), and only later became popularized by their presence in public protests, notably those organized by the association of relatives of victims of forced disappearance known as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.⁴⁵ For Ludmila da Silva Catela, these pictures have become the most direct way to “give visibility to disappearance”—that is, not only to represent the victims of this practice, but also to create “a strong iconic referent for the purposes of denunciation.”⁴⁶ (Figure 4) As we can appreciate in the ID picture of María de las Mercedes Carriquiriborde, forcibly disappeared in Córdoba on December 6, 1977, the individual character of these images—which isolate the victims and present them in a context entirely different from that of their later agony—contrasts starkly with Ferrari’s anonymous, clustered, and disarrayed suffering bodies. Those whom Ferrari

represented as victims in his illustrated *Nunca más* are not only portrayed at the very moment of their punitive ordeal, but are also bereft of any indicators of their identity.⁴⁷ (Figure 5) In one print, Ferrari depicts the victims of human rights abuses by juxtaposing a detail of Giotto's *Last Judgement* where a number of people are hung by their genitals, hair, and tongues with a picture of the Junta walking behind Bishop Tortolo (then Vicar of the Armed Forces). In this collage, Ferrari's allegorical critique of the dictatorship's punitive frenzy becomes disassociated from modern technologies of control and punishment, pointing instead towards a refusal of the religious notion of just punishment.

By avoiding the use of photography or any other historical documentation to represent the disappeared, Ferrari renounces realism, together with the dramatic overtones of the individual story. By contrast, the ID photographs used by human rights organizations are directly referential and evoke the tragedy of each abduction: they give a face to those missing, reminding those who see them of the youth and vitality of the disappeared before their lives were suddenly cut short. These photographs also necessarily precede the victims' experience of being disappeared, and situate this condition as lying outside the sphere of the visible.⁴⁸ In comparing Ferrari's *Nunca más* with the imagery of the human rights movement, we are therefore confronted with two different understandings of mimesis. While both acknowledge the impossibility of realistically representing absence and affirm the political significance of striving to recuperate what has been made invisible, the effects on the workings of memory of these two mimetic regimes differ. The documentary strategy of the ID picture leads to a demand for justice that is historically situated and must, at the very least, respond to the suffering of individual victims (and their families), of whom tangible evidence of abduction exists. Ferrari's allegorical representation of the disappeared by way of collage seeks, by contrast, to invite historical reflection on the influence

of long-held systems of belief on Argentina's immediate political history, and their continued prevalence in the present. The collages that have come to illustrate the *Nunca más* are therefore not aimed at directly demanding specific acts of justice and reparation. Rather, they endeavor to trigger cultural change, by making visible the political use of a religiously sanctioned punitive morality during some of the bloodiest episodes of Western history.

Against the Morality of Torture

In his 1996 text *Arte y represión* (Art and Repression) Ferrari argues that in the history of art, torture has been glorified for centuries:

The West . . . possesses an extraordinary wealth of works that depict torture as an evangelizing strategy. . . . From these artistic representations of evil, from these paintings from a hundred, five hundred, a thousand years ago, and from the Bible verses that inspired their creators, the armed forces and the bishops who supported them seem to have taken, whether consciously or not, ideas for the repetition of this evil: these are etchings and frescoes that could shed light on the faces of the *Proceso*.⁴⁹

As he questions the aestheticization of punishment in Western visual culture, Ferrari ascribes equal importance to biblical and historical episodes—arguing, for instance, that some of the most atrocious crimes in Western history are “the Flood, the conquest, hell, Nazism, the Apocalypse” and “the crimes of the ‘Western and Christian’ *Proceso* denounced in the *Nunca más* report.”⁵⁰ This discourse, as I argue above, challenges the singularity or event-like character of the brutal

acts committed during the last Argentine dictatorship. Yet one must add here that this view also highlights the political importance of what could be described as “mythical” history. That is, focusing on the cultural dimension of the dictatorial regime, Ferrari views the Christian conception of just punishment as the ultimate ideological justification for the murderous use of violence by the military. This perspective places the role of myth and (religious) belief as determinants of political action over an interpretation of this history in the light of Cold War grievances, class struggle, and the military regime’s interest in dismantling the welfare state with the support of a neoliberal-minded civilian elite. Furthermore, the artist suggests that the collusion between elements of the Catholic Church and the Argentine military during the dictatorship resulted not merely from hypocrisy or political interest but from a flawed moral logic that is endemic to Western Christian thought. Driven by a friend/enemy division of society, this logic provides a moral ground for the fierce use of violence, justifying the dehumanization of a purported enemy on the basis of his or her “sinful” nature. In Ferrari’s view, the 1976 military coup, as much as the Nazi politics of extermination, was carried out in the name of a Messianic idea of justice. At times this idea had direct church support and at other times it did not, yet the artist highlights the extent to which this political logic can be traced back to biblical narratives of divine punishment (most notably, against Jews).⁵¹ The Great Flood thus comes to be described by Ferrari as the West’s “*primer exterminio*” (first extermination). To use his words: in the parable of the Flood “the crime committed by the few contaminates the rest of humanity. . . . That is what happened with the dictatorship. The supposed crime of the few was punished with the death of tens of thousands.”⁵²

The critique of the entanglement of politics and religion in Ferrari’s art can be traced back to his early experiences of political commitment in the 1960s, with works such as *La*

civilización occidental y cristiana (Western Christian Civilization, 1965). Originally conceived for the Instituto Di Tella Prize as an expression of protest against the war in Vietnam, this polemical assemblage was excluded from the contest on the basis that it could offend the religious sensibilities of the institute's personnel. The work featured a two-meter-long scale replica of a North American bomber jet hurtling downward and bearing on its fuselage a wooden figure of the crucified Christ. (Figure 6) By assembling these symbols, the piece suggests that the colonial massacre of the Vietnamese population by the American military could only be understood in light of the latter's conviction of having the moral duty to bring Western values to the Eastern country, which had been ostensibly corrupted by Communism. For the artist, the religious argument both provided the fundamental rationale to use physical violence in order (purportedly) to lessen greater evil and concealed the sheer brutality sustaining the colonial war.

