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As it Was: Sergio Ramírez's *Adiós muchachos: Una memoria de la revolución sandinista* as a Literary Portrait of Sandinismo

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Originally published in 1999, *Adiós muchachos* was reissued in 2007 only months after Ortega's 2006 presidential victory at the helm of the Frente Sandinista. Ramírez wrote a prologue to this edition where he catalogues Ortega's political moves to reveal an ideological about-face that has emptied the term "Sandinismo" of its original meaning. Ramírez is concerned in this prologue that "desde fuera de las fronteras de Nicaragua puede surgir la pregunta de si existe continuidad entre el actual gobierno de Daniel y la revolución de los años ochenta del siglo pasado" (16). He insists that there is not, and, in this paper, I study how Ramírez uses the genre of the literary portrait to prove his claim.

> *"Con el triunfo de la revolución en 1979, era Sandino el que volvía"*
>
> (Ramírez, *Adiós muchachos* 141)

Sergio Ramírez published *Adiós muchachos: una memoria de la revolución sandinista* in 1999, a date that celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Sandinista's victory. In the introduction, Ramírez tells his readers that he wrote this book for one reason: he is worried that the revolution "se ha quedado sin cronistas" (*Adiós muchachos* 25) and that it will be erased from historical memory. To prevent that from happening, he tells the story himself, giving his account credence when he "places himself as a witness and a protagonist" (Polit-Dueñas 165) with such asseverations as "la viví" (Ramírez, *Adiós muchachos* 25) and "yo estuve allí" (*Adiós muchachos* 29). The overall tone is nostalgic for a time long gone, and he expresses grateful wonder at having coincided in time and place with "[u]na época que fue también una épica" (*Adiós muchachos* 27); a moment, he writes, that was characterized by a "desprecio absoluto" (*Adiós muchachos* 28) of the past dictatorial regime, and "sueños éticos" (*Adiós muchachos* 29) that served as fodder for a limitless future. The book was reissued in 2007 only months after Daniel Ortega's 2006 presidential victory at the helm of the Frente Sandinista. Ramírez wrote a prologue to this edition that precedes the original introduction, and with it he paints the textual body in a different light, and nostalgia gives way to indignance. Within these pages, the author "[rechaza] las líneas oficiales del Sandinismo" (Rodríguez, np) by cataloging Ortega's political moves to reveal a "vocación regresiva" (Ramírez, *Adiós muchachos* 19) that likens him

to the authoritarian "caudillo" (*Adiós muchachos* 19) of decades past, and aligns him with powerful figures antithetical to the "proyecto trascendental" (*Adiós muchachos* 15) of the 80s. Ramírez is concerned in this prologue that "desde fuera de las fronteras de Nicaragua puede surgir la pregunta de si existe continuidad entre el actual gobierno de Daniel y la revolución de los años ochenta del siglo pasado" (*Adiós muchachos* 16). He insists that there is not, that Ortega and his government represent an ideological about-face that has emptied the term "Sandinismo" of its original meaning, and "la relectura de este libro frente a la realidad presente [se] lo confirma" (*Adiós muchachos* 16). With this prologue, Ramírez inserts an immediacy into his memoir that was not there before, and he creates a context that, I will show, allows us to see in his book a literary portrait of Sandinismo that he urgently holds up face-to-face with what he calls "este otro Frente Sandinista" (*Adiós muchachos* 17), ultimately aiming to unmask Ortega and his political party.

Literary portraiture, by definition, refers to an actual person. In her article, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting," Wendy Steiner shows this definition more complex than at first appears. Briefly, she traces the evolution of the genre from its inception as funerary masks up to the 20th century and writes that what is consistent throughout its visual and literary history is the task of "rendering present an aspect of the subject" (113). In both painting and writing, Steiner notes, portraiture "makes use of conventional associations between appearance and character" (115), and particular to literary portraiture is the association it makes between "acts and traits" (115), a relationship that obliges the reader to gauge the study's character—to see who a person is—through their actions. With this in mind, the author borrows from the tradition of biography to incorporate carefully chosen anecdotes from the subject's life, "[ruling] out the accidental, trying to make every...predication in writing reveal something about an unchanging essence" (115), and to intentionally endow that person's story "with a particular kind of meaning" (White 283).

