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Testimonio and Hypertext as Resistance in Chile: The Case of Manuel Guerrero Ceballos and Son

David H. Bost
Furman University

Those familiar with Santiago de Chile's neighborhoods recognize Los Leones as one of the capital city's most elegant and tranquil streets with its tree-lined sidewalks and many stylish homes and apartment buildings. Los Leones bisects the fashionable "comuna" of Providencia, traditionally a stable zone of the city, somewhat insulated from central Santiago's tumult and din. Yet during the years of the dictatorship, 1973-1989, there was virtually no sanctuary within the country for Augusto Pinochet's opposition, and even upscale districts like Providencia were the site of considerable violence and repression. In March of 1985, in front of the Colegio Latinoamericano de Integración, located on the corner of Los Leones and El Vergel, in the heart of Providencia, Colegio Latinoamericano teacher Manuel Guerrero Ceballos was abducted by DICOMCAR agents (Carabinero Intelligence). His body, among others, surfaced the next day in another part of the city with his throat cut, thus ending the life of a dedicated activist, educator, and articulate opponent to Pinochet and his political and economic agenda. *Desde el túnel; diario de vida de un detenido desaparecido* (1976) is Manuel Guerrero's testimony of his first detention by the infamous and feared Comando Conjunto, an imprisonment he miraculously survived, only to be seized again and killed in the 1985 abduction in Providencia. His book recounts in detail the brutal circumstances of his first internment as well as insights into the political philosophy of Chile's progressive activists in the dark years following the 1973 "golpe de estado." Once released, Manuel Guerrero and his family fled to Sweden where he published his testimony in 1976. His son, Manuel Guerrero Antequera, who as a fourteen-year-old witnessed his father's final abduction, edited and republished his father's narrative in 2008.

Desde el túnel recounts, in sometimes terrifying and graphic detail, the circumstances of Manuel Guerrero's seizure, detention, repeated incidents of torture and brutality, and final release. Narrated in the first person, *Desde el túnel* is one of many testimonies from Chile written in the 1970s and 1980s that recount the systemic brutalities committed by members of Pinochet's government and various security forces, particularly DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional). Guerrero's account begins with his 1976 abduction from his neighborhood in La Florida, then largely a blue-collar sector in southern Santiago. He describes his captors, reconstructs dialogs, recalls rooms where interrogations punctuated by beatings occurred, and occasionally reminisces about others like him who have been sacrificed to the socialist cause. As testimony, *Desde el túnel* cries loudly for social and political justice, as if Guerrero's own personal circumstances functioned as a symbol of both oppression on the part of the government and resistance on behalf of large segments within the population, especially the working class. That his son would publish a second edition of the manuscript 32 years after his first kidnapping and 23 years after his second abduction and death suggests that Manuel Guerrero's story continues to resonate powerfully in a society that perhaps still struggles with the tragic nature of its not-so-distant past.

Testimony as a genre came of age in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, partially as a response to the political conditions in many countries, but its deeper roots stretch back much further. In her book *Can Literature Promote Justice? Trauma Narrative and Social Action in Latin American Testimonio*, Kimberley A. Nance points to such iconic colonial texts as Bartolomé de las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552), Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* (1559), and Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz's "Respuesta a Sor Filotea" (1691) as early precursors to contemporary literature of social justice (167). "Both personal experience narratives and social justice writing have a long and distinguished tradition in Latin America," writes Nance (167). The modern age of the Latin American testimonial narrative probably begins with *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966), edited by Cuban ethnographer Miguel Barnet, and includes what have become classics in the field: Jacobo Timerman's *Preso sin nombre, celda sin número* (1980), and, of course, Rigoberta Menchú's eponymous *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983) (Nance 171-2). Manuel Guerrero's *Desde el túnel* shares much in common with

these testimonies, especially the manner in which the narrative voice speaks in the name of a community or group, to follow John Beverley's critique of the Latin American testimonial narrative (33). Beverley writes,

