

Haunted Objects: Spectral Testimony in the Southern Cone Post-Dictatorship

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Megan Lynn Corbin

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Ana Forcinito

June 2014

© Megan Corbin 2014

Acknowledgements

As I reflect back on the last ten years that have led me to finishing this project today, the words thank you seem profoundly inadequate to express the gratitude I feel toward all those who have contributed to making me the scholar who produced this dissertation. As a first-generation college student who didn't realize it is commonplace to apply to more than one institution, the University of Minnesota was the only university to which I applied. I am profoundly grateful to have been accepted a decade ago as an undergraduate student. If I had not, I perhaps would not have pursued my studies to the point of submitting this manuscript. As an undergraduate student, I had it in my mind that I was destined to go to law school. I will forever be indebted to René Jara who opened my eyes to the power of literature and changed the course of my career entirely. Without his influence, I would most likely be a lawyer today—perhaps successful, but in all likelihood probably unhappy. Four years into my post-secondary career I would be grateful once again to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies for taking a chance on accepting me as a graduate student—looking back that acceptance occurred despite my having written probably one of the worst personal essays of all time. I know it had to have been a bit of chance to have been accepted and it is that decision by an anonymous committee to which I will always owe my career.

This project was made possible by the generosity of the College of Liberal Arts who granted me a Graduate Research Partnership Program fellowship for the summer of 2013 which allowed me to travel to Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay and to discover much of the information that now forms the basis of this study. During that summer I was generously welcomed into the homes of a number of individuals, who helped me navigate the cities where I conducted my research. María Eugenia, Sebastián, Belén, Guadalupe, Patricia, Elena, Saúl, Marili and Alexis, Fernando, Mariana, Zoraya, Johan, and Saira—thank you all for opening your homes to me, and to Sebastián, a special thank you for giving up easy access to your toys and lending me your room for a month in Santiago.

A special thank you to all those at Crysol who shared their stories with me, revisiting what have to be painful memories in order to contribute to the building of this project. In Chile, thank you to Verónica Sánchez at the Museum of Memory and to Anahí Moya Fuentes, José Danor Moya Paiva, María Alicia Salinas, and Marcela Andrades Alfaro for helping me find information about the *artesanías carcelarias* that I could not have found on my own. In Montevideo, thank you to Antonia Yañez, Pedro Giudice, and Stela Reyes who invited me to their homes for conversation and to view and photograph the craftwork that they had kept from the time of their incarceration in the past.

This project developed gradually over time and I am very grateful to Alberto Ribas Casasayas and Amanda Petersen for organizing a wonderful panel at the American Comparative Literature Association's Spring 2012 conference, where I was fortunate to receive a number of comments and suggestions on an initial version of the main theoretical argument that informs this project. Additionally, I need to express my thanks

to the College of Liberal Arts for awarding me a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for the academic year of 2013–2014. The fellowship allowed me the flexibility to stay at home and finish this project on time, something that, given the circumstances of my last year at the University of Minnesota, would have been impossible to achieve had it not been for the award.

I am thankful for the support of all of the faculty with whom I have taken courses at the University of Minnesota, and especially those in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies. I want to particularly thank the members of my doctoral committee—Amy Kaminsky, Ofelia Ferrán and Nicholas Spadaccini. I am also extremely grateful to Professor Spadaccini for inviting me to participate on the editorial board of *Hispanic Issues* and *Hispanic Issues On Line*, giving me an “insider’s” view of the publishing world that helped demystify the process and give me the confidence to take the risk to start publishing my own work.

I have been very fortunate, dare I say extremely lucky, to have Ana Forcinito as my advisor over the last six years. I am grateful to her for having confidence in me and letting me run with the idea of analyzing objects in testimonial texts—I will never forget her comment early on in the conceptualization of this dissertation that she saw I was thinking about something and to just keep thinking. Her support, especially during this last year of the project, went above and beyond that which can be expected of an advisor and for that I am more appreciative than words can express. I hope that I can act in the same capacity for my own students one day.

I have to thank my parents, who have put up with my seemingly eternal “student” status, all the while encouraging me because they knew “school” was what I was meant to do, even at those times when they really didn’t know what I was studying or how to explain the strong content matter of my work to their friends and colleagues.

Last, and especially not least, I both need and want to profoundly thank Dr. Matthew Hunt, Dr. Ann Parr, Dr. Amit Goyal, Dr. Daraspreet Kainth, Dr. Shau Shau Lin, Dr. Mustapha Ezzeddine, Katie Fuchs, Julie Quass, Natalie Brandt, and all of the nurses on units 4D and 6A of the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, who during this last year made the “Big Scary Diagnosis” of a brain tumor seem like “no big deal at all” to fix and without whom, this project would have remained unfinished and I, most likely, would not be here to write these words of gratitude today.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to those individuals who fought and continue to fight so that the world may be a more just and equal place for all. May your memories and actions continue to make a difference.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the role of the everyday, common object in relation to the human experience and capacity to give testimony—to communicate experiences of trauma, torture and suffering. In my research, I seek to bring together a number of subfields: theoretical interpretation of testimonial narratives, trauma theory, memory studies, spectral theory, and object-oriented philosophy, in order to “think with things” in my analysis of narratives emerging in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile (three of the countries that make up the area known as the Southern Cone) in what is called the “Post-Dictatorship” period.

Basing my analysis on testimonial narratives written by survivors in Argentina, as well as interviews I conducted with former political prisoners in Chile and Uruguay, the first part of my project considers the important role material objects had for those who were imprisoned and survived torture and mistreatment during the dictatorships. I argue that these accounts demonstrate a reliance on the material world, meaning the prisoner/detainee during his/her detention used the secret possession of objects, along with acts of artistic creation, as a means of re-building and expressing a semblance of autonomous subjectivity and resisting the total destruction of his/her world.

The second part of my project moves to the period of the post-dictatorship, exploring how this changed relationship to the material world shapes the creation of new narratives that seek to remember the period of the dictatorship and transmit this information to society in Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay today. Examining the narrative logic of texts, museum expositions, and artistic endeavors that use objects from the dictatorship period to teach about the traumatic past, I examine how the material of the past (prison craftwork, corporal remains, and the former belongings of the disappeared) is endowed with a testimonial capacity and used to effect change in the present, communicating the atrocities of the past in order to ensure that human rights abuses never occur again in the future.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Introduction: The Absent Witness—The Enduring Material	1
Chapter 1. Loss and Reconstruction in a Still-Material Word	22
Chapter 2. (Extra)Ordinary Things— <i>Manualidades</i> and <i>Artesanías carcelarias</i> as Artifacts of Imagined Agency and Resistance	61
Chapter 3. After Detention or Disappearance—Spectral Testimony: Haunted Objects in the Museum of Memory	94
Chapter 4. Bodily Incarnations—Hauntings in the Everyday	124
Chapter 5. Reappearance—Learning to Live and Speak with Ghosts	167
Conclusion	197
Works Cited	205

List of Figures

1. Barbed Wire Hanging in a Tree at Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi . . . 2
2. Flowers made in detention by Stela Reyes. Stela Reyes—Personal Collection. . . . 83
3. Painting made in detention by Pedro Giudice. Pedro Giudice and Antonia Yañez—
Personal Collection. . . 84
4. Pendants on display at the MUME. . . 85
5. Woven blanket made in detention at Punta de Rieles. Stela Reyes—Personal
Collection. . . 88
6. Embossed leather glasses case made in the Penal de Libertad. Stela Reyes—Personal
Collection. . . 90
7. Photograph of two Soporopo. Maria Alicia Salinas—Personal Collection. . . 94
8. Soporopo made in Tres Álamos detention center in Chile. Reproduced with permission
from Marcela Andrades Alfaro. . . 95
9. Soporopos made by Marcela Andrades Alfaro. Photograph reproduced with permission
from Marcela Andrades Alfaro . . . 95
10. Soporopos created by Marcela, with the traditional *pancartas* used to denounce
disappearances in Chile, to ask ¿Dónde están? Photograph reproduced with permission
from Marcela Andrades Alfaro . . . 97
11. Soporopos created by Marcela, with the traditional *pancartas* used to denounce
disappearances in Chile, to ask ¿Dónde están? Photographs reproduced with permission
from Marcela Andrades Alfaro . . . 97
12. *Anillos de Elena Kalaidjian*, Vestigios, Memoria Abierta . . . 116
13. *Relojes de Gregorio Sember*, Vestigios, Memoria Abierta . . . 120
14. *Colgante realizado en la cárcel por Diana Cruces*, Vestigios, Memoria Abierta . . 128
15. *Afiche* from the campaign *Piedra Libre Sos Mi Nieto* . . . 131
16. *Afiche* from the campaign *Piedra Libre Sos Mi Nieto* . . . 136
17. *Afiches de la memoria, La identidad no se impone* . . . 157
18. *Marta Lidia Ugarte Román, Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi. 182

19. *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi. . . 187
20. Detail (broken glass) of the display dedicated to *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi. . . 189
21. Detail (pillowcase) of the display dedicated to *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi. . . 190
22. *Memorias de vida y militancia*—Miguel Ángel Boitano . . . 191
23. Cross made by María Alicia Salinas in Villa Grimaldi. María Alicia Salinas—
Personal Collection. . . 213

Introduction: The Absent Witness—The Enduring Material

*Skeleton #33: We find signs that it was a woman.
A hair pin.
A bra.
(Bernardi 36)*

*It is harder to find these objects associated with the skeletons
than it is to uncover the remains.
(Bernardi 43)*

*We have always lived off the splendor of the subject and the poverty of the object.
(Baudrillard 111)*

In the far-right corner of the Parque por la Paz, the former space of the Villa Grimaldi/Cuartel Terranova detention center in Chile, there remains a seemingly inconsequential tree. One of many on the grounds, it stands largely hidden by the grandiose monument of names, built in homage to those who disappeared from the grounds of the center. This tree is easy to pass by without notice. There are no markers in this area of the park to signal to the visitor a special significance, the area stands at a distance from the rest of the grounds, a mere alternative path to pass through on the way to the next stop of the guided audio visit. However, if one looks up into the branches of the tree, s/he will see a loop of barbed wire that hangs around one of the branches, a quiet, yet lasting testament to the atrocities of a space that was meant to be destroyed and forever forgotten [Figure 1].¹

¹ Before the Corporación Parque Por la Paz obtained the grounds for use as a memory site, the former detention center was destroyed by Pinochet's secret police in an attempt to eliminate any material traces that could lead to their prosecution.



Figure 1. Barbed Wire Hanging in a Tree at Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi

One small, yet durable, loop of wire, smooth but for a single, menacing barb, incarnates humankind's potential toward cruelty, a potential fully realized in this space's past. This object gestures to a violence that removed voices and eliminated subjects, impeding the historical reconstruction of a carefully targeted sector of lives. *This* remnant remains in *this* tree, frozen in the past, yet emphatically in the present. More than a symbol, it is a testament to a hand that purposefully placed it in the tree. For what purpose? By what means? At what time? On what date? The questions are numerous and remain unanswered.

The frustration of confronting this vestige from the past is evident. These questions will, of necessity, go largely unanswered, our curiosity just one more desire that will be left unsatisfied in the quest to rebuild the pieces of what was lost along with the lives of those beings who simply (yet monumentally) disappeared.

Claudia Bernardi is a member of the renowned *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense* (The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team). In the opening quotes above, she describes her reactions to her work at the site of the massacre of El Mozote in El Salvador, where she and her team worked to uncover the buried remains of women and children. Bernardi has also remarked “skeletons in a mass grave give me a profound tenderness . . . I am touching history with my hands” (29). An internationally-known visual artist who uses art to promote human rights, Bernardi points to the same power identified by Marjorie Agosín in her claim that “memory speaks from dead bodies” (xvi). The declaration that the dead can speak appears counter-intuitive, but begs the important question of whether a body itself can have a post-mortem agency. If so, what type of capacity to speak is this? And, if objects are emotionally harder to find than the skeletal remains themselves, do *things* also hold this power?

The material object poses a unique possibility to the scholarship of memory, in much the same way that Francine Masiello observes “art and literature [. . .] force us to think of interpretive strategies of resistance, interrogating the past and leading to a politics of cognition with which to move toward the future” (13), the importance given to objects from the past in spaces of memory asks us for a reconsideration of their interpretative power. Mentions of such material items abound in descriptions of the space of the concentration camps, the political prisons, and the clandestine detention centers of the Chilean, Argentine, and Uruguayan dictatorships during the second-half of the twentieth century. In Alicia Kozameh’s *Pasos bajo el agua*, the narrator describes how an iron is used to transmit crucial knowledge from one area of a detention center to another,

carefully dismantled by one set of prisoners, filled with messages written on small scraps of paper, then reassembled and sent to another area of the prison, where the process repeats. This iron, no longer serving a purely utilitarian function, facilitates the expression of human subjectivity, making possible the communication of both information and sentiments of caring that became crucial to the building of solidarity amongst prisoners. An iron, a simple tool for smoothing out the fibers of rumpled clothing, in the space of the detention center breaks with its traditional meaning and becomes something else entirely, but what exactly?

This project reconsiders a variety of materials from the past, in an effort to reveal the interpretive power memory work in the present hopes to gain from them: the everyday object of the detention center, the prison craftwork made as an important form of survival and resistance in the Chilean and Uruguayan detention centers, the common *things* that belonged to the victim prior to his/her becoming victim, the materiality of the body of the children of the disappeared, and the object that was once present at the scene of torture or detention and presently occupies the role of witness in the space of the museum. I seek to reevaluate the function of such objects in memory projects in the post-dictatorship and assert that such material objects in the present speak a truth about the past, giving what I call “spectral testimony” in lieu of the voices of their disappeared owners.

While it has to be recognized that an object cannot speak in the same way a person does, and therefore cannot give *testimony* in the strict sense of the term, I propose that objects do give a *spectral* testimony that runs parallel to *testimonio* as the genre is

generally understood. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Giorgio Agamben explores the notion of a “complete witness” in the figure of the *muselmann*, the being that is technically still living, but has gone mute, resigning him/herself to certain death in the face of insurmountable cruelty, thus existing in an altered “in-between” state separate from that of the living. In the central theoretical inquiry of this project, I take inspiration from Agamben’s stance and ask, if the Muselmann as a “complete witness” is this remnant, in the function of a telos, joining the living being and the speaking being, the human and the inhuman (*Remnants* 158–59), can the same function be extended to the material remains of the dead? And, can we extend this function to material objects such as the barbed wire in the tree at the Parque por la Paz? In identifying the object’s potential to give testimony I am interrogating whether the remnant that does this joining can be an object, rather than the subject’s voice. Or, can an object be the witness to a remnant, a remain? To the ghostly presence of the victim? And if so, to where is the object joining us?

For Idelber Avelar, the unrepresentability of the atrocities produced by the dictatorships, of what *really* happened, by issue of their incomprehensibility produces a reliance on allegory: all testimonial recountings of the past end up in the realm of the allegorical (or, to use René Jara’s term as “*una huella de lo real*” [2]), a tethering from the present to the third realm of an unrepresentable past. The object, the material, the non-subject that touched the subjectivity that was once present, is the tether between the two. It was present, but it cannot place into our system of understanding the words that would make coherent to us their experiences in the past, hence its ongoing spectral nature.

Central to my project is the question of how objects from the past are perceived as bringing people in the present to a realm of shared sentience in which experience can be transmitted and the labors of memory can take place. Not everyone (and thankfully so) has suffered the circumstances of political repression, unlawful detention, or torture. The importance of and difficulties inherent to relating such events to those who have not fallen victim to such crimes have been extensively studied and documented, both in terms of the Southern Cone dictatorship and the Jewish Holocaust. However, I ask, can visiting, viewing, and contemplating the physical evidence of mistreatment, the vestiges of the evil of the past, or the handcrafted objects of resistance transmit this knowledge? Does encountering the material of this past access the “realm of shared objectification,” rehumanizing those who suffered, resisting the dismissal of subjects of the past by re-contextualizing their actions through a material compilation of their former selves, of their personalities, of their having been more than the sum of their actions. By leaving a testimonial material legacy, can objects bypass the subject’s need to articulate his/her lived trauma, yet still create the change in the overall political climate sought by the testimonial voice that speaks? I contend that projects that highlight the possessions of the disappeared and the craftwork made by former political prisoners serve to reconstitute the subjectivity stripped of these persons at the moment of detention, fostering encounters between the past and the present, creating new and productive experiences with still largely hidden histories.

To embark on an analysis of the memory power held by material objects in the post-dictatorship, one must first return to the past moment of violence and determine the

importance the material world held for those who were kidnapped, tortured, detained, incarcerated, and/or disappeared. To even begin to consider the importance of the object and its ability to bear witness to the past from the present place of the museum of memory, the family home, from texts, cinema, or the digital platform, we must first understand the history and the significance of the object in the past.

The military dictatorships in Southern Cone Latin America purported to re-establish political and social order in their respective countries, discouraging dissent and rigidly controlling the actions of the citizenry, doing so via the dissemination of a regime of terror, employing torture, unlawful detentions, murder, and enforced disappearance of persons. In Chile the democratically-elected Socialist government of Salvador Allende was systematically undermined by influences from outside of the country, and, after winning election to a second term, was violently overthrown in a coup d'état on September 11, 1973, led by CIA-backed General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet then installed himself as the head of the country, beginning a seventeen-year reign of state repression and massive human rights violations. In Argentina, after the death of General Juan Domingo Perón and the subsequent political chaos that plagued the weak presidency of his successor, his wife Isabel Perón, the Argentinean armed forces took control of the government in a coup d'état that would be billed as the "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional," signalling the beginning of a military dictatorship packaged as a necessary political change in order to rid the country of armed groups that threatened a Communist takeover of the government. Lasting until 1985, what ensued would come to be known as the "dirty war," with the government (in the name of restoring order), systematically

violating the rights of its people through unlawful detentions, torture, murder, and enforced disappearance of persons.

The Uruguayan context differs somewhat from the histories of the other two countries, in that its military dictatorship arose out of increasing economic problems² and the rise of unionizing efforts and an urban guerrilla movement (the Tupamaros) that battled police and governmental “inefficiency, corruption and failure to enact meaningful reforms” (Sondrol 190). Gradually, the country militarized and by 1973, the armed forces took over the country and proceeded to impose, as Paul Sondrol has phrased it, “their own vision of political life” (190). While in Uruguay enforced disappearance of persons was not nearly as widespread as in Argentina or even Chile, authoritarian control of the citizenry occurred through widespread and seemingly permanent incarcerations of citizens who demonstrated against the government, along with the brutal use of torture as a method of spreading terror.

The violence characteristic of all three dictatorships’ programmatic responses to ongoing opposition exhibits a callous operating desire intent upon reducing the unyielding oppositional subject to an object, removing agency and thus, the threat of social rebellion. Alicia Partnoy has remarked that while she was detained and tortured in Argentina, a guard threatened to, in her words, “hacerme jabón” (make me into soap) for being Jewish (qtd. in Finchelstein 177), clearly revealing not only the anti-Semitic nature of her experience with state violence, but also an expressed intent to reduce the

² “Economic pressures destroyed Uruguay’s delicate political balance, polarising class conflict as workers’ demands increased on civilian governments unwilling or unable to resist escalating services and subsidies, reinforcing the spiral of economic decline and political problems” (Sondrol 190).

subversive subject to an inanimate (and therefore non-threatening) object.³ This intent is echoed in multiple sections of the Argentine *Nunca Más* (Never Again) report by the *Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons—CONADEP). For example, the testimony of Dr. Norbert Liwsky (file No. 7397) comments: “The normal attitude of the torturers and guards towards us was to consider us less than slaves. We were objects. And useless, troublesome objects at that. They would say: ‘You’re dirt’” (25). The report’s authors reveal the systematic design that underlines this attitude: “The characteristics of these centers, and the daily life led there, reveal that they had been specifically conceived for the subjection of victims to a meticulous and deliberate stripping of all human attributes, rather than for their simple physical elimination” (52). These references reveal the dictatorship’s approach to the “re-organization” and installation of “order” in society, a program premised upon the need to carry out a reordering of the world meant to systematically reduce the subject to an object and eliminate all expressions of individual thought and action.

Yet, it was not just the detention center, but the entirety of the operation of the dictatorship that was designed to reconfigure the subject’s relationship to his/her external, sentient reality, thereby making autonomous resistance unviable in both the public and private realms. If one turns back to the *Nunca Más* report, it is clear that the project of

³ This remark forms part of the psychological torture inflicted upon detainees, but at its base reveals that underlying many of the techniques employed by the military forces was a clear view that the removal of personhood, and therefore all aspects of human life and behavior that differentiates us from objects—thus, as I am identifying the desired reduction of the subject to an object.

destroying the detainee's material world begins before s/he even reaches the space of the detention center and extends out into their familial and social sphere. In considering objects as the basis of my study, revisiting reports about this time period reveals a distinct effort on the part of the dictatorial leadership of each of the three countries to control the object world of its citizens. Accounts of the moment of kidnapping are almost uniformly accompanied by descriptions of the raiding and destruction of the subversive home (whether partially or completely). For example, the testimony regarding Alberto Santiago Burnichon's disappearance is communicated to the CONADEP by his wife (file No. 3820) and reveals robbery and destruction of possessions as an important element of the program of disappearance:

At 12:30 am on 24 March 1976, our house in Villa Rivera Indarte in Córdoba province was broken into by men in uniform carrying rifles. They identified themselves as belonging to the Army, and were accompanied by a number of youths in casual dress. They trained their guns on us while they stole books, *objets d'art*, bottles of wine, etc., which the uniformed men carried outside. They did not talk to each other, but communicated by snapping their fingers. The looting of our house lasted for over two hours. (12)

Similarly, the file (No. 3081) that relates the abduction of Roque Núñez reads: "I was later told that my sister, María del Carmen Núñez, her husband, Jorge Lizaso, and one of his brothers, Miguel Francisco Lizaso, were also abducted, and their flat completely ransacked in the process" (16). The testimony of Jorge Eduardo Alday's wife (file No. 4512) echoes the same series of events: "When I returned home, I was captured at the

door by these people, who were holding my mother as hostage . . . They set me free four hours later near Villa Dominico. While they kept me detained and held my mother hostage, I saw them looting all our goods and belongings and piling them on to (sic) trucks. The house was left without any trace that people had lived there” (17). Another woman, referred to as “Sylvia” by a psychiatrist’s case study, flees her house after her husband’s disappearance and when she

returned home, she found the door to the apartment damaged and the interior in complete shambles. The television set, stereo, and some other possessions were missing. Terrified, she moved with her children to a friend’s house. A few days later, her friends went to her apartment to retrieve her personal belongings and found it practically empty; no furniture, clothes, or dishes were there. Silvia could no longer return to her home. (Kordon et. al 214–15)

This accumulation of *botín de guerra* (war booty) was more than simple looting: it had a clear ideological goal—the creation of terror expressed through the complete control of any and all objects (and by extension people) in the social sphere. Those pertaining to “non-subversive” households were ostensibly already under this control, exercised by censorship restrictions disseminated by the military forces. In the episodes recounted above, this control filters over into the sphere that remains resistant to the reach of the military forces. The destruction and pillaging of subversive homes brought all material spheres under the reign of the dictatorships, whether it be by taking them into their own possession (and, therefore, economic benefit) or by destroying them completely. The following description is revelatory: “The robberies carried out in the homes of those

abducted were considered by the forces involved as ‘war booty.’ This looting was often part of the kidnapping, but in many other cases took place during a later operation in which another gang removed the victims’ possessions” (16). The return to the scene of the kidnapping for the removal of possessions demonstrates an understanding of objects as fundamentally important in the struggle for sociopolitical control, on both sides of the conflict.