In *Adiós muchachos*, the portrait of Sandinismo that Ramírez wants us to see is one that is rooted in the 1927-1933 rebellion and that persisted on through the revolution of the 80s. To this end, the author intermittently refers to and, therefore, willfully nudges us towards Ramón de Belausteguigoitia's 1933 *Con Sandino en Nicaragua: La hora de la paz*, a hybrid text consisting of reports and interviews with the revolutionary that amount to a meticulously constructed literary portrait of a "Sandino vencedor" (7) and, by extension, those who fought with him.[1] This extrapolation from Sandino to his soldiers is understood throughout as the Basque journalist writes that they are all bound together by "una profunda camaradería" (123). Belausteguigoitia aims

1 Belausteguigoitia's text was published is 1933, marking the critical moment of the peace negotiations after the defeat and withdrawl of the U.S. troops, and just months prior to Sandino's assassination.

to convince us of this sense of community when he writes that Sandino "habla siempre en nosotros" (125) and when he quotes him as saying "estamos compenetrados en nuestro papel; todos somos hermanos" (147), a relationship made visual through the symbol of the hug, that which Sandino calls "nuestro saludo" (125). The significance of the camaraderie lies in the importance that it wrests from the "self," making it part of a whole. Inspiring this whole, is a "fe en el mundo moral" (129), an imagined post-imperial world where "haya trabajo y actividad para todos" (152) and "el trabajador no sea humillado y explotado" (152), where "unos cien mil sin comunicaciones, sin escuelas, sin nada del gobierno" (157) can realize their humanity. In the end, through carefully chosen anecdotes and tailored descriptions of daily life, the journalist shows that the rebels' commitment to their faith is acted out through an absolute discipline (123) and an "extraordinario desinterés" (126), both of which position them willingly looking death in the face, an attitude expressed in the definitive phrase "yo quiero patria libre o morir."

The essence of Sandino's army, as Belausteguigoitia portrays it, is the communal and complete renunciation of the self, inspired by a common faith in a post-imperial world to be reached only through the unification of theory and practice, words and action. By alluding to this report in his book, Ramírez is able to draw parallels between his revolution and the rebellion that came before. To do this, the author infuses his memoire with portraits of individuals complicit in the historical process ranging from the insurrections of the 60s and 70s up through the revolution and its definitive war of the 80s. With these portraits, the author is able to "[render] present" (Steiner 113) to his readers an "unchanging essence" (Steiner 115) or an ideological continuity between the two time periods that allows him to show an authenticity that he denies Ortega when he deems his Sandinismo as "otro" (Ramírez, *Adiós muchachos* 17).

Among the many portraits in Ramírez's memoire, is that of the author himself. Throughout his text, he paints himself as a central protagonist of the Sandinista Revolution, and he admits from the very beginning that his position is one of extreme privilege. For example, in the original introduction, the writer acknowledges that he never carried arms in the revolution or wore a military uniform (*Adiós muchachos* 25) even though he has taken it upon himself to write about what Polit-Dueñas equates to "a whole Nicaraguan generation that was lost in the war against the Contras" (170). Ramírez's privilege is further seen in the opening paragraph of the first chapter "Confesión de parte." Here, he describes his geographic mobility that carried him in political exile from Nicaragua to Costa Rica where all three of his children were born, and then on to Germany "por dos años espléndidos, gracias a una beca de escritor" (*Adiós muchachos* 31). While there, he spent part of his time engaging with the elite sector of the avant-garde art world, experiencing "todo el cine expresionista alemán en el cine Arsenal, todo Brecht en el Berliner Ensemble al otro lado del Muro,...los cuadros de

Lucas Cranach en la pinacoteca del Museo de Dahlem" (*Adiós muchachos* 31). Further, he portrays himself as a valued member of that community when he notes that he benefited from "entradas de cortesía a los conciertos en la Philharmonie de Von Karajan" (*Adiós muchachos* 31), and, more directly later in the book, when he writes: "Armand Gatty, que para entonces solía dirigir en una sala de teatro experimental de la Kurfüstendamm, me había propuesto irme a trabajar con él al Centro Pompidou, que estaba por abrirse, como guionista de cine" (*Adiós muchachos* 94).