> the meaning of testimonio lies not in its uniqueness but in its ability to stand for the experience of [the] community as a whole. . . . Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle . . . Testimonio . . . always signifies the need for a general social change in which the stability of the reader's world must be brought into question. (41)

Similarly, Sylvia Molloy writes that testimonios are "the life-stories of members of minority groups, that is, of those whose presence, as individuals, has been routinely marginalized" (462). *Desde el túnel* explicitly identifies its community: workers, organizers, activists, artists, musicians and writers whom Pinochet's regime singled out for persecution, exile, or death. In this way, Guerrero directly connects himself to the larger socialist movement throughout his country (and beyond) and implies that his story, while painful, was not necessarily unique (thereby indicating a collective tragedy). Beverley's assertion that the testimonio genre picked up steam in the years after 1973 (77), the year of Pinochet's "golpe," suggests that Guerrero's text functions metonymically (34); it is one story that represents many other similar stories from marginalized individuals and groups in analogous circumstances. Guerrero thus represents the silenced Chilean socialist movement; similarly, Rigoberta Menchú gives voice to Guatemalan Indian tribes persecuted by the government.

Following the metonymical pattern identified by Beverley, *Desde el túnel* tells Manuel Guerrero's story with parallel and complementary stories of other Chileans in similar circumstances, thereby illustrating Beverley's point that testimonios are not just about the individual who narrates: "The situation of the narrator in testimonio is one that must be representative of a social class or group" (33). As such, in testimonio one can tell multiple stories, though each story generally connects to the other through some common experience, theme or context. For instance, no one would confuse Manuel Guerrero with noted "Nueva Canción Chilena" musician Víctor Jara, (whom Guerrero mentions and

obviously admires). Yet Jara's imprisonment, death and desecration in 1973, immediately following the "golpe", resonate strongly with Guerrero's immediate predicament in 1976, not to mention with Jara's obvious political affiliation with progressive groups. Guerrero's allusion to Jara, among many others, is a reminder that the fallen singer-activist's life had a powerful symbolic value worthy of commemoration in *Desde el túnel*. Jara was emblematic of a larger social and political movement reflected in his music and life. This is also the case, for instance, for talking about José Weibel, to whom Guerrero dedicates an entire chapter, "Recuerdo del Checho." Weibel had already been abducted by DINA and would later die in custody, a fact that was hidden from Guerrero when he wrote his testimonio. Weibel was a leader in the Juventud Comunista ("la Jota"), and, like Manuel Guerrero, had a very humble upbringing. Guerrero's characterization of Weibel illustrates the tendency in testimonio literature to locate life stories within a larger thematic context. Therefore, when Guerrero writes about the death of El Checho's father, we never overlook the man's true character:

> Cuando su padre murió después del golpe producto de los allanamientos, amenazas y persecuciones a sus hijos, se condolía de no poder estar presente en los funerales y expresar su amor hacia ese hombre enérgico que rendía culto al trabajo y la disciplina. Sin embargo, cada obstáculo y dolor, lejos de aplastarlo, le imponía la exigencia de hacer más por la libertad de su Patria. (122)

Guerrero, through Weibel's story, never loses sight that they share a passion and devotion to the socialist cause. Weibel's absence from his own father's funeral intensifies one of the central motifs in *Desde el túnel*: the movement was larger than any single individual was, regardless of one's personal circumstances or misfortunes; this is a salient trait of the testimonio genre. Chilean socialism and allegiance to Allende's progressive programs called for personal sacrifice, and Weibel's story exemplifies a very high degree of dedication and resolve.