Objects during this time period became suspect on both sides of the conflict for a number of reasons. For the resistance, objects were looked to for their use value, for their capacity to aid in the struggle (weapons, printing presses, propaganda materials), and thus they became suspect and prompted regulatory control by the armed forces. On the dictatorship’s side, objects were useful in the ongoing torture of the detainee (personal items and clothing taken from family members were later used to threaten them—in one documented example, a woman’s underwear was shown to her husband as a threat that she too would be tortured should he continue to resist). Controlling the object world was also useful for attempting the total erasure of the victim’s existence in society (to remove all individual possessions was to further stamp out the subject’s material imprint in society) and pillaging the possessions of others as *botín de guerra* was not only a means of obtaining resources for which the military forces themselves had a need,⁴ but left a

⁴ In the section of the *Nunca Más* report that describes the Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA), stolen goods as a means of obtaining necessary resources for the military struggle is apparent. The report states “the cars used were not identified as navy vehicles: and some were disguised as belonging to state or private bodies. All had previously been stolen and their license-plates changed. It was this section which ransacked the raided houses and destroyed everything in which they were not interested” (*Nunca Más* 123). Such procedures were also means by which to profit financially: “In

clear warning to others. All of these attitudes toward the object demonstrate that a clear and exercised focus on the control of not only subjects, but also the material world formed a crucial part of the dictatorship's approach to the demoralization of any and all ideological dissenters.

Importantly, in the aftermath of the Argentine dictatorship, Julio C. Strassera, the leader for the prosecution during the trials of the Military Junta asked

Is it an act of war to occupy houses and keep relatives of those being looked for as hostages? To keep the babies? Are those military objectives? Can you explain the systemic plundering of homes as a necessary measure to seize enemy arms? 'I was robbed of everything, from my wife's underwear to the flint on the kitchen stove,' the witness Hugo Pascual told us. Are we to believe that these are just the unfortunate consequences of war? (qtd. in Joyce and Stover, 264)

Strassera's comments further emphasize that the kidnappings and violence had at their core not only the elimination of an opponent to the dictatorship's forces, but also the systematic destruction and pillaging of property—goods, items, and spaces—in an effort to use such devastation as a means of further establishing control over society. Actions that went far beyond the tactics necessitated in war, actions which make us question what importance objects hold in creating history related to this time period.

some cases the proceeds of a raid were taken to the School and placed in 'store.' This property was later distributed among members of the Task Force as a kind of 'war booty.'" (*Nunca Más* 123); "Besides the funds which the naval authorities allocated to the Task Force, it involved handling the proceeds of looting and robbery and the property titles of prisoners-disappeared which had been fraudulently obtained by counterfeiting or obtaining signatures under pressure. Towards the end of 1978 and beginning of 1979 an 'estate agency' was set up" (*Nunca Más* 124).

One of the most haunting pieces of evidence of the dictatorships' exercise of complete control over the material world are the disappearances of the detained themselves, the absencing of not only subjects, but all traces of their corporal existence post-kidnapping. The term disappearance, used strategically by the dictatorships, was a way of evading legal documentation of the detention of individuals, thus avoiding the denunciation of political kidnappings by families and friends who sought answers regarding the whereabouts and conditions of their loved ones and companions. But disappearance was also a way to avoid international scrutiny of the methods being used by the government in its quest to restore order to a chaotic political environment.⁵ Disappearance proved to be both a strategic and systematic means of covering up the violations of human rights that occurred during the dictatorship. As Emilio Crenzel notes: "In this way, no traces would be left, the bodies of the abducted would become invisible to the public, their captivity could be denied, and nobody would be held accountable for their death" (16). Such a policy sought to evaporate all material signs of having existed, all corporal traces of the disappeared.⁶ However, it missed the elimination of other, material, signs of the existences of the disappeared.

The term *detenido-desaparecido* continues to be destabilizing in post-dictatorship society, emphasizing an ongoing and palpable lack in society:

⁵ Crenzel writes, "By disappearing their victims in clandestine actions they sought to avoid the kind of denunciations that were being brought by the international community against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile since the September 11, 1973 coup d'état. the practice was also meant to expand torture methods without restraints, eliminate opponents without being hindered by legal or political barriers, and spread terror among the population" (16)

⁶ For an extensive exploration of the term "disappearance" and its meaning in relation to the Southern Cone dictatorships (especially in Chile), see Howe.

Respecto al uso del término detenido-desaparecido en lugar de asesinado por la dictadura militar, pienso que mi hijo sigue siendo un desaparecido porque no conozco cuál fue su destino. Si lo mataron, no sé quién lo mató, ni dónde, ni cuándo y tampoco sé qué hicieron con su cuerpo. Esto pasa con miles, por eso siguen siendo los desaparecidos y nosotras seguimos buscando la verdad. (Gelman and La Madrid 177)

These remarks, by Nora de Cortiñas, member of the *Línea Fundadora* of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, reveal that at the heart of disappearance is a lack, one which rests not only on the loss of life and the inability to determine information, but on a lack of access to facts, and to materials (here corporal/ the absence of the body) that could help establish those facts. It demonstrates a view of the body as the key to establishing a truth about the past, recognizing the body's ability to speak sans subject and voice. As has been extensively studied, disappearance was not only a means by which to control the population's access to information, it was also a focused effort at the destruction, elimination, and ultimate control over the circulation of peoples and goods in the realm of society—reinforcing power during the dictatorship and assuring impunity in the postdictatorship.

Yet, little by little, the traces, the spaces, and even some of the remains of the disappeared are being recovered. In 1978, in a Chile still under the control of Augusto Pinochet, fifteen bodies burned and covered in lime were recovered and identified in Lonquén; in 1991 the Grupo de Antropología Forense exhumed 126 bodies from Patio 29

of Santiago's Cementerio General⁷; for years bodies washed up on the Uruguayan coast of the Río de la Plata—photographed by Uruguayan officials, while never officially investigated, the files of these happenings reemerged in Daniel Rey Piuma's *Un marino acusa: juicio y castigo a los culpables: informe sobre la violación de derechos humanos por la Marina uruguaya* and in December of 2011 were turned over as proof to be used in the third megacausa ESMA that “hasta el momento sólo contaba con pruebas testimoniales de los ‘vuelos de la muerte’” (“ESMA: Entregaron fotos de desaparecidos arrojados al mar”). In the documentary *Encontrando a Víctor*, Natalia embarks on a search for her disappeared father. Her grandmother, Laura, remarks to her: “Las personas . . . viste . . . no desaparecen como si fueran cosas.” Since 1986, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team has worked to identify and interpret the pasts of exhumed human remains (see Salama). The reemergence of bodily remains actively defies disappearance in their ability to relate facts, fill gaps, eliminate doubt.

This emergence of the material of the past does not limit itself to corporal remains. At the former detention center *Londres 38*, the team that works at the site, along with the Dirección de Bibliotecas Archiva y Museos and the Centro Nacional de Conservación y Restauración carried out a biological and cultural analysis of the structure—arriving at an “análisis testimonial” via an examination of the material (objects and structure) of the space of the house (see *Londres 38: Prospección*

⁷ The tragic consequences of Pinochet's legacy do not end there: between 1992 and 2002 ninety-six bodies were identified by the Unidad de Identificación del Servicio Médico Legal. In 1994 experts expressed doubt as to the validity of the identifications and in 2005 judge Sergio Muñoz ordered a second exhumation of the bodies. In 2006 it was confirmed that forty-eight were misidentified and another thirty-seven remained doubtful identifications. For more information see Bustamante and Ruderer.

exploratoria). Similarly, in Argentina the ESMA underwent its own forensic architectural analysis, the findings of which have been presented in the Megacausa ESMA trials. The excavations done at the site of the ex CDC Club Atlético unearthed from a pile of earth the structural remains of entire rooms, which permitted survivors of that particular center the information necessary to pinpoint where they had been held captive. As of the summer of 2013 similar investigations were being conducted at the ex CDC Virrey Cevallos in Buenos Aires, unearthing (among other material evidence) the words “Todavía vivo” written on a wall. This slow, but sure, reappearance of material vestiges of the past point to the perhaps only rational premise that the dictatorship had in its ideology: the fear of the potential threat posed by *things*.

The first half (chapters one and two) of my study is located in the temporality of the dictatorship, approached (due to archival limitations) through the consideration of narratives left by survivors in order to re-evaluate the threat posed by *things* and the importance the material world held for the detainee. In an effort to contextualize the theoretical arguments I develop around the testimonial capacity of objects in the post-dictatorship, I start from an exploration of how the detainee’s relationship to the material world changes during the course of his/her detention and scrutinize how s/he turns to the material as an ally in the fight for survival.

To do this, the first chapter of my study departs from an analysis of the unmaking and remaking of the world of the subject who suffers, which I contend awakens him/her to the possibilities contained in the objects surrounding him/her, to what Graham Harman, following Martin Heidegger’s tool analysis in *Being and Time*, terms their “tool-

being.” I contend that the subject who is tortured experiences a break with the world around him/her, that this changed subject can’t help but notice the potentiality of the material items that order the detention center and turns to those items as allies in the struggle for survival. Creating a bridge between Heidegger’s tool analysis and Elaine Scarry’s analysis of the making and unmaking of the world, I discuss how for the subject who was detained and tortured during the dictatorship, it did not require a break in the tool for the interior agency of the object to become noticeable, but rather that the subject’s relationship to the world breaks (is unmade and remade to use Scarry’s terms), producing a constant state of noticing the tool-being of things. To illuminate these processes and examine the potentiality of the object for the human subject’s survival, I explore the narrative voices of four people who survived the repression and reappeared: Alicia Partnoy, Alicia Kozameh, Jorge Tiscornia and Marcelo Estefanell. Beginning from Elaine Scarry’s analysis of the unmaking of the world during the scene of torture, I look at how the crimes perpetrated during the dictatorships produced a break with the material world for tortured and detained subjects, a break which (as is demonstrated in the second half of this project) remains present in memory narratives generated in the temporality of the post-dictatorship. Placing Scarry’s text in dialogue with emerging theories of object oriented ontology, I argue that this break produced a heightened awareness regarding the potential for survival and reconstruction offered to the subject by the objects that surrounded him/her in the space of detention, and gave way to a new noticing of, valorization of, and relationship to the tool-being of material things. In this chapter, I

limit my analysis to an examination of the objects encountered by detainees during their detention.

Chapter two moves the discussion of the importance of the material world for the prisoner forward from an examination of found objects in detention to a consideration of the process of imagining and making-real undertaken as a form of material resistance by the prisoners themselves, focusing on two types of objects that were produced by the hands of incarcerated subjects from within the confines of detention: the *artesanías carcelarias* in Chile and the *manualidades* in Uruguay. In this chapter, I contend that the constant state of noticing *things* that I explored in chapter one produced an awareness in the incarcerated subject to the potential of all materials within the detention center and I maintain that craftwork was used as a means of amplifying the self (again, following Scarry's analysis) through the creation of an exterior artifact capable of relieving interior pain and, at the same time, as the crafting of a testimonial object that would relay an aspect of life in the concentration camp to the generations of the future.

In the prisons, craftwork was a means by which the suffering subject imaginatively created an artifact that could relieve a facet of his/her pain. Like the chair that relieves the body's pain, artifacts were imagined that moved out and beyond the confines of incarceration. At the limits of the ordinary, extraordinary objects were imagined in order to help the subject make real the very items s/he lacked. The mental reasoning, the productive work of taking scant materials and turning them into imaginative pieces of art was a way by which the prisoner both created and expressed his/her individual agency. These items, preserved today, are therefore an important

material legacy of resistance, a resistance that forms the basis of the material testimony being employed within spaces of memory, in the present day.

The second half of this project (the last three chapters) introduces the concept of spectral testimony and explores the implications this concept has for the consideration of three instances of the use of objects from the past: first, by examining the singular object itself in the space of the memory museum; second, by revisiting the body as a material object capable of relaying a spectral testimonial truth from the past to the present; and, third, by examining the aggregate collection of objects (such as a childhood bedroom) of the past and the combination of voices from the present and objects from the past in a dramatization of a testimonial encounter that simultaneously evokes a truth from the past and explicitly calls attention to that truth's inaccessibility, creating ghostly *vivencias* with those who are not present to give their testimony.

With the premise of this second half of the project in mind, the third chapter of this project moves from the temporality of the violence to the transitional period back to democracy, in which each country is grappling with how to approach the legacy of the traumatic past and as the survivors in each context are struggling to relay their memories to present and future generations. In this chapter, I first re-examine classic scholarship on *testimonio* as a genre in an effort to highlight already existing examinations of the testifying voice's productive ability to speak and be heard. Next, I scrutinize what testimonial theory might gain from a dialogue with materiality and spectral theory, especially in regards to the use of objects in current memory projects in the Southern Cone. Lastly, I argue that when we reconsider the everyday object—once present at the

scene of torture or detention and presently occupying the role of witness in the space of the museum—and reevaluate this material in light of testimonial and spectral theory, it becomes clear that material objects speak a truth about the past, giving what I introduce as “spectral testimony” in lieu of the voices of their disappeared owners—a type of testimony that is a form of deferred agency that lies in the realm of the just beyond. It is a concept I connect to Agamben’s notion of the third state of the Muselmann, but also to Derrida’s ruminations on the specter of Marx that continues to haunt our society, along with his thoughts on the fiction of testimony, a writing that yields a phantom real that is ever-present, yet ever just beyond reach. I suggest that spectral testimony interpellates the viewer in the present with a deferred past and requires him/her to do the work of memory, to contemplate what the object offers, at the same time that the spectral nature of this process calls attention to the limitations on knowing posed by the violence of the past.

In chapter four, I extend my analysis in chapter two of the made object as an externally created artifact to a material consideration of the bodies of the children of the disappeared, exploring the impact disappearance had and continues to have on society’s view toward the capacity of the body to remember and to “speak” or “testify,” especially these bodies that can be viewed as the living physical material remainder of their parents. I examine how the legacy of disappearance contributed to the creation of a “poetics of DNA” that continues to inform the narrative logic of advertisements, narratives, and art related to memory activism, and how one sees this poetics combine with a spectral testimony that emerges via the body in the novel *A veinte años, Luz* by Elsa Osorio.

Lastly, I argue that the body of the child of disappeared parents is uniquely positioned to not only contribute forensic testimony, but in its very physical existence, constitutes another type of artifact, a material that is haunted by the former activism of the child's parents and yields a spectral material testimony that continues to sow doubt and animate action in the present day.

In my last chapter, I explore how the material narrative both created and left by prisoners and discovered in the wake of disappearance is being used to recreate and transmit memory by second-generation actors in the postdictatorship. First, I argue that projects such as the *Sala de Memoria* in the space of the former detention center Villa Grimaldi in Chile and the art project *Memorias de vida y militancia* undertaken by the groups that inhabit the ex ESMA in Argentina are using the former belongings of the disappeared in order to conjure forth their individual specters in an effort to rehumanize them and permit them to speak, thus resisting the emptying of their identities that lies at the core of disappearance as a systematic form of repression. Second, I consider how the virtual art exposition *Proyecto tesoros* takes these projects further in an attempt to weave together the voices and materialities of the past and present generations in the creation of memory narratives that interrupt the impersonal and collective narrative of disappearance. Lastly, I examine how the film *Cautiva* and recent theatrical productions by Lola Arias further enmesh the material and the voice in an effort to dramatize the testimonial encounter with the objects of the past, depicting a scene of spectral communion in which the present experiences the ghosts of the past through an affective commingling and conversation with material belongings.

Chapter One: Loss and Reconstruction in a Still-Material Word

It is impossible to speak of either torture or war without attending to the destruction of the artifacts of civilization in either their interior and mental or exterior and materialized forms.

(Elaine Scarry *The Body in Pain* 161)

A Marxist recognition of our journey from matter will return us, finally, to a world in which matter is truly humanized and internalized. Matter must not remain in itself, nor must it simply be wished away as already human. Recognition of matter's own dynamism—its role in the trajectory of human history—will allow us to harness matter's potentiality such that human life can live in accord with its own material nature.

(Elizabeth Grosz "Darwin and Feminism" 64)

At the concentration camp kitchen they made a list of her belongings [. . .] 'A wedding ring, a watch . . . dress color . . . bra . . . she doesn't wear one . . . shoes . . . she doesn't have any?' [. . .] When she thought the interrogation session was about to begin, they took her to a room. She walked down a tiled corridor, then an old wooden floor. After arriving at the wretched bed assigned to her, she discovered a ragged blanket. She used it to cover her feet and did not feel so helpless.

(Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School* 26)

The turn to the material in the search for knowledge about the past calls us to reconsider just what the object is (its being), how it retains (or is perceived to retain) information about the past, and the relationship the *thing* has with the individual. In short, as Elizabeth Grosz comments above, "its role in the trajectory of human history"—in this case, the recent history of the traumatic past. Elaine Scarry's reading of matter emphasizes the process of the material "making" of civilization, originating from the interior mental state and projected outward into an external form: "Independent objects, objects which stand apart from and free of the body, objects which realize the human being's impulse to project himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body in acts of making, either physical or verbal, that once multiplied, collected, and shared are

called civilization” (39). Scarry’s concept of the material world emphasizes human being’s relationship to the object, the utility we draw from the inanimate, the making external of an internally created idea. The final passage quoted above is taken from the opening tale of Alicia Partnoy’s *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, describing her initial arrival at The Little School (*La Escuelita*), a clandestine detention center in Bahía Blanca. Partnoy’s initial account is jarringly centered on the relationship between her experience and the objects that compose it. Partnoy’s attempt to communicate the terror she felt in not knowing if (or, perhaps better stated, when) she would be taken from her home plays out over a comment on footwear: “She had waited for them to come at night. It felt nice to be wearing a loose house dress and his [her husband’s] slippers after having slept so many nights with her shoes on, waiting for them” (25). The loss of Partnoy’s freedom is accompanied by the loss of her slippers in a futile attempt to flee the men who arrive to take her to the detention center: “When the soldiers grabbed her, forcing her into the truck, she glanced down at her feet in the dry street dust” (26). At the Army Headquarters, waiting for her transfer to The Little School, she again describes her feet against the cool “tiny black and white tiles” (26), calling explicit attention in both instances to the lack of protection on her feet, their bare vulnerability to the changing ground she treads. Her arrival at the detention center is accompanied by an inventory of her belongings, and finally her encounter with the ragged blanket she uses to cover her feet in order to “not feel so helpless” (26). The blanket lends her its warmth and comfort. Later, the guards give Partnoy a pair of slippers to wear during her detention—only one of which retains its decorative flower, a “huge

plastic daisy” (27), the absurdity of which lends Partnoy a little levity in a situation dominated by fear.⁸ Partnoy describes that she often searched blindly for the daisy “between the guards’ shouts and blows” (28) and that when she was moved to a prison, the “one-flowered slippers remained at The Little School, disappeared” (28).

Questions abound after reading this passage—why narrate via the material when the human suffering taking place in the space of detention is so great? What power does the description of a slipper hold? What power did *the slipper* itself hold for Partnoy in detention? Why turn to an absurd “huge plastic daisy” amidst the violence being inflicted by the guards? If recovered, could that daisy contribute to the understanding of the past? Would it retain its significance for Partnoy? Could it communicate this significance to others? These questions point to the importance of examining the specific and important ramifications held by the un-making and re-making of the world for the victim of torture, the prisoner, the detainee, a process that plays out across the relationship between humanity and the material of our surroundings. For Partnoy, the blanket is a welcoming friend, offering itself as an ally in surviving the hard times ahead, if only through the comfort of a bit of warmth on her feet. The one-flowered slipper also occupies this role, offering its own absurdity as a comic escape from the ominous confines of The Little School. More than bastions of civilization, traces of the exterior world miraculously encountered in the interior of a torture center, such objects offer up the dynamism of their own matter for use by the prisoner in resisting and surviving, hence it might just make

⁸ “. . . that one-flowered slipper amid the dirt and fear, the screams and the torture, that flower so plastic, so unbelievable, so ridiculous, was like a stage prop, almost obscene, absurd, a joke” (28).

perfect sense that Partnoy begins her collection of “tales of disappearance and survival” via a pointed observation of her commingling with objects.

Emerging theories of the philosophy of objects posit that, like humans, objects have an interior being of their own: “tool-being” (Graham Harman), or “vibrant matter” (Bennett). This being normally hides in plain view, in the ready-at-hand tools that we use in the day-to-day.⁹ Yet, every once in a while, human Dasein encounters a broken tool (Heidegger), the tool becomes present-at-hand, and we, if only fleetingly, become aware of a being held within the object, for “equipment is not effective ‘because people use it’; on the contrary, it can only be used because it is *capable of an effect*, of inflicting some kind of blow on reality” (Harman *Tool-Being* 20). In the case of the detention center, it is not necessarily the *object* that is encountered as a broken tool, but the occupied world that undergoes this transformation. The entire reality in which the prisoner exists is altered, thus calling attention to the tool-being of not only specific objects, but *all* of the matter that occupies the space of mistreatment. The ragged blanket and the plastic daisy of the sandal are objects *capable of an effect*—they inflict a blow on the cruelty of the detention center, they reveal their interior power to the subject who suffers, a power that then marks Partnoy’s reconstruction of her detention via her testimonial text.

While in general we, as subjects, don’t notice the *things* around us until they break (my computer, for instance, is a tool that largely goes unnoticed by me until it stops working and interrupts my ability to write), the unmaking and remaking of the world awakens the subject who suffers to the possibilities contained in the objects surrounding

⁹ “The more efficiently a tool performs its function, the more it tends to recede from view” (Harman *Tool-Being* 21).

him/her, to their tool-being.¹⁰ S/he can't help but notice the potentiality of the material items that order the detention center, an altered state that produces a constant *noticing* of things. To illuminate these processes and examine the potentiality of the object for the human subject's survival, this chapter turns to the narrative voices of four people who survived the repression and reappeared: Alicia Partnoy, Alicia Kozameh, Jorge Tiscornia and Marcelo Estefanell. Beginning from Elaine Scarry's analysis of the unmaking of the world during the scene of torture, I will explore how the crimes perpetrated during the dictatorships produced a break with the material world for tortured and detained subjects, a break which (as will be demonstrated in the second half of this project) remains present in memory narratives generated in the temporality of the post-dictatorship. Placing Scarry's text in dialogue with emerging theories of object oriented ontology, I will argue that this break produced a heightened awareness regarding the potential for survival and reconstruction offered to the subject by the objects that surrounded him/her in the space of detention, and gave way to a new noticing of, valorization of, and relationship to the tool-being of material things.¹¹

¹⁰ Harman is very emphatic in his theoretical development of Heidegger's tool analysis that the tool is a category that does not limit itself to *equipment*, but envelops all material beings (including human *Dasein*): "No entity lies outside of tool-being; equally, no object has a privileged status with respect to it, whether it be *Dasein* or well-known devices such as lanterns" (*Tool-Being* 42). Harman's contribution to Heideggerian thought further develops the tool analysis and argues that the tool being of objects is observable in the way in which objects interact with each other, even without the presence of Human *Dasein*. He gives the example of the earth's plates and their shifting, their interaction with each other, an agential movement that then causes the distinct consequence of earthquakes.