The privilege Ramírez experiences reveals what Pérez-Cuadra describes as "un distanciamiento simbólico y discursivo entre el narrador / autor / protagonista y el sujeto popular abyecto" (12). To mitigate this distance, Ramírez consistently positions himself as wholly committed to the Sandinista agenda. For example, when he describes his appreciation of and participation in the revolutionary aesthetic of the avant-garde while in Germany, it serves to flesh out his revolutionary persona because it links theory and practice when it comes to be an ideological backdrop for the political protests he joined and his painful but necessary choice not to go to Paris with Gatty: "Rehusé, no sin lástima, y desde entonces nunca he dejado de decirme a mí mismo que fue una decisión crucial en mi vida. Me hubiera perdido una revolución..." (*Adiós muchachos* 94).[2] The pain he evokes here allows him to attribute to himself the discipline and selflessness central to Sandino's agenda as portrayed by Belausteguigoitia, qualities he brings to the forefront when he tells us of the family life he sacrificed.[3] For example, Ramírez writes that just prior to the Sandinista's victory in 1979, he left his wife and children behind in San José to return to Nicaragua where, "a pesar de una orden de prisión de la dictadura y...bajo amenaza de muerte de El Chigüín, el delfín de Somoza" (*Adiós muchachos* 32), he gave himself completely to the fight against Somoza. Further, he describes the years of the Revolution when he spent endless nights at the Casa de Gobierno, leaving his wife, Tulita, to "diez años de abandono" (*Adiós muchachos* 45). Also, as Polit-Dueñas notes, the author emphasizes the "notion of fatherhood as he portrays himself as a father who sent his only son to fight against the Contras" (163). To fully express the difficulty of his sacrifice and, therefore, his unwavering commitment, Ramírez dresses his sacrifice as cyclical, as something he chose to suffer every day. He does this in the following where he contemplates how easy it would have been for him to bring his son home and how difficult it was for him not to do so: "cómo podia un gobernante dedicarse tranquilo a sus tareas en la revolución si debía vivir pensando que podían devolverle a su hijo cualquier día muerto,

2 Ramírez writes that even though he was in Germany on a writer's grant, he was equally committed to political activity. In the following quote, the author places himself under snowfall and shows his concerns to be global in order to show his relentless dedication to social equity: "Fueron años también de marchas bajo la nieve por toda la Kurfüstendamm hasta Nollendorfsplatz para protestar contra la Junta Militar de Pinochet o contra los coroneles griegos, o para celebrar la revolución de los claveles en Portugal" (*Adiós muchachos* 31).

3 In her article, "When Politicians Contruct Father Worlds," Gabriela Polit-Dueñas studies how Ramirez interweaves his family's history into that of his nation, and how he shows both histories to be dependent upon a masculine lineage.

cosa de tomar un teléfono y pedirlo de regreso...Y yo tragándome siempre la tentación como un pedazo de pan duro, difícil de masticar" (*Adiós muchachos* 41–42).

By foregrounding his own portrait in tones of sacrifice, Ramírez tacitly reiterates his narrative authority because he portrays himself as "compenetrado" with the *muchachos* whom he endeavors to "[render] present" (Steiner 113) throughout his book, and there are many, with his subjects ranging from his own children to those from much less privileged backgrounds, some of whom survived while many more did not. In many cases, he describes them physically so we can envision them. In these instances, the visual adopts a figurative quality when it is contextualized within the anecdotes that Ramírez shares. In all cases, the portraits give testimony to the individual role each person played in the whole of the Revolution.

In the introduction, the author brings his young children to the page: Dorel, María and Sergio, aged nine, fourteen and fifteen, respectively. He describes them as they arrive home in Nicaragua for the first time in 1979: "extraños, y extrañados, tomando tierra en su país ignorado, ajeno y tan incierto, donde todo se inventaba, se trastrocaba y se improvisaba, y el futuro era una franja colorida en el cielo distante" (*Adiós muchachos* 33). Because they are disoriented, and they are in a space that he paints as undefined, the first anecdote Ramírez shares in this context symbolically becomes the foundation upon which his children's identities are rooted: "Llegó la Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización y los tres quisieron alistarse, pero Dorel no tenía aún edad" (*Adiós muchachos* 33). From this basal union, Ramírez draws his children as intrinsically inclined towards the literacy campaign that was propelled by a revolutionary "conducta ética, que partía del amor por los que no tenían nada" (*Adiós muchachos* 60).