A similarly political use of the combinatory strategies of collage and assemblage to oppose the Vietnam war by means of an abundance of religious references is present in Ferrari's 1967 literary collage *Palabras ajenas*. Conceived as both a printed book and a theatrical performance, *Palabras ajenas* is entirely made of juxtaposed quotations from one hundred sixty sources, including biblical texts, news agencies, and historical figures such as Pope Paul VI, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, several German cardinals of the Nazi period, and US generals active during the Vietnam War. Ferrari structured these quotations as a conversation with God, whose word was mainly sourced from the biblical book of Exodus. In the prologue, the artist explains that the work was intended to be both read and performed; he also provides precise instructions to those directors willing to stage it, with the idea of creating a performance that challenges dramatic conventions—by omitting any clear beginning or ending and by not involving any movement or action aside from the reading of the quotations:

This play will be interpreted without any action. Without any play with lighting, without reflectors, microphones, amplifiers, curtains, etc. The spectacle will have no beginning nor ending: it will already have begun when the first spectator enters the theater, and it will only end when the last spectator has gone.⁵³

Seeking to produce a seemingly unending flow of discourse, these stage directions aimed to generate a feeling of everlasting historical continuity, in which the twentieth century unfolds in conjunction with biblical times, as contemporary leaders continue the immemorial practice of conducting violent wars in the name of righteousness. Since the arguments justifying warfare seem identical between past and present, the conversations among Johnson, Hitler, the Pope, the press, and the prophets develop as a continuum of consensual views. In certain parts of the text, this dialogue is interrupted by descriptions of military offensives, rendering Vietnam as the continuation of a fascist saga going back to Auschwitz and before.

Reading the play might lead one to conclude that Ferrari was attempting to expose the double discourses of corrupt figures of authority. Yet the artist's stage directions suggest something different; in them, Ferrari indicates that the actors should be seated in rows exactly opposite the audience, and the director should establish "an equivalence between public and actors . . . creating a geometrical symmetry that accompanies or produces a mutual observation."⁵⁴ Staging this symmetrical relationship between actors and public was a performative attempt to contest the vision of the ruthless, populist leader who manipulates otherwise nonviolent ordinary people into supporting wars. Furthermore, by producing a mirror effect between leaders and people, the play describes the desire to wage fiercely destructive yet

“just” wars as disseminated between both groups, that is to say, as present in everyday forms of identification. If the history of the West can be seen as a continuum, it is precisely because any member of the audience can embody and potentially become a Hitler or a Johnson, and even receive the support of certain church leaders in the process. Such is the artist’s claim in this immensely original and polemical work.

Ferrari’s use of visual collage to engage with religious themes dates at least to the 1980s, when he was still living in Brazil but traveling back and forth to Buenos Aires. At that time, the artist embarked on his first rereading of the Bible, leading to a long series of images, arranged in book form and entitled *Relecturas de la Biblia* (1983–ca.1988). In these works, the artist combines biblical passages with, on the one hand, iconic pieces of Western art, often made by the same European artists who figure in his *Nunca más*, and on the other, Japanese *shunga* (erotic woodblock prints). The latter are meant to illuminate, by way of contrast, the allegedly contained (if not overly repressed) representation of the human body and sexual desires in Western religious art. According to Andrea Wain, an art historian who collaborated closely with Ferrari for years, during this period the artist read the Bible almost obsessively and became known among friends and foes for mastering biblical exegeses better than devotees.⁵⁵

As one compares the many works and writings in which Ferrari engaged directly with religion, it becomes clear that at the basis of his interest in the Bible always lay a preoccupation with the divine word, its accompanying moral codes, and the mechanisms through which they become embodied. That is, throughout his artistic career, Ferrari repeatedly questioned the role played by religious texts and images in the development, on the one hand, of lived moral norms, and on the other, of actual and embodied forms of fear and punishment. The artist paid special attention to the social and political processes through which punishment has been rendered both

holy and beautiful, and to how religious precepts have become incorporated into our sensual perception of the world—often after being violently enforced upon other worldviews by colonial powers. To reduce Ferrari’s art to an attack on the Catholic Church is therefore to overlook its broader critique of modernity and colonialism. Crucially, numerous spectators, including some Christians, have been perceptive to the wider claims made in this oeuvre. For example, after attending the 2004 retrospective at Recoleta, one viewer left the following comment in the visitors’ book:

My name is Isabel, I am 16 years old. This is the second time that I have seen the exhibition, but this time I examined it more carefully. I must say that the church’s reaction to your work was very unnecessary. The church creates a paradox by promoting good will and equality, but then opening the doors of hell to those who are different.⁵⁶

A month later, Marcela, a self-proclaimed Christian, wrote:

When I saw Christ nailed to the aircraft, I remembered what he said: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” In the end, I feel that you [Ferrari] are the most Christian of us all. A very nice guy, full of smart, beautiful, and unique things to show that one can always be a better person, and that the only hell is blindness, madness, and ignorance.⁵⁷

These heartfelt comments from spectators who were receptive to the complexity of Ferrari’s treatment of religion in his art return us to the discussion of the artist’s illustrated CONADEP

report with multiple secular and arguably religious reasons to situate these collages beyond a binary pro- or anti-religious logic. The comments also invite us to undertake a revisionist reading of the works that not only goes beyond the artist's intentions, but also leaves space for ambiguity in the works' ultimate signification. In this spirit, my suggestion is that Ferrari's positioning of cut-up pictures of political and religious leaders over the background of religious paintings in his illustrated *Nunca más* situates the recent history of state violence in Argentina and the long history of Christian art within a complex dialectic. On the one hand, the artist's hybrid images, which combine photography and painting, past and present, high art and photojournalism, evoke *continuity* in the entanglement of violence and religious art and/or belief in the West. On the other hand, these same images could be said to be almost crudely explicit in the *distinctions* that they make between different mediums and time periods. As we can see in sharply contrasted pictures such as *Escuela Mecánica de la Armada + Detail of "The Last Judgment" by Memling* (Figure 7), such distinctions generate unresolved tensions between past and present, a history of violence and its representation. In the discontinuities resulting from these contrasts one must locate the possibility of disjoining allegory and deed.