¹¹ This chapter will limit itself to a consideration of found objects and the expression of possession over objects already present in the space of detention. Chapter two will then

Un-making the World: Torture, Destruction, and the Subject

Torture was used in the Argentine, Uruguayan, and Chilean dictatorships as an instrument by which the military forces could, little by little, uncover the structures of leftist (so-called subversive) militant organizations they believed to be working to thwart the successful reorganization of the country by the military regime. Yet, the quest for information in many cases can be dismissed as a mere façade, the true aim of torture and disappearance being the creation of a rhetoric of fear that orders the larger environment in which the citizenry lives, thereby controlling through a culture of terror and violence. As literary critic John Beverley writes,

Torture or practices approximating torture . . . are not primarily about information that may be useful in fighting terrorism. They have become themselves a form of terrorism, exercised by or with the complicity of the State, intended to reinforce or re-impose relations of power and inequality in situations where these have been challenged or come into question. (“Torture and Human Rights” 99)

Similarly, Inge Genefke and Peter Vesti, both physicians who have extensively studied the effects of torture, declare: “The ultimate aim of torture is not to obtain information but to break down a person’s personality, his or her identity” (47). Torture has at its core an alteration of the body/subject’s interaction with the exterior world.

continue this discussion in a consideration of objects created by detainees from the space of the detention center.

Hernán Vidal's study, *Chile: Poética de la tortura política*, traces "las metamorfosis por las que pasa el cuerpo del torturado a partir de los espacios marginales y ocultos en que el Estado lo procesa—cárceles, prisiones, campos de concentración, lugares de interrogación-tortura—para llegar al ámbito público en que se dan las grandes polémicas sobre el significado de la tortura y sus secuelas para la cultura nacional" (23). Such a point of departure for Vidal's study takes as a base the fundamental relationship between the subject and his/her surroundings, between the psyche/corporality of the body and the material space of the scene of torture. It recognizes a changed relationship post-torture not only of the body, but of the person who inhabits that body, to the exterior object world.

However, this focus on the careful design of the material space of detention by the military had a secondary dimension: the creation of an environment in which the use of torture could take place and perpetuate itself. Vidal posits that for mass torture to be possible, along with a general asceptisim toward human dignity and a perverse conception of what it is to be a citizen "en lo material se requieren instalaciones especialmente habilitadas y discretamente localizadas, provistas de instrumentos adecuados, de un personal entrenado y burocratizado por estos efectos, y de la dotación, orientación y connivencia de la autoridad estatal" (*Chile: Poética de la Tortura Política* 12). In short, the material element of this schemata exhibits a specific design that allows for the immediate and future destruction of the subject. The intent to destroy the subject through torture was not only a utilitarian tool for eliminating threatening voices from the sociopolitical sphere via an erasure of their autonomy, but also a means by which to

ensure that the repressive forces put into place would continue operating, supported by a band of officers whose job became the systematic physical and psychological torture of a subject dehumanized in the very process.¹² From the beginning, this task had at its core a consideration not only of the individual that was to be tortured and how best to inflict that pain, but the material design of a space and a process by which the torturer could continue his/her work without hesitation. The dehumanization of the victim, his/her reduction to the status of a *thing*, of an object, in a space specifically designed for this task, was used to facilitate this ongoing mistreatment of some humans by other humans by providing a psychological barrier that permitted the torturer to disconnect from the inhumane nature of his/her crime in order to continue carrying out brutal acts of terror.¹³

However, no matter how thoroughly planned and successfully implemented the design of a space for the sheer purposes of torture, testimonial accounts of the space of the detention centers, political prisons, and concentration camps reveal that this work of conversion always remains incomplete. For, the prisoner him/herself undergoes a change in the scene of torture—the remaking of his/her world gives him/her a new relation to the realm of objects, finding in the least assuming of *things* an important ally in the fight for survival.

¹² Mario Benedetti's *Pedro y el capitán* derives its power specifically from a revision of this scene - the prisoner being tortured actively asserts his individuality to provoke his torturer, asking him questions with the goal of humanizing not only himself, but the torturer thereby implicating him personally in the mistreatment of an individual, rather than a numbered, unfeeling, body object.

¹³ Janice T. Gibson and Mika Haritos-Fatouros note hints of this phenomenon in "The Education of a Torturer, and Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* also underlines this element in the design and implementation of torture as a political weapon.

The dangerous potential posed by the object world is palpable in the way in which everyday items were policed and pillaged during the dictatorship (see Introduction). While it is true that some such items were converted into objects of torture, personal objects and belongings were also a means by which the testimonial subject retained and/or rebuilt his/her subjectivity while in detention. Objects in testimonial texts hold utilitarian value for both the testimonial subject and his/her victimizer. As Elaine Scarry observes in her analysis of the use of pain to increase the torturer's power, torture occurs largely through objects, through a changing of the relationship the subject has with his/her sentient world. This can occur through the use of one's body against him/her, as a source of pain, but also through the remodeling of an object's use, making a formerly benign object into a weapon capable of producing pain. During the period of violence, everyday items—often belonging to the prisoners themselves—were converted into objects of torture. The Argentine *Nunca Más* report recounts cases in which “the captors either brought their own blindfolds, or used the victim's own clothes—shirts, pullovers, jackets, etc., or sheets, towels and so on” (19). The turning of such personal belongings, formerly inconsequential and largely unnoticed, into producers of pain demonstrates the unmaking of the subject's relationship to his/her exterior world. It produces a new relationship to formerly present objects, revealing to the subject a newly noticed potentiality/power of the exterior world. The change produced by detention was not just an imposed reconfiguration of the subject's world, but gave way to a new system of survival for the prisoner him/herself. Testimonial accounts from the dictatorships of each country demonstrate both an exercised control over the objects that make up the world of

the detention center and a fear of what potential acts of resistance such items may allow the prisoners to carry out from the space of detention. This important role of objects for both the breakdown and later recuperation of subjectivity signals a fundamental change in the everyday object pre-versus-post victimization. Such a reliance on the material world reveals a facet of the resistance to the dictatorship (even from within the space of the scene of torture and/or detention) that has the possibility of revealing truths in the present about the past, should we choose to engage its (even if incomplete) dialogue.

Elaine Scarry's now canonical study, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, is perhaps best known for its exploration of the reality-destroying quality of pain, of the relationship between the human body and the sentient realm. It is often cited for its exploration of the difficulty (near impossibility) of articulating pain in language and of transmitting the individual and wholly interior state of all-consuming sentience (pain) to another being. Scarry writes:

This book is about the way other persons become visible to us, or cease to be visible to us. It is about the way we make ourselves (and the originally interior facts of sentience) available to one another through verbal and material artifacts, as it is also about the way the derealization of artifacts may assist in taking away another person's visibility. (22)

Central to Scarry's project is her humanistic insistence that we scrutinize the central role occupied by pain and wounding in all acts of war and torture, a call she continues to emphasize even decades after *The Body in Pain's* initial publication (see Smith; Sutherland).

Yet, uses of Scarry's study and its exploration of the relationship of pain to language often limit themselves to a consideration of the arguments she develops in her chapter on torture and its commentary that emotion is often tethered to an external object (we "have feelings for"), with the exception of pain, a state of pure sentience for which the subject has no referential content. Idelber Avelar takes issue with Scarry's departure from the voice, arguing that torture at its core is not an attempt to extract information, but rather "the *act of torture itself*" ("Five Theses" 259, emphasis in the original). This observation leads Avelar to contend that "we do not describe the act of torture through a phenomenology that would recount the *unmaking* of the world" (259, emphasis in the original), and that we cannot presume that what is destroyed by torture ("civilization", "world" [259]) is "somehow completely uncontaminated by torture itself" (259). Avelar argues that "torture has always entered into the very construction of what is understood and experienced as 'civilization', and not just 'civilization' but what is understood as 'democracy' in politics and 'truth' in philosophy and jurisprudence" (259). Central to Avelar's disagreement with Scarry is the notion of a possibility to recover lost subjectivity for the survivor of torture. This leads Avelar to assert that "what is at stake in the critique of the liberal-phonocentric thesis on torture is not only the loss of illusions (and hopes) that civilization is not corrupted by atrocity, but also the possibility of a positive space where the production of a post-traumatic subjectivity is made possible" (260).

Discussions of Scarry's text often focus on its identification of the difficulty of communication and destruction of the voice (hence, Avelar's critique), but ignore the

productive possibilities Scarry finds in art and the material world (in artifacts)—a conduit for transmitting the individual’s sentient experience of pain. For Scarry, when art attempts to relate pain it can “provide a more compelling (because usable) form of reassurance—fictional analogues, perhaps whole paragraphs of words, that can be borrowed when the real-life crisis of silence comes” (10). Art (and artifacts) can create instances that bring the reader to a “realm of shared objectification” (11) and relate the “interior facts of bodily sentience” (11). While fragmentary and incomplete, Scarry posits that objects (nails, hammers) can be employed within a linguistic referentiality that Scarry calls “language of agency” (13), a dual structure in which two metaphors function simultaneously. The first specifies an external agent of the pain, a weapon that is pictured as producing the pain; and the second specifies bodily damage that is pictured as accompanying the pain. Thus, weapon and wound join together in order to express the sentient experience. Yet, Scarry insists, the object (weapon) is not “identical with the sentient experience of pain; and yet, because it has shape, length, and color, because it either exists [. . .] or can be pictured as existing [. . .] at the external boundary of the body, it begins to externalize, objectify, and make shareable what is originally an interior and unshareable experience” (16). Scarry notes the “expressive potential of the sign of the weapon” (17), along with the hurt “suggested by the object” (17).

Scarry’s analysis of torture tethers the material object (it is important to note that her discussion of the object at this point limits itself to the weapon) to the sentient state of the tortured individual. Calling them “objects of sentience,” Scarry focuses on the destruction of this material world by the torturer: the room (shelter) and the objects that

fill that space convert into weapons, producing a re-ordering of the semantic realm of the scene of torture (a chair is no longer just a chair, but a potentially wounding fixture). In her exploration of the impossibility of the signification of the pain experienced by the human body, Scarry recognizes a paradox. The relaying of sentient experiences from the interiority of the body to the exteriority of other peoples' lived experiences rests on the instability of the signifying sign: the object. Scarry recognizes not only the limiting power of the loss of voice, but the useful power of the weapon as an object (a language of agency) in conveying pain and suffering; yet, this utility can be misinterpreted, turned around and used in the same way to deny that suffering:

The deeply problematic character of this language, its inherent instability, arises precisely because it permits a break in the identification of the referent and thus a misidentification of the thing to which the attributes belong. While the advantage of the sign is its proximity to the body, its disadvantage is the ease with which it can then be spatially separated from the body. (17)

But, what happens when the object we see before us isn't merely a symbol (assuming it may ever be more than a symbol—a thought I will revisit further on in this chapter in my consideration of Graham Harman's interpretation of Heidegger's tool analysis)? What potential does the object hold that truly *was* the weapon, the source of hurt? Not *any* weapon, but *the* weapon. Not *as if* it were the agent of pain, but *as* the true agent of the production of that pain? Or, conversely, the object that was the saving grace that permitted ongoing survival, the object that didn't produce pain, but alleviated it, if only momentarily? What communicative potential do these *specific* objects hold?

Scarry's text ultimately rests on the relationship the subject has to the material world that surrounds him/her and the way in which one makes sense of that environment and then conveys his/her experience to another through language.¹⁴ Scarry writes:

Once the structures of torture and war have been exposed and compared, it becomes clear that human action of making entails two distinct phases—making-up (mental imagining) and making-real (endowing the mental object with a material or verbal form)—and that the appropriation and deconstruction of making occur sometimes at the first and sometimes at the second of these two sites. (21).

Scarry posits that “the disintegration of the world is here, in the most literal way possible, made painful, made the direct cause of pain” (Scarry 41).

The first half of Scarry's study analyzes the destruction of the torture victim's world, via the complete unmaking of his/her material reality. Taking advantage of the manner in which the world is created, according to Scarry, torture employs a deconstructive approach. It unmakes the world of the prisoner to a point where the only thing that exists for the prisoner is pain: “This world unmaking, this uncreating of the created world, which is an external objectification of the psychic experience of the person in pain, becomes itself the cause of the pain” (45). Torture is an act of destruction that “rather than destroying the concrete physical facts of streets, houses, factories, and

¹⁴ Scarry limits her discussion to language, in this chapter I will propose a consideration of the object itself, though I will be analyzing the scripting of such objects in language in texts written by survivors of political violence and torture. However, I do this in order to set the stage for a consideration of actual, material objects in the second chapter of this study.

schools, it destroys them as they exist in the mind of the prisoner, it destroys them as they exist in the furnishings of a room” (61). Scarry envisions this unmaking as a gradual elimination of acts of imagination (the envisioning of things in the mind) and creation (the carrying out of the making-real of the imagined thing).

The making of the world, and, by extension, the object (the artifact), for Scarry, is an act based on a model of creation. The design of the artifact has at its core the goal of taking over the work of the body, thereby creating less pain for the individual. Scarry cites the example of the chair whose design is to relieve the subject of the discomfort imposed on the spine by having to remain standing, a creative design undone by the use of the chair to immobilize the victim, imposing pain after long durations of time. She explains:

Torture begins at precisely the point where the other has left off: it starts by appropriating and deconstructing the artifacts that are the products of creation—wall, window, door, room, shelter, medicine, law, friend, country, both as they exist in their material form and as the created contents of consciousness. Torture ends at what is the other’s starting point: it “produces” the pain that has not only been eliminated by the act of creation, but whose very existence has been the condition that originally occasioned the act of creation. In the one, pain is deconstructed and displaced by the artifact; in the other, the artifact is deconstructed to produce pain. Thus torture not only deconstructs the “products” of the imagination, but deconstructs the act of imagining itself. (145)

While Scarry's analysis of torture is the most often cited, her study's exploration of this process of making sentient, of making external, completely interior states of sentience (pain, discomfort, or even imagining) through the creation of objects merits further consideration.¹⁵

I ask, what happens when we reconsider the object—not just any object, but the specific objects that ordered the detention center, political prison, the place of torture—as more than a mere symbol, as an *ally* in the struggle for survival or a *made* piece of art not necessarily meant to relate the language-shattering moment of pain that Scarry is considering, but—when we apply Scarry's thoughts to the communication of a story of resistance, to the creation of an object capable of eliminating the pain of incommunicability—to relate an individual reality in the past to the present? Does the logic that the object can only ever be a *symbolic* representation of experience still hold?

Before I move on to place Scarry's analysis of unmaking and remaking in dialogue with Harman's reevaluation and extension of Heidegger's tool analysis, I first will demonstrate how objects referred to in testimonial texts evidence that *things* were important factors for survival and resistance within the space of detention. To do this, I turn to two narratives written by survivors from the Argentine context: Alicia Partnoy and Alicia Kozameh.

¹⁵ In this chapter I am limiting my analysis to the objects encountered by detainees during their detention. Chapter two will turn to a consideration of the process of imagining and making-real undertaken as a form of material resistance by the prisoners themselves, creating material narratives that (as will be seen in chapter three) testify in museums and spaces of memory in the present day.

Material Matters: The Role of the Object in Resistance

In survivor Alicia Partnoy's *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival in Argentina*, objects are relied on by the subject for solidarity and survival. Partnoy's text has been heavily examined by theorists of *testimonio* (see Edurne Portela; Treacy; Partnoy "Cuando vienen matando") and many analyses of it mention the manner in which the author incorporates a literary treatment of the blindfold she was forced to wear in the detention center, a consideration to which I offer the following analysis of the weapon, in light of its interior tool-being.

The blindfold is, technically, employed by the dictatorship as a weapon, but, as emphasized in Partnoy's text, it also can be manipulated by the prisoner into being his/her ally in survival. The blindfold's potentiality evades the total control of the guards who employ it to help them render helpless the prisoner, its vibrancy rebels against the status quo.¹⁶ The fabric of the blindfold loosens over time, as it moves ever so slightly under the strain of the prisoner's movement. Such malleability is a property interior to the object itself—it is a feature of the fabric's being in the world. But it is precisely this feature which comes to the aid of the prisoner. The prisoner relies on this malleability to manipulate the fabric to capture visions of the space that surrounds her. The blindfold is not only a weapon, but, conversely, an ally in the prisoner's struggle.

¹⁶ In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett theorizes a "vitality intrinsic to things as such" (xiii) that recognizes the impersonal political affect of *things* as a type of material/nonhuman agency. In using the term "vibrancy," here, I am gesturing toward Bennett's political theory of the agency of the material.

In another prisoner's reconstruction of her time in detention, this time that of an Uruguayan political prison, the blindfold-as-ally leads the prisoner to another object: a shoe, which offers a similar structure of support. Martha Valentini states:

Una de las mil formas de tortura fue ponernos de *plantón* sin un zapato, te desequilibrás y caés sin remedio, sobre todo las mujeres que usamos tacos. Nuestros zapatos se apilaban en un rincón. Una querida amiga que estaba en aquel *plantón*, me contó mucho después, que mi zapato, que veía por debajo de la venda, la alentaba, quería decir que no estaba sola. Fijáte los apoyos que lo afectivo puede encontrar. (Pi 28)

Valentini's testimony reveals that the object-as-ally, the *noticing* of the potentiality of things—to both harm and help—was not specific to Partnoy's personal experience, nor to the Argentine context, but rather was a phenomenon held in common to the experiences of torture and mistreatment characteristic of the Southern Cone dictatorships.

In other tales in Partnoy's text, objects function similarly to the shoe that encouraged Valentini's friend, as conduits by which to extend kindness and caring to a fellow detainee, yet also as a means by which to retain a semblance of subjectivity in a space systematically designed to deny the prisoner such autonomy. For example, food not only nourishes the body, but the soul: "I have some cheese and a small end of bread saved for tomorrow . . . If I cut them into little pieces, then put them between my toes, I can pass the bread and cheese to Benja. The blanket is covering my feet; the guard won't see me. It's too bad I didn't save the quince jam!" (46). The food passed to Benja during his first night of detention at The Little School is a medium not only for sustaining his

bodily strength so that he may withstand the brutal violence that is being inflicted on him during his initial torture sessions, but also a way for Partnoy to nurture Benja's spirit, as Partnoy remarks: "Bread is also a means of communicating, a way of telling the person next to me: 'I'm here. I care for you. I want to share the only possession I have'" (84) and "to give a brother some bread is a reminder that true values are still alive.¹⁷ To be given some bread is to receive a comforting hug" (85).

In the prologue to Partnoy's text, Julia Alvarez astutely writes: "We watch as she rolls her ration of bread into twenty-five little balls rather than eating it, desperate to *create* something, anything, in an environment where everything is being destroyed" (9. my emphasis). In the tale to which Alvarez refers—appropriately titled "Bread"—one of the guards discovers that Partnoy has been creating the balls of bread and asks her what they are for. She responds: "To play with" (84). In turn, he "kept silent for two minutes while he meticulously calculated the danger level of that toy" (84), then determined that "it's okay" (84). Yet Partnoy disagrees, stating the guard was "wrong" (84). Her ruminations on the way in which the little balls of bread could be used to transmit caring—thus, subverting the dominant paradigm of absolute silence and isolation amongst the prisoners—ultimately point to the small piece of bread as a tool for

¹⁷ Partnoy's perspective resonates outside of the Argentine case. When asked whether there had been "gestos de humanidad" in her experience in La Paloma (one of the detention centers in Uruguay), Martha Valentini remarked: "Alguna vez me trajeron un huevo duro o un caramelo. Pero también esto dependió de los cuarteles y de la capacidad de cada persona para encontrar un canal de comunicación con los celadores. Para uno de mis cumpleaños, que casualmente fue un día de paquete, varios compañeros de los que estaban en aquel patio sacrificaron la manzana que les había tocado ese día, para enviármela como regalo; quedé con cuatro o cinco manzanas en la falda: vendada, atada, pero con manzanas de cariño y compañerismo. Es un recuerdo entrañable" (Pi 31).

resistance, an act of defiance that cannot be undertaken without a self-sense of some type of subjectivity: the prisoner who resists through an act of creation has necessarily not been successfully subdued.¹⁸ The difference between Partnoy's relationship to the bread versus the guard's (she disagrees that the bread is a benign toy, and he fails to see its potential), demonstrates how the experience of detainment, torture, and detention alter the subject's relationship to the material world around him/her.

In *The Little School* it is not only food (a non-enduring substance) that acts in this manner, but material objects as well. In "The Small Box of Matches," Partnoy describes how she has lost a tooth in the detention center, a piece of herself that she now keeps safeguarded in an empty *Ranchera* matchbox. Partnoy explains:

This small box of matches is my only belonging. Sometimes I own a piece of bread, and once I even had an apple. But this box is my only non-edible belonging. Now I keep my box under the pillow. Every so often I touch it to make sure it is still there, just because inside that little box is a piece of myself: my tooth. (88)

The matchbox allows Partnoy to keep a secret: the possession of her tooth. The matchbox lends a determinate facet of its being to Partnoy—the capacity to hold, hide from view, to keep safe another object—and, defiantly, the matchbox permits her to keep a part of herself (of her body) for her alone, outside of the watchful and violating gaze of the prison guards. The power of the object for Partnoy is underlined for the reader in the explanation of the danger it poses in the detention center: "The little matchbox will bring

¹⁸ Objects as acts of creation (making one's own world) will be further explored in chapter two.

me trouble. Sooner or later a guard is going to decide that the box is a dangerous object in my hands. Right now it's my only possession" (90).

Material possessions are often the markers by which we identify the personalities of individuals, a means by which one cultivates a personal style or way of presenting him or herself to the world. The statement "right now, it's my only possession" points to this important connection with the realm of individual personality, a state of being meant to be effaced by the very design of the detention center. In this sense, the object is a tether to subjectivity, to the resistance of the total destruction sought out in the dictatorial quest for determinative control in the social (and, of course, political) sphere. Partnoy's little matchbox is a small item, but it performs a monumental task: it guards a piece of Partnoy that the dictatorship has violently removed from her—her tooth—and assures that her personhood remain intact, that the small piece that has become detached from her body remains with her, remains a part of her, remains in her possession, by virtue of the storage properties of the matchbox. Here, the object and Partnoy's subjectivity overlap via the commingling of matchbox and tooth—the matchbox's past, it's having been with Partnoy specifically is emphasized.

The change of the detainee's relationship to the material world pre- versus post-detention is also demonstrated in Alicia Kozameh's *Pasos bajo el agua*. Detained and incarcerated during the dictatorship, Kozameh expresses that she does not write *testimonio*, but rather novels and poetry, insisting on a differentiation between her voice as a survivor and the authorial voice that appears in her text. Yet, an image of a cup and spoon, which appears in the first edition of *Pasos bajo el agua*, but in none of the

subsequent versions, is directly reproduced from the notebook that Kozameh was allowed to have in prison. The first edition begins with the image of the official document that gave Kozameh the permission to keep the notebook. I contend that *Pasos bajo el agua* has a testimonial nature that lies in the material details that appear in and are described by the text, and that the removal of the images of the document and the cup and spoon (presumably used by Kozameh to eat in prison) after initial publication was meant to diminish this testimonial quality, after it forced Kozameh into exile a second time when she was threatened in Argentina for the book's publication. The drawing, the objects, augmented the text's testimonial charge, thus pointing us to the importance of a reconsideration of their power.

The representation of objects in subsequent versions of *Pasos bajo el agua* moves out of the temporality of the dictatorship and into the immediate years that followed. The detained person's voice remains represented, but is no longer speaking from the space of the prison. In a chapter added when the text was translated and republished into English, "Sara, What Does a Jacket Mean to You?," the importance of the object for the detainee after liberation is markedly evident and demonstrates that the changed relationship to the object world remains present after the end of detention. In the space of exile (Mexico), Sara (the text's testimonial subject) remarks to her friend Chanita: "You don't know what a jacket is" (75), marking a fundamental difference between the two. She reveals: "This jacket has an importance for me that would be very difficult for you to imagine" (75), placing herself at a distance from the comprehensible realm of possibility that exists for Chanita. Sara's conception of jackets is fundamentally human: "The jackets tremble.