Guerrero's narrative takes full advantage of opportunities to criticize Pinochet's efforts to "modernize" the economy, and he thus relentlessly promotes Allende's dream to convert Chile into a socialist country. Consequently, Guerrero's testimonio resembles a partisan

political pamphlet in the way he excoriates Pinochet's agenda and lays bare the initial shortcomings of the incipient market economy:

> Eran días fríos y duros de principios de junio de 1976. Santiago mostraba la crisis.
>
> Los últimos días otoñales habían graficado, una vez más, la situación económica angustiosa. La lluvia desnudó la miseria, impulsando a centenares de niños y mujeres —preferentemente— a recorrer casa tras casa implorando un mendrugo de pan. La venta de los más inverosímiles productos de los microbuses, tales como elásticos, botones, dulces, ganchos para la ropa, hilos y agujas, parches sanitarios, lápices y cuadernos, mostraba la amplia participación popular en la "economía social del mercado". Chile había ingresado a la economía del Candy. La cesantía era disfrazada con variados oficios y subempleos. Más de las tres cuartas de la población trataba de vender algo a la restante porción de habitantes, transformando cada lugar en un mercado persa.
>
> La limosna, los pordioseros, la disputa de los tarros de basura con los perros era la nueva geografía humana del país. (13)

To what degree is such economic and social analysis Guerrero's own personal story? Kimberly Nance reminds us that "testimonio is simultaneously political and literary" (11). For the speakers in a testimonio, "the goal is not only to produce books; they are after concrete social change. . . . It is a project of social justice in which [the] text is an instrument" (Nance 12, 19). As a result, *Desde el túnel* freely intersperses Guerrero's story of abduction and torture with frequent commentaries on Chile's current leadership and its abject moral bankruptcy. The Latin American testimonio is such a sufficiently broad and flexible genre that it can easily encompass a variety of discourses, especially those that are political in character. Hybrid in nature, the testimonio tells an individual's story yet laces its discourse with blatant and often scathing assessments of a country's political, economic, and social reality.

An example of testimonial literature's fundamental hybridity is its communal voice, even in ostensibly unmediated works like *Desde el túnel*. As John Beverley, Kimberly Nance, Naomi Lindstrom and others have convincingly shown, a testimonio is more often than not a collaboration of two or more people, a factor that potentially complicates our understanding of authorship or originality. This is

particularly the case in such works as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú and Biografía de un cimarrón*, testimonios that, despite the first-person narrative, were constructed in dialogue with an editor/transcriber. Rigoberta Menchú told her story to Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos who, in turn, transformed her account into the widely-read text that became known as Menchú's testimonio. Similarly, Cuban ethnographer Miguel Barnet was Esteban Montejo's interlocutor for the text that became the iconic *Biografía de un cimarrón*. Literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin is one critic among several acknowledging that the narrator's voice in many testimonios represents a plurality of voices that are dialogic in nature (Lindstrom 89). Sylvia Molloy sees this unusual narrative construct at work in such testimonios: "[they] show a particularly complex tension between an individual 'I' and the collective 'we' that 'I' strives to represent" (462). On the surface at least, *Desde el túnel* avoids such epistemological and ontological quandaries created by multiple authorship and by what Frederic Jameson refers to as "collective voices" (qtd. in Lindstrom 88). Initially, we assume that *Desde el túnel*'s narrative voice belongs solely to Manuel Guerrero Ceballos, the actual "desaparecido," and in a strict sense, this is probably true. However, given that the modern edition of the work begins with "palabras iniciales" from his son, Manuel Guerrero Antequera, and that his son currently blogs (http://www.manuelguerrero.blogspot.com/) about his father's experiences as a political prisoner, then it may be possible to assume that Manuel Guerrero Ceballos' larger testimonio is a congeries of voices from father and son, figuratively speaking. The two thus form a hybrid liaison made up of the traditional, printed text and a series of hypertexts that continue to comment on the father's tragic circumstances.

One poignant episode illustrating this hypertextual collaboration begins with a chapter from *Desde el túnel*, "La mano del traidor," and ends with son Guerrero Antequera's extensive commentary on the "traidor's" likely identity, Miguel Estay Reyno, popularly known as "El Fanta." In *Desde el túnel*, Guerrero Ceballos narrates an occasion when he vaguely recognized one of the voices of his inquisitors (he was always blindfolded during interrogations). This unnamed individual recounted so many accurate details of the prisoner's life that Guerrero felt sure that they had known each other previously. He knew Manuel Guerrero's age, wife's nickname, his son's name and age, his parent's affiliation with the Communist Party, Manuel's leadership with the

Juventud Comunista, and other aspects of his personal and private habits. Manuel Guerrero wonders, "¿Dónde he escuchado esa voz? En alguna ocasión me fue cercana. ¿Pero será la misma?" (67). In the preface to *Desde el túnel* and in several online interviews and blogs, son Manuel Ceballos Antequera identifies this particular interrogator as "El Fanta," not only one of his father's torturers in 1976 but also someone who participated in his murder (Skoknic). "El Fanta" is currently serving a life sentence for his involvement in the assassination of Manuel Guerrero Ceballos and has spoken quite openly on his role as one of Pinochet's henchmen. "El Fanta"'s connection to Guerrero Ceballos was, as the testimonio suggests, quite real: both were active in the Juventud Comunista during the same period. In an interview from 2007, "El Fanta" says, "Lo conocí en 1969, cuando ingresé a la Juventud Comunista. [El] tenía un rango de dirección y yo era un militante más. Empecé a tener algunas responsabilidades y lo veía diariamente en diversas actividades" (Skoknic). However, "El Fanta," also captured and tortured while a member of the Communist Party, turned on his former comrades and became an informer for the state. By late 1975, "El Fanta" was providing inside information to the military regime about communist activists, his former friends and colleagues (Skoknic).

Ironically, "El Fanta"'s admissions through online interviews complement both *Desde el túnel* and Guerrero Antequera's multiple blogs on the subject of his father. For example, "El Fanta"'s statements confirm the allegations that *Desde el túnel* makes about the enormous divisions that existed within the country following the "golpe" and the tenacity with which the entrenched government attempted to annihilate all current and future political opposition.

Manuel Guerrero Antequera's blog frequently comments on his father's life, imprisonment, death and legacy. For instance, in March of 2008 (the year that *Desde el túnel* was re-published), Guerrero Antequera blogged extensively about his father's captors, stressing that they were government functionaries carrying out orders from above in an environment of systemic, institutional abuse:

> Hace 23 años, el 29 de marzo de 1985, mi padre, el profesor Manuel Guerrero Ceballos, junto al sociólogo José Manuel Parada y el artista plástico Santiago Nattino, fueron secuestrados de las puertas de mi colegio, hechos desaparecer por un día, para luego aparecer

> degollados en un camino rural de la comuna de Quilicura a las afueras de Santiago.
>
> Sus captores y asesinos eran funcionarios públicos. El pecado que habían cometido era investigar, en plena dictadura, el actuar del Comando Conjunto, con el objetivo no de cobrar venganza sobre sus funcionarios, sino de dar con el paradero de miles de detenidos desaparecidos.
>
> Era la época del terrorismo de Estado, en la que las fuerzas públicas en vez de defender a sus ciudadanos los maltrataban atrapados en una máquina de exterminio que duró 17 años.
>
> (http://www.manuelguerrero.blogspot.com/)

This particular blog, obviously posted to commemorate the anniversary of his father's second (and fatal) kidnapping, informs the readers that there would be a gathering that afternoon at the intersection of Los Leones and El Vergel, the address of the Colegio Latinoamericano where his father and others met their tragic fate. In this way, Guerrero Antequera's ongoing political commentary, a hypertexual meditation offered in the spirit of and as an addendum to his father's original testimonio, sustains the memory of those whom the dictatorship wounded, disappeared, or killed in the name of political and economic stability.