An Anthology of Cruelty

On October 6, 1995, the Argentine newspaper *Página/12* published a letter by Brigadier General Ernesto Juan Bossi, then Secretary General of the Army, reacting to Ferrari's *Nunca más*. Bossi described a sense of

indignation felt by members of the Argentine Army in response to Ferrari's illustrations, in which, by means of "photographic artifice," the archway at the entrance to the Colegio Militar de la Nación appeared with an eagle and a swastika, "symbols of that opprobrium of humanity that the Nazi regime signified."⁵⁸

Bossi perceived Ferrari's images as discrediting the efforts allegedly made by the army, in the Brigadier's words, "to alleviate the painful sequels of the past that we hope to overcome, thus contributing to the reconciliation of all Argentines." Bossi also pointed out that cadets continued to receive their training in that building, where "they are instilled with the moral values and ethical content pertaining to Argentine society."⁵⁹

Ferrari was well-accustomed to responding to in this kind of diatribe. Indeed, from the 1960s on he had almost always aired his views on the politics of art through forceful and insightful polemics.⁶⁰ Less than two weeks after the publication of Bossi's letter, the artist therefore sent a reply to the newspaper with the objective of explaining the "origins" and "objectives" of his *Nunca más* collages. Here, Ferrari called his series an "anthology of cruelty," which illustrated with images the *delitos* (crimes) of the "Western and Christian Argentine dictatorship." A number of the anthologized works, he said, "refer to . . . processes of extermination forming part of Western history and religion."⁶¹ Moreover, Ferrari stated that he included the image of the Colegio Militar because alumni of the school had been involved in staging acts of kidnaping, torture, rape, extortion, and appropriation of children during the military regime. He felt it to be important that the human rights offenders and the institutions responsible for educating them should not be forgotten during the course of a single generation. To this, Ferrari added, somewhat contentiously, that by invoking a patriotic idea of "ethical

content and moral values,” without clarifying how these values differed from those that had been taught in the school twenty years before, Bossi had returned to the same moralizing discourse that his visual work sought to critique. The artist therefore suggested that Bossi’s letter reinforced and actualized the political significance of this kind of artistic intervention in public debate; and he also saw the Brigadier’s text as a reminder of the primacy that a discourse around the defense of a “rightful morality” (backed up by force) has occupied in Argentine military politics.

Besides the anecdotal value of this public exchange, Ferrari’s description of his series of collages as an “anthology of cruelty” is of particular interest in understanding the work as a whole. To consider the series as an anthology is to suggest that Ferrari’s revision of the history of Western art is not a comprehensive and chronological endeavor, but an exercise of compilation and gathering (the word anthology coming from the ancient Greek notion for gathering or collecting extracts, ἀνθολόγιον). Effectively, in the selection of sources for his collages, the artist focused strictly on the work of a few prominent European artists who have provided well-known illustrations of the Bible. Having previously color-photocopied catalogue reproductions of these canonical images, Ferrari then selected certain details and used them fragmentarily, paying particular attention to the representation of tormented bodies. Therefore, one could argue that his *Nunca más* originated in a simple and, to a degree, anachronistic attempt to question whether forms of torture now considered illegal, though extensively practiced in Argentina during the last military regime, figured in the history of Western art and continued to be considered objects of visual delight. Having collected the sources, Ferrari then drew the spectators’ speculative attention to the function that these visual representations of torture may have played in the construction of a Christian idea of what divine justice and just punishment entail.

Ferrari's interest in the corporeal gestures resulting from a punitive Christian morality, together with his aspiration to construct a trans-historical anthology of cruelty by means of collage, bears strong resonances with Aby Warburg's methodology for analyzing images in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Ferrari's anthology and Warburg's atlas are both collections of images arranged in "loose historical and thematic sequences" and compiled as a way of investigating the persistence of certain gestures in the cultural memory of the West.⁶² Just as in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*—to borrow from Georges Didi-Huberman's approach to Warburg—*Nunca Más*'s relating of image and word leads to a double understanding of the act of reading. Reading here becomes not just a search for meaning and encoded messages, but also a means of reassembling fragments and establishing new relationships between pictures and words by way of montage. "To read the world," writes Didi-Huberman, "is also to link the things of the world together according to their 'intimate and secret relationships,' their 'correspondences,' and their 'analogies.'"⁶³ This spatial, associative, and ultimately metaphorical form of reading is generated in Ferrari's *Nunca más* as a result of the correspondence both among the images that constitute the collages and between these collages and the testimonies included in the human rights report.

A further analogy between Ferrari's "anthology of cruelty" and Warburg's atlas of images is their common interest in the European Renaissance and their treatment of the detail as a "compressed microcosm."⁶⁴ This is most visible in Ferrari's comparatist interest in the allegorical representation of hell by figures such as the Limbourg brothers and Giotto.⁶⁵ The Christian hell is mentioned several times in the original human rights report and it is also a recurring scenario in Ferrari's *Nunca más*. In the text's prologue, Sábato speaks of a systematic violation of human rights which followed a methodology of terror and a *tecnología del infierno* (infernal technology).⁶⁶ Sábato also evokes a fictional scene in which the doors of clandestine

detention centers display the following inscription (read by Dante before crossing through the gates of hell): “Abandon hope all ye who enter here.”⁶⁷ Making a third reference to this idea, Sábato describes the survivors of clandestine detention centers as those who “were able to escape from hell.”⁶⁸

In Ferrari’s anthology, infernal references include Giotto’s *Inferno* (1306), in which Satan physically punishes and devours sinners, and the Limbourg brothers’ *Hell* (1412–16), where red-hot tongs torture sinners for eternity.⁶⁹ The former painting is left almost untouched by Ferrari and appears as a picture contemplated by the chief commander of the navy, Admiral Massera, who was the head of ESMA between 1976 and 1978. During Massera’s tenure, with his consent and direct intervention, thousands of disappeared people were tortured at ESMA, kept in conditions of extreme confinement, enslaved, and, in most cases, thrown alive into the River Plate, after having received the “blessing” of Catholic priests.⁷⁰ Ferrari situates Massera and the devil in Giotto’s painting as mirror images; this lays open the ethical question of how a torturing demon can be considered one of the greatest works in the history of art. (Figure 8) Does our aesthetic appreciation of this piece, Ferrari challenges us to ask, make us consciously or unconsciously enjoy this violence? Does the persistence of redeeming images of torture in the history of Western art influence our relationship to the suffering of the Other? Are there remnants of a Christian morality in the contemporary reception of the Western artistic canons? Ferrari responds to these questions in the affirmative, even as he remains aware of the anachronism of his comparisons, for his goal was not to demonstrate historical accuracy or artistic connoisseurship. Rather, he sought to make visible the violence against bodies present in some of the best-known religious art, the extent to which conceptions of beauty are permeated by a punitive morality, and the fact that the aesthetic accomplishment of certain images often makes

us forget their political use by church and civil authorities to spread fear.⁷¹ Yet I would also contend that in the background of Ferrari's critical art lies what Dawn Ades—following György Lukács—identifies as the ambiguous and jocular character of effective political photomontage. That is, the artist's images may be seen as both absurd and uncomfortably accurate, just like a good joke.⁷²