They shake. They walk. They face death” (72). This humanness is further emphasized in the remark: “That’s why thinking of that denim jacket makes me sleepy. Because it humiliated itself trying to be something it wasn’t. And people like that bore me. I know we’re not talking about a human being. Though to tell you the truth, certain human beings are not easily distinguishable from jackets. And certain jackets seem to have attitudes. The attitudes of certain human beings” (76) and “there are jackets that are part of some people” (76). I contend that more than mere allegorical personification, these comments reveal that post-detention the perceived line between subject and object becomes blurred: both exist within the same realm of being (what Harman would refer to as tool-being). These explorations in later editions of the text are echoes of the original text’s testimonial charge, emanating from the materiality described in the initial version of the text.

This later chapter tells the story of the jacket that belonged to Hugo, Sara’s husband, prior to his detention. The blending of Hugo’s subjectivity into his (and *specifically* his) jacket, this “very symbiotic relationship” (78) for Sara marks the robbery of this item and its use by a *milico* as an even greater violation: “Just like that, out of nowhere, and with Hugo’s jacket. Not carrying it around, but wearing it. Wearing it . . . Taking it over. Filling, invading that space which didn’t belong to him. Almost like peeling off Hugo’s skin and covering himself with it” (79). The allusion to the melding of flesh and leather signals a re-ordering of the material world that exists for Sara post-detention; her re-construction of the events of Hugo’s kidnapping and mistreatment by the military regime occurs allegorically through the mistreatment of the jacket—the flesh

being pulled off of one man, to cover another.¹⁹ The revealing of Hugo's story via the disappearance and subsequent reappearance of a jacket signals a recognition of a testimonial capacity held by objects due to their connection to personhood, especially that of detained/disappeared subjects, a power which remains in the period after violence, in the fight for the reconstruction of memory.

Hugo's subjectivity, his personhood, remains attached to the jacket as it goes on to circulate through society, through the space of the city of Rosario, Argentina, disappearing and reappearing from Sara's life in unpredictable ways. Similarly, survivor Adriana Calvo describes the circulation of possessions amongst the prisoners:

Recuerdo que le di a Eloísa mi hebilla para el pelo, un trofeo muypreciado, una hebilla de esas francesas que agarran bien el pelo; las dos lo teníamos muy largo. Le di mi vestido a Patricia, estaba con un camisón y la chaqueta. Me decía: 'Vas a salir, vas a salir.' Le dejé mis sandalias a Inés Ortega, que andaba en ojotas de goma. Y así salí, con las ojotas de Inés y el camisón de Patricia. (Calvo 11)

Even after the exchange of these objects, the previous owner's personhood remains attached to the object. Adriana is not just wearing any "ojotas" (flip-flops) as she leaves the space of the prison, but *Inés's* flip-flops. She wears not just any nightshirt, but *Patricia's* nightshirt. In much the same way that Partnoy shares food as a demonstration of caring, the exchange of objects here also signifies a nurturing gesture of camaraderie.

¹⁹ It is worth noting that the jacket is not made of cloth, but leather, a materiality that is consistently emphasized by Kozameh in her text. All leather, treated cowhide, at some point in its existence was the skin of a living animal. Thus, the jacket holds a materiality whose production has additional resonance in the discussion of the realm of the living and the non-living. In this context, the identification of Hugo with the jacket, and now as a second-skin for the military officer, is even more jarring.

But this moment (much like the jacket in Partnoy's text) also points to a mobility (and perhaps agency) held by the object—a mobility that supersedes the limits imposed on the detained subject. If Adriana is wearing Patricia's nightshirt as she moves out of the space of the camp into liberty/freedom, the testimonial personhood (ownership) attached to the nightshirt moves with her. The significance of the material form, its prior context, changes as it moves from the space of the camp/prison back out into the circulatory market of society. The object retains a telling significance; in the exterior of the camp it can be used as evidence to the previous owner's family and/or friends that Adriana had truly seen Patricia. It lends credibility to the testimonial function, its own being affixes a stamp of authenticity to the message being transmitted.

Remaking the World: The Constant State of Noticing *Things*

In a testimonial story titled "La llegada," Jorge Tiscornia reconstructs the details of his arrival to the Penal de Libertad, one of the main prisons used to house male detainees during the Uruguayan dictatorship. Tiscornia's narrative reconstruction of the events occurs not solely from his own interior memories, but relies on the guidance of a "pequeño almanaque que fui haciendo desde que caí preso, para recoger, desde él, el ancla de mi memoria" ("La llegada" 66), a material aid that permits his reconstruction of the events.²⁰ Tiscornia's story is prefaced by a reliance on the material world for the

²⁰ Tiscornia's original *almanaque* was reproduced for distribution in November of 2012, accompanied by a collection of texts that reflect on the creation of the *almanaque* and its importance within the context of the dictatorship. See Charlo, José Pedro and Jorge Tiscornia.

successful narration of his past. The *almanaque* is his memory, his past embedded into an exterior, material *thing*.

Tiscornia describes how, upon preparing to leave Punta de Rieles—which thereafter was converted into the women’s prison—, he is told to collect his things. He writes: “Las historias me decían que sería difícil pasar algo en el Penal, que lo primero que hacían era quitarte todo lo que llevabas” (67). Tiscornia decides to at least try and explains his plan: “Llevaría la almohada, mi almohada. Probaría con algún libro y un poco de ropa. Dejaría el juego de ajedrez que estaba construyendo y las cosas de dibujo que me acompañaban, y el resto de la ropa; acá serían más útiles” (67). It is important to note that this is not Tiscornia’s first arrival to prison, but rather a transfer from one prison to another. Given these nuances to Tiscornia’s story, his choice of which objects to bring and which to leave behind reveal an already reoriented relationship to things. Tiscornia’s first item of choice is a pillow, but not just any pillow, *his* pillow, a lifelong companion. He writes:

Con la almohada probaría, pues la relación con ella provenía desde mi niñez, había pasado por mi adolescencia, y por mi casamiento, donde no le permití a mi suegra más que hacerle una funda, sobre la que ya tenía. La había pedido cuando estuve en el cuartel, y había llegado pese a ser de lana y poder ser portadora de cualquier cosa adentro; había ido conmigo a Punta de Rieles y vuelto al cuartel.
(67)

This transfer, as one can probably foretell, is the last moment in which the pillow remains in Tiscornia’s possession. Upon arrival at Penal de Libertad, Tiscornia, one among a

group of sixteen, affirms his presence as his name is called by the guard taking attendance, then enters the gates of the prison. Describing the moment in which he crosses the threshold of the prison, Tiscornia writes

Aquí quedaba nuestro nombre, nuestra identidad, congelada hasta que, para mí, aquel 10 de marzo de 1985, dentro de otra heladera, entre los mismos portones, la recobrara, y en sentido inverso, la pusiera al calor, y ahora caminando, recorriera este camino hacia mis familiares y amigos. . . . No lo supe claramente, pero en pocos metros y en pocas horas dejaría también otras cosas, la vestimenta de civil, el pelo largo, y con el tiempo la juventud. (74)

The next morning, Tiscornia indeed does lose his personal items, the last traces of his life prior to his initial detention. He is “processed”—the guards make him undress, he is examined by a doctor, assigned a number, has his head shaved (Tiscornia is emphatic in writing that this is the last moment he ever saw himself with a full head of hair), is made to undress again, commanded to shower and shave, and finally, “sin pelo, sin barba, y de piel rosada, me tuve que calzar el mameluco gris y las alpargatas negras, que el sargento me alcanzó” (80). Amidst the donning of an imposed new order of *things*, Tiscornia remembers he left his personal belongings on the other side of this process: “‘Mis cosas,’ le dije, intentando el rescate de la ropa, que me había quitado, y de la bolsa” (80). The guard commands him to “póngalas aquí” (80) and Tiscornia undertakes the arduous task of giving up his last possessions, the last remaining remnants of his youth, his life prior to the prison: “Aquí quedaba mi almohada, y la placidez de mis sueños. El sueño tranquilo, efectivamente, regresó con mi libertad. No así las cosas” (80). While Tiscornia signals

that upon entering the gates of the prison he loses his name and identity, he draws attention to the incomplete process of this loss at the initial moment of entrance; it is not until he loses his civilian clothing, his long hair, and “otras cosas”—presumably the things that he has attempted to bring with him (among them his pillow)—that he suffers the total reduction/oppression posed by the prison. The process remains incomplete while he still remains in possession of his belongings.

The pillow is an important item to consider. Applying Elaine Scarry’s logic of the creation of the object, one understands that the pillow’s design and manufacture has at its core the desire to relieve some kind of interior pain, the body’s suffering. The pillow, made to relieve the pain of (to make more comfortable) the head, spine, and body while sleeping, in this case represents a means by which Tiscornia can make the space of the prison more bearable. But, *this particular pillow* also holds for him the function of memory, like the almanaque with which Tiscornia is able to reconstruct the story of “La llegada,” the pillow serves as an amplifying device, helping him visualize the happiness of his past, of his youth, his adolescence, his marriage, and therefore providing him a tool for the self-soothing, healing power of memory. However, the pillow itself can be seen as a companion, it has accompanied Tiscornia like a friend. The loss of this tool is the loss of an ability to reach out beyond the bars of the prison for help. It is a loss of an amplification/extension of the body capable of making itself feel less, resist more. The loss of the pillow is more than what it seems, it is a closing off, a limiting of the prisoner’s world, the loss of an ally, a fellow subject, a tool-being on which to rely for comfort, an increase of the prisoner’s sentient discomfort, and, thereby an increase in the

repressor's power. The loss of all objects changes Tiscornia upon his arrival, and he is remade in a new material order, that of the Penal de Libertad.

My use of the term “subject” to refer to an “object” in the previous paragraph is intentional and merits explanation. The heritage of Heidegger's philosophy derives firstly, from the legacy of Franz Brentano who argued that every intention is an objectifying act and secondly, from Edmund Husserl's use of this term (“intention”) in the development of a phenomenology, a use focused on describing how things appear to us. Heidegger develops this further, stating that intentionality “reduces things to their accessibility to human thought” (Harman *Heidegger* 175)²¹ and ignores that there is always something that remains in the *thing* that eludes our reach. The “as structure” we employ to relate to objects is only ever a superficial bridge to their tool-being, which remains always present, yet unreachable to human Dasein. In the “as structure” by which human Dasein relates to the object world of which it forms a part, one observes an echo of Scarry's comments that we have “feelings for”—in both our interactions with other *things* as *things* and our expressions of the emotions our interior being hides. The reason I discuss the pillow as a subject is due to this complexity of the inaccessible being within the object. I argue that the prisoner who has suffered the unmaking and remaking of his/her world is uniquely tuned to the existence of this unreachable, but nevertheless existent, quality in the object. The prisoner treats the object in a way that acknowledges this presence beyond his/her reach, but that can be conceived of in terms of a recognition

²¹ I use Harman's reading of Heidegger throughout because Harman is responsible for extending Heidegger's tool analysis and out of it developing the “Object Oriented Philosophy” that informs my discussion of *things* throughout this project. In order to remain consistent, I defer to Harman's reading in many instances throughout my project.

of a type of subjectivity in the object capable of sharing its agency with the prisoner. Heidegger pushes us to theorize objects in a way that doesn't "reduce things to their external properties," but rather grasps them "in their deeper factual reality" (Harman *Heidegger* 27). By considering that objects act with their own subjectivities, and do so in a way that demonstrates solidarity to human subjects who are suffering, one acknowledges this deeper existence of the object. The extremity of the circumstances of deprivation, of unmaking and remaking, provokes this recognition on the part of the human subject. In the following chapters, it is important to keep in mind this new dimension and to remember that the object—recognized in its tool-being (even if the understanding of that tool-being remains just beyond reach) by the human subject rendered psychically distinct due to circumstances of torture, by the remaking of his/her world—participates in the prisoner's struggle for survival and aides him/her in the fight for resistance.

Heidegger's philosophy of objects (of being) focuses on the "veiling and unveiling of things encountered in the world by Dasein" (Harman *Heidegger* 3). The distinction between tool and broken tool is really a distinction between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. Heidegger's tool analysis posits that the moment at which the tool breaks human Dasein becomes conscious of its relationship to the material item. The tool is integral to our functioning as agential subjects, it facilitates our relationship not only to one another, but to the world that surrounds us. Yet, does the tool need to break in the space of detention for it to become visible to the detainee? Let's consider the following comment by Marcelo Estefanell, a former political prisoner in Uruguay:

Con la atención sobrada que un preso en soledad puede prestar a cada detalle de sus paredes desnudas durante las largas horas de confinamiento, es posible distinguir detalles que, en otras condiciones, no merecerían ni media mirada. (Estefanell 27)

Estefanell's comment highlights a distinct, changed environment in which the prisoner exists in a *constant state of noticing things*. His comment reveals a break not with the object (or, a broken tool), but a break between the subject and the world, provoked by extreme circumstances of deprivation and abuse. Prolonged solitude in conditions intentionally meant to produce deprivation has the secondary effect of not allowing anything to go unnoticed. For Heidegger, the functioning tool only remains functioning as long as its tool-being goes unnoticed. In the vigilant space of the prison nothing goes unscrutinized, neither the prisoners themselves under the constant watchful gaze of their guards nor the object world, all tool-beings are constantly reflected upon by the prisoners, both for their utility and their limits. This process necessarily creates relationships between subject and object, forever bringing the object into the present-at-hand: "it is *relations* that turn objects into present-at-hand atoms [. . .] the tool-being withdraws into its vast inner reality, which is irreducible to any of its negotiations with the world. Only in its relations with other entities is it caricatured, turned into a unitary profile" (Harman *Tool-Being* 169).

In *El hombre numerado*, Estefanell narrates his experience arriving at Penal de Libertad, one that runs parallel to that of Tiscornia's in "La llegada."²² Estefanell describes how the prisoners prepared themselves upon hearing the news that they would be transferred from Punta de Rieles:

Sabíamos que debíamos tomar ciertas precauciones como consecuencia de las severas normas que íbamos a encontrar allí, como el hecho, por ejemplo, de que con excepción de las prendas interiores nos quitarían toda la ropa y los zapatos y, en su lugar, vestiríamos un mameluco de brin color gris y calzaríamos alpargatas negras. . . Por otra parte, como no íbamos a tener ningún medio de comunicación a mano, alguien llegó a planificar el traslado oculto de una radio portátil. (19)

The resistance that prepares the prisoners for the transfer begins prior to the arrival at Penal de Libertad and has its basis in the material. The prisoners make plans to smuggle into the space of the prison a portable radio: "¿Una radio?—le pregunté incrédulo al Pochilo durante un recreo—¿Cómo vamos a meter de queruza una radio en el Penal de Libertad?" (19). Pochilo responds to Estefanell explaining that the radio will be dismantled and each piece "del tamaño de un grano de café" (19) will be given to a different prisoner, each *compañero* responsible for his piece's safe arrival to the new prison. Estefanell is assigned "un diodo" (19) which he successfully smuggles into Penal de Libertad, hidden away on his body with the money he carries in the sole of a shoe, waiting for the moment in which he will be called on to participate in the construction of

²² Estefanell was a political prisoner in the Uruguayan prison Penal de Libertad for thirteen years, from 1972 to 1985.

the radio, the resistance, the ear to the outer world. The diode gives Estefanell a purpose, a task:

Una vez integrado a la vida carcelaria del penal esperé durante semanas que alguien se acercara a decirme si tenía algo para pasar. Si bien era cierto que en mi piso y sector (2° B) había compañeros de confianza, ninguno provenía de mi columna y, menos aun, de Montevideo. Entonces me encontraba en una especie de limbo organizativo y estructural; dudaba qué hacer o a qué atenerme y, por otra parte, si bien era consciente de que en esas condiciones de reclusión resultaría extremadamente difícil armar una organización compleja, confiaba en que de todas maneras alguien aparecería y me diría ‘pasá la guita y el diodo.’ (Estefanell 20)

This passage reveals the task performed by Estefanell (to preserve the diode for its future job in the making operable of the portable radio), but it also reveals a task being performed by the diode itself. The diode holds within it the possibility to make operable the rest of the objects that compose the radio: it is one piece of a whole, existing in relation to the composition that results in a functioning machine. This distinction may appear to be splitting hairs, but it is an important difference to consider as we move forward with the reading of this narrative. If we recognize the potential for operation held in the object, we must recognize, as Heidegger (via Harman) asks, that: “Things are not objects: instead, they have significance, which means they belong to a system of relation with other things in the environment” (Harman *Heidegger* 29). The diode is significant not only to Estefanell, representing a reason for his continued survival, but to the rest of

the radio of which it is destined to form a part. Like Estefanell, one person in the resistance in Uruguay, the diode is one part of a systematic whole: the radio. They both hold an important interiority to their being and in their relationship blur the distinctive features of subject and object, bringing tool-being to the undeniable fore.

In the new prison, Estefanell patiently awaits “una señal, un mensaje, algo que me diera a entender que esa era la persona que me reclamaría lo que yo llevaba” (20). Finally, one day Pochilo appears and Estefanell’s task is completed. However, “la radio nunca se llegó a armar: faltaron piezas” (21). Here, the classic dimension of Heidegger’s tool analysis becomes clear. The radio, in its missing pieces, if it wasn’t noticed by the prisoner prior to this moment, is impossible to not observe in its broken-tool form. Estefanell’s initial reaction to the plan to bring a radio into Penal de Libertad (“¿Cómo vamos a meter de queruza una radio en el Penal de Libertad?” [19]) reveals the new relationship to noticing that takes place in the space of detention, even prior to the state of the broken tool. Under “normal” circumstances the transport of a radio from one place to another is not one that calls attention to itself, reflecting Heidegger’s assertion that the true being of things is absence (withdrawal). The dismantling of the object in order to transport it successfully, and the subsequent failure to do so, produces a broken tool that, rather than being the initial change in the relationship between subject and object that calls attention to tool-being, is a second step that further augments the already noticed state of the *thing*’s tool-being.

The unmaking of the world explored earlier through Elaine Scarry’s theoretical perspective, here, produces a relationship between the prisoner and his newly remade

object world (the prison) in which the material thing cannot go unnoticed—everything is noticed and noted for its potentiality as a form of resistance. For example, Estefanell’s constant state of noticing reveals that an inconsistency in the material that makes up the wall of his cell is an *enchufe* that had long been forgotten and overlooked: “Parecía mentira ver ese adminículo en el medio de la pared de mi celda; la tapa de plástico blanco y esas tres hendiduras que parecían los ojos de un chinito triste con nariz y sin boca” (28). This new relationship to the power outlet creates an agency for Estefanell. It produces a new purpose in his existence within the prison. The discovery of the outlet reanimates the lost world of *electrodomesticos*, remakes them in the present, brings them forward from the realm of broken tools, from “[el] reino de los recuerdos” (38).²³ Estefanell becomes the only possessor of an outlet on his floor of Penal de Libertad. What’s more, the outlet creates the “posibilidad cierta de poder ingerir la infusión gauchesca” (27)—it falls to Estefanell to heat the water for *maté* for all of his *compañeros* and even for the guards on the fourth floor: “Esta tarea, tan prosaica si se quiere, fue para mí el reverso de mi rutina” (39).

²³ The full citation, clearly revealing a different relationship to things pre- to post-detention, this time focused on the tool/broken tool distinction, is: “En la vida normal, urbana y libre, la electricidad se convierte en un elemento cotidiano, casi tan natural como el aire o como el agua. Sin embargo, en aquel sitio de reclusión, donde ni siquiera teníamos la posibilidad de encender o apagar la luz por encontrarse la llave y el portalámparas del lado de afuera de la celda, ser poseedor de una fuente de energía eléctrica parecía una incongruencia mayúscula, máxime cuando carecíamos de todo como consecuencia de una larga lista de prohibiciones casi draconianas y cuando no, simplemente estúpidas. En pocas palabras: no teníamos para enchufar; los electrodomésticos nos estaban vedados: radios, televisores, planchas, licuadoras, ventiladores y heladeras eran objetos que pertenecían al reino de los recuerdos” (Estefanell 38)

The outlet lends Estefanell its agency—as an object it is a creator of electrical energy and as such it holds the power to animate other objects: it exercises influence over another being (even if that being is another tool-being [ie: *un electrodoméstico*]). By its mere presence in Estefanell’s cell, the outlet shares its agential power with the prisoner. The spread of its power, made perceptively present in Estefanell’s relationship with the outlet, even goes so far as to liberate the locks on his cell: the guards take to using Estefanell’s outlet to heat the water for their maté to save them the trouble of descending three sets of stairs to the other station, which meant that “con el correr de las semanas, esto último fue generando cierta complicidad entre la guardia y mi tarea, a tal punto que de noche solían dejar la puerta de mi celda abierta, entornada o a media tranca, cosa de poder entrar a cualquier hora para calentar sus propios termos” (40). Graham Harman writes, “equipment is not effective ‘because people use it’; on the contrary, it can only be used because it is capable of an effect, of inflicting some kind of blow on reality” (Harman *Tool-Being* 20). The outlet in Estefanell’s cell is not only effective because it is used to heat water (changing the temperature of the water from cold to hot inflicts a blow on reality), but is also effective as an unlikely tool of survival for Estefanell. The blow it inflicts on reality is a change in Estefanell’s routine, the creation of a new job for him, and, most shockingly, the opening of the locks on his cell door (even if this never results in Estefanell’s escape, it is a monumental blow to say the least). None would have happened without the *noticing* of the outlet in the first place. None would continue to take place should the outlet fail to function.

Conclusion: The Object Ally

In “An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival,” Dori Laub argues that a key element for survival of the Holocaust was the creation of an internal witness to which the victim could testify during the moment of trauma: “survival takes place through the creative act of establishing and maintaining an internal witness who substitutes for the lack of witnessing in real life” (Laub 87). In the case to which Laub refers, this internal witness was an id card of the child victim’s mother, to whom he talks, prays and bears witness. In cases such as Estefanell’s one sees the same process occurring in Southern Cone detention centers via the creation of a witness in the object—the object, viewed as an ally, fulfills the role of an internal witness to which the prisoner can testify. The crisis of witnessing that occurs for those that were incarcerated in the concentration camps, clandestine detention centers, or political prisons during the dictatorships, produced a search: of the walls of the cell looking for inconsistencies (Estefanell), of jackets looking for information about the past (Kozameh), for the retaining capacities of matchbooks (Partnoy), for the comfort of the past held in a pillow (Tiscornia).