Having planted the seed, Ramírez selects additional narratives to more fully paint a picture of who he wants us to understand his children to have been. For example, even though his youngest was not able to join the Cruzada Nacional, he proves her revolutionary leanings when he evokes "una foto suya, de trenzas largas, al lado de Fidel Castro...; él está hablándole y ella tiene una cara muy triste, el dolor, porque tuvimos que llevarla a las pocas horas al hospital para ser operada de apendicitis..." (*Adiós muchachos* 33). Here, Ramírez creates a direct link between Dorel and Fidel through the Cuban revolutionary's words that she stoically absorbs even though she is hurting. Further, when the author focuses on his daughter's braids, he highlights her youth, and holds her up as a vehicle that has the potential to carry Castro's words into the future.

Regarding María, Ramírez underscores her selfless commitment to a post-imperial Nicaragua by recounting key anecdotes. For example, he implies that she sacrificed her own future for that of the whole when she "dejó el Colegio

Alemán porque la juventud Sandinista la necesitaba como organizadora en un colegio nocturno del barrio Achahualinca" (*Adiós muchachos* 35). The author also tells of how at fifteen, as the war was escalating, María "se integró al batallón de mujeres <<Erlinda López>>" (*Adiós muchachos* 35), ready to give her life if need be as professed in a goodbye letter where she tells him that "se iba a cumplir su deber, <<a algún lugar de Nicaragua>>" (*Adiós muchachos* 35). Further, Ramírez emphasizes her role in the Cruzada Nacional in order to depict her as "compenetrada" not only with her fellow Sandinistas, but, just as importantly, with those whom she tutored, whom "la revolución buscaba redimir" (*Adiós muchachos* 63). To this end, the author describes the physical distance between María and her pupils when he narrates her journey "hacia los caseríos y las comarcas en lo hondo de la Nicaragua campesina,... que toda la otra Nicaragua de las ciudades ignoraba" (*Adiós muchachos* 33). This physical distance that takes her from the city to the country comes to coincide with an experiential one when the author describes don Pedro, one of María's students: "ya muy viejo quería aprender y se aplicaba a sacar punta a los lápices desde temprano, alistaba sus cuadernos para que la niña de catorce años que era mi hija le enseñara frente a la pizarra" (*Adiós muchachos* 34). Once Ramírez establishes this distance between his daughter and "los demás" (*Adiós muchachos* 63), with alacrity he points out that María closed that distance by not distinguishing between herself and the others. On the contrary, he writes, she considered herself to be a part of them, an attitude he concisely and poignantly demonstrates when he narrates how she inserted herself into one of the families by calling one of her students, doña Ofelia, "su otra mamá" (*Adiós muchachos* 34).

Among the many anecdotes Ramírez includes about his son is this one where he writes of Sergio's departure to fight the Contras: "Y esa noche misma en la que se iban las reclutas sonó el claxon del camión y Sergio ya estaba en la puerta adonde Tulita y yo corrimos a despedirlo, flaco más flaco en el uniforme verde olivo, el incipiente bigote en la cara afilada...." (*Adiós muchachos* 37). Here, the author presents Sergio's youth—symbolized in the budding beard—as something new in direct contrast with the old regime of yesteryear, "los somocistas derrocados" (*Adiós muchachos* 71). And his physique not only points accusingly toward the literal and figurative "gordura soez" (*Adiós muchachos* 71) that the defeated regime represented, but it also symbolizes "los rigores de la guerra, las penurias de los combates cotidianos, las marchas forzadas, los días sin probar bocado. Flacos," he writes, "en los puros huesos" (*Adiós muchachos* 71). In other words, his thinness embodies his discipline and "extraordinario desinterés" (Belausteguigoitia 126), traits that Ramírez insists are essential to Sandinismo.

The second chapter of the book explores the ideological and practical parallels between the Sandinista rebels and the earliest Christians. To do this, Ramírez looks to the *guerrilleros* of the 60s and 70s who, the author argues, through their ultimate sacrifices, created the ethical space necessary for the Revolution

of the 80s. The title is "Vivir como los santos," and, with it, Ramírez brings Leonel Rugama, the militant-mystic poet and martyr to the forefront by paying direct tribute to one of his poems, "Como los santos." Ramírez artfully sketches him as a "seminarista pobretón, de lentes que parecían demasiado grandes en su rostro moreno, siempre con la misma camisa de tejido sintético" (*Adiós muchachos* 51). With this image, the author reifies the select anecdotes he incorporates. Ramírez introduces Rugama by underscoring his inherited poverty when he writes: "[h]abía nacido en una comarca de Estelí, hijo de un jornalero y de una maestra rural" (*Adiós muchachos* 50). He then immediately skips ahead a decade to tell us that Rugama entered the Seminario Nacional when he was eleven years old, a path he abandoned just prior to receiving his tonsure in order to eventually join the military struggle. This initial fusion of poverty and faith, and the subsequent definitive steps taken to join his faith with action, likens Rugama to the early Christians upon whom he modeled his own life as he testified in his poetry. Ramírez writes that in one of his poems, Rugama declares that

> en la lucha clandestina era necesario vivir como los santos, una vida como la de los primeros cristianos.... significaba una renuncia total no solo a la familia, a los estudios, a los noviazgos, sino a todos los bienes materiales y a la ambición misma de tenerlos.... Vivir en pobreza, en humildad, compartiéndolo todo, y vivir, sobre todo, en riesgo, vivir con la muerte. (*Adiós muchachos* 53)

After reading these words, the simple image of the "misma camisa de tejido sintético" (*Adiós muchachos* 51) is turned into a powerful symbol of Rugama's rejection of material goods and his willful path of poverty, a choice that is given significant weight with Ramírez's adjective, "pobretón." This rejection of material goods corresponds to his renouncement of self that Ramírez narrates most poignantly through Rugama's early death at the age of twenty in 1970. After bearing four hours of sustained attack "al lado de otros dos muchachos de edades parecidas contra centenares de soldados de la Guardia Nacional" (*Adiós muchachos* 51), Ramírez writes that the Somoza's soldiers stopped shooting and ordered Rugama and his *compañeros* to give up, a command to which Rugama responded with the now legendary, "¡Que se rinda tu madre!" (*Adiós muchachos* 52).[4] Rugama's discipline that gave him his staying power stems from his unwavering faith in, as Ramírez phrases it, "un futuro muy improbable" (*Adiós muchachos* 53); a faith that granted him an immense vision, an immensity symbolized in the "lentes que parecían

4 Ramírez identifies the two unnamed boys that fought alongside Rugama on page 53: Mauricio Hernández Baldizón and Róger Núñez Dávila.

demasiado grandes" (*Adiós muchachos* 51) and that enabled him to imagine or to see a time, albeit unlikely, when there would be a "paraíso para otros, en la tierra" (*Adiós muchachos* 54).

Ramírez writes that beyond his death, "Leonel sobrevivió...porque era un poeta, y su vida, y su entrega, se recuerdan ligadas a su poesía" (*Adiós muchachos* 55). The author goes on to insist that there are many more that embraced the "fiolosofía de las catacumbas" (*Adiós muchachos* 63) that Rugama's life exemplified. These are the people that make up "la inmensa lista de héroes, mártires y caídos con que se abonó la lucha a lo largo de dos decenios" (*Adiós muchachos* 55) and that are being or have already been forgotten. To return these heroes to historical memory, in this same chapter, the author embeds Rugama in a group where he is one among many by including several other aphoristic portraits that mirror the poet's. For example, there is that of Ernesto Castillo, the oldest son of a friend of Ramírez. The author begins Ernesto's portrait by positioning him within a well-to-do family that, at the end of the 1960s, renounced their inherited privilege when they converted to "un cristianismo de compromiso con los pobres" (*Adiós muchachos* 47). Emerging from this background of sacrifice, Ernesto went to Cuba for training before joining the armed struggle in 1978. In September of that same year "lo mataron de un balazo en la cabeza" (*Adiós muchachos* 49). Surviving his death, however, is a recording that he sent to his parents on August 30, a date given poignancy when Ramírez notes that it was his birthday. From memory, the author quotes just two sentences from the recording and, in so doing, he paints Ernesto's conviction as absolute: "No tengo miedo, sé que voy a rozarme con la muerte y no tengo miedo. Ustedes y todo un pueblo me acompañan" (*Adiós muchachos* 49). Also, there is Edgard Lang, son of a prosperous businessman in Managua, who first rejected his family's money when he declared himself "compenetrado" with "los que no tenían nada" (*Adiós muchachos* 60) through the symbolic act of "dejar su cama y pasarse a dormir al suelo" (*Adiós muchachos* 60). Later, Ramírez writes, Edgard went underground and was ultimately killed "en sangre fría" (*Adiós muchachos* 88) on April 16, 1978 when the Guardia Nacional ambushed the house where he and other *compañeros* were planning their upcoming insurrection. Finally, there is Jorge Navarro, a former classmate of Ramírez. The author begins his portrait by announcing his death, defining him by his ultimate sacrifice: "lo mataron en 1963" (*Adiós muchachos* 61). Subsequently, Ramírez observes that "no olvidó nunca su voto de pobreza y de castidad con el dinero" (*Adiós muchachos* 61). To prove this, the author remembers Jorge "llevando una vez un saco de billetes que debía resguardar, producto del asalto a un banco ejecutado por una escuadra del FSLN, no quiso sacar los dos córdobas que le costaba el viaje en taxi" (*Adiós muchachos* 61). Here, Jorge's elected journey by foot comes to be a metaphor for his life, one that was defined by putting others before the self.

Later in the memoir, in chapter four, Ramírez portrays the *guerrillera*, Idania Fernández, in the following manner: "Era una morena espigada, que arqueaba las cejas al reír, una risa que daba brillo a sus ojos negros.... La asesinarion el 16 de abril" (*Adiós muchachos* 87). Just as with the other portraits, the visual quality of this one turns figurative when studied within the context of the anecdotes the author has selected to incorporate. With "espigada," Ramírez refers to her slenderness, again, a symbol of selfless commitment that culminated in Idania's death, but that is also depicted when the author writes that, in order to dedicate herself wholly to the fight, she painfully sacrificed her role as mother when she "[dejó] atrás a Claudia [su hija], que tendría entonces cuatro años" (*Adiós muchachos* 88). Though he paints her decision as a naturally difficult one, calling it her "pena mayor" (*Adiós muchachos* 87–88), Ramírez also instills it with joy when he documents her laughter, a joy that is expressed through Idania's own words many pages later in the epilogue. In closing his memoire, Ramírez recollects a meeting he had with Claudia, Idania's daughter, years after the Revolution came to an end. In these pages, he quotes parts of the final letter Idania had sent her, dated a little less than a month prior to her death. It reads with certainty:

> Cuando todo pase y estemos en paz, te voy a mandar a traer para que estemos juntas y juguemos mucho. Vamos a comprar una muñeca de trapo de Masaya y la vamos a llevar a pasear al parque. Nos vamos a sentar en la calle con otros niños en Monimbó o en Subtiava y vamos a tocar la guitarra para cantar canciones lindas de niños y canciones nicas y canciones revolucionarias. Cuando estemos juntas en Nicaragua ya todo va a ser distinto y vamos a ser felices y vas a ir a la escuela para que sepas más cosas. (*Adiós muchachos* 290)

The joy felt in these words stems from Idania's faith in the world as it could be, as she had envisioned it, a vision encapsulated when Ramírez brings the image of her "ojos negros" to the page. To get there, though, necessary was a communal and revolutionary "actitud de vida" (*Adiós muchachos* 290) that she exemplified, as Ramírez tells us when he quotes Claudia speaking about her martyred mother: "ella no dio su vida en vano. Lo hizo por su impulse del corazón, por su amor sin egoísmo, y puso el bienestar de los demás por encima de su propia vida. Y no importan los resultados, importa su ideal. Sobre todo...en este tiempo sin ideales" (*Adiós muchachos* 290–91).

In chapter nine, "El paraíso en la tierra," Ramírez narrates the political disaster of Pope John Paul's 1983 visit to Nicaragua that emphasized the ideological and practical tensions between the Sandinistas and the Vatican that stemmed from the armed struggle and ultimately contributed to the founding of the "iglesia popular" (*Adiós muchachos* 187), a movement borne of "el compromiso de cristianos y marxistas por un cambio social" (*Adiós muchachos* 187). Within this context, the author portrays Gaspar García

Laviana, "muerto en combate en el Frente Sur en 1978" (*Adiós muchachos* 185), as an "ejemplo de compromiso armado de un cura con la revolución sandinista" (*Adiós muchachos* 185). Ramírez describes him as "un asturiano con vigor de minero, nacido en San Martín del Rey Aurelio en 1941, tenía las crenchas entrecanas y las cejas pobladas, y una barba rebelde que a pesar de la cuchilla siempre le estaba creciendo otra vez" (*Adiós muchachos* 186). Concentrated in this sketch is commentary on whom Ramírez wants us to understand Gaspar to have been. With "vigor de minero," the author begins the portrait with an unveiled reference to Gaspar's strength and bravery in dire conditions, characteristics that become persistent through the symbol of the unrelenting beard. With the adjective "rebelde," the author contextualizes Gaspar's persistent strength and bravery by alluding to his commitment to the armed struggle against the Somoza regime, here incorporated with the word "cuchilla," a metaphor for the everyday, intimate violence said regime represented. Ramírez makes this perseverance in the face of violence visual when, directly subsequent to this introduction to Gaspar, he recounts seeing pictures of the militant priest's corpse: "En alguna de las oficinas del búnker de Somoza encontramos a la hora del triunfo las fotografías a colores de su cadáver tirado sobre la hierba. Tomadas de diferentes ángulos, lo muestran vestido de verde olivo, la pañoleta rojinegra al cuello, toda la mitad del rostro un enorme boquete abierto por la bala de alto calibre" (*Adiós muchachos* 185). Here, the disregard with which the body was thrown onto the lawn coupled with the horrific image of Gaspar's face serves as a thematic frame that underscores not only the inhumanity of the Somoza dictatorship, but the selflessness, commitment and faith that is required to fight it, characteristics that Ramírez shows Gaspar to embody when he describes the telling uniform he is wearing. Further, when the author notes that the pictures were "tomadas de diferentes ángulos," he alludes to a plurality of perspectives that suggests a completeness to Gaspar's picture that allows his documented commitment to rest absolute. As such, Ramírez writes that Gaspar was to live on through this "unchanging essence" as "un símbolo para decenas de sacerdotes, misioneros, religiosos, diáconos y delegados de la palabra que predicaron la revolución, trabajaron en apoyo de los guerrilleros sandinistas en los barrios y en las áreas rurales" (*Adiós muchachos* 186).

The portraits I have included are representative of the many more that Ramírez creates in *Adiós muchachos*. They range from the 1960s through the Revolution of the 80s, and their power is in their number. Together, the author offers them as a visual of the plurality of individuals that lived the community of faith and action that Ramírez associates with his Sandinismo, "una actitud de vida" in Idania's words that envisioned a post-imperial "mundo moral" and that, with the help of Belausteguigoitia, the author traces back to Sandino himself. When the memoire was first published in 1999 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution, Ramírez's mood is celebratory and nostalgic, and his agenda is to assure that the Revolution—as he remembers it—transcends time to live on in historical

memory. At the 2007 reissue, however, shortly after Ortega's rise to the presidency under the banner of the Frente Sandinista, Ramírez is angry, and his agenda has turned to a corrective nature. This is so because he fears that Ortega's Sandinismo, an ideology of "lealtades personales más que lealtades ideológicas" (*Adiós muchachos* 14), of "ambición de poder personal que despoja de cualquier consideración ética" (*Adiós muchachos* 15), and where word and action represent an antagonist duality will resonate so deeply in people's daily lives that a continuity will be drawn between the two historical moments of Sandinismo. In this context, Ramírez urgently holds up these literary portraits vis-à-vis Ortega's government to draw a clear disconnect and set the record straight: as it is now is not as it was.

What does all this mean? In his study, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that for any historical narrative to have meaning, it must establish a "relationship to the living present" (149). At the close of his prologue of 2007, Sergio Ramírez forges this relationship through a call to action when he writes: "Otra vez, entonces, la historia de Nicaragua entra en una encrucijada decisiva. Tocará usar de todos los recursos de la conciencia democrática para resguardarnos de cualquier proyecto de autoritarismo" (*Adiós muchachos* 23). He is not calling for a return to "el viejo proyecto revolucionario que se queda ya entre las brumas del siglo pasado" (*Adiós muchachos* 21). Rather, with this newly contextualized memoire, he is urging Nicaraguans to contemplate the historical record made up of real, historical people, so as to imagine, and then build a new Nicaragua antithetical to Ortega's agenda. And because Ortega is still in power today, a decade and a half later, the relevance of this text still resonates, and Ramírez's call remains valid, a validity the writer projected onto the international stage in April 2018 when he dedicated his Premio Cervantes to "la memoria de los nicaragüenses que en los últimos días han sido asesinados en las calles por reclamar justicia y democracia, y a los miles de jóvenes que siguen luchando sin más armas que sus ideales porque Nicaragua vuelva a ser república" (Ramírez, "Discurso" np).

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