Depicted as they shake hands in front of a blazing background, General Videla and Cardinal Juan Carlos Aramburu, the archbishop of Buenos Aires at the time of the coup, are the protagonists of a second collage depicting hell. (Figure 9) Aramburu was a well-known supporter of the military regime who considered the state of exception imposed by the military regime to be essential in order to protect the country from communism. He also publicly denied that the practice of forced disappearance was occurring, claiming that the so-called *desaparecidos* were living in Europe.⁷³ The 1412–16 image by the Limbourg brothers which serves as a background to the encounter between Videla and Aramburu allegorizes the brutal consequences of this union between church and state. The relationships between foreground and background in the panel are, however, destabilized by the fact that the greatest part of the collage is occupied by the painted background. More importantly, this background takes a certain precedence over the rest of the collage by being a thoroughly unexpected element in the narration of the Argentine dictatorship. By way of its strangeness, the image by the Limbourg brothers calls the attention of the viewer, who is prompted to question the extent to which this painting is an appropriate representation of the realities experienced in Videla's Argentina.

In a third collage involving a “masterful” rendering of hell, Videla and Aramburu shake hands once again, this time against the background of a detail of Doré's *Inferno*—taken from the French artist's illustration of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Other generals and clerics are also present,

although they are neither looking at each other nor paying attention to the punitive ordeal occurring behind them, in which naked men and women are being whipped by demons. (Figure 10) Videla, Aramburu, and the men who accompany them look guiltily elusive, shielded from perceiving the painful reality that surrounds them. Their uniforms bear all the signs of merit, honor, and responsibility. Aramburu bows before Videla, who is wearing the presidential sash, in a subservient gesture, and seems to be offering him a gift, from which Videla averts his eyes as he maintains his characteristically serious facial expression. Although we can know little about the gift, it is clear that in this context it represents unity and collaboration between the Catholic Church and the military state. Using the same image, the pair's complicit handshake leads Ferrari to suggest, in *Hitler with Christian Dignitaries + Galtieri, Lambruschini, and Viola with Nuncio Calabresi and Cardinal Aramburu*, that Church leaders in Argentina acted in a similar fashion to those officials of the Catholic Church who endorsed Hitler. (Figure 11)

At first glance, it may appear that this use of a photograph of Hitler in the illustrated *Nunca más* merely repeats the commonplace association—increasingly critiqued by historians and social scientists— of the Argentine experience with that of Nazi Germany.⁷⁴ Yet Ferrari's substitutive gesture, in which Doré's *Inferno* can be replaced by a representation of fascism, suggests that a different operation is also in place. In other words, the artist is demonstrating here an art historical as well as a political preoccupation. As one steps away from looking solely at Ferrari's polemical treatment of certain symbols in his collages and focuses on the semiotic interplay present in the elements that constitute them, it becomes clear that his *Nunca más* is not only a rereading of the homonymous human rights report—relying on what Mieke Bal would call a “preposterous” quotation of Christian iconography—but a call for another history of art and a renewed, less punitive idea of beauty.⁷⁵ By decontextualizing images of the art history

canon to effectively represent the violence of the Argentine dictatorship, the artist ultimately critiques the celebration of moralizing punishment that traverses the history of (Christian) art.

The Ethical Turn

In July 2013, soon after I began this research, Ferrari died at the age of ninety-three. In the numerous obituaries written on the artist, it was repeatedly stated that he was not only a political artist, but also one who had situated ethics at the center of his work. In his article entitled “Cuando el arte mueve conciencias” (“When Art Moves Consciences”), Fabián Lebenglik, an art critic and columnist of *Página/12*, wrote that Ferrari’s art entwined politics and poetics, as well as ethics and aesthetics.⁷⁶ The filmmaker Gastón Duprat and curator Liliana Piñeiro also emphasized the artist’s “*ética inquebrantable*” (unflinching ethics).⁷⁷ The discussion of ethics in relation to Ferrari’s work did not come as a posthumous homage, but was already common at the time of the Recoleta retrospective. On this occasion, Luis Camnitzer described the artist as a “guiding figure within twentieth-century Latin American art,” highlighting “his vision of an ethically committed art.” For Camnitzer, Ferrari had served as a role model for various generations, helping them to escape “the empty formalism promoted by the art market.”⁷⁸ Camnitzer’s emphasis on ethics is particularly significant, considering his role as a pioneer theorist on the political character of conceptual art in Latin America, and how little attention ethics has received in the scholarship on conceptualism.

Informed by the writings of the radical philosophers Chantal Mouffe and Jacques Rancière, I consider the association of Ferrari’s art with an ethical praxis deeply puzzling. These thinkers have generally understood the “ethical turn” in terms of a substitution, in which ethics

has come to replace politics in an attempt to seal, or merely disguise, fundamental societal antagonisms. In this sense, Mouffe associates the ethical turn with “the current infatuation with humanitarian crusades and ethically correct good causes” that has accompanied and even fostered the current dominance of neoliberalism. For her, this “sort of moralizing liberalism” is not only entrenched in the rationale of neoliberal democracy, but also “increasingly filling the void left by the collapse of any project of real political transformation.”⁷⁹ Mouffe considers this turn to be based on a problematic association between “moralism and rationalism,” which strives to reach rational consensus on matters of common concern, rather than recognizing antagonism and the violence inherent in the social bond.⁸⁰ This politico-philosophical project has led to the questionable defense of Western political institutions on the grounds of reason, a stance that goes hand in hand with the interventionist mission to bring democracy and human rights to the rest of the world. The appeal to the ethical thus obscures the Eurocentric and often interventionist bias driving what is primarily a political project.

Rancière, meanwhile, discusses the ethical turn in terms of the production of consensus, that is, the *de facto* elimination of conflict.⁸¹ He argues that this operation of “political purism” construes insurmountable divisions between right and wrong, good and evil, art and politics. As a consequence, the relationships between these categories become rigid and unproductive, leaving only the possibility of mournfully waiting for an “event”—a miracle of sorts—to reestablish a more operative relationship. Significantly, Rancière’s and Mouffe’s fierce attacks on the “ethical turn” do not derive from an unqualified rejection of ethics, but from a current elaboration of notions such as “absolute wrong,” “absolute evil,” and “the unrepresentable,” in which ethical discourses are delinked from politics and history.⁸² Rancière, for instance, takes issue with Lyotard’s understanding of the Holocaust as a world apart, an expression of absolute

Evil, claiming that this vision enforces a silence instead of motivating debate about a past that continues to haunt the present.⁸³

Situating this debate in the Latin American context, Bruno Bosteels argues that the recent “generalized turn to ethics” in the study of culture has led “to a state of indistinctness in which we are all ultimately victims of some ordinary trauma, witnesses to some radical evil, or subjects of an overwhelming catastrophe. The result is an unprecedented dramaturgy of . . . endless reparation.”⁸⁴ This vision has been particularly prevalent in the case of postdictatorship cultural production in Argentina and other countries of the Southern Cone, given the fierce forms of repression that characterized them. Critical of this turn, Bosteels’s call is not to deny recognition of the pain endured by these societies or refute the significance of ethics in toto. Rather, he stresses the importance of developing both ethically and politically informed modes of cultural production and interpretation that are capable of moving beyond the act of bearing witness to the impossibility of representation.⁸⁵ The challenge at stake here is one shared by Ferrari, who understood politics as the possibility of distinguishing between different moralities, accompanied by the struggle to redistribute or reorganize certain value structures—starting with some of those values that have organized the history of art in Europe and beyond. For Ferrari, the moralist confrontation of good versus evil—as opposed to the political recognition of heterogeneity and difference—is at the root of some of the bloodiest episodes in human history, including colonialism, the Holocaust, and the last dictatorship in Argentina. His *Nunca más* evokes the extent to which a religious morality has repeatedly sustained crude political violence. Yet, against a narrative striving toward the ethical witnessing of ultimately unrepresentable suffering, Ferrari’s work dwells on the possibility, and indeed the political responsibility, of developing critical means to represent, memorialize, and stimulate discussion around episodes of mass-scale

violence. This is how the artist resists Lyotard's notion of the unrepresentability of extreme historical wrongs, arguing instead that art plays a key role in making perceptible the cultural conditions leading to these wrongs. For Ferrari, the very "banality of evil" is sustained by deep-rooted ideas of beauty, order, and punishment that are perceived as morally desirable.⁸⁶ These long-held beliefs, which underpin both everyday morality and canonical art, must be taken into consideration when discussing the politics of memory in the aftermath of a military regime that was arguably imposed to defend "God, the Motherland, and the Family."

Ferrari's *Nunca más* interrupts the dichotomy between *víctimas y victimarios* (victims and perpetrators of violence) that permeates the human rights report on which it is based. While the original text treats the dictatorship as an exception in Argentine history, the artist's emphasis on the *longue durée* opens up a general reflection on the cultural values (from ideas of beauty to conceptions of reason and order) that, in different times and places, have inspired the deployment of extreme violence.⁸⁷ These claims have enormous import for the politics of memory in postdictatorship Argentina, for they suggest, first, that ordinary people and everyday values and beliefs are to be held accountable for past wrongs; and second, that we ought to make visible the violence underpinning Western ideas of order, beauty, and morality, while situating the history of art in relation to the social history of punishment.

Rather than promoting absolute notions of justice and responsibility or presenting unequivocal or "saturated" political messages, as some critics have argued, Ferrari's art foregrounds the historical contingency of ethical regimes.⁸⁸ In the artist's work, ethics do not appear as the place of the unrepresentable. On the contrary, ethics (as contrasted with morality), is rooted in the perhaps impossible but all too necessary imperative to search for a language capable of representing horror. The artist's use of collage to search for this language suggests

that it is only through often experimental, fragmentary, and appropriative aesthetic strategies that culturally ingrained beliefs—ideas of beauty, moral claims, and mythical or grand narratives that have been mobilized to legitimize genocide—can be exposed and, ultimately, uprooted.

Bio

Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra is a lecturer in Contemporary Art at Birkbeck, University of London. She has published widely on the politics of aesthetics in Latin America, performance art, the role of religion in contemporary art, and changing notions of “life” in artistic practice. She has recently published *Marcos Kurtycz: Corporeality Unbound* (Fauna, 2018) and her monograph *Touched Bodies: The Performative Turn in Latin American Art* is forthcoming (Rutgers University Press, 2019). With Sophie Halart, she coedited the volume *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America* (Tauris, 2016). [MARA—will it have appeared by November? If so, we should insert date and Publisher here.]

Captions

1. León Ferrari, *Apocalypse 22*, from the series *Rereadings of the Bible*, 1986, collage on paper, 11-1/4 x 8-7/8 in. (28.5 x 22.4 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales-CELS)

Ferrari identified the source as *Madonna del Parto* by Piero della Francesca (ca. 1457).

2. León Ferrari, “Great Flood” by Doré + Military Junta, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

3. León Ferrari, “Infernal Tortures” from the Book “*Grant Kalendrier des Bergieres*” + *Officer Saluting* (Photo: Tony Valdez), from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

4. Photograph of María de las Mercedes Carriquiriborde, forcibly disappeared in Córdoba on December 6, 1977 (photograph provided by Alicia Carriquiriborde)

5. León Ferrari, *Videla, Massera, and Agosti with Monsignor Tortolo, Vicar of the Armed Forces* (Photo: A. Kacero) + “*The Last Judgment*” by Giotto, *Capella degli Scrovegni, Padua 1306*, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

6. León Ferrari, *Western Christian Civilization*, 1965, plastic, oil, and plaster, 78-3/4 x 47-1/4 x 23-5/8 in. (200 x 120 x 60 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

7. León Ferrari, *Escuela Mecánica de la Armada* + *Detail of “The Last Judgment” by Memling, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96*, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari. Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