In a story—“Entrevista a una llave de agua”—from the third edition of a newspaper produced within the confines of the concentration camp Chacabuco in Chile, *Diario de Chacabuco* 73, a man finds the witness, the solidarity, and the support he seeks for survival in a water faucet:

No discutiré con aquellos compadres graves que aseguran no haber visto nunca hablar a las llaves. Estoy de acuerdo con ellos, pero me tocó una llave que al

abrir la emitió el sonido de no tener agua, sino aire, le pregunté qué pasaba y después, de prudencial esfera y lanzar algunas gotas de H₂O, me contestó que el agua la habían cortado en la copa, por problemas propios del desierto y del campamento. (32)

The water faucet, experiencing problems of its own, is a broken tool, its suffering mirrors the suffering of the man in the camp—the two, companions in their suffering, reveal a recognition that under normal circumstances goes unnoticed: Harman’s observation that all beings (including human Dasein) at their core exist as tool-beings, hold something within themselves that cannot be expressed exteriorly except through an as-structure. Yet, the two commence witnessing to each other:

Nos entretuvimos un largo interrogatorio recordando al velódromo del ESTADIO NACIONAL, muy conocido de algunos compadres. Supe que habrá venido desde Antofagasta y haber sido escogido al azar, entre muchos miles de llaves. (32)

The man and the water faucet remember the trauma of the violence of the Estadio Nacional. The man finds out that the water faucet (perhaps not unlike the man himself) was taken “by chance” (*al azar*) from amongst many other thousands of faucets (or, men). Once again, we must assume that, given the realities of the time period, the faucet’s story parallels that of his comrade. The faucet remarks:

“No tengo culpa de estar aquí, pero serviré muchos años hasta al último de los amigos, siempre me tratan bien. Estoy aburrída de la Pampa, porque en la noche hace frío y en el día calor . . .” (33)

Like the men in the camp, the faucet is destined to be held prisoner for many more years, even though it is innocent of any crimes. Additionally, the faucet feels for the suffering of others: “Me contó que a veces le daba lástima ver a muchos bañistas jabonados que debían secarse con la toalla por no haber agua” (np) and reveals that he offers a bit of his subjectivity to alleviate the pain of others, acting as an ally in solidarity to the prisoners: “Yo guardo siempre algunas gotas para el amigo paciente que me junta gota a gota en un choquero.” (np); and commiserating and celebrating with the prisoners:

“A veces me entristezco con las conversaciones de los compadres que vienen a lavar su ropa y hacen recuerdos a sus mujercitas o mamas a quienes nunca le ayudaron en el lavabo y siempre les exigían camisa limpia y bien planchada. También gozo de cuando sé que un compadre cercano a mí, ha recibido noticias optimistas, o buenas de su casa porque así no toma caldo de cabeza, que hace mucho daño con estos calores.” (34)

The man has to cut short his conversation with the water faucet, but not before the faucet offers him water to drink. Upon saying goodbye to the faucet, it tells the man: “Si te vas luego lloraré de alegría; pero si te quedas, me pondré triste y frustrada. De todos modos te ayudaré a pasar las penas” (34).

One could read this story as the personification of an inanimate object, pure and simple. However, given the context in which the story was written (from within the space of the concentration camp Chacabuco) and the examples I have cited throughout this chapter, I contend that the use of the faucet in this story is more than intentional. It directly shows the changed relationship that the subject of torture and detention has to the

material world that surrounds him/her. It evidences the constant noticing of the potential of *things*. In *Chile in Transition*, Michael Lazzara asserts: “the victim who speaks after trauma is not the same subjectivity who spoke prior to the traumatic moment” (72). De Silva notes that for survivors of torture “the presence or absence of social support and the perception of others’ helpfulness are important variables for the reduction of the probability of full-blown PTSD (De Silva 1993 qtd. in Genefke and Vesti 49). In this story, the social support the victim looks for is held in the ally status of the object. It is more than the poetic personification of the *thing*. It refers to a noticed internal pragmatism of the object. It acknowledges an interior being to the object, capable of commiserating: “A thing is more than its appearance, more than its usefulness, and more than its physical body” (Harman *Heidegger* 1).

When we consider how each survivor discussed in this chapter speaks of objects in his/her narrative (Partnoy—a ragged blanket, a plastic flower, food, a matchbox; Kozameh—jackets; Tiscornia—an almanaque, a pillow; Estefanell—a diode, an outlet), it becomes clear that within the space of the torture center, of the prolonged and severe mistreatment of the prison, there occurs not only a break with the object that makes the human aware of its relationship to it, not only a reordering of the subject’s relationship to language and therefore the material world, but a changed environment in which that object exists. The object in the space of the prison no longer completes the simple task for which it was designed, it instead lends a part of its subjectivity as an ally to the victim, as an aide in his/her survival. As will become evident in the chapter that follows, the object, even when broken, actually doesn’t truly break in the eyes of the subject who

has been tortured. Because this break occurs on the side of the subject, this constant state of noticing gives way to an entirely new order of extraordinary things. Bread crumbs become the basis for elaborate floral sculptures, bone fragments leftover from soup become intricately crafted rings. In an endless cycle of reuse, the object lives on as a changed entity, yet retains an essential function, that of maintaining and recording the link between subject and the world—it is precisely this living on of the object as an ally for the subject in survival that will be the focus of the next chapter, as I consider the role prison craftwork played in the self-care of the prisoner.

Chapter Two – (Extra)Ordinary Things: *Manualidades* and *Artesanías carcelarias* as Artifacts of Imagined Agency and Resistance

La vida diaria se rige por normas racionales y la dictadura basa el terror en la irracionalidad. He meditado mucho sobre esto. Me costó darme cuenta que era un método y no una cuestión circunstancial. El absurdo que impone la irracionalidad te exige un esfuerzo muy grande para crear modos de supervivencia que la contravenga.
(Martha Valentini qtd. in Pi 25)

The only state that is anomalous as pain is the imagination.
(Elaine Scarry *The Body in Pain* 162)

Cuando estoy triste lijo mi cajita de música. No lo hago para nadie. Sólo porque me gusta.
(Mercedes Sosa “Cuando estoy triste”)

I am sitting at the kitchen table in the home of Pedro Giudice and Antonia Yañez, both of whom were imprisoned during the last Uruguayan dictatorship. Over the course of our conversation, during which Pedro has been showing me the *manualidades* (prison craftwork) that he made during his incarceration, Pedro suddenly recalls the confusion he felt over the lyrics of the popular song “Cuando estoy triste,” sung by Mercedes Sosa, during the time of his incarceration in *Penal de Libertad*, the prison for male detainees. Pedro tells me that he has always wondered if the lyric was “cuando estoy triste lijo mi cajita de música” or if it was “cuando estoy triste elijo mi cajita de música” and goes in search of a laptop to Google, after so many years, the lyrics to determine which was the actual phrase used in the song. Upon finding “lijo” to be the official *letra*, Pedro tells me that for him, it was always “lijo,” a reflection of his own actions sanding, sanding, sanding away, slowly, but surely, creating small pieces of art from the interminable time and cramped space of incarceration, one item of which was specifically a small box, made for his son, also named Pedro.

Another former political prisoner from Uruguay, Roberto “Mono” Herrera also explains the significance of turning to material creation in an effort to adapt to, cope with, and survive detention. Roberto explains:

Una vez, después de una paliza, me llevaron al baño atado—te ataban con un cable largo—y pensé en matarme. Me iba a colgar de la cisterna, llegué a atar el cable a la cisterna, y ahí me puse a pensar “¿qué estás haciendo? ¿No decíamos que era una lucha ideológica? ¿Varios frentes para luchar? Bueno, ¡ahora te tocó este! Solucionar esa contradicción fue lo que me permitió vivir. La contradicción no estaba entre la libertad y el estar preso, sino en estar preso y aprender a estar preso, porque la lucha se daba en todos los frentes y eso es central en la vida. Yo fui de hacer pocas manualidades, hacia algunas cosas, dibujitos para que otros grabasen (Pi 19).

Roberto’s means for adapting to life in prison, to coping, to surviving is to begin participating in the imaginative work of the *manualidades*. The constant state of noticing the potential of *things* reveals to him the creative potential of the objects to which he has access in the prison. This work permits him to learn to be a prisoner, and ultimately a survivor of the dictatorship. A similar attitude is expressed with regard to those held in the concentration camps in Chile:

La prisión es un signo de un tiempo diferente . . . Pero el hombre no muere . . . las manos torpes y dañadas trabajan afirmando la libertad aprisionada . . . aquí estamos, aquí somos todavía. Desde el campo de prisioneros nace un grito de hueso que trae una semilla de pan y de paz. (de Arteagabeitia np)

Written in reference to the *artesanias carcelarias* made in Tres Álamos, this passage emphasizes the collective and organized nature of the *talleres* organized by the prisoners in the Chilean concentration camps to help them survive and resist from within the space of detention. It affirms not only the same work of resistance through adaptation that Roberto mentions, but also gestures toward a collective effort to testify from the space of detention: “aquí estamos, aquí somos todavía.” The *grito* that the silenced prisoners did not possess, at least openly, here, is born through the soup bones they crafted into pendants, rings, and sculptures. The object-as-artifact creates that which the prisoner lacks: a voice, a means by which to communicate, a hope for survival. All of these examples reveal a specific turn to the material world by the prisoner in resisting, in learning to cope with his/her new day-to-day reality and in the looking forward to a future freedom. For Pedro, the simple, yet productive action of sanding away at a little box was an act of comfort. For Roberto, the turn to creating through *manualidades* was a way of learning to be a prisoner, of reconstructing/remodeling his subjectivity within the confines of a new space and reality. For the prisoners in Chile, their hands worked to affirm liberty even when reality denied it to them.

In this chapter, I contend that the constant state of noticing *things* that I explored in chapter one produced a turn in the incarcerated subject to the potential of all materials within the detention center and that craftwork was used as a means of amplifying the self, following Elaine Scarry’s analysis, through the creation of an exterior artifact capable of relieving interior pain and, at the same time, as the crafting of a testimonial object that would relay an aspect of life in the concentration camp to the generations of the future.

As was briefly mentioned in chapter one, for Scarry, a productive power lies in the making of the world that can counter the pain and hurt caused by the violent unmaking of the world for the suffering subject. Such objects can relate the “interior facts of bodily sentience” (11) to another being and bring that person to a “realm of shared objectification” (11), thus communicating an aspect of one suffering subject’s reality to another. However, this “expressive potential of the sign of the weapon” (17) occurs only because the artifact itself performs a specific function in the prisoner’s world. Revisiting Scarry’s discussion of the chair (previously referenced to explain Tiscornia’s valorization of his pillow), one observes that the objects that populate this world have a specific design—the chair is conceptualized and created as an object that will relieve the body of the discomfort of having to stand continuously and alleviate the strain of the spine, providing a brief respite for the subject. In the prisons, craftwork was a means by which the suffering subject imaginatively created an artifact that could relieve a facet of his/her pain. Like the chair that relieves the body’s pain, artifacts were imagined that moved out and beyond the confines of incarceration. At the limits of the ordinary, extraordinary objects were imagined in order to help the subject make real the very items s/he lacked. The mental reasoning, the productive work of taking scant materials and turning them into imaginative pieces of art was a way by which the prisoner both created and expressed his/her individual agency. These items, preserved today, are therefore an important material legacy of resistance—as will be explored in chapter three, such items in the space of the museum today are more than mere art projects, they are the witnesses to both terror and survival. They are the extraordinary items made on the limit of

humanity, the work of the hands of those who created them as an escape from their pain, as a means for their very survival.

Fugas Materiales: Craftwork as Escape

As was argued in chapter one, during the dictatorships, the totalitarian attempt at complete destruction of deemed “subversive” subjects found its limit in the changed relationship of that subject to his/her material world. As Pilar Calveiro writes in her study of the concentration camps in Argentina, the:

Intento de totalización no es más que una de las pretensiones del poder. ‘Siempre hay una hoja que se escapa y vuela bajo el sol.’ *Las líneas de fuga*, los hoyos negros del poder son innumerables, en toda sociedad y circunstancia, aun en los totalitarismos más uniformemente establecidos. (Calveiro 24)

For Calveiro, to study the dictatorships, one must refer not only to the “índole específica de cada poder” (25), to not only “su núcleo duro, a lo que el mismo acepta como constitutivo de sí” (25), but also to “lo que excluye y a lo que se le escapa, a aquello que se fuga de su complejo sistema, a la vez central y fragmentario” (25). Departing from this perspective, Calveiro bases her analysis on the testimony of persons all of whom “*fugaron* en más de un sentido” (31, emphasis in the original). This idea of escape, conceptualized as possessing multiple forms, means that escape from the concentration camps is conceived not necessarily in terms of a physical escape from detention, but also, as in the cases shown above, in a momentary psychological escape from the harsh reality of the conditions of detention. While the narratives analyzed in the previous chapter

demonstrate the prisoner's use of the material world as an ally in his/her struggle for survival, it is in an exploration of two separate, but very much related phenomenon that one observes the direct connection between the made object and the subject's self-construction of an independent agency within the confining space of detention: *manualidades* (such as Pedro's box) in the Uruguayan context and *artesanías carcelarias* in the Chilean context. In this chapter, I will consider how the new relationship to the material world was utilized by the detained person as a way of escaping the concentration camp, as a way of resisting from within the space of detention and argue that *artesanías carcelarias* and *manualidades* were a very particular type of imaginative *fuga*, a resistance carried out by the prisoner that ran counter to the logic/goals of the political prison.

The Object's Past: Turning to the Material for Solidarity and Survival

Marcelo Estefanell recounts that upon arriving to Penal de Libertad a fellow prisoner shared with him the "key" for understanding and producing the morse code designed by the male prisoners to communicate with each other unbeknownst to the prison guards. Estefanell practices on his own and then sets to attempting to communicate with a neighboring inmate:

Mi vecino me contestó rápidamente: 'Arriba,' y luego me propuso jugar al ajedrez . . . Le contesté afirmativamente y, con un lacónico 'Esperá'—en nuestro mores— le pedí que aguardara mientras me fabricaba el tablero y las piezas: en media hoja de cuaderno dibujé la cuadrícula del tablero (8 por 8), rayé los cuadros que debían

ser negros con birrome y de un cilindro de cartón de papel higiénico corté las piezas burdamente. A la media hora—tack, tick-tick-tick—arranqué con la blancas: Peón 4 Rey. (Estefanell 17)

The truly revelatory statement accompanying this flurry of creative resistance is this: “Cuando me respondió mi vecino—tack, tick-tick-tick—pensé que si la cana era un campeonato, ya teníamos ganado el primer partido” (Estefanell 18). As was explored in the first chapter of my project, the prisoner turns to and relies on the material as an ally in resistance. The morse code tapping would not facilitate the communication that leads Estefanell to this first victory over detention were it not for the properties that permit it to make sound when tapped. It is the confluence of human hand and solid material that produces the sound. While this example is perhaps more recognizable than others, prisoners turned to the material for various possibilities of resistance, to imaginatively escape in multiple ways.

Another example of this turn to the material for solidarity is a deck of cards now sold at the MUME, reproductions of the originals made by an imprisoned man named Pardal in 1972: “Entre septiembre de 1972 y abril de 1973, en la soledad de uno de aquellos minúsculos calabozos del FUSNA y con un tiempo indeterminado por delante, se me dio por pedir cartulina y algunos marcadores de colores y empezar a diseñar un mazo de naipes con figuras que simbolizaran la lucha y las costumbres de nuestro pueblo (la estrella de 5 puntas, la lanza tacuara, el mate y la guitarra).”²⁴ Pardal explains that these cards “escaparon de los barrotes para llegar a mis familiares, como uno más de los

²⁴ This and the following citation come from the explanation that accompanies the card reproductions sold at the MUME.

tantos mensajes simbólicos que los presos políticos enviamos al mundo en los años de la dictadura.” Here, the material cards stand in as an extension of the voice. They travel out of prison in lieu of the prisoner who cannot, thereby acting as a prosthesis for that which the prisoner lacks. In a study in which they conducted interviews with a number of former political prisoners, a group of students from the Universidad de la República’s Facultad de Psicología in Montevideo, Uruguay reported:

Cuando la gente está incomunicada necesita hacerle llegar un mensaje, hablar; sabe que hay otros seres humanos alrededor suyo y sin embargo ellos no te dejan interactuar. El ser humano busca siempre la forma de comunicarse, somos seres sociales . . .”; “Uno de los elementos represivos más importantes fue la incomunicación y el aislamiento, entonces nació como una forma de resistencia a esa herramienta represiva . . . (Castillo et. al 14)²⁵

Although the article published by Castillo et. al primarily explores the birth of the sign language invented by the female prisoners in Punta de Rieles, the authors also identify the communicative value held by the “regalitos en el baño del calabozo” (14) and one of the interviewed former prisoners relates that “. . . a través del bordado de ropa, cuando había alguna compañera en el calabozo y le mandábamos desde el sector ropa para cambiarse, le bordábamos alguna palabrita, un número, algo para darle ánimos o datos de

²⁵ The authors of this article were students of the Universidad de la República’s Facultad de Psicología in Montevideo, Uruguay. Their investigation is based on interviews they conducted with a group of female former political prisoners: Susana Carli, Adriana Castera, Cristina Fynn, Paula Laborde, Nybia López, and María de los Ángeles Michelena. The citations included from their interviews do not carry individual names.

la realidad” (15). The material offered an important means for communicating solidarity in the context of the prison. This importance is echoed by Stela Reyes, who recalls:

Suponerte que estabas en el calabozo y te daba ropa para cambiarte y en la ropa, adentro, en la costura en el bordito un barquito, apenas simulaba un barquito, era como un “vamos arriba.” Mis compañeras de mi celda como me tenían que mandar ropa . . . y bueno . . . en esto de mi . . . vos cuando llegaba la ropa lo buscaba porque en algún lado algo había, viste? Aunque fueran puntitos . . . o sea, algo había. O sea . . . que . . . no, las manualidades significaban mucho. (Personal Interview)

Material creation stood in where the body faltered, where the prisoner was deprived of communication, of voice, of the ability to extend a kind word to a friend, needle and thread stepped in to create an imagined extension of that which was lacking. Solidarity amongst prisoners was constructed via the exchange of created material items, but the material also was a means by which the subject could affirm his/her own existence to his/herself. Stela Reyes describes how in solitary confinement she would turn to the only material object she was allowed, her clothing, in search of a stray string out of which to fashion a small doll. She tells me that she would make a stick figure doll out of the string on the floor and show it to the prisoner across the hall, by placing it in the small crack underneath the door of the *calabozo*, as if to say “look, look what I made.” Stela describes how in absence of the ability to communicate by voice the doll permitted the female prisoners to share a piece of themselves, an accomplishment all their own, with one another. In lieu of the voice, the made object stands in and communicates

encouragement and survival. Regarding such survival strategies and the guards' reactions to them, Raquel Barratta remarks: "¿Cómo les fastidiaba la unión entre nosotras! '¿Por qué se regalan?' Era pregunta corriente en los frecuentes interrogatorios que para amedrentarnos nos hacían" (41). Such acts constituted a means by which the incarcerated subject expressed him/herself independently, the creative decisions of making such items were ways of overcoming not only physical, but also psychological torture.

In Uruguay, Joaquín, a former political prisoner, tells me that as a part of this psychological torture the prison guards would force the prisoners to do work of a fundamentally useless nature. They would force the prisoners to move a pile of dirt around the prison yard, from one place to another as a way of torturing them. Whereas useless work was utilized as a form of psychological torture, productive work was used as a form of resistance—both to keep one's mind occupied in an attempt at mental escape and as a means of providing for a family outside of the confines of the prison or concentration camp. In terms of the former, Roberto Herrera relates:

Nosotros teníamos el taller de dibujo, proyectos y eso. Por ejemplo, diseñábamos muebles, sillas, equipamiento para los talleres nuestros. Andábamos en eso y siempre estábamos en contacto con oficiales. Eso nos permitía movernos, hacer cosas. Y, bueno, había cierta condescendencia en el trato. (Pi 19)

In Chile, the creation of similar workshops (to produce *bolsos*, *cinturones*, *ponchos*, *repujados de cobre* and more) served to facilitate a schedule by which the prisoners could organize and break up the monotony of the day, providing a temporary mental escape from the reality of the camp. The Fundación Solidaridad produced a text that documented

some of the *artesanias carcelarias* called *Dignidad hecha a mano: 30 años*, and explains the origin of the craftwork in Chile:

Los abogados y las asistentes sociales se esforzaban por dar una atención integral al prisionero y a su familia, expresada en todo cuanto se podía intentar en aquellos días: defensa jurídica, denuncia de su situación, atención médica y psicológica, apoyo a sus organizaciones. Pero los presos y detenidos pedían algo más: ‘Ayúdenos a poder trabajar, el tiempo parece interminable, queremos hacer algo con nuestras manos.’ ¡Trabajo, eso era lo que pedían los encarcelados! Había que responder, aunque la tarea nos parecía casi imposible de realizar. ¿Qué se podía producir en una cárcel? ¿Qué herramientas sería posible ingresar a un campo de concentración? ¿Cómo hacer llegar los materiales? ¿Permitirían las autoridades organizar y desarrollar una actividad laboral al interior de estos recintos?’ (9)

José Danor Moya Paiva tells me that the *artesanias carcelarias* became “una cosa común” (Personal Interview), that it was a way by which to break up the day in the concentration camp—one got up in the morning, had breakfast, and then went to work. Prisoners were often organized into *talleres* with small groups working to produce certain items. Yet, these same workshops were also a very important means of personal survival. The *artesanias* and *manualidades* permitted communication with family and allowed the prisoner (oftentimes the male head of household) the means by which to provide for the “sobrevivencia de la familia” (José Danor Moya Paiva, Personal Interview). Work was an escape—one created in accordance with his/her own mind, made decisions about design,

rationalized how to achieve the desired product given what scant resources were available, and problem-solved along the way.

In the prologue to his study *Trincheras de papel: Dictadura y literatura carcelaria en Uruguay*, Alfredo Alzugarat makes the case for the importance of the study of the creative resistance undertaken by the political prisoners during the Uruguayan dictatorship: “Si las cárceles fueron uno de los mayores emblemas de la peor época de este país, también es posible afirmar que en ellas la dignidad humana libró una dura batalla que, entre sus múltiples consecuencias, dejó obras artísticas y literarias de inapreciable valor” (5). While Alzugarat’s project argues for the study of literary pieces written in prison, the same argument can be made about the importance of the further examination of these small pieces of craftwork.

Marcelo Estefanell writes that in the Uruguayan prison Penal de Libertad one of the officers told him upon his arrival that “ésta será una cárcel modelo de la cual no se van a poder fugar nunca” (11). Yet, while the legacy of incarceration left by the dictatorship

Se planteó la destrucción masiva, incitando a la locura o empujando al suicidio, se compartimentó, se incomunicó, se determinó al milímetro la vida de miles a través de absurdos reglamentos. Sin quererlo ni sospecharlo el verdugo, fuera de los cálculos de su barbarie, se generaron a manera de réplica condiciones para la reflexión, para el intercambio humano y para la creación, tanto literaria como artística en general. (Alzugarat 204).

Creative ingenuity, especially through *artesanias carcelarias* and *manualidades* was a means by which the prisoner escaped from the prison/camp that sought to destroy his/her humanity.

In José's experience the men in the *talleres* worked in teams, producing craftwork that went on to be sold by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad in Holland, France, and even the United States.²⁶ According to José, the Vicaría sent the prisoners quotas that they met, all the while submitting their work to a type of "control de calidad" (Personal Interview). Family members brought the prisoners the materials and the Vicaría de la Solidaridad reimbursed them the cost. But this was more than an assembly line of workers who happened to be located in a concentration camp in Chile. José recalls that all of the works, destined to be sold in foreign countries, "llevaban un mensaje hacía afuera" (Personal Interview). Each carried the name "Chile" along with the year in which it was produced and a message of resistance carried within a symbol, whether it be a "puño," a "paloma," or any other image.²⁷ An article written upon the announcement of the impending closure of the Fundación Solidaridad explains the history of the arrangement between the prisoners and the Vicaría:

²⁶ A similar use of material creation as a means of providing for family outside of the Argentine detention center is documented in the film *El Buen Pastor: Una fuga de mujeres*. In the documentary, a former prisoner explains: "Hagamos actividades. Gimnasia, estudio, y otras actividades del trabajo también. Así que nos organizamos más con tejidos, costura . . . sobre todo tejido, verdad. Mucho crochet y las agujas. Bueno, así hicimos cosas hermosas y todo se vendía afuera. Todo se vendía" (*El Buen Pastor: Una fuga de mujeres*).

