

Glocal Narratives of Resilience

Edited by Ana María Fraile-Marcos

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9 Critical Dystopias in Spanish

Memory as an Act of Resilience¹

*Ana María Fraile-Marcos
and Francisca Noguero*

*Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
Das Rettende auch*

—Friedrich Hölderlin, “Patmos”

The lines in the epigraph, “But where there is danger, / A rescuing element grows as well” (Hölderlin 71), highlight a quality of resilience that can be observed in the capacity of human beings for endurance and recovery when they find themselves under extreme pressure. The present chapter approaches the study of human resilience through the lens of memory and its centrality in the recovery of individual and collective self-esteem by focusing on a selection of recent “critical dystopias” (Moynan) written in Spanish. We suggest that the selected works can be understood as ascribing to the “ethics of defeat” (Amar Sánchez) and “reflective nostalgia” (Boym), at the same time as they investigate the potentiality of “cultural agencies” (Sommer) for the development of resilience. Furthermore, we argue that the chosen dystopian narratives reject the consensus ethics characteristic of contemporary writing (Rancière) and defend, instead, an ethics of conviction (Badiou).

In *L'éthique. Essai sur la conscience du mal* (1993) Badiou indicates the impossibility of an abstract ethics, as he claims that any ethical expression is defined by the context from which it emerges. He further explains that those who profess this “ethics of conviction” must maintain it in the face of adversity, even if this means to become alienated and relegated to the margins of society. For Badiou, the actual Promethean heroes are those people who embrace the idea of self-failure—which is a political category—rather than shunning the tenets—an ethical category—that underpin their identity as subjects. Hereby, to be faithful to a particular truth means to fight for the preservation of memory against the complacency offered by oblivion.

Rancière follows this train of thought when he denounces in *La méésentente: politique et philosophie* (1995) that current thinking is

deeply influenced by consensus. As a result, controversial artistic and intellectual mechanisms are replaced by social mediation. Facing what he considers a misinterpreted “turn to ethics,” the French philosopher advocates in many of his later works—*Malaise dans l'esthétique* (2004), *Politique de la littérature* (2007), *Le fil perdu* (2014)—an understanding of art as the space from which to reinvent politics, resist the forces of neoliberalism and reveal the microstories of the defeated. Consequently, Rancière defends the radical aspects of certain “representations” of the unrepresentable, of evil, and of the “state of emergency,” in order to fully analyze the reality of contemporary societies.²

These radical representations are often found in the anticipatory fictions that Tom Moylan calls “critical dystopias” and which overlap with other current popular genres, such as gothic and crime fictions. They all share a desire to “linger in the terrors of the present even as they exemplify what is needed to transform it” (Moylan 198–199), thereby making us fully aware of our position in the world but also retaining a utopian impulse in the face of the bleakest dystopian scenarios. Typically, these works highlight the human ability to face adversity according to the twofold pattern that Stefan Vanistendael advanced in *Resilience* (1994): on the one hand, protecting human integrity and, on the other, adopting a positive vital behavior in the midst of hostile environments.

The following analysis links Vanistendael’s understanding of resilience to the notion of humanist science fiction. Next, it undertakes the study of well-known critical dystopias written in Spanish where the role of memory is crucial for the construction of resilience.

Navigating the Inner Space

Contrary to those who identify science fiction as an escapist genre aiming to mere entertainment, numerous contemporary critics stress its potential to inquire into the relationship between the individual and their environment. For Donna Haraway, for instance, the limit between science fiction and social reality is only an optical illusion (149). Lyman Sargent denounces the generalized misinterpretation of dystopias “[f]or rather than seeing eutopia and dystopia as equal subsets or varieties of Utopia, or social dreaming about alternative future societies, utopian texts are taken as the exemplar of Utopian thought and dystopias as their cowardly cousins” (9). On his part, Fredric Jameson defines dystopias as “masquerades under a dystopian appearance whose deeper libidinal excitement, however, is surely profoundly Utopian in spirit (as in most current cyberpunk)” (26). Consequently, he considers that dystopian writing is particularly valuable to elaborate a cognitive cartography of the present. This is also the approach that underpins much contemporary

dystopian writing in Spanish, as Edmundo Paz Soldán's comments on his short story collection *Las visiones* confirms,

Aquí quería explorar la mirada de los dominados. Es una colonización contemporánea, pero hay ecos de muchos otros períodos. Yo quería reflexionar sobre el presente . . . Para mí la ciencia ficción es un gran género político. La ciencia ficción que me interesa es aquella que habla de ideas políticas.

(“Tanto cine” 3)³

Dystopian writing in Spanish also shows an inclination toward the subjective turn experienced by contemporary science fiction, where we find less and less science and, perhaps, also less fiction. In this, it corroborates James Ballard's perception that the future of science fiction is to be found in the “exploration of inner space,” in contraposition with the outer space that constitutes the traditional sphere of the genre. This turn toward the interior allows for a novel analysis of the mind and its capacities that may contribute to reclaim a narrative that penetrates the human unconscious, the biggest universe to discover.

The extent of Ballard's influence on writing in Spanish is evident in Marcelo Cohen's words prefacing the groundbreaking series *Línea C de Ciencia Ficción* (2004) that explicitly express the idea that science fiction needs to stop focusing on the outer space and the far future and focus on the near future and inner space. This approach is actually rather natural for Spanish-speaking authors who, following in the tracks of Borges, Ballard, and Philip K. Dick, have traditionally shown a certain proclivity toward “soft science fiction” and its characteristic emphasis on provoking ontological questions about the human condition. Bernard Goorden observes this tendency when he affirms that Latin American Science Fiction has mainly focused on humankind, the central concern of a progressive literature (8). Besides, Latin American writers are also concerned with the adaptation into Ibero-American realities of the concepts applied to the analysis of futuristic fictions written in English. As a result, they coin new terms that may better describe their fictions.⁴ The Chilean Jorge Baradit, for example, proposes the notions of “magical realism 2.0” and “cyberchamanism,” whereas Marcelo Cohen speaks about “ciencia ficción trucha” (bad quality or fake SF).

Similarly, Spanish-speaking writers are successfully adopting the dystopian subgenre of cyberpunk to reflect on the everyday contexts of their distinct societies.⁵ Baradit, for instance, draws a parallel between cyberpunk and present-day Latin America. The Uruguayan Ramiro Sanchiz offers the term “trashpunk” to refer to the “third-world” version of William Gibson's and Bruce Sterling's cyberpunk. If cyberpunk can be considered as a fictional space where the obsolete and state-of-the-art technologies coexist, in Latin America new technologies and technocratic

societies overlap with indigenous communities, and the gated communities of millionaires intersperse among the ghettos of the poor (qtd. in Muñoz Zapata 1).

Critical Dystopias

Dystopias offer a critique of the present by imagining near-future societies where certain familiar policies, such as those deriving from unfettered neoliberalism, result in the increase of poverty, inequality, and exploitation among human beings, the blurring of the boundaries between man and machine, and the lack of freedom of choice. In these hopeless contexts, certain “eutopian” attitudes or enclaves emerge, to which some dissidents hold on to. These apocalyptic works proliferate in times of crisis and conflict and, as Camille Focant explains, their mission is to transmit to readers a message of resistance and bravery (38).

Along the same lines, Tom Moylan coined the term “critical dystopia” as opposed to that of “classical utopia,” and defined it as “a textual mutation that self-reflexively takes on the present system and offers not only astute critiques of the order of things, but also explorations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration” (xv). After the utopic 1960s, critical dystopias acquired relevance with the conservative ideological turn that began in the 1980s, “an era of economic restructuring, political opportunism, and cultural implosion” (186). If classical dystopias usually conclude with the idea that there is no way out (194), critical dystopias become new manifestations of the utopic imagination, as they are subversive, opposed to resignation, and epic in character. While utopias offer solutions, dystopias are more inclined to offer a path to survival in contexts that are marked by oppression.

Thus, dystopian writings open “a space of contestation and opposition” (Baccolini 520) that offers the possibility of escaping, in Cohen’s words, the cycle of realist adaptation, of false dichotomies between what is said and what happened, between the realistic and the fantastic (“Como si empezáramos” 134). By playing with shifting structures, digressions and multiple references, as well as by frequently displaying a language that destabilizes readers’ expectations and drives them to a position of cognitive estrangement, dystopian writing enhances reality, since, according to Cohen, “ningún arte está mejor dotado para el realismo total” (“there is no art better equipped for total realism”; 134).⁶

Memory and Identity

Over three centuries ago, John Locke defined memory as the foundation of personal identity: “In this alone consists personal Identity, i.e., the

sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of the person” (335). The link between memory and identity established by Locke is also of paramount importance in dystopian narratives.⁷ A case in point is *Blade Runner* (1982), a groundbreaking cyberpunk film. Based on the short novel by Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), the film emphasizes the similarities between bioengineered individuals and human beings by replacing the term “android” of the original with “replicant.” In the world imagined by Dick, possessing memories of one’s own is synonymous with humanity, which explains the anguish experienced by the Nexus 6 when they have to face the Voigt Kampff test that is designed to reveal the spurious nature of implanted memories.

Memory also manifests itself as the element that saves us from alienation. For this reason, the works analyzed in this chapter often insist on the madness brought about by oblivion, which can be provoked by different means. In Ray Loriga’s melancholic novel *Tokyo ya no nos quiere* (2014), forgetting is induced by the ingestion of psychotropic drugs. Other works resort to ingenious, though toxic, new technologies to enforce forgetting. Thus, in the film *Strange Days* (1995) the SQUID allows its user to enjoy the memories of others; in Paz Soldán’s *Sueños Digitales* (2000) the Bolivian government decides to use the latest digital technology to erase the most sinister memory of its recent past from the electronic media library. Eventually, the creators of the alternative digital realities cannot stand the situation and get lost, either in the virtual reality of video games, like *Píxel*, or in real life, like *Sebastian*; similarly, the characters in “Wonderama,” by the Mexican author Bernardo Fernández BEF, and those in the trilogy *El Gen de Dios*, written by the Cuban Juan Abreu, get stranded in the infernal consumerist heavens of the amusement park aesthetic, so pervasive nowadays.

Frequently, dystopian works in Spanish are wary of the dangers of erasing from the annals of history situations of collective oppression. *Tiempo Lunar* (1991), by the Mexican author Mauricio Molina, is an example in point. In this thriller marked by the lunar eclipse that gives the book its name, the protagonist must solve the disappearance of his best friend, a photographer of off-limits areas, while he bears witness to how identities become interchangeable and the town suffers an uncanny transformation. In other instances, the critique against the suppression of memory emerges through the portrayal of cyborgs who undergo a surgical procedure in the cerebral cortex. This is the case of Baradit’s characters in *Ygdrasil* (2005) and those in *Las islas* (1998), by Argentinian author Carlos Gamerro. However, it is in Paz Soldán’s *Iris* (2014) and *Las visiones* (2016) where this topic is more extensively explored. In *Iris* the characters with recycled memories are common. They are usually soldiers hurt in combat—“shanz” in the estranged language of the

book—who, despite losing their human condition, continue functioning as war weapons. This is Xavier’s case:

Entre los shanz en el heliavión también había reconocido a Xavier, pareja de la responsable de la bomba dentro del Perímetro. Un oficial explicó a todos que se le había borrado la memoria y no recordaba nada de su vida anterior. Las torturas le habían afectado el cerebro, escuchaba órdenes y las cumplía pero era incapaz de iniciativa propia. Un shan [sic] ideal. Debían tratarlo como una persona, porque lo era; se llamaba Marteen y no tenía nada que ver con Xavier.⁸

Another meaningful passage about implanted memories revolves around the characters of Chendo, Carreño and Reynolds:

Queríamos inventarle un pasado a Reynolds mas era imposible. Los artificiales no tenían infancia ni adolescencia. Eran construidos así, nacían adultos. Les injertaban una memoria que les daba una historia, mas sabían tan bien como nos [sic] q’esa [sic] memoria era artificial. La podían cambiar si alguna experiencia no les gustaba, algún trauma con el que no se identificaban. Decían que había un mercado negro pa [sic] las memorias de los artificiales.

(*Iris*)⁹

Similar examples appear in the extraordinary short story “Artificial,” included in *Las visiones* and narrated by a young woman who laments the progressive loss of humanity exhibited by her mother, a soldier who was wounded in combat and subsequently rebuilt. The problem is introduced in the first lines: faced with her father’s cowardice, the daughter fights for her mother not to be branded artificial by the bureaucratic organism of reclassification. Her stance clashes with that of the office manager who, proving to be both pragmatic and heartless, claims not to understand so much effort just so the mother could continue being considered human: “Ser artificial podía y debía considerarse un ascenso, ellos tenían muchas más ventajas que los humanos, eran más eficientes y se les daban los mejores trabajos” (“Being artificial could and should be considered a promotion, they had many more advantages than humans, they were more efficient and they got the best jobs”; 91). The loss of humanity is accomplished in an aseptic manner, paying attention to the percentage of mechanical elements incorporated into the wound: “los reajustes numéricos elevaron la artificialidad al 48.78%. Mamá podía ser tanto humana como artificial . . . Solo un abogado nos dio esperanzas. Pidió que lo buscáramos cuando saliera del hospital. Iría a los medios, armaría un escándalo” (93).¹⁰ As the mother becomes aware that losing her memory is the same as losing her identity, her strategy of resilience focuses on not forgetting who she is (94–95).

Memory as an Act of Resilience

Although framed in the context of classical dystopias, critical dystopias stress the importance of preserving memories in order to endure traumatic situations and rebuild oneself. Ana María Amar Sánchez highlights this when she asserts that, as long as we do not forget, we are not defeated, since the preservation of silenced memories, especially through writing, gives meaning to a tragic experience. Thus, despite the apparent paradox, Amar Sánchez affirms that to be a defeated antihero, guarantees belonging to a superior group of victors: those who have resisted and ground their victory upon the proud acceptance of their defeat (25). Those who practice this form of resilience turn their writings into a political act to cope with trauma (Amar 77). Following the ideas of Theodor W. Adorno and Hannah Arendt, Amar similarly upholds an attitude of seclusion as a strategy to maintain freedom of conscience before the “consensual public life” (79–80).

In the critical dystopias we analyze, the narration of that which is irrepresentable shuns melancholy and turns instead to memory and nostalgia—or, recovering the etymological meaning of the term, to the pain of what is known (118). However, far from focusing on what Svetlana Boym identifies as a damaging kind of nostalgia that she calls “restorative” because it is linked to nationalisms that reformulate the past through the fabrication of myths and the creation of thoughts based on conspiracy theories, critical dystopias seem to draw on “reflective nostalgia” to trigger processes of resilience that are taken up by those who assume the impossibility of rebuilding the past. Thus, Boym explains,

Restorative nostalgia is at the core of recent national and religious revivals. It knows two main plots—the return to origins and the conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. It loves details, not symbols. At best, it can present an ethical and creative challenge, not merely a pretext for midnight melancholies. If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and specialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and demoralizes space.

(xvi)

Assuming the value of memory, Amar holds a notion of history that resembles the theses proposed by Walter Benjamin, according to whom it is the task of the defeated to update the past and set the basis for utopian change. Along the same lines, Reyes Mate asserts: “sólo recuerdan los sobrevivientes . . . no es el recuerdo de los vencedores sino el de los vencidos el que crea la esperanza” (“Only the survivors remember . . . It

is not the memories of the victors, but the memories of the defeated that create hope”; 224).

This sort of “cultural agency” that is characteristic of resilient individuals is at play in many of the selected dystopian works. For the narrator in Ricardo Menéndez Salmón’s dystopia *El Sistema* (2016), writing is not only a survival strategy and a way to preserve memory but also a privilege of the weak: “*Porque contar ha sido siempre privilegio de los débiles. Porque el dueño de la narración ha sido siempre un anciano, un enfermo, un loco, un inútil o un triste. Un Ajeno en un mundo de Propios*” (“Because storytelling has always been the privilege of the weak. Because the narrative’s owner has always been an old man, a sick person, a madman, a useless or a miserable person. A Stranger in a world of Fellow human beings”). On his part, Cohen creates characters that paradigmatically incarnate the many levels of association and belonging through which agency operates, often providing more than one anchor of identity for each subject. Interestingly, as Doris Sommer argues, the room to act up is often found “[i]n the contradictions among those anchors” (5). Withdrawn within their own society and unplugged from new technologies, Cohen’s characters practice conversation and walking as the means to counter state biopolitics. For example, Tállico and Multon, the protagonists of the short story “*Cuando aparecen Aquellos*,” reject Panconsciousness, a psycho-technological phenomenon used as a control device that generates an imposed memory shared among the world’s inhabitants. As the two men walk around the city, something unheard of in that society, they not only claim the spaces they inhabit but also succeed in momentarily transcending their dire present by casually talking about the plots of films and books or old biographic anecdotes. As a result, the book presents a defense of a conscience that owes its resilience, partly, to its link to memory:

La conciencia, eso era lo que ellos querían, mostraba dichosamente su condición fluida, como si se sometiera a avalanchas y ciclones, suaves pero desordenados, para afirmar una estabilidad triunfal. Era como esa gente que prueba cosas repugnantes para proclamar que no le gustan. Pero no: a la conciencia ese lugar le gustaba, al menos a la de Tállico y Multon. ¡La conciencia! Esa emisora interior de pensamientos y preocupaciones, de recuerdos innúmeros y observaciones alarmantes, pagar el seguro del cocheciño, ese trabajo, demostrar más afecto a R., tomar el comprimido, adónde iré a parar mi vida, cuán feliz soy, qué insatisfecho vivo, qué interesante esto, qué pernicioso esto otro, cómo podría ser más bondadoso.¹¹

Ricardo Piglia’s *La ciudad ausente* (1992) joins in the same effort to recognize the importance of memory, denouncing the silence of Argentinian society regarding the abuses that took place during the Dirty War

(1976–1983). In this dystopian novel, a journalist attempts to discover the origins of a machine-cyborg-woman that preserves, permutes and multiplies tales of violence in a context marked by a deliberate oblivion. The female cyborg infiltrates State institutions, such as the Museum, in order to discredit the official truths and reveal the authentic memories of the murdered people. In this way, we get to learn of the existence of “white nodes,” or the live matter where words were recorded (*Absent* 99). These white nodes come from hieroglyphic designs drawn over turtle’s shells. Because “[o]riginally, the white nodes had been marks on bones” (70), the turtle shells acquire a special meaning for those missing in Argentina. Piglia’s machine offers then a counter-memory that is resilient and raises over that what is hidden.¹² Like Derrida’s *Spectres de Marx* (1993) and Cillian McGrattan’s *Memory, Politics, and Identity* (2013), Piglia’s novel insists that the “ghost” remains visible despite the attempts to erase it.

In some of these dystopian narratives, the preservation of memory through writing is particularly effective. Ezequiel,¹³ the protagonist of Cohen’s novel *Insomnio* (1985), decides to stay in the dystopian Bardas of Krámer instead of escaping and finds his freedom in writing. In the face of adversity, Ezequiel shifts from melancholy to a kind of resilience grounded in what he considers an accepting vigil (184). The same attitude is adopted by Lear, one of the protagonists in Carmen Boullosa’s *Cielos de la tierra* (1997)—translated into English as *Heavens on Earth*. Lear defends literature as a strategy to preserve memory and language in L’Atlàntide. The title of the novel derives from a verse in Bernardo de Balbuena’s *La grandeza mexicana* (1603) that also appears in the novel’s epigraph: “Indias del mundo, cielo de la tierra” (“Indies of the world, heaven on earth”). Thus, the blurb of the first edition presents the book as “Carmen Boullosa’s new utopia.” Yet the structure of the novel is marked by three historical dystopias or failed utopias. The first one is set in the colonial past and features Hernando de Rivas, a victim of the acculturation carried out by the Spanish priests who decided to create a learned elite of Indians from the indigenous nobility. Hernando de Rivas writes a book in Latin that, centuries later, will engage professor Estela Díaz in its translation into Spanish. Estela’s present-time dystopia is that of Mexico in the 1990s, which is further accentuated as she reminisces about the lost ideals of the 1970s. Finally, Lear lives in a future dystopian community made up of the survivors of a nuclear holocaust. She decides to recover Estela’s translation of Hernando’s writings with the objective of preserving literature in a world keen on forgetting the word and erasing the past in an act of rejection of those who provoked the destruction of the planet. However, oblivion only begets a violent society in L’Atlàntide. Devastated by this situation, Lear decides at the end of the novel that she can no longer stay in her community: “I’m going to try to transform myself into words and jump into the realm I can share with

Estela and Hernando” (*Heavens* 367). When facing the inevitable failure of utopian projects, the only option that remains is the preservation of memories through the act of writing:

The three of us will inhabit in the same realm. The three of us will belong to three distinct times, our memories will be of three distinct ages, but I will know Hernando’s, and Hernando will know mine, and we’ll share a common space where we can look each other in the eyes and we’ll establish a new community.

Ours will be the Heavens on Earth.

(369)

Toward a Collective Memory

In this section we would like to connect the concept of “community resilience,” coined by Néstor Suárez Ojeda (2001) with that of collective memory, arguing that collective memory has a mobilizing effect that allows for the reconstruction of communities after they have been hit by disaster, which is often the focus of critical dystopias. Suárez Ojeda establishes that community resilience is only achieved by proudly claiming the collective cultural identity through the compilation of traditions, language, songs, dances, and tales. Evidently, collective memory, understood as that which allows individuals to ascribe themselves to a group (Halbwachs), plays a key role in this process, and critical dystopias consistently echo this possibility. As Baccolini points out,

In classical dystopia, memory remains too often trapped in an individual and regressive nostalgia, but critical dystopias show that a culture of memory—one that moves from the individual to the collective—is part of a social project of hope.

(520)

Edmundo Paz Soldán’s novels clearly exemplify the relevance of collective memory for the development of community resilience. Introducing in his dystopian universe multiple references to the Bolivian religious and anthropological imaginary, the despised and subjugated inhabitants of Iris manage to preserve their civilization and their identity by means of the preservation of ancestral rituals that connect people with their deities and nature. In this community, drugs are used to reach a sense of transcendence, in a similar way to that practiced in the Andean Altiplano. Significantly, too, the deities Xlött, Malacosa and La Jerere are reminiscent of Bolivian syncretic gods that have been venerated by miners within the Potosí region since the pre-Columbian period.

In a situation of absolute vulnerability, the inhabitants of Iris gather and tell their stories in order to regain their dignity. Their success is such

that they even draw some of their dark-skinned enemies to their fight. Soji, for instance, falls in love with the local culture as she tries to understand the land she inhabits through Irisian legends:

En los ratos libres, Soji recopilaba leyendas irisinas. Soñaba con una colección exhaustiva que no dejara una al margen. Ése debía ser el verdadero Palacio de la Memoria, no ese tonto museo con que pieloscuras de mala conciencia habían querido honrar el pasado irisino. No había montaña o arroyo, claro en el bosque o árbol en el valle que no remitieran a una leyenda. Hay que respetar lo que no se entiende, decía Soji. Interpretar lo interpretable, cubrir los silencios mas no forzar las cosas.¹⁴

In a novel in which four of its five parts tell the stories of the invaders Xavier, Reynolds, Yaz, and Katja, the inclusion of Irisian tales of violence and death becomes particularly meaningful. These harrowing microstories, abruptly inserted in the text and written in italics, follow in the tradition of the Bolivian “mining novel.” They contribute to the sense of estrangement that, according to Ranciére and Cohen, the chronicles of the defeated must produce. Through them, the people of Iris recover their self-awareness. Stories such as the following evoke, in an interesting paronomasic game, the possibility of turning the dystopian “iris” into an ideal collective rainbow, a transcending community:¹⁵

Conocen los pájaros arcoíris que cruzan el cielo, dijo una vez [Orlewen]. Cada pájaro dun [sic] solo color, al volar juntos forman el arcoíris . . . Vuelan guiados por un líder, el único pájaro que lleva en su plumaje los siete colores del arcoíris, mas ellos lo ven dun [sic] solo color, el suyo. Y cuando llegan a Malhado descubren que la sombra que crean al llegar al cruzar los lagos es el rostro de Xlötl. Eso es lo que somos. Nada cuando estamos solos, el Dios si estamos juntos. Un todo trascendente.¹⁶

To conclude, our analysis of contemporary Latin American dystopian narratives evidences a solid tradition of humanist SF writing in Spanish that combines the conventions developed in the English-speaking context with autochthonous cultural and geopolitical characteristics. Far from mere entertainment, these speculative fictions are firmly anchored in the present sociopolitical Latin American and global realities. Most relevant is their emphasis on representing ways of resilience that rely on the preservation of individual and collective memory, which is achieved in salient examples through the telling of stories. Hence, storytelling and *writing* are envisioned as forms of cultural agency that facilitate individual and collective resilience. Frequently privileging the memories of the defeated, these critical dystopias do not aim to reconstruct an imaginary idyllic

past but to instill a sense of hope (Mate) based on a reflective nostalgia that functions as a precondition for resilience and survival. Ascribing to the ethics of defeat, these works eschew resignation in the face of oppression and rise as influential cultural agents that offer a space to rethink and, as Rancière would have it, even, perhaps, reinvent politics.

Notes

1. Research for this paper has taken place within the framework of the research project “Narratives of Resilience: Intersectional Perspectives about Literature and Other Contemporary Cultural Representations” (FFI2015–63895-C2–2-R), graciously funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.
2. Carrying the banner for this position in the Hispanic world, the Argentinian writer Marcelo Cohen advocates the dismantling of “state prose” through texts that may unbalance, decodify and question the discourse of dominant power in our society (“Prosa” 1–8).
3. Where no published translation into English has been found for the works cited, translations are by this chapter’s authors. Translations longer than four lines are offered as notes. “Here I wished to explore the vision of the subaltern. It is a contemporary colonization, but there are echoes of many other times. I wanted to reflect on the present . . . For me science fiction is a great political genre. The science fiction I am interested in is that which speaks of political ideas.”
4. Juan Ignacio Muñoz Zapata addresses this topic in *Le cyberpunk vernaculaire de l’Amérique latine*.
5. Cyberpunk is a science fiction subgenre anchored in a dystopian future marked by repression and inequality, where the most advanced technology coexists with a low quality of life.
6. For more on this kind of aesthetics, see Francisca Noguerol’s “Barroco frío.”
7. See Martin Holz.
8. “Amongst the shanz in the heliplane I had also recognized Xavier, the partner of the woman who was responsible for the bomb inside the Perimeter. An official explained to us that his memory had been erased and he had forgotten everything about his previous life. The torture had affected his brain, he could listen to orders and carry them through, but he was incapable of taking the initiative. An ideal shan. We had to treat him as a person, because he was one; his name was Marteen and he had nothing to do with Xavier.”
9. “We wanted to imagine a past for Reynolds, but it was impossible. The artificials were never children nor teenagers. They were built like that, they were born adults. They had an implanted memory with a history of their ‘lives,’ but they knew as well as we did that the memory was artificial. They could change it if they didn’t like a particular experience, some trauma they didn’t identify as theirs. They said there was a black market for the memories of artificials.”
10. “The numerical adjustments raised the artificiality to 48.78%. Mom could be just as much human as artificial . . . Only one lawyer gave us some hope. He asked us to call him when Mom got out of the hospital. He would speak to the media and see about stirring up a scandal.”
11. “Conscience, that was what they wanted, happily showed its fluidity, as if it were subjugated to cyclones and avalanches, soft but disorganized, only to affirm a triumphant stability. But no; conscience liked that place, at least Tállico and Multon’s conscience. Conscience! That inner transmitter of

thoughts and worries, of uncountable memories and alarming observations, paying the car insurance, that job, showing more affection towards R., taking the pill, where will my life go, how happy I am, how unsatisfying my life is, how interesting this is, how damaging this other thing, how could I be a better person.”

12. *La sonámbula* (1998), a cinematographic dystopia by Fernando Spiner, with script by Spiner and Piglia, touches upon the same topics: the colonization of citizens' memories on the part of a repressive state that inflicts both a deliberate oblivion and false memories, the use of science in the process of achieving this end, and characters that resist the collective lie.
13. Ezequiel himself notes the intertextual reference to the homonymous biblical prophet: “a long time ago they decided to name me Ezequiel and the name hid the hope of revelation” (154).
14. “In her free time, Soji compiled Irisian legends. She dreamed of an exhaustive collection that left no tale forgotten. That should be the authentic Memory Palace, instead of that silly museum where guilty conscience dark-skinned ones had tried to pay homage to the Irisian past. There was no mountain nor stream, no clearing in the forest and no tree in the valley without a legend. One must respect that which is not able to understand, Soji said. Interpret that which can be interpreted, fill the silences, but no forcing the issue.”
15. This idea is recovered in the tale “Los pájaros arcoíris,” included in *Las visiones* (59–68).
16. “You know the rainbow birds that cross the sky, said [Orlewen] once. Each of a different color, when they fly together they create a rainbow . . . Their flight is guided by the leader, the only bird that has the seven colors of the rainbow in its plumage, but the other birds only see the one color, their own. And when they get to Malhado, they discover that the shadow they create when flying over the lakes is the face of Xlöt. That is what we are. Nothing when we are alone, God if we are together. A transcendental whole.”

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