8. León Ferrari, *Giotto's “Inferno” + Massera, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96*, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

9. León Ferrari, “*The Inferno*” by *P. de Limbourg* + *Jorge Videla and Cardinal Aramburu, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96*, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

10. León Ferrari, *Videla, Massera, Agosti and Cardinal Aramburu (Photo: Loíacono)* + “*Dante’s Inferno*” by *Doré, 1860, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96*, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

11. León Ferrari, *Hitler with Christian Dignitaries* + *Galtieri, Lambruschini and Viola with Nuncio Calabresi and Cardinal Aramburu, from the series *Nunca más*, 1995–96*, digital print on paper, 16-1/2 x 11-5/8 in. (42 x 29.7 cm) (artwork © Fundación Augusto y León Ferrari

Archivo y Colección, Buenos Aires; photograph provided by the Fundación in partnership with CELS)

Notes

[initial unnumbered note, appears on first page of text, above the first footnote]

I would like to thank the Augusto and León Ferrari Foundation for their support throughout this research and for granting the permissions to publish the majority of the images that accompany this article. Thanks also to Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) for providing the images. I am equally indebted to Alicia Carriquiriborde for allowing me to publish the image of her disappeared sister. Alex Houen, Lucy Bell, Jordana Blejmar, Andrew Green, Geoffrey Kantaris, Christy Lane, the copy editors of *Art Journal*, and the anonymous peer reviewers have enormously contributed this essay through their insightful comments. All errors and omissions are my own responsibility.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

¹ Bergoglio's letter was reprinted in Andrea Giunta, ed., *El caso Ferrari: Arte, censura y libertad de expresión en la retrospectiva de León Ferrari en el Centro Cultural Recoleta, 2004–2005* (Buenos Aires: Lycopodio, 2008), 55.

² On December 3, 2004, three men entered the exhibition crying “Viva Cristo Rey” [Long live Christ the King] and started smashing glass bottles that were part of the installation *1492–1992 Quinto Centenario de Conquista* [1492–1992 Fifth Centennial of the Conquest]. A woman received minor injuries from the broken glass. The men also destroyed an acrylic sculpture entitled *La ciudad de los inmortales* (The City of Immortals), inscribed with excerpts of Jorge Luis Borges’s short story “The Immortal.”

³ The entire affair is documented in Giunta.

⁴ As Gorelik puts it, “Efficiency in the art/politics relationship is a very fragile and evanescent line which is constantly present at the boundary of that which can be absorbed, not *only* by institutions and the market, but also by habit or new socio-political conditions.” Adrián Gorelik, “Preguntas sobre la eficacia: vanguardias, arte y política,” *Punto de Vista* no. 82 (2005): 8.

⁵ CONADEP, *Nunca más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*. (Buenos Aires: Universitaria, 1984).

⁶ For an in-depth analysis of this repressive strategy, see Pilar Calveiro, *Poder y desaparición* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2008). One of the international legal instruments recognizing this practice is the “Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons,” adopted by the Organization of American States in June 1994.

⁷ On December 8 and 10, 1977, twelve people linked to the movement of Madres de Plaza de Mayo were disappeared, including three of its founders: Azucena Villaflor, Esther Ballestrino, and María Ponce de Bianco.

⁸ Norbert Lechner, “Some People Die of Fear: Fear as a Political Problem,” in *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*, ed. Patricia Weiss Fagen, Juan E. Corradi, and Manuel Antonio Garretón (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 26–37.

⁹ The practice of forced disappearance in Argentina precedes the 1976 coup; indeed, numerous kidnappings took place during the two-year period of political instability before the military took power. These events are not included in the *Nunca más* report. For a discussion on the difficulties to establish the exact number of disappeared people and the political implications of the different estimates, see Alison Brysk, “The Politics of Measurement: The Contested Count of the Disappeared in Argentina,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 16 (1994): 676–92.

¹⁰ The religious figures on the Commission were Carlos T. Gattinoni, bishop of the Argentine Methodist Church and active member of the human rights movement; the Argentine-American rabbi Marshall T. Meyer; and the Catholic monsignor Jaime de Navares.

¹¹ As a human rights report, however, the text also endorses the principle that it is the responsibility of the state to defend the rights of individual citizens. See Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca más: La memoria de las desapariciones en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2008), 99–100.

¹² Crenzel, 106.

¹³ The report is also available for free online, in both Spanish (www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/investig/articulo/nuncamas/nmas0001.htm) and English

(www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_001.htm). [These are the URLs, would it be better to put both of them at the end of the footnote?]

¹⁴ “La solución final,” *Página/12*, March 3, 1995.

¹⁵ Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 226, emphasis in orig.

¹⁶ Feitlowitz, 227.

¹⁷ Emilio Crenzel, “El *Nunca Más* en fascículos: El infierno resignificado,” *EIAL* 17, no. 2 (2006): 94.

¹⁸ Crenzel, 87–88.

¹⁹ Ariel Ferrari was a student of sociology and member of the political organization Montoneros. It is now known that on February 27, 1977, during an attempt to kidnap him, Ariel was shot by the navy commander Alfredo Astiz (today in prison) and badly injured. On arrival at ESMA, the twenty-five-year-old had already died; his remains, disappeared by the military, have not yet been found. Ariel’s partner, Liliana Bietti, had originally left Argentina in exile with the Ferrari family. Months later she returned to Argentina to search for Ariel, but she was disappeared too. See “Día 62: ‘Quiero saber dónde está mi hija, si está viva o muerta,’ le dijo una madre a Graselli,” at

www.espaciomemoria.ar/megacausa_juicio.php?ju_ID=89&cabecal=megacausa&barra=megacausa&titulo=megacausa, as of August 20, 2018.

²⁰ Ferrari quoted in Crenzel, “El Nunca Más en fascículos,” 88.

²¹ Crenzel, 96.

²² Andreas Huyssen suggests that “combined with the ritual spell of the ‘never again,’ the figure of the unimaginable and the unsayable may lead to an easy amnesia.” “Prólogo. Medios y memoria,” in *El pasado que miramos: memoria e imagen ante la historia reciente*, ed. Claudia Feld and Jessica Stites Mor (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2009), 20. [MARA—Is this in the CONADEP report itself, or in some other publication? This comes from a different publication]

²³ Crenzel, “El Nunca Más en fascículos,” 88.

²⁴ The proximity between high-ranking church members and the military junta, as well as the collaboration of numerous priests in the process of disappearance, torture, and murder, has been the topic of extensive research—as with the cases of those priests who resisted state violence, helped members of left-wing organizations to escape from it, and were kidnapped and murdered in cold blood. Studies on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Argentine military regime include: Emilio Fermín Mignone, *Iglesia y dictadura: El papel de la Iglesia a la luz de sus relaciones con el régimen militar* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2006); Horacio Verbitsky, *La mano izquierda de Dios*, vol. 4: *La última dictadura (1976–1983): Historia política de la iglesia católica* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2010); and Gustavo Morello, *The Catholic Church and Argentina’s Dirty War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁵ *Nosotros no sabíamos* is an archive of newspaper cuttings documenting the media coverage of military and paramilitary violence in the months that followed the coup (May–October, 1976).

Challenging the common claim that society at large was unaware of the dictatorship's fierce repressive tactics, the nearly four hundred articles constituting Ferrari's archive describe the attention given by the media to the recurrent disappearance of people, the proliferation of habeas corpus petitions, and the discovery of corpses and bullet-riddled bodies all over the country during this time. Rather than providing extensive documentation of a few cases, Ferrari emphasizes, by presenting numerous articles from different newspapers, that these incidents were neither isolated nor hidden from the public eye.

²⁶ See Emilio Crenzel, "Las fotografías del *Nunca más*: Verdad y prueba jurídica de las desapariciones," in *El pasado que miramos: Memoria e imagen ante la historia reciente*, ed. Claudia Feld and Jessica Stites Mor (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2009), 293.

²⁷ Liliana Viola, "La obra que resume la memoria del horror," *Página/12*, March 24, 2006, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/2-2085-2006-03-24.html>.

²⁸ Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *Historia argentina: La dictadura militar 1976/1983; Del golpe de estado a la restauración democrática* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003), 34.

²⁹ Millicent Rose, "Introduction to the Dover Edition," in *The Doré Bible Illustrations* (New York: Dover, 1974), v. See also Eric Zafran, Robert Rosenblum, and Lisa Small, *Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 65. There is an interesting parallel between the fact that Doré had made the engraving of the Flood to illustrate the Bible, and Ferrari's use of it to illustrate the *Nunca más* report, treating the latter as a bible of sorts. Here, unintentionally, Ferrari offers a critique of the canonical status of *Nunca más*.

³⁰ Rose, viii.

³¹ Rose, ix.

³² Henry Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1960), 18.

³³ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale, 1967), 86.

³⁴ See Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 83–84.

³⁵ Crenzel, "El Nunca Más en fascículos," 90. The representation of the victims of state terror in Ferrari's collage as a *human* collectivity enduring a divinely commanded punishment does not necessarily suggest that a process of dehumanization is not well underway. Here I understand dehumanization as "the removal of a group from the domain of moral acceptability," which has long been presented as the theological justification for the biblical Flood. See Cristian Tileaga, "Ideologies of Moral Exclusion: A Critical Discursive Reframing of Depersonalization, Delegitimization and Dehumanization," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 46 (2007): 720.

³⁶ Andreas Huyssen, "Prólogo: Medios y memoria," in *El pasado que miramos*, 18.

³⁷ Hugo Vezzetti, *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria: Memorias y olvidos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2009), 22.

³⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002 [1988]), 13.

³⁹ Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Manchester: Manchester University Press and Columbia University Press, 2008), 148.

⁴⁰ Bennington, 151.

⁴¹ Stuart Sim, ed., *The Lyotard Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 71.

⁴² Sim, 71.

⁴³ Ernesto Sábato, "Prólogo," CONADEP, *Nunca más*, 8.

⁴⁴ Jacques Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (2004): 304.

⁴⁵ See Ludimilia da Silva Catela, "Lo invisible revelado: El uso de fotografías como (re)presentación de la desaparición de personas en la Argentina," in *El pasado que miramos*, 343.

⁴⁶ Ludmila da Silva Catela, "Lo invisible revelado. El uso de fotografías como (re) presentación de la desaparición de personas en la Argentina," in *El pasado que miramos: memoria e imagen ante la historia reciente*, ed. Claudia Feld and Jessica Stites Mor (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2009), 337–38.

⁴⁷ The loss of identity markers is another condition commonly associated with the process of dehumanization. See Herbert C. Kelman, “Violence without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers,” *Journal of Social Issues* 29, no. 4 (1973): 48–49.

⁴⁸ An extremely rare instance in which the disappeared became visible are the pictures taken by Víctor Bastera, who was a prisoner at ESMA from 1979 to 1982. As he worked at a printer’s workshop in Buenos Aires before being kidnaped, at ESMA Bastera was forced to take photographs of some of the detainees, as well as of ESMA’s officers, in order to make false identification documents. At great personal risk, Bastera managed to make copies of these pictures and smuggle them out of the torture center. See Claudia Feld, “Making Disappearance Visible? Photographs of the Disappeared at the ESMA on Victor Bastera’s Testimony,” *Clepsidra* 1 (2014): 28–51.

⁴⁹ Here the artist is referring to the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, which is how the military named the period during which it stayed in power and its political program. León Ferrari, “Arte y represión,” in *León Ferrari: Prosa Política* (1996; Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005), 153.

⁵⁰ León Ferrari, “Imágenes en el Nunca más,” in *Prosa Política*, 149.

⁵¹ Michael Phayer describes how, as a result of his fear of communism and admiration for Germany, Pope Pious XII failed repeatedly to speak in favor of Jews and to support those Catholics seeking to save Jewish lives. Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 55, 64. It has also been argued that, with few exceptions, the “majority of [German Catholic] bishops openly supported Hitler,” primarily

for political reasons. William J. Bausch, Carol Ann Cannon, and Robert E. Obach, *Pilgrim Church: A Popular History of Catholic Christianity*, rev. ed. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989), 361.

⁵² Ferrari quoted by Crenzel, “El Nunca Más en fascículos,” 97.

⁵³ León Ferrari, *Palabras ajenas* (1967; Buenos Aires: Licopodio, 2008), 8. *Palabras ajenas* was staged as *Listen, Here, Now* by the Argentine artist Leopoldo Maler at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1968. Ferrari celebrated the work’s new title, emphasizing its sense of urgency and action. He also stipulated that the title should include “Vietnam” somewhere, so that people would know beforehand they were going to see Vietnam and “encounter God.” Ferrari quoted in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 286. Four years later, the director Pedro Asquini, known for his engagement with independent theater and “critical realism,” mounted a new adaptation of Ferrari’s text, under the title *Pacem in terris*. There are few records of both of these productions.

⁵⁴ Ferrari, *Palabras ajenas*, 7.

⁵⁵ Author’s conversation with Wain during a research visit to the Augusto and León Ferrari Foundation in Buenos Aires, 2012.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Giunta, *El caso Ferrari*, 131.

⁵⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 336. Ferrari was a staunch advocate of the abolition of the Catholic notions of Last Judgement and Hell, often mobilizing a human rights rhetoric to criticise them. In 1997 and

2000 he sent letters to Pope John Paul II petitioning the Vatican to abolish them, as a means to demonstrate a repudiation of torture both on Earth and beyond; and as a way to “respect the human rights” of millions of pennant souls “suffering... in the Land of Satan.” Interestingly, it has been rumoured that Pope Francis I, the religious officer who initiated the protests against Ferrari’s Recoleta exhibition in 2004, recently denied the existence of hell in a private interview, leading to some speculation as to whether the Vatican was considering the abolition of infernal tortures. See [Angela Giuffrida, “Vatican Scrambles after Pope Appears to Deny Existence of Hell,” *The Guardian*, March 30, 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/30/vatican-scrambles-to-clarify-popes-denial-that-hell-exists](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/30/vatican-scrambles-to-clarify-popes-denial-that-hell-exists), as of September 12, 2018. Ferrari’s letters are reprinted in Spanish here: [María Moreno, “El león y los cristianos,” *Página/12*, May 12, 2004, www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/9-1868-2004-12-05.html](http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/9-1868-2004-12-05.html), as of September 12, 2018.

⁵⁸ Bossi quoted in Andrea Giunta, ed., *León Ferrari: Retrospectiva. Obras 1954-2006* (São Paulo: COSAC NAIFY, 2006), 416.

⁵⁹ Giunta, 416.

⁶⁰ A number of these public exchanges are reprinted in [León Ferrari, *Prosa Política* \(Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005\)](#).

⁶¹ Ferrari, “Imágenes en el Nunca más,” 149. [MARA—Is this a reprint of Ferrari’s response to Bossi’s letter, or a separate text in *Prosa Política*?. This is a reprint]

⁶² Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg’s Atlas of Images* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), ix.

⁶³ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas, ou, le gai savoir inquiet* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2011), 6.

⁶⁴ Matthew Rampley, *The Remembrance of Things Past: On Aby M. Warburg and Walter Benjamin* (Göttinger: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 25.

⁶⁵ The comparison between Warburg and Ferrari loses momentum once we take into account their specific treatment of the image. While Ferrari uses collage to establish dialectical relationships between past and present, Warburg's Atlas did not involve such direct forms of intervention in those pictures that he situated diagrammatically in wooden panels covered in black cloth.

⁶⁶ Ernesto Sábato, "Prólogo," CONADEP, *Nunca más*, 8–9.

⁶⁷ CONADEP, 9.

⁶⁸ CONADEP, 10.

⁶⁹ The Giotto di Bondone work is part of his fresco cycle at Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy.

⁷⁰ On Massera's involvement in the repressive apparatus and his role as head of ESMA, see Marcelo Borrelli, *El diario de Massera: Historia y política editorial de Convicción; La prensa del "Proceso"* (Buenos Aires: Koyatun, 2008).

⁷¹ See Ferrari's comments in the series of interviews edited by Andrea Wain, *Ferrari por León* (Buenos Aires: Librería, 2016), 37.

⁷² Dawn Ades, *Photomontage* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 57.

⁷³ Emilio Fermín Mignone, “Iglesia y dictadura: La experiencia argentina,” *Nueva Sociedad* 82 (1986): 124.

⁷⁴ See Vezzetti, *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria*.

⁷⁵ Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 9.

⁷⁶ Fabián Lebenglik, “Cuando el arte mueve conciencias,” *Página/12*, July 26, 2013, at www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-225347-2013-07-26.html, as of August 15, 2018.

⁷⁷ Facundo Gari, “Voces para homenajear a un gigante,” *Página/12*, July 26, 2013.

⁷⁸ Camnitzer quoted in Giunta, *El caso Ferrari*, 17.

⁷⁹ Chantal Mouffe, “Which Ethics for Democracy?” in *The Turn to Ethics*, ed. Marjorie B. Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (New York: Routledge, 2000), 85 and 86.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 88. For Mouffe, this zeitgeist can be traced back to the Enlightenment, but its most contemporary expression is the Habermasian conception of liberal democracy, which is founded on universal rationality.

⁸¹ Or, in a similar yet apparently paradoxical sense, the absolutization of dissensus to a point in which it becomes rigidified.

⁸² For a historicist critique of this approach to ethics, see Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 60; and Wulf Kansteiner, “Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural

Trauma Metaphor,” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 8, no. 2 (2004): 199–200.

⁸³ Rancière describes Lyotard’s concept of Auschwitz or the Shoah, as “an event beyond any cause that could be rationally reconstructed” (Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009], 126). According to Solange Guénou, “For Rancière, as a theoretician of dissensual democracy, [Lyotard’s] Shoah is, first and foremost, an object of a dominant consensual discourse that blocks the political horizon, a depoliticizing, demobilizing, inhibiting fiction of political inventiveness and an artistic usurper of insurrectional forces.” Solange M. Guénou, “Jacques Rancière’s Ethical Turn and the Thinking of Discontents,” in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2009), 184.

⁸⁴ Bruno Bosteels, *Marx and Freud in Latin America: Politics, Psychoanalysis, and Religion in Times of Terror* (London: Verso, 2012), 306.

⁸⁵ Bosteels, 307.

⁸⁶ See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 252.

⁸⁷ On the notion of the *long durée*, see Fernand Braudel, “Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 4 (1958): 727.

⁸⁸ See Josefina Ludmer, “El territorio de León Ferrari,” in *León Ferrari: Escritos en el aire, 1961–2005*, ed. Andrea Giunta (Neuquén: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2005), 33.