²⁷ The Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago has an extensive collection of these types of items. They carry symbols that range from these types of symbols to more overt denunciations of violence, such as an outline of Chile's form as a country with barbed wire surrounding it.

La historia de esta heredera de la Vicaría de la Solidaridad—la cual muchos hemos vuelto a recordar por la transmisión de la serie Los Archivos del Cardenal—se remonta a 1975, cuando el equipo del Comité de Cooperación para la Paz recibió peticiones de trabajo de parte de los presos políticos. Sin saber muy bien, en un principio, cómo ayudar a los encarcelados, pronto fueron los mismos familiares los que indicaron cómo hacerlo. (Jiménez np)

The exhibit that presents the Artesanías Carcelarias in the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile contextualizes the objects, affirming their ability to transgress the confines the prisoner could not cross in the following way:

El trabajo manual en los centros de reclusión era una forma de supervivencia física y emocional. Artesanías carcelarias que traspasaban la frontera del encierro convertidas en palomas, tallados en madera, ‘soporopos’ para niños, medallas, anillos y cruces para las madres, las esposas, y las novias. Objetos cargados de significado que servían para conectarse con un ser querido en la lejanía o para generar recursos para mandar a la familia que se había quedado en el desamparo al perder un padre o una madre. También la manera de proveerse de lo imprescindible para vivir en la cárcel o el campo de prisioneros. En medio de la precariedad y la falta de herramientas para trabajar, una piedra era un martillo, los restos de la comida se convertían en palomas; las calcetines viejos, en muñequitas; las migas de pan, en collares que luego se pintaban. (Museo de memoria y derechos humanos, Chile)

The *artesanias carcelarias* and the *manualidades* ultimately produced a legacy of handcrafted objects with very specific and powerful prior contexts. The object, as a forensic material proof of the productive work of hands meant to be silenced, deterred from creating, are the exterior and lasting manifestation of the interior imaginative sentience of their makers. These objects, these ways of “supervivencia física y emocional” truly crossed not only “la frontera del encierro,” but the boundary of time and the limits of representation. Where the voice falters, is dismissed or denied, or even is no longer alive to speak, these objects make themselves undeniably present.

The Artifact—Imagined Agency in Material Form

In the second half of *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Scarry explores the intricacies of the project of “making” the world (or, “remaking,” in the case of the tortured body). Scarry places on opposite ends of a spectrum the experience of pain as a state that “unmakes” the world and the experience of creating/imagining that makes the world. For Scarry, “while pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects” (162). The objectlessness of pain when experienced by the subject is a futility that animates him/her to move to imagining as a means by which to objectify pain, to render it within language (or, here, within a made material):

“this objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it [pain] from being rendered in language: objectless, it cannot easily be objectified in any form, material or verbal. But it is also its objectlessness that

may give rise to imagining by first occasioning the process that eventually brings forth the dense sea of artifacts and symbols that we make and move about in” (162).

While the person in pain (here, the victim of torture) may find it impossible to accurately represent that pain to another being through a material object (or even language), s/he simultaneously experiences the parallel process of turning to imagination in order to self-soothe the pain caused by his/her circumstances and to attempt to communicate that pain by creating symbols and artifacts. Scarry is quick to point out that imagination is the “ground of last resort” (166) only turned to in a crisis of representation, but also underlines that it is the terrain in which objects can be accessed should the subject be deprived of them in his/her reality. Scarry explains this process using the example of hunger:

Should it happen that the world fails to provide an object, the imagination is there, almost on an emergency stand-by basis, as a last resource for the generation of objects. Missing, they will be made-up; and though they may sometimes be inferior to naturally occurring objects, they will always be superior to naturally occurring objectlessness. If no food is present, imagining grain or berries will, at least temporarily, allow the hunger to be experienced as potentially positive rather than as wholly aversive, and the imagined image may remind the person to walk over the next hill to find real wheat and berries. (166–167)²⁸

²⁸ Perhaps serving as evidence to support Scarry’s analysis, in the Chilean concentration camp *Tres Álamos* the women used cut-out pictures of food to simulate/imagine that they were “tomando onces,” eating the traditional late-evening Chilean meal. Where the

In the case of the detainee, there are many lacks to be made up for, but perhaps the most primary lack that s/he experiences is the loss of control over his/her world. The detained subject cannot decide for him/herself, cannot provide for him/herself, and is completely at the mercy of his/her captors. In this space, just as Pedro and Roberto comment above, the detainee—predisposed to a new state of noticing the potential of things—turns to that which s/he has at his/her disposal in order to exact an impact on the exterior world. In Chile, this turn was a new envisioning of the potentiality of bones from soup, of breadcrumbs, of pieces of wood from the walls—all materials used to create *artesanias carcelarias*. In Uruguay, a parallel use of the found objects of the detainee’s world resulted in the creation of the *manualidades*. In both instances, these small pieces of prison craftwork are a specific manifestation of the artifact, a making-material of the inner state of the imagination. But, they are also a making-real, making-material of the internal suffering of the prisoner, of the suffering of being in prison, of the lack of individual agency.

The prison craftwork in Chile and Uruguay helped detained persons overcome the passivity of the painful circumstances of detention, incarceration, and torture, in the way in which they facilitated an individual expression in an environment designed to eliminate this type of autonomous subjectivity. Regarding her time in Tres Álamos, in Chile, Nubia Becker states, “nunca en mi vida vi tanta creatividad, ni tanta imaginación

women did not have real, material access to food, they relied on a different type of material to imagine that they were eating. Similarly, in the documentary film *La Venda*, one of the former detainees recalls: “Ya me acuerdo de cuando nos celebramos los cumpleaños, pescábamos la *Variedad* que era la única revista que podíamos leer y la parte ésa de las recetas y nos servíamos.... La revista nos servíamos para cumpleaños” (La Venda).

para divertirse, para hacer teatro, y para disfrazarse, como entre las prisioneras en la dictadura” (95). Becker’s observation that she has never seen as much imagination and creativity as in the concentration camp is perhaps the best evidence of Scarry’s assertion that imagination is a limit point, a “ground of last resort” (166):

Beyond the expansive ground of ordinary, naturally occurring objects is the narrow extra ground of imagined objects, and beyond this ground, there is no other. Imagining is, in effect, the ground of last resort. (166)

By “ground of last resort” Scarry means that the imagination provides what the being cannot access. She writes “imagining provides an *extra and extraordinary* ground of objects beyond the naturally occurring ground: it actively ‘intends,’ ‘authors,’ or ‘sponsors’ objects when they are not *passively* available as an already existing ‘given’” (167, my emphasis). While these objects were often created as a means to “ocupar el tiempo,” they also served as a way of overcoming abject circumstances and of making decisions entirely of one’s own volition:

Pero, también al final, esto era, una superación de uno mismo. No era solamente que me quedara lindo para que me dijeran una ‘que lindo’ los familiares. Era para un . . . en mi caso por ejemplo . . . yo no quiero generalizar porque digo que hay casos diferentes. Hay gente que lo hacía para vender hasta otros que lo hacían por otras maneras [Una superación de qué?] Como desafíos que uno se pone— desafíos técnicos, de paciencia, de disciplina. Mmmm . . . por ejemplo hice un barco. . . (Pedro Giudice, Personal Interview)

Pedro explains to me when I ask him to clarify what the manualidades were permitting him to overcome that creating these items, often from what in the everyday world would seem to be nothing, was a challenge (un desafío) —it occupied one’s mind to solve the problem of the lack of access to adequate materials, it required active mental activity. For example, pictured below [Figure 2] is a collection of flowers Stela Reyes made during her detention. The flowers are fashioned out of bread crumbs, then painted with the dyes that seeped out of new clothing sent to the prisoners by their families and set out in water to extract the dye that would be used to paint the bread crumb sculptures. But the artifact, aside from evidencing the profoundly imaginative ingenuity of its artist, also acts as an imagined artifact. At the point where the subject has no agency, has lost his/her dignity, has been detained in the “cárcel modelo” (Estefanell 11) from which there is to be no escape, the object stands in to fill a lack. For example, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile explains: “En el encierro, los días se hacían interminables y este tiempo luchando para darle forma a una piedra o un trozo de madera, para recuperar la dignidad que da el trabajo, los acercaba un poco a la libertad.”



Figure 2 Stela Reyes—Personal Collection.

Pedro shows me replicas of famous paintings he did with crayons during his incarceration in Uruguay and explains that they were very difficult to use to really render the details of the pieces effectively, but that he found innovative ways to use the blunt end of a crayon to make a fine dot or a thin line to complete the finishing touches on his *manualidades*. One specific crayon painting that Pedro shows me is of a young girl [Figure 3], a copy of a Matisse painting Pedro found in one of the books he was able to have in his cell, on loan from the prison library. The seated girl symbolized for Pedro the daughter (the second child) that he and his partner, Antonia, were planning to have prior to both of their detentions. The girl in the painting is Pedro and Antonia's future, the daughter that they will have (and, indeed, do have) after they are freed. Thus, the painting, at the same time an act of creation, an activity that requires creative thinking in order to successfully come to fruition due to scant resources, makes symbolically real the

most basic act of human creation: the birthing of an autonomous subject, a daughter. In this sense, the painting acts as an artifact that is made real through imagination when such an object is unobtainable given the circumstances of imprisonment. I read the painting as not only the imaginative birthing of Pedro and Antonia's child, but simultaneously as an imaginative making real of the possibility of a future; and the assuredness of having a future is precisely what the prisoner during this time period lacked.



Figure 3 Pedro Giudice and Antonia Yañez—Personal Collection.

Imagination, here, in the creation of *manualidades* is an act that permits the prisoner a type of (even if incomplete or inadequate) healing, a self care, but it was also a means by which to leave a testimonial mark, to choose to communicate an aspect of his/her sentience to the outside/future world. This type of elimination of the burden of pain (and, perhaps, the difficulty of testifying) is reflected in Scarry's premise:

“To be more precise, one can say that pain only becomes an intentional state once it is brought into relation with the objectifying power of the imagination: through that relation, pain will be transformed from a wholly passive and helpless occurrence into a self-modifying and, when most successful, self-eliminating one” (Scarry 164)

Like the chair that is an exterior object created to relieve the pain of the sitting individual, the prison craftwork in Chile and Uruguay were objects that relieved the pain of the individual in feeling helpless, without agency, without productive/creative power. The *manualidades* are objects that signify that which language cannot transparently render—the internal and painful experience of specific people. Today, in the Museum of Memory in Uruguay (the MUME), the display of the *manualidades* stands out, then, as a visual testimony that puts on display the external manifestation of the inner sentient state of the prisoner [Figure 4].



Figure 4 Pendants on display at the MUME

Communing with these objects of created sentience, then, is a communing with the inner voice of the prisoner, bypassing written language and opting for a material communication. These objects, though they cannot speak, are *suspect*; they were made by the hands of s/he who suffered. Pedro's, Roberto's, Nubia's, Marcelo's, and Stela's experiences are all very individual in nature, yet they remain representative of many lived experiences in the space of the prisons and camps. They reflect the process of turning to the imagination as a suture, a means of accessing that which is denied as it is described by Scarry. Roberto refuses to succumb to the pain (both physical and psychic) inflicted on him by the prison. Instead, he turns to imagining, producing craftwork in the workshops, and in doing so he self-modifies that over which he previously had no control. He self-eliminates the helplessness of pain in the making-real of imagined objects, in the creation of 'limit' pieces,²⁹ of artifacts of resistance.

A catalogue from the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile explains that in Chile, creation was a way in which

La víctima construye las oportunidades para interactuar con el entorno y el medio social, recurriendo a primitivas formas de comunicación, creando espacios imaginarios y haciendo artefactos culturales con intención de comunicación en diferido (creación de dibujos y poemas). Las personas privadas de libertad construyen intencionadamente una cotidianidad y un espacio de pertenencia desde donde protegerse, resistir y superar la adversidad comunitariamente, con la

²⁹ By the term "limit" pieces, I am referring to Scarry's assertion that imagining takes place as a last resort, when objects and language are not available to properly articulate experience, beyond the ordinary in the realm of the "extraordinary."

promoción de un comportamiento ético coherente y la optimización de los recursos propios. (*Interfaz* n. pag.)

The creation of a cohesive narrative relating the day-to-day struggle of survival in the prisons and the camps was not a possibility for most detainees. Instead, the objects that were created both in secret and in the workshops in both countries, were imbued with hidden information meant to document truths and relay information from the interior space of detention to the exterior, both to families within the country and, it was hoped, to foreign populations that could perhaps advocate on behalf of the prisoners. Deferred communication (*comunicación en diferido*) occurred primarily through symbolism, but also through the documentary nature of the object, its durability through time, its ability to transgress the limits through which the prisoner was not permitted to pass. Stela Reyes explains the effort that went into the creation of these powerful symbols:

Hubo épocas en que tuvimos telares. Hubo épocas en las cuales no . . . sacaron los telares, en que no tuvimos telares. Pero yo te voy a mostrar que aun sin telar . . . esta manta que yo tengo fue hecha sin telar. Es una manta que tiene nubes y, para nosotros, la luna. (Personal Interview)



Figure 5 Personal Collection, Stela Reyes.

When I asked Stela about the consistency of this type of symbolism (“Este tipo de simbolismo siempre había en el objeto?”), she responded:

Siempre. Sí. O sea . . . bueno, nos inspiraba la luna, sí la luna era muy importante porque, bueno, nosotros no la veíamos. Nosotros en el Penal de Mujeres teníamos las ventanas tapiadas . . . con una acrílico verde que no veía para afuera. Este . . . Pero, bueno . . . la luna como que la recordábamos siempre . . . como hermosa, digamos . . . (Personal Interview)

Such a meaning goes beyond an expressive symbolism; the object is given a documentary function. The significance of the image is present in the object, yet absent from the access of the ordinary viewer. The information is engrained [Figure 5] (here, literally *woven*) in the object itself, yet the whole story remains inaccessible without the voice of the person. The object’s meaning is at once present and absent. Stela goes on to explain the conditions in which this blanket was made:

Te quería explicar esta manta. Nosotros no teníamos telar, pero esta manta fue hecha igual, si vos la mirás, ésta es hecha en un telar. Nosotros lo que hacíamos era . . . y teníamos prohibido no hacerlo. Por eso nos sacaron los telares. Colgábamos la lana de la cucheta de arriba a la cucheta de abajo tirantes así, ¿no? Y era como si estuviéramos en un telar, ¿no? Y lo tejíamos pasando con una aguja no más. Este . . . llevaba . . . yo qué sé . . . esta manta creo que años, no sé. Y la teníamos que esconder. O sea, cuando venían, se abrían las rejas y nosotros poníamos debajo del colchón de la cucheta de arriba. Tratábamos rápidamente así, así, así, así, y la metíamos.

In another example, Stela tells me about an image that directly evoked solidarity amongst the prisoners:

Muchas cosas tenían simbolismo. Por ejemplo, esto [Figure 6] es del Penal de Libertad. Pero, un árbol tenía mucha significación porque tiene las raíces bien remarcadas, ¿no? Como las raíces que nos unían a nosotros, ¿no? Las raíces sí, el follaje, ¿no? Como que . . . sí tenía para nosotros. No podíamos hacer muchas cosas porque cualquier cosa la podían interpretar dando una interpretación . . . viste . . . que . . . que fuera . . . que la censuraran. Pero, bueno, esto no. Lo entendían como un árbol, punto. Esto . . . ellos [los hombres del Penal de Libertad] tenían para repujar a hacer estas cosas. (Stela Reyes, Personal Interview)

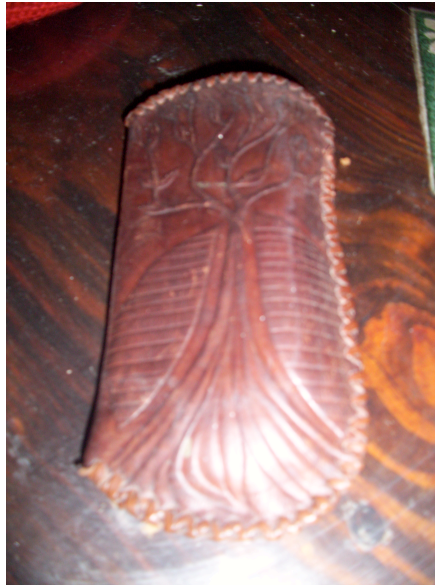


Figure 6 Personal Collection, Stela Reyes.

The turn to the material world, to the use of found objects to create new, imaginative pieces of craftwork is, I argue, a consequence of the new valorization of the object produced by the very process of unmaking the world explored in the first chapter of my project. The subject who experiences torture lives a newly made reality in which s/he cannot but notice the objects that surround him/her. The noticing of things produced by the limit experience of the camps consequently also creates a being in the world that denies presence-at-hand and reorders the material world with a constant state of readiness-at-hand.

Anything therefore which puts us in touch with our own powers of creation is itself a contribution to the ongoing aspiration for justice
(Scarry “Beauty and Social Justice”)

Soporopo: Transgenerational Memory of Resistance

One particular type of artesania carcelaria en the Chilean context deserves special mention in this analysis—the *soporopos*. My research on the *soporopos* turned up a

couple of different versions recounting the story of their creation. A document at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile—an article published in the Cuban newspaper the *Granma*—explains:

Pequeño, sencillo, con mucho pelambre y cara tristona, así es Soporopo. La sopa de porotos muy del pueblo de Chile, dio nombre a este muñeco confeccionado por mujeres encarceladas por la Junta fascista en Chile. Más que algo para jugar, es un tesoro de amor y un mensaje político valioso: ‘Nuestro Soporopo te recordara que nuestros ideales sobreviven y que nosotras a pesar de lo que nos sucede momentáneamente, seguimos creyendo en ellos,’ dice la carta que junto al muñeco dirigió la madre presa por sus justas ideas, a su hija. (Pelaez)

Another *testimonio* explains a different origin of the small dolls:

En Puchuncaví, en la Navidad de 1974, nació Soporopo. Sus padres: el Dolor y la Esperanza. Este muñeco pobrísimo, hecho con ropas viejas, restos de lanas y pinturas, llevó amor a los hijos desamparados y ternura a los hogares que el mal había destruido. (Paulsen)

During my interview with Maria Alicia Salinas I asked her about the conflicting versions of the origins of the soporopo that I had encountered. She explained to me that for her the soporopo was first created in Tres Álamos by her friend Nieves Ayress who was a very creative and artistic woman. Maria Alicia describes the soporopos to me in the following terms [Figure 7]:

No tenían brazos, eran monos que tenían, era como una cabeza, una panza con estómago y después con dos patas y el pelo. Éstos se usaban para distintas cosas.

Se usaban para barretín, que sé yo. . . y también eran bien simbólicos. Porque los monos. . . las mujeres en la cárcel pública, en la cárcel, ellas hacían otra cosa. Entonces, estas cuestiones tienen que ver más con, con lo que era Tres Álamos. Y. . . entonces . . . Pero todas estas cosas se hacían casi de manera individual. Todas estas cuestiones. La hacían . . . las empezaban a hacer, les hacían para la familia, para los sobrinos, para los hijos, para lo, eh . . . estas cosas también podían . . . Pero estas son las primeras cosas porque después, nosotras ya empezamos a hacer todo más elaborado. (Maria Alicia Salinas, Personal Interview)

The *soporopos*, regardless of their true origin, today stand as emblematic of the type of resistance carried out by the prisoners in the Chilean concentration camps, especially that carried out by parents. Small dolls, the *soporopos* were often made as gifts for the children of inmates and were given to them on days in which they visited their parents in prison, or as special gifts for birthdays or on Christmas: “Te envío este pequeño regalo para tu cumpleaños. Se llama Soporopo, lo hemos inventado en la cárcel. Lo hacemos de restos de telas y rellenos de colchón, claro que día a día los colchones están más delgados” (Palaez). The *soporopo*, being invented in the space of incarceration are completely original to the space of the concentration camp. While the other *artesanias carcelarias* were an extension of already existing craft traditions, the *soporopo* were something else entirely. As the Cuban article explains, “¿Soporopo? Es otra cosa. ¡Tan chico y tan inmenso a la vez! Soporopo no está a la venta. Es símbolo de combatividad, de amor y de futuro claro: es esperanza en la victoria del pueblo chileno sobre el facismo” (Palaez). *Soporopos* were not made to be sold as other *artesanias* were, they

were made with a particular affective objective in mind: the soporopos were a way for parents, especially mothers, to continue being parents to their children from the space of the camp. They were future-oriented and looked toward the time of freedom that would follow detention. If we follow Scarry's logic of the artifact as a making real of the imagination in an effort to relieve pain, they were material items that acted as imagined artifacts of parenthood, relieving the suffering of not being allowed to be a parent to a small child, of being forced to miss out on mothering that child through certain periods of its life. The Chilean article reproduced a letter in which a parent explains to her child the significance of the little doll she has made:

Con este regalo te quiero mostrar todo mi amor y todo el amor y la esperanza que nos mantiene unidas a todas en estos difíciles días de prisión. Este no es el primer Soporopo que hago, pero sí el más bonito que he hecho hasta hora. Te quiero contar como lo inventamos: el otro día cuando recordábamos nuestra niñez, una de nosotras pensó—creo que fue Nena la que cortó el primer molde de papel—de una blusa de Juanita (la que nos hace clases de historia) lo cortamos y rellenamos con la paja del colchón. Lucia le hizo el pelo con la chascón, pero original. Yo tuve la idea de pintarle los ojos y la boca con el mismo lápiz que ahora te escribo.
(“Carta”)

This explanation reveals the true testament to solidarity held within the doll. Nena, Juanita, Lucia, all contributed to the creation of the Soporopo's existence. The doll was created with the love and hope that holds the women together in their survival of the conditions of the camp. The little doll does what the women are not permitted to do, it

communicates this caring to the child outside of the camp. Not only that, its materiality remains in the present as an ongoing presence from the past. The *soporopo* documents a specific sentiment, specific actions, from a specific time and place. It acts as an artifact of motherhood, of a very particular motherhood enacted in extreme circumstances.



**Figure 7 Photograph of two Soporopo,
Image from the collection of Maria Alicia Salinas.**

Today, *soporopo* continue to be made in Chile. The Taller de Manualidades: SOPOROPO is an art supply store that was created by the child of a former political prisoner, Marcela Andrades Alfaro, whose mother (Eva Alfaro Holbrook) sent her *soporopos* from Tres Álamos. The taller is located in La Florida, a neighborhood in Santiago and Marcela also has a blog called “Taller Soporopo” where she tells the story of the creation of the *soporopos* and a Facebook page dedicated to her mission of speaking the stories of the little dolls. Below [Figure 8], is the *soporopo* that Marcela’s mother sent to her, made in 1975 in *Tres Álamos*.



**Figure 8 Soporopo made in Tres Álamos during the dictatorship
Reproduced with permission from Marcela Andrades Alfaro**

Marcela's soporopos have appeared at expositions at the Corporación Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi and have been sent abroad to foreign reporters, tracing the same steps as some of the original soporopos, supposedly stuffed using fabric on which were written names and testimonies and used as *barretines* to carry messages abroad.



**Figure 9, Soporopos made by Marcela Andrades Alfaro
Photograph reproduced with permission from Marcela Andrades Alfaro**

Marcela makes Soporopo now [Figure 9] in honor of her mother who did the same activity in the past from the space of the concentration camp. Here, the daughter is not only getting to know her mother through the object, but is recreating the activity that produced the artifact in an attempt to continue on the material legacy of the past. Similarly, María Alica told me she is recreating (today) some of the artesanías that she made along with other women in *Tres Álamos* over 30 years ago. Marcela's soporopos are traveling the world. She makes them as gifts for friends—“regalos con sentido”—and has sent them to reporters who inquire about her taller de manualidades. Recently, with the recuperation of the site of the former *Tres* and *Cuatro Álamos*, Marcela proudly boasted on her Facebook page that “mis soporopitos vuelven a su lugar de origen.”

The soporopos made today are a different type of artifact than those that were made from the space of detention, yet they perhaps follow the same logic that Scarry describes. Now, instead of an imaginative prosthesis relieving the pain of a lack of agency and control, the soporopo is an artifact of memory, standing in to fill a transgenerational gap. Below, the soporopos are pictured telling their stories and protesting the disappearances that took place during the Chilean dictatorship. Marcela's soporopos are ambassadors of memory, continuing on the legacy of memory activism in the present [Figures 10 and 11].



Figures 10 and 11 Soporopos created by Marcela, with the traditional *pancartas* used to denounce disappearances in Chile, to ask ¿Dónde están? Photographs reproduced with permission from Marcela Andrades Alfaro

Conclusion: Object Witnesses?

If, as Idelber Avelar states, “maintaining experience—maintaining it as material that can be narrated, that is to say maintaining it as such—is the very condition of survival, its constitutive moment” (“Five Theses” 257), then prison craftwork and its subsequent preservation by survivors, family members, and museums, can be read as the ultimate testament of survival, as an acting out of the maintaining of a material that can be narrated. While Avelar here most likely meant “material” not in terms of matter, but in terms of information, a literal reading of “material” in this context still rings true. For her part, Scarry sustains that

Artifice is more modest and fragmentary than imagining, its objects have the immense advantage over imagined objects of being real, sharable; and because the objects are sharable, in the end artifice has a scale as large as that in imagining because its outcome is for the first time collective. (Scarry 171)

The phenomenon of *manualidades* in Uruguayan political prisons and *artesanias carcelarias* in Chilean concentration camps are small monuments to important acts of

resistance: to the making real of pain via imagining and work. Once created, each object is shareable, pointing to an important collective memory possibility. For, if the object was envisioned and made real in order to protect the prisoner from the pain s/he was suffering, then such material objects have important stories to tell. Throughout this chapter I have cited various interviews, important conversations through which I was able to find information about the *artesanias carcelarias* and the *manualidades* that to this point has gone largely undocumented. In my conversations with Maria Alicia, Pedro, and Stela, each told me their stories through a narration of the significance of the objects they, their friends, and their significant others made while in detention and prison. But, what happens when the person is not present to narrate the object's past? In the next chapter I will examine more closely if and how the object itself might give testimony, asking whether the object itself can be a witness.

Chapter Three: After Detention or Disappearance—Spectral Testimony: Haunted Objects in the Museum of Memory

Contrariamente a la permanencia y la riqueza de la piedra o el metal precioso de otros calendarios que buscaron establecerse en su función y su belleza (baste pensar en el azteca o el maya), éste se embellece de su propia precariedad, de la fragilidad de sus pequeños papelitos, de las huellas de los trazos, de la vulnerabilidad de su existencia, de su trayectoria, de la marca personal y por encima de todo de su condición de verdad.
(Ana Tiscornia, “Una memoria, un documento histórico, una obra” 73)

“...todas las marcas, objetos y signos encontrados y documentados y los que siguen apareciendo por estas horas, hablan. Nos cuentan particularidades sobre las cuales hay que trabajar, recomponiendo tiempo y lugar, situando esos hallazgos con la mayor precisión posible, para poder acercarnos a lo que esas señales quieren decirnos”
(Eduardo Tavani “Las marcas de la memoria” 9)

August of 2013 marked the release of the book and reproductions of Jorge Tiscornia’s *almanaque*, a series of small material papers upon which he recorded the day-to-day happenings of his time incarcerated as a political prisoner in Uruguay. These reproductions of the actual cards that helped Tiscornia track the ten years of his detention in Uruguay are now sold accompanied by a book that explains their significance. In an article published previous to the book, Tiscornia explains that his first *almanaque* was the wall of his *calabozo* in Punta de Rieles:

Traté de mirar hacia afuera sin éxito esta vez, pero me topé con un clavo y una Gillette, ambos herrumbrados [. . .] Al clavo doblado y herrumbrado lo tomé en mi mano todavía húmeda. Me conectó con la profesión, con mis gustos y hasta con aquello de no haber sido elegido, o haberse doblado en el trayecto. Lo rescataría de su triste destino, a mí sí me serviría. Con él rayaría el muro, sería mi lápiz de carpintero. (“Los almanaques” 12)

This first almanaque, carved into the wall of his cell with a discarded nail, remains in the past of Punta de Rieles. Tiscornia's second almanaque, this time on a more conventional material—paper—was also lost during his transfer from Punta de Rieles to Penal de Libertad: “Este que hoy doy comienzo quedó, con todas mis otras cosas, en una pila de objetos, ropa y libros, en Punta de Rieles, el 17 de octubre de 1972” (Tiscornia “Los almanaques” 20). While it was the carvings on the wall, and later the small folded papers that reminded Tiscornia of the passing of time during his incarceration, in the context of the present, from which he is writing—reflecting on the importance of those items for him during the past—it is a photograph of a very specific object that provokes Tiscornia's memory: “Levanto la vista del teclado y miro una foto, sacada casi treinta y cinco años después, de dos clavos herrumbrados, que cuelga aquí en mi casa” (Tiscornia “Los almanaques” 17) For Tiscornia, these nails themselves also serve as an almanaque today, a way of remembering the first almanaque, carved into the wall in the *Penal de Punta de Rieles*.

In light of the changed relationship to the object world experienced by the prisoner that I explored in chapter one, and the use of the artifact as an imagined extension of the self as I proposed in chapter two, I now shift temporalities to the period after violence—to the memory projects in the postdictatorship—that are taking up these material remainders of the past in order to create a memory politics that perpetuates and transmits the lessons learned and works in an exemplary manner³⁰ to testify to the past in

³⁰ Here, I employ “exemplary” following the work of Tzvetan Todorov, as a form of memory capable of effecting change, of serving to prevent a future repetition of the same

an effort to prevent future atrocities. In this chapter, I will turn to the objects that remain in the wake of violence and ask whether or not the object itself is capable of witnessing. While in Tiscornia's case we have the survivor present to us, able to testify, in the case of many of the victims of the dictatorships we cannot engage with them in a direct dialogue. The victim cannot explain to us the significance of the object, its creation, its meaning. The voices of the past cannot be heard, yet, even so, material traces of these past presences remain vividly present in the wake of disappearance. The doubt that remains attached to material objects, their integral function in not only the dictatorship's project of control, but in the resistance by the detained, changes the prior context of the object, imbuing it with not only its own past, but a phantasmal presence that remains residually attached to its materiality even after the disappearance of the person for whom it represents hope, resistance, rebuilt subjectivity, and even life.

The material object poses a unique possibility to memory scholarship. The importance given to objects from the past in spaces of memory asks us for a reconsideration of their interpretative power.³¹ The attempt to narrate the realities of genocide is an act that has received much critical attention, especially in relation to the Jewish Holocaust and the recent period of violence in Southern Cone Latin America. In terms of the former, Dori Laub argues that "what precisely made a Holocaust out of the

past through the fostering of a critical reflection on the legacy and meaning of the traumatic past event.

³¹ The second opening quote of this chapter comes from the executive director of the Instituto Espacio Para la Memoria in Argentina. His words appear in the prologue of one of the latest publications by the institute, a book titled *Las marcas de la memoria* which documents all of the physical evidence, especially objects, that has been recovered from the various spaces of memory that forms the institute's patrimony.

event is the unique way in which, during its historical occurrence, *the event produced no witnesses*” (80). In terms of Latin America, the same paradox motivates Idelber Avelar to argue that allegory constitutes the most adequate (and perhaps only) means for approximating a representation of the terrors of mass violence.³² Both of these analyses focus largely on the means by which to facilitate the subject’s testimonial capacity to speak. In the absence of a surviving *complete witness* (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*), in the silencing of the subject due to disappearance or death, can the material act as an “invaluable record—a testimonial object, a point of memory” as Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (“Testimonial Objects” 367) posit?

The role of the material has not been entirely ignored in critical considerations of the Latin American post-dictatorship period, nor has it been in the field of memory studies. However, though many have discussed the power of the memory space in transitional justice and in the healing of a traumatized society (see Nora; Huysen; Tandeciarz; Jelin; Young), only now are scholars beginning to contemplate the plain things (see Saona), the tough to find objects, the belongings of the past whose residues haunt the present. In this chapter, I will first re-examine classic scholarship on *testimonio* as a genre in an effort to highlight already existing examinations of the testifying voice’s productive ability to speak and be heard. Next, I will scrutinize what testimonial theory might gain from a dialogue with materiality and spectral theory, especially in regards to

³² Avelar observes: “Allegorization takes place when that which is most familiar reveals itself as (an)other, when the most customary is interpreted as a ruin, and the pile of past catastrophes hitherto concealed under that storm called “progress” at last begins to be unearthed. The most familiar cultural documents become allegorical once they are referred back to the barbarism that lies at their origin” (Avelar 233).

the use of objects in current memory projects in the Southern Cone. Lastly, I will argue that when we reconsider the everyday object—once present at the scene of torture or detention and presently occupying the role of witness in the space of the museum—and reevaluate this material in light of testimonial and spectral theory, it becomes clear that material objects speak a truth about the past, giving what I term “spectral testimony” in lieu of the voices of their disappeared owners—a type of testimony that continuously evokes the productive nature of simultaneous presence-and-absence and that promotes an ongoing questioning of the past in the temporality of the present.

***Testimonio* as Genre: The Difficulty and Crisis of Bearing Witness**

The roots of the genre of *testimonio* are largely recognized as Miguel Barnet’s *Biografía de un cimarrón*. Barnet’s testimonial production formed a part of the conversionary trend of post-1959 Cuban literature (González-Echevarría 111–12). Due to this praxis element, Barnet’s text notably aims, following González-Echevarría’s analysis, to be “both past and present, individual and collective” (118) and to “bypass literature” (118). The text acts as an appeal to a collective, using the individual life story of Esteban Montejo to reveal the collective past of a nation, thereby enveloping each individual not in a literary story, but in a present, political, and importantly *collective* reality. This points to another central element in the definition of *testimonio* as a genre: the text as an outward projection of the self in a public sphere, rather than an introspective analysis of the intimate workings of a singular psyche.³³ This outward directionality of the projection of

³³ Hugo Achugar uses this distinction to differentiate *testimonio* from autobiography in his essay “Historias paralelas/Ejemplares: La historia y la voz del otro.”

the self in testimonio further underlines the overlap of the text's production with the goal of constituting political awareness/change.

Later, in the Central American context, the creation of an objective truth seems to not necessarily have been the goal of the act of writing a testimonial text. Instead, such textual production sought to gain recognition for a (subaltern) side of the political story that had been repressed/oppresed and silenced. It is within this fight that Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú Tum's testimonio, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, emerged. Menchú's narrative has come to be one of the most widely recognized and criticized examples of testimonial literature. Emerging out of the indigenous struggle in Guatemala, specifically within the political fight of the Quiche native population against the government and the *ladinos*, Menchú's narrative was intended as a propaganda tool for the political movement of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), as evidenced by the text's initial creation with the backing of the EGP's representative Arturo Taracena.³⁴ The text emerged out of a series of taped interviews with Menchú, conducted by Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray in her apartment in France. Burgos-Debray later transcribed Menchú's words, editing the text for repetitions, dividing the manuscript into separate chapters and adding epigraphs at the start of each new section. This is the production process that caused so much controversy in the early critical focus on *testimonio*.

³⁴ "Taracena arranged for a meeting between Menchú Tum and Burgos-Debray, an technologist of Venezuelan origin, very well connected to publishing houses in France..." (Arias 6).

The critical reception of and debate regarding Menchú's narrative focuses on precisely this assertion: that it is *Menchú's* narrative. The transformation of Menchú's spoken words into Burgos-Debray's transcription, the re-ordering of Menchú's oral narrative into a textual narrative governed by chapter organization, the use of an individual woman's (native/subaltern) perspective as a collective political story reaching outside of an indigenous community and into an occidental academic/political context, after an initial celebration of such a courageous act of telling, gave way to critical scrutiny and fact-checking. What was the result of this collision of "First" and "Third" worlds? A frenzied debate ensued regarding the politics of truth (Did Menchú lie? Or, did Burgos-Debray misrepresent Menchú?), and the measures to which a narrative must be subjected in order to be considered a truthful representation, to be accepted as a "valid" form of history, an "objective" record of the past. One of the most recognized critics in studies of testimonio, John Beverley, in 1989, offered a working definition of *testimonio* as:

a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience. Testimonio may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview,

eyewitness report, life history, *novela-testimonio*, nonfiction novel, or “factographic” literature. (“The Margin” 25)

The definition Beverley offers, while resting largely on the voice and the text, also leaves room for the inclusion of future texts such as the material object or the artistic project, for instance the *manualidades* or the *artesanías carcelarias*. For, just as Beverley asserts a difference that exists between *testimonio*, life history, autobiography, and “factographic literature,” he also recognizes that *testimonio* is a not yet codified genre, therefore positing only a working definition and not a strict categorization, perhaps leaving us room to add an important material form of testimony to the genre. In 1991, George Yúdice added another formative definition to the field, proposing that

testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history (“*Testimonio and Postmodernism*” 44).

Yúdice, like Beverley, is quick to recognize the heterogeneity of testimonial writing, citing the diversity demonstrated by the sampling of texts considered in Jara and Vidal’s 1986 collection *Testimonio y literatura*. What Yúdice emphasizes in the equation, though, is the idea that *testimonio* is fundamentally an act (echoing René Jara’s early assertion that “el testimonio es una forma de la lucha” [1]).

This act, this element of the “lucha” of which testimonio forms a part, is evident in the “canonical,”³⁵ genre-delineating narratives that emerged out of the Central American and Cuban contexts. The revolutionary politics of these two geopolitical regions formed the basis for the emergence of the beginnings of this genre: “El testimonio guerrillero contemporáneo es una expresión del proceso revolucionario que se desarrolla en América Latina a partir de los años sesenta, de cuyo inicio la Revolución Cubana constituye ya un común punto de referencia” (Duchesne 85). The connection between the political specificities of the Central American region and testimonial production is also underlined by Ileana Rodríguez in *Liberalism at its Limits: Crime and Terror in the Latin American Cultural Text*:

testimonials do not merely reflect a given sociopolitical moment but are responses to, engagements with, and contestations of enduring issues. By contributing to the public sphere and constituting counterpublic spheres, they participate in the reconstitution and reformulation of democracy and democratic practices (3).

Rodríguez argues that testimonial texts are not only influenced by the struggles that form the background of their production, but are vital documents immersed in the revolutionary (and democratic) struggle. This marks them with a specific content that

³⁵ I use quotes around the term “canonical” here to delineate the precarious place occupied by testimonio in the field of literature. As John Beverley has recognized, testimonio emerged as a way of fight against the exclusionary hegemony of the bourgeoisie novel (see “The Margin at the Center”), yet, now, this previously transgressive genre risks becoming a part of the canon, an institutional legitimation whose debate organizes the collection of essays in Georg Gugelberger’s *The Real Thing*. Perhaps by pushing the boundaries of the genre once more, in including material legacies of resistance such as the *manualidades* and the *artesanías carcelarias*, we can maintain the power of the transgressive nature of testimonio.

reveals to the reader not only the current, prescient, political reality, but also how citizens (or abjected “non-citizens”) are navigating their places in society and working against hegemonic powers. So, where can we place objects within this scholarship? If testimonio is fundamentally an act, if it is a form of *lucha* born out of an urgency to narrate, if it is embedded in a given sociopolitical moment, if it responds to or contests enduring issues, why must the genre hinge on the written document? As was explored in chapter two, prison craftwork was a deliberate and organized act, it was a form of resisting from within the space of detention and was born out of an urgency for survival, it was embedded in the sociopolitical moment of detention (if we consider that the material used was often encountered in the space of detention itself, this embedded nature is quite literal), and it responded to and challenged the repression of the moment. If all of these not yet “codified” criteria have been met, why not accept these objects as a form of testimony? Javier Sanjinés has explored forms of performative testimony in the Bolivian context, specifically theatrics and dramaturgical actions that go “beyond testimonial discourse” (254). For Sanjinés the key element of testimony is that it is “an act of political participation” (254) that promotes a dialogue about the past. He argues that “without authentic dialogue, the efficacy of testimonial narratives seems to be left behind in the transitional moment of social change that marked the downfall of military authoritarianism” (264). In my consideration of the object in this chapter, rather than limiting the discussion to the way the material is often evoked as an element of forensic truth in the juridical context, I hope to show how the object can go beyond this capacity and offer up its past for an authentic dialogue (I argue, in the realm of the spectral) that is

capable of facilitating change via the creation of possibilities of political participation in the present.

The focus on testimonio by the lettered world has subjected it to analysis that reveals the ambiguities of its limits, often hinging on the question of its veracity and the threshold of its capacity to relate such an atrocious truth.³⁶ Yet, this very “porosidad” (Achugar “Historias” 63) of the restrictions on telling posed by the text, ultimately points to a differently productive nature of the subaltern testimony, which doesn’t necessarily depend on its measure of truth, but rather calls attention to pre-existing/pre-conditioned value notions attached to the definition of truth and truth-telling in the first place. Given the scrutiny the testimonial (and, most especially, the subaltern) voice has received, the material object’s lack of access to a voice that can narrate its past and its importance truthfully within written language merits further examination and perhaps must be rejected as an element that prohibits the object from being seen as *testimonio*.

The lack of a definition of the genre of testimonio, along with its undiscernability in terms of disciplinarity, has implications for the consideration of its aesthetics. In the introduction to his collection, *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, Georg Gugelberger considered the difficulty of categorizing Menchú’s testimonio,

³⁶ This assertion is underlined by the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation’s response to the controversy, which states: “Just when the commemorations of the five hundredth anniversary appeared to have left behind the arrogance and the superiority complexes of those who have, until now, written history since the Conquest, now we see how some people celebrate with unconcealed enthusiasm the appearance of these new chroniclers who attempt to return to their place—the same old place—those who had the audacity to add to the Official Story that which it was lacking: the vision of the conquered. And they do so protected by the presumably scientific rigor conferred upon them by the fact that they speak in the name of the North American academy” (103).

identifying its intersectional nature and locating it at the midpoint of a number of binaries (“oral v. literary; authored/authoritarian v. edited; literary v. anthropological; autobiography v. demography; masterpiece v. minority writing; postmodernism v. postcolonialism” [11]). For Gugelberger, this intersectional nature begs the question of not only where such a text belongs in the academy, but also challenges us to think about “what happens if we use such a text” (11). The preoccupation over the text’s use points not only to the ethical implications of its employment, but also to the difficulty of pinpointing the methodology by which to analyze the piece based on its aesthetic qualities. As Nora Strejilevich notes: “hay siempre una confrontación entre ver, decir y escribir, y la creación juega siempre con estos contrastes. Lo que surge es una labor artística en la que ética y estética coinciden” (20). Objects from the past sit neatly in this in-between framework and even add to the binaries under consideration a material nexus between past versus present; said versus unsaid, legible versus illegible, accessible versus inaccessible. Objects also productively ask us to think about what happens *if we use them*, and, in their unfixability, continually evoke a play between seeing, telling, and (if not writing) interpreting. In the case of objects created in resistance by prisoners in the detention centers, ethics and aesthetics coincide and ask to be considered.

The testimonial text has evolved over time from one based on an interview-style exchange between anthropologist/ethnographer³⁷ to a journalistic endeavor to re-create

³⁷ For an extended analysis of this type of testimonial creation see Margaret Randall’s text “Qué es y cómo se hace un testimonio.”

the voices of a deleted past, to a first person narrative of experienced trauma.³⁸ What remains constant throughout all of these forms is the way in which “el testimonio transforma una narrativa pre o para-literaria en un libro” (Beverley “Prólogo” 10).³⁹ Such a reliance on literature to put experience (and often traumatic events which evade representation in language) into words entails, for Marta Rojas, a necessary defense of language. By proxy, this means a defense of the artifice of language, the aesthetic as a means of rendering a representation of reality capable of transmitting knowledge from one being to another. Seen in the light of postmodernist theory, and the difficulties it poses for those who would like to accept language as a transparent system capable of recording reality, it makes sense that Derrida would remark that many believe juridical testimony should perhaps break away from literature.⁴⁰ Derrida also observes that in working through language, in relying on the conversion of a para-literary experience into

³⁸ Recognizably, this is not a linear evolution through time, but can be seen as a gradual opening of the field of testimonio to consider multiple texts and their various testimonial functions.

³⁹ Marta Rojas identified this reliance on language in her contribution to Jara and Vidal’s volume *Testimonio y literatura*: “El uso de lenguaje es básico para el testimonio y obviamente para toda la literatura porque la herramienta principal del escritor es su lenguaje. Se narra con el lenguaje, se construyen los diálogos con el lenguaje; se da una intención con el lenguaje, directo o figurado. La emoción, la fuerza, la ternura le llega al lector mediante el lenguaje. Ningún tema por grandioso que sea, por dramático, humano o espectacular que sea podríamos llevarlo fielmente al lector si no usamos un lenguaje adecuado. La defensa del testimonio está en la defensa del lenguaje; en la imaginación y talento de quienes lo escriben, además del hecho mismo: del protagonista, individual y colectivo” (Rojas 322–23).

⁴⁰ “In our European juridical tradition, testimony should remain unrelated to literature and especially, in literature, to what presents itself as fiction, simulation, or simulacra, which is not all literature” (“Demeure” 29).

a narrative, testimonio necessarily needs to grapple with the opacity of language.⁴¹ In relying on the artifice of language in order to communicate, to witness a previous event, the testimonial subject relies on a system that is a construction, inherently overlapping with the literary in its very employment, therefore, once again we might ask, why can't that opaque system be an object?

In considering the original question of authenticity, Yudice's identification of *testimonio* as an "authentic narrative," the object, in its unchanging and lasting materiality holds a forensic truth value unique from the malleability of language. The object *was there*, it *witnessed*, what happens if we use it now in an effort to uncover testimony to atrocity? Elzbieta Sklodowska affirms that *testimonio* uses the literary tradition as a tool for political emancipation.⁴² She argues that testimony is "una nueva modalidad de novela" (Sklodowska 99). For Gugelberger, it is a form of narrative that is "fundamentally democratic and egalitarian" (28) because it "implies that *any* life so narrated can have a kind of representational value" (28). Gugelberger argues that *testimonio* helps "make ourselves visible to ourselves" (3), if not through a production of the real (ie: truthful) past, "then certainly a sensation of *experiencing the real* and that this has determinate effects on the reader that are different from those produced by even the most 'realist' or 'documentary' fiction" (34). Michael Lazzara chimes in with the

⁴¹ "Yet, if the testimonial is by law irreducible to the fictional, there is no testimony that does not structurally imply in itself the possibility of fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie, and perjury—that is to say, the possibility of literature" (Derrida 29).

⁴² "A contrapelo de la negación posmoderna de todo tipo de metadiscursos, el testimonio continúa la tradición comprometida de la literatura latinoamericana en el sentido de confiar en la eficacia de la palabra como herramienta de emancipación política" (Sklodowska 100).

stance that “truth utterances are malleable, that they are crafted in the present based on a speaker’s motivations and perceived outcomes” (155). He sustains, then, that post-authoritarian truth-telling is “the aggregate of discourses—official and unofficial, factual and fictional, written and performative—that have the capacity to transform society and help it imagine a better future, without forgetting its past” (155), a view that once again gestures to Avelar’s identification of a need for allegory in representing the atrocities of mass violence. The material object when considered in this debate presents a unique memory opportunity. It is not a narrative in the traditional form of a written text, but it does offer a narrative up to be read by the one who encounters it. The object holds a very specific truth value, one need only look to the use of material evidence in trials or to forensic teams that work to recover these fragments of the past to see this regime of truth at work.

For example, at the site of the former detention center, El Club Atlético, in the heart of San Telmo in Buenos Aires, excavation work has uncovered a number of “hallazgos” (Visitor’s pamphlet) that range from pieces of the infrastructure of the building to pieces of police uniforms, to food packaging (“objetos con referencia temporal”) to remnants of clothing, dishes, and (as has become rather infamous about the site) ping pong balls from the table at which the guards played in between torture sessions. The excavation of the site emerged out of the demand by a group of former detained/disappeared “en el marco de su lucha por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia” (Visitor’s pamphlet): “El 13 de abril de 2002 comenzaron las obras de excavación, constituyéndose en la primera iniciativa de arqueología urbana relacionada con la

memoria de los crímenes cometidos por el terrorismo de Estado en la Ciudad” (Visitor’s pamphlet). A visit to this memory site is made up firstly of a walk through the site of the former detention center. A guide signals the various rooms, in different stages of recovery and explains the confluence between the materials one observes around him/herself and the testimony that has been given by survivors who were detained there. After one has observed the infrastructure, s/he has the opportunity to then visit the objects that were recovered, which are held in a separate building so as to be monitored by a group of forensic archivists who care for the preservation of these fragments of history. The objects have been used as evidence in some of the trials that are ongoing in Argentina, as such they demonstrate the important perception that such forensic proofs “hablan” as the director of the Institute for Spaces of Memory remarks in the quote at the outset of this chapter.

However, the object, at the same time as being a largely unchanging forensic truth from the past, also represents an element of artifice that halts our ability to read the truth behind it. Just as Lazzara states about post-authoritarian truth-telling above, the object is the aggregate of discourses. While it is true that it was created and used in a specific context and remains constant through time, the one who encounters the object in the present and attempts to read its story brings with him/her an entirely new set of discourses. To analyze the confluence of these temporalities, of these presences and absences, I now turn to spectral theory and propose that the testimony offered by objects is a spectral testimony that creates a productive memory dialogue between the living generations of the present and the lost generations of the past.

After Detention or Disappearance: Haunted Objects in the Museum of Memory

The virtual exposition, *Vestigios*, is an ongoing memory project by Memoria Abierta. It invites survivors and families in the post-dictatorship to submit photographs and written histories showing and explaining important objects of memory connected to the cases of the detained and disappeared. As a project, in its spotlight presentation of the former belongings of the disappeared, *Vestigios* highlights the failure of the dictatorship's efforts to reduce the subject to an object, of the desire to disappear subversive presences.

Julian Bleecker explores the agency held by internet objects (what he calls "blogjects") in the virtual times in which we live, arguing that these blogjects hold an agency that, though not parallel to the human, is an agency nonetheless, capable of impacting our cultural behaviors. In *Vestigios* the object holds a similar agency, more weighted than an object of mourning, or one that metonymically affects our neurological processes of memory. In her exploration of Domingo Gribaldi's photograph, an effort to use photography as a contribution to the creation of collective memory in Peru following the report by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Margarita Saona considers the memorial power of objects, what she terms "plain things" and argues that such objects "consistently embody mnemonic mechanisms highlighted by current research on cognition" (73). Saona contends that plain things carry a "metonymic aspect in the way objects represent absence" (73). Exploring metonymy and space, Saona argues that plain things "produce in us 'memory-like' effects" (74) in that "we feel as if we 'remember'" (74), a process that occurs even for those who have not experienced the traumatic event. While I do not disagree with Saona's assessment, I wish to push this

process a bit further and examine the manner in which the object does transmit a (spectral) form of knowing to the visitor, even s/he who has no personal memory of the event in question, and even if that transmission simultaneously communicates memory and calls attention to the impossibility of that same transmission of memory.

Vestigios, as a virtual space of memory, a work in progress, invites participation through submission of objects with stories, thus providing a space for the labors of memory (Jelin) to take place. The puzzle-like placement of the images of the objects points to the idea of recuperative work in progress, inviting participation into the struggle for completion. The impact of the submitted narratives come from the accompanying images of the objects themselves. We are not only being told about a ring that had been worn by a disappeared sister, and was discovered along with her bodily remains, we are shown the recovered ring in its full material form [Figure 12].



Figure 12 *Anillos de Elena Kalaidjian, Vestigios—Memoria Abierta*

The object itself holds a prior knowledge, the marks of having-once-been. In the space of the museum it has the capacity to effect change, these objects “force us to think of interpretive strategies of resistance, interrogating the past and leading to a politics of cognition with which to move toward the future” (Masiello). This is not a parallel agency to the human, nor is the object a stand-in for the past person. To say that it were would undermine the authority and power of movements that seek to find lost loved ones—who definitively remain in *limbo*—*disappeared* not *dead*. Yet, the object does remain haunted by the past presence of the *detenido/desaparecido*, even if that person is still alive, known, and can speak.

In their analysis of books carefully crafted by Holocaust victims in the concentration camps, Hirsch and Spitzer note that objects were “collectively made in the camp in communal acts of defiance and resistance, constituting unconventional collective memoirs marked by the bodily imprints of their authors” (366). Although the examples of objects included in *Vestigios* are not all examples of collective labors, or even all handmade items such as the *manualidades* and the *artesanías carcelarias*, they can be read as a type of material memoir that carry the bodily imprints of their past owners via the visible manifestation of their individual personalities, tastes, and attempts at survival.

As Hirsch and Spitzer note, the meaning found in many of these objects for the prisoners themselves are lost to us, but the objects still constitute a species of “invaluable record—a testimonial object, a point of memory” (367), which transmits information meant to be lost to oblivion, wiped away with the elimination of peoples and bodies. It gestures to the rebellion presented by the imbuing of memory in such objects and

evidences the destabilizing presence these physical items continue to have. These objects, evidence that stays behind even after the extreme act of disappearing the detained was undertaken by dictatorship forces, shows the manner in which the spectral presence of the disappeared cannot be erased or removed from society. The material object in *Vestigios*, the memory punctum, the *hallazgos* in the former Club Atlético, make visible the haunting presence of the disappeared and demonstrate the failure of the project of disappearance.

Spectral Testimony: The Truth-Telling Capacity of Objects

As I explored in the first half of this project, emerging theories of the philosophy of objects posit that, like humans, objects have an interior being of their own: “tool-being” (Graham Harman), or “vibrant matter” (Bennett). This being normally hides in plain view, in the ready-at-hand tools that we use in the day-to-day.⁴³ Yet, every once in a while, human *Dasein* encounters a broken tool (Heidegger), the tool becomes present-at-hand, and we, if only fleetingly, become aware of a being held within the object, for “equipment is not effective ‘because people use it’; on the contrary, it can only be used because it is *capable of an effect*, of inflicting some kind of blow on reality” (Harman *Tool-Being* 20). In the case of the detention center, it is not necessarily the *object* that is encountered as a broken tool, but the occupied world that undergoes this transformation. The entire reality in which the prisoner exists is altered, thus calling attention to the tool-

⁴³ “The more efficiently a tool performs its function, the more it tends to recede from view” (Harman *Tool-Being* 21).

being of not only specific objects, but *all* of the matter that occupies the space of mistreatment.

The result of this re-ordering is the production of a new meaning of the object for the disappeared person, but also for the rest of society. The doubt that remains attached to objects, their integral function in not only the dictatorship's project of control, but in the resistance by the detained, changes the prior context of the object, imbuing it with not only its own past, but a phantasmal presence that remains residually attached to its materiality even after the disappearance of the person for whom it represents hope, resistance, rebuilt subjectivity, and even life.

The objects that remain after disappearance are indelibly marked by the past presences of their owners. At the outset of *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Jacques Derrida states: "the name of the one who disappeared must have gotten inscribed somewhere else" (5). This "somewhere else" forms the basis of his study, in which he inquires into the continual spectral presence of Marx in society. In the case of the disappeared in the post-dictatorship, this "somewhere else" where their name has been inscribed can be seen as the object, their former possessions. The object becomes an intermediary, permitting access to the ghost, creating a means by which to speak with the haunting presence of the disappeared.



Figure 13 *Relojes de Gregorio Sember, Vestigios—Memoria Abierta*

For example, the father of this watch's [Figure 13] disappeared owner, Gregorio Marcelo "Guyo" Sember, explains the origin of this object:

Cuando estaba siendo secuestrado de su hogar, Guyo se quitó el reloj y se lo dio a su padre. Éste se lo puso ese día y no volvió a quitárselo esperando el regreso de su hijo. (*Vestigios*)

The spectrality of the object is augmented in the second portion of this account:

En 1978, el padre de Guyo fue asaltado y los ladrones se llevaron el reloj. Preocupado por que su esposa no note su ausencia compró otro similar. Dos años después el reloj que estaba usando se detuvo y cuando lo llevó al relojero descubrió que otro cliente que estaba allí antes que él tenía el reloj de Guyo. Logró recuperarlo y desde entonces conserva ambos relojes. (*Vestigios*)

The return of the watch signals that which Derrida posits regarding the phantom presence of Marx, of the eternal waiting for that-to-come. The imbuing of a material

object with the presence of its owner marks that non-decomposable object with a durability that outlasts the decay experienced by the body. The case of this watch, in its sudden appearance, points to a haunting presence that objects hold in society, a destabilizing memory possibility.

The *Museo de Memoria y Derechos Humanos* in Chile has more than 2,000 material objects in its collection that help transmit to the visiting public the memory of the recent history in Chile. The objects are divided amongst six classifications:⁴⁴ the “colección arpilleras,” “colección objetos personales,” “colección vestigios,” which consists of “restos de algún objeto o lugar de carácter histórico,” the “colección artesanías carcelarias,” the “colección artesanías,” notably “hechas en otros contextos, ejemplo talleres laborales,” and the “colección objetos histórico,” which are general objects “que dan cuenta de situaciones de violaciones y de defensa y protección de los DD.HH.” (Internal document, Museo de Memoria y Derechos Humanos). The display of these objects is accompanied by small, explanatory paragraphs drafted by the archivists and arranged according to a very specific narrative logic. The objects derive much of their power from the highlight of their remarkable pasts in these paragraphs, but there is an entirely other element to their power that remains hidden underneath their surfaces. The confluence of that which the visitor to the museum can access and that which s/he cannot readily capture about each object places the individual object’s ability to give testimony permanently in the in-between space of ambiguity. The object’s testimony remains to come, deferred, permanently haunted by the possibility of transmission. Yet, this

⁴⁴ These “types” were identified by the archivists of the museum in an effort to catalogue and better preserve the items on display.

possibility itself is productive as it mandates contemplation, reflection, pause. It requires the productive labors of memory upon its very encounter. It effects change in the viewer, thus accomplishing the destabilizing activism upon which testimonial practices are premised.

Similarly, the collection of *manualidades* on display at the MUME places the work, the material that was made as a resistance in the past on display: “Allá en la ex Quinta de Santos, el Museo de la Memoria intenta reflejar los esfuerzos del pueblo uruguayo en su lucha contra el terrorismo de Estado” (Rasmussen and Domínguez 61).

The director of the MUME, Elbio Ferrario, himself a former political prisoner, explains:

Toda la acción del Museo de la Memoria estará orientada a combatir la mentalidad que dio lugar a la implantación de la dictadura en nuestro país en el pasado reciente, para que nunca más origine los hechos y realidades pavorosas que tuvimos que vivir, para que nuestros hijos y los hijos de nuestros hijos nunca más tengan que sufrir el terrorismo de Estado y la violación de los derechos humanos. El Museo de la Memoria promoverá los valores de la paz, la Democracia, la Justicia Social y los Derechos Humanos. (Rasmussen and Domínguez 62)

There is a pedagogical function here (a continuation of the *lucha*) in the use of the material of the past as a form of *testimonio* in the museum. Recently, Daniel Link argued that the contact *testimonio* has had with the community, outside of the realm of the judicial, has an outreach component—which he terms the “sede pedagógica”—that is

currently causing the main fracture in debates over *testimonio*'s ability to "tell" truths.

Link argues:

El testimonio no está del lado de la verdad, sino del lado de la experiencia. Y la experiencia no es previa al acto de discurso en el que se constituye (la narración), como tampoco puede ser previo el sujeto al proceso mismo de subjetivación y de desubjetivación (ascesis) del que paradójicamente depende. Por eso mismo, la fuerza pedagógica del testimonio no se resuelve en sede judicial, epistemológica o estética, sino en sede ética. (Link 126)

This view echoes an early one articulated by Ariel Dorfman, that the majority of testimonial efforts in Chile were "urgidos por la necesidad de denuncia política y de instruir a una opinión pública conmovida y asqueada" (170). In this same essay, Dorfman argues that there are three main functions to testimonial writing: "*acusar* a los verdugos, *recordar* los sufrimientos y epopeyas, *animar* a los otros combatientes en medio del repliegue" (177). The last of these functions, *animar*, points to a pedagogically motivated function in which testimony is meant to spur to action others who are currently in the fight against repression, or in the case at hand, in the fight for the recuperation of the exemplary memory of the past.

In the documentary film *Nostalgia de la luz*, Patricio Guzmán turns to the material world's ability to speak and explores the Chilean Atacama desert's own memory possibilities, saying that:

Es una tierra castigada, impregnada de sal donde los restos humanos se momifican y los objetos permanecen. El aire, transparente, delgado, nos permite leer en este gran libro abierto de la memoria hoja por hoja. (Nostalgia de la luz)

In the space of the desert, the presence of the past is palpable. The dust-covered, abandoned possessions of those who died in the desert still have movement, a jacket sways in the air, and hanging spoons sing, inanimate objects seem not so inanimate. The preservative qualities of the desert provoke astronomers to seek “los secretos del cielo” that “se fueron cayendo sobre nosotros uno a uno como una lluvia transparente.” But they also give hope to those who lost loved ones in Pinochet’s dictatorship, who take to the dry land in an obstinate search for bodily remains.

Vicky Saavedra recovers “un pie. Un pie que estaba dentro del zapato” This foot, her brother’s, along with other fragments of his skull, yield enough information to determine that Pepe was shot twice, demonstrating the evidentiary capacity of human remains. But this capacity, a testimonial function, goes beyond the simply evidentiary. Vicky describes her last encounter with her brother:

“Recordaba esa mirada cariñosa y todo estaba resumido en eso. En unos dientes, en unos pedazos de huesos. Y un pie. Un pie que aunque parezca increíble, el último encuentro de mi hermano fue con un pie que yo tuve en mi casa. Porque cuando encontró la fosa, yo sabía que era el zapato de Pepé. Sabía que era el pie de Pepé. Y a la noche como estoy de la mañana yo me levanté y me puse a cariñar a su pie. Y tenía un olor de descomposición. Estaba en su calcetín. Un calcetín color así conchetino. ¿Granadino? No sé. Un rojo oscuro. Y yo lo saqué de la bolsa. Lo miraba. Después

me senté en un sillón de living. Estuve como horas sentada pero en blanco. Totalmente en blanco. No tenía la capacidad de pensar en nada. Estaba tan impactada, shoqueada por eso. Y al día siguiente mi marido se fue a trabajar y pasé toda la mañana con el pie de mi hermano. Estábamos reencontrándonos. Fue el gran reencuentro y quizás la gran desilusión también. Porque en ese momento yo resiento mi conciencia que mi hermano estaba muerto. (*Nostalgia de la luz*)

Vicky attempts to find the answers, the representability of the past, in her exchange with her brother's foot, sock, and shoe. But, it ultimately leads to the disillusioning realization that her brother is dead. No longer disappeared, but confirmed dead. However, this disillusionment may also refer to the incompleteness of the testimony she is able to perceive from the material remains of her brother. We remember Agamben's paradox: the *Muselmann* is a "complete witness", a remnant that functions as a telos between he who can speak (has subjectivity) and he who cannot (the desubjectified, non-human, or the dead): "the remnants of Auschwitz—the witnesses—are neither the dead nor the survivors, neither the drowned nor the saved. *They are what remains* between them" (164).⁴⁵ The foot, the shoe, the sock remain between Pepe and Vicky. They are

⁴⁵ The *Muselmann*, for Agamben, is the state at which has occurred a full reduction of the subject to a species of object. The living being here is reduced to pure corporality, pure objectivity, desubjectified, "non-human." Once one reaches the state of the *Muselmann*, one is at a point of no-return, which is why the *Muselmann* presents a crisis for witnessing. Agamben states: "At times a medical figure or an ethical category, at times a political limit or an anthropological concept, the *Muselmann* is an indefinite being in whom not only humanity and non-humanity, but also vegetative existence and relation, physiology and ethics, medicine and politics, and life and death continuously pass through each other. This is why the *Muselmann*'s "third realm" is the perfect cipher of the camp, the non-place in which all disciplinary barriers are destroyed and all embankments flooded" (48).

Agamben's most complete witness—they were *there* at the scene of violence. But they may also be incapable of transparently witnessing.

If the Muselmann as a “complete witness” is this remnant, in the function of a telos, joining the living being and the speaking being, the human and the inhuman (158–59), can the same function be extended to the material remains of the dead? And, can we extend this function to the material objects that are now seen in exhibits such as *Vestigios*? Here, I turn to a consideration of the object's ability to testify, asking can the remnant be an object? Or, can an object be the witness to a remnant, a remain? To the ghostly presence of the victim? And, if so, to where is the object joining us?

Agamben declares: “we will not understand what Auschwitz is if we do not first understand who or what the Muselmann is—if *we do not learn to gaze with him . . .*” (52, my emphasis) Agamben calls on us to look differently at the testimony offered by the Muselmann. The same call is echoed in Derrida's *Specters of Marx* and his declaration that: *we need to learn to live with ghosts* (xvii and xix).⁴⁶ One must accept that the full knowledge of the truth about the disappeared does not exist in a realm in which we are able to openly dialogue with it. No complete witness exists to answer our questions. We rely on the incomplete memory, this zone of the “in between” in order to construct in the present a knowledge about the past. In the absence of this witness, the object—mass-produced, manmade, or even corporal—steps in, to help us (even if incompletely) in our labors to fill the gaps. Derrida writes:

⁴⁶ The way in which present generations are learning to live with the ghosts that haunt the objects of focus here will be explored in the final chapter (five) of this project.

The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The specter is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects—on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see. (100–01)⁴⁷

If objects are haunted by the spectral presences of their previous inhabitants, this hauntology constitutes a repetitive act whose comings and goings cannot be controlled (10). This haunting presence reveals the destabilizing nature of the object in the case of the disappeared. These objects are specters of possibility (12), a way of accessing memory and destabilizing homogenizing attempts at forgetting in transitional governments.

The residual phantom presence that haunts the object and gives it a “specter of possibility” also imbues it with the power of what I am calling spectral testimony. It is a different form of deferred agency that lies in the realm of the just beyond. It is a concept I connect to Agamben’s notion of the third state of the Muselmann, but also to Derrida’s ruminations on the specter of Marx that continues to haunt our society, along with his thoughts on the fiction of testimony, a writing that yields a phantom real that is ever-present, yet ever just beyond reach. Spectral testimony interpellates the viewer in the present with a deferred past and requires him/her to do the work of memory, to contemplate what the object offers.

⁴⁷ It is noteworthy to notice, in reference to Guzmán employ of light in his title, that in physics *frequencies* form the basis of light.

Going back to Idelber Avelar, the unrepresentability of the atrocities, of what *really* happened, by issue of its incomprehensibility produces a reliance on allegory: all testimonial recountings of the past end up in the realm of the allegorical, a tethering from the present to the third realm of an unrepresentable past. The object, the material, the non-subject that touched the subjectivity that was once present, is the tether between the two. It was present, but it cannot place into our system of understanding the words that would make coherent to us their experiences in the past. Instead, it activates the “sede pedagógica” (Link) of testimony, it animates the viewer (Dorfman) and promotes ongoing dialogue (Sanjinés) and human rights work in the present.

In *Nostalgia de la luz*, it is not only the material form that holds a truth-telling capacity, but it is light that is equated to beingness, the calcium of the stars directly identified with the calcium that makes up human bones. If we consider the following image [Figure 14], of a pendant carved out of bone by a prisoner using a coin, one can see continuity between the material and the cosmos.



Figure 14 *Colgante realizado en la cárcel por Diana Cruces, Vestigios—Memoria Abierta*

There is a temporal jump between the present and the past, we are viewing stars that died long ago, yet remain present to us, gesturing to an ongoing continuity of presences.

In Guzmán's film, this continuity of presences is palpable. The physical terrain of the Atacama desert, in its lack of humidity, produces conditions ideal not only for the preservation of material remains, but for the clear connection between earth and the cosmos, for both boil down to a question of light.⁴⁸ Astronomer Gaspar Galaz remarks:

Todas las experiencias que uno tiene en la vida en realidad, [. . .] incluso esta conversación, ocurren en el pasado. Aunque sean millonésimas o millésimas de segundos. Pero, claro, o sea la cámara que yo estoy mirando ahora está a unos cuantos metros de distancia. Por lo tanto ya está unas millonésimas o algo así digamos de tiempo atrás, en el pasado respecto al tiempo que yo . . . que yo tengo en mi reloj. Porque la señal demora en llegar. La luz de la cámara . . . o la luz tuya . . . refleja y se demora en llegar a mí. Una fracción de segundos, una fracción muy pequeña de segundos porque la luz es muy, muy rápida . . . Ésta es la trampa. El presente no existe. (*Nostalgia de la luz*)

This link, the “misterio de la ciencia” (*Nostalgia de la luz*), both spatial and temporal, as emphasized by the astronomers in the film, creates a nexus between the fleeting present and the seemingly unreachable distance of the origin of things (this material origin being the elements, especially the calcium, that was produced in the stars). The overlay of the specks of light (the stars) upon images of women searching for remains of their

⁴⁸ One must note that all light boils down (within physics) to a matter of frequencies, thus emphasizing the fundamentally material nature of Derrida's claim that the specter “is the frequency of a certain visibility” (100).

disappeared loved ones in the desert augment this connection and conjure forth onto the camera's plane the simultaneity of existence between past (the measurable light/calcium/matter from the stars) and present (the calcium in the bodies of those who search, but also in that present in the hidden remains of the desert), producing a haunting commingling that is not just imagined, but measurably real and speaks in its own way through the materials that are left behind, even those that remain to be found, for as archeologist Lautaro Nuñez predicts in the film, one day the remains will appear. And when they do, they will conjure forth that truth which was already present giving a spectral, always-to-come, yet still productive testimony. If the material world was so integral to the detained subject in prison, it also remains integral for those who seek to reconstruct the past, to access the third realm of the unrepresentable, to commingle with ghosts in order to know what happened then, but remains remarkably present in the ever-fleeting
today.

Chapter Four: Bodily Incarnations—Hauntings in the Everyday

Los militares del '76 fueron más allá aún: el intento fue borrar no sólo la escritura sino la marca misma de la existencia, los nombres, las lápidas, los cuerpos.
(Elvira Martorell 150)

La lucha que nos parió.
(Campaign Slogan for H.I.J.O.S.)

Indeed human memory can be regarded as a mere elaboration of the basic ability of all organisms to 'read' the substances that surround and constitute them (beginning with their own DNA).
(Marius Kwint 3)

Faltaba saber digamos de qué familia era. A todo esto, ya mi novia se había metido en internet y había encontrado una foto de la . . . de mi mamá. Y vio tan parