

Helen Zout

An account of Argentine death (Osvaldo Bayer)

The image which bears witness. This is the daughter whose parents disappeared on a night when the moon shone brightly on the Rio de la Plata. Emptiness. Grief. Impotence. All mingled together. There is no explanation. How could we have come to this? But this, of course, is the point. Anything is possible. I have seen a Spanish cardinal make the Fascist salute as he stood next to Franco, the executioner of poets. And Monsignor Plaza? Yes, monsignor. Jesus nailed on the cross is looking straight at us. Jesus disappeared for ever in Argentina in 1976.



Here is the youthful face of death. The boy opens his eyes wide, he wants to keep on looking. He will keep on looking, for he will never give up. And he continues to stare at Videla and Massera and their civilian informers. He will continue to stare. He will never close his eyes. He will stand in the front line of human protest, always.



My dear boy, I would close your eyes so you can rest. Or perhaps it is better that you should continue to look at me and show me that the path ahead is one only: the search for justice.

A survivor. No more tears. They lie far beyond their eyes. Eyes continue to stare.

To be the son or daughter of one of the disappeared is to be alone for ever. But yet, it is also about being the one with the closest companion. There will always be the example of a disappeared parent by their side. The pride of having a father who fought for what he believed in. Somebody who gave up their life for the most beautiful song sung by all people: liberty, equality and brotherhood. What pride to have a parent like that! Meanwhile, the children of the repressors spend their lives seeking out places to hide, denying who they are even in death. Denial for ever. The stench of rotting flesh and blood, of rotting brains. The permanent odor of a body without a soul. They are the ones who must drop their gaze in order to pass by

unnoticed. The sons of the disappeared, on the other hand, their eyes fixed on the horizon. The son of the disappearer bows his head to avoid recognition.



Quilmes Cemetery, with its mass grave of the disappeared. Boots have tainted the soil forever. People cross themselves when they go by. Their dead no longer enjoy the peace and quiet of eternity. Passers-by leave a flower. Flowers that never wilt. Always in bloom.



The Vucetich police academy, which can never be cleansed of its past as a center for detention, torture and disappearance. Who could possibly study there? Who could let their

hands and souls be besmirched in such a manner? What kind of example is this for young people, unless it is the way a school should be, as demanded by Argentine society? How can we Argentines allow a police college to be at the same time a symbol for the most cowardly of repressions? It is exactly like the time when we allowed the Federal Police Officers' Academy to be named after Coronel Ramón Falcón, the brutal assassin of the workers' demonstration on May 1, 1909. Of course, there must be a reason for it. It was there that the police officers who subsequently collaborated in Argentine death, the disappearing of people, learned their trade.



Public outrage against an assassin in uniform. His house is daubed with paint and graffiti forever. And one phrase: "Asesino. Hijos". The children of the heroes have branded the soul of the repressor for all time. The stains will remain on the front of the house, and on the face of its owner. This is the civic courage of the children who will never give up.



Pablo Míguez was a boy of fourteen who disappeared in the ESMA, the Naval Mechanical School. Fourteen years of age. The bronze sculpture says it all. The beauty of adolescence. The cowardliness of his executioners.

Pablo. We will gaze upon you forever. We will think of you always. We will take your hand as we gather flowers. Together.

The last page. The last photograph. Sara and Jaime.



A final farewell to their son at the place where he was thrown into the river. The end. To learn what cruelty means. To learn what Argentine Death was like. To make sure it never happens again. Ever.