Guerrero Antequera's recurrent and often impassioned commentaries on various facets of Pinochet's dictatorship have both an overt and more hidden agenda. On the surface, his criticisms continue to lay bare—in testimonio fashion—the savagery with which standing (and newly-created) governmental institutions were complicit in carrying out the dictatorship's will. Guerrero Antequera echoes his father's voice in his staunch opposition to institutional violence carried out on a country's own citizens. On a deeper, more symbolic level, Guerrero Antequera's ample use of cyberspace and up-to-date technology to further his father's case suggests that the use of hypertext itself is a powerfully freeing and creative act, the antithesis of the dictatorial legacy of the Pinochet years. Recalling Marshall McLuhan's terminology, the medium becomes the message; freedom in cyberspace stands in opposition to a regime that attempted to control nearly all facets of life, especially words. George Landow, one of the first to explore the theoretical dimensions of hypertext, writes, "the history of information technology from writing to hypertext reveals an increasing democratization or dissemination of power. Writing begins this process,

for by exteriorizing memory it converts knowledge from the possession of one to the possession of more than one" (174). Landow suggests that inherent within information technologies is a "democratic thrust," since the wide diffusion of information ultimately empowers those who become better informed about the world they inhabit (174). Literary theorist J. Hillis Miller shares Landow's enthusiasm about the democratic impulse of hypertext, writing prophetically in 1989: "one important aspect of these new technologies of expression and research is political. These technologies are inherently democratic and transnational. They will help create new and hitherto unimagined forms of democracy, political involvement, obligation, and power. . . . The new regime of telecommunications seems to be inherently democratic" (qtd. in Landow 179). Blogs, websites, Facebook, Twitter, and other manifestations of contemporary social networking exist in extreme contrast to the secrecy and control of communication that many dictatorships seem to require to function.

Manuel Guerrero Antequera utilizes a medium (blogging) that gives him powers and freedoms that Pinochet's government denied his father and a host of other Chileans. In this way, Guerrero Ceballos' print testimonio is interpreted, complemented and ultimately superseded by his son's hypertextual essays. The son's ongoing blog allows him to preserve and further develop the issues that his father once raised, especially his belief in a multi-cultural Chile that openly acknowledged its indigenous presence and heritage. As Marie-Laure Ryan has observed, "hypertext is uniquely suited to express the aesthetic and political ideals of an intellectual community that has elevated the preservation of diversity into one of its fundamental values" (7).

Desde el túnel; diario de vida de un detenido desaparecido embodies perhaps the most fundamental characteristic seen in more iconic, much more widely-read Latin American testimonial literature, such as *Preso sin nombre,* celda sin número and *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*: a commitment to reveal "a problematic collective social situation in which the narrator lives" (Beverley 33). *Desde el túnel,* in virtual dialogue with <manuelguerrero.blogspot.com>, father with son, thus speaks on behalf of other "desaparecidos," exiles, tortured and assassinated citizens of Chile who suffered and perished throughout Pinochet's regime in the name of stability and modernization.

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The Places of Agnès: Representation of Space in Varda's *Sans toit ni loi*

Michelle Scatton-Tessier
University of North Carolina at Wilmington

French Filmmaker Agnès Varda's acute awareness of the interactive relationships between people and spaces they frequent has long been one of the principal components of her cinema, from *La pointe courte* (1956), through *7 P, cuis., s. de b.* (1984) to *Les plages d'Agnès* (2008). "I believe," states the director, "that people are made not only of the places where they were brought up, but of those they love, I believe the environment *[le décor]* lives in us, directs us . . . by understanding people you understand places better; by understanding places, you understand people better" (Smith, *Agnès Varda* 60).[1] Faithful to time periods and geographical details, Varda's *mise-en-scène* and film techniques lead the viewer in a better understanding of the ways in which personal and private spaces both prescribe daily behaviors and provide springboards for identity creation. Most specifically, all her films, whether fiction or documentary, feature or short, allot a great deal of screen time to interactions between female protagonists and their domestic space; moreover, when viewed chronologically, her films reveal a progression in this depicted relationship: a cinematographic shift from the traditional bourgeois domestic sphere, as well as places bearing such class markings, towards a more complex involvement with more natural land and seascapes. This is a problematic move since natural space often implies one that needs to be cultivated, arranged, ordered and contained. Varda's linkage of environment and people draws heavily on an understanding of the inhabitant/habitat dynamic in which personalized living space provides protection from the outer elements (often strangers and harsh weather), replicates its inhabitants' roles and status within the larger social sphere, and supports its residents' integration into the specific community by reinforcing the essential values on which it is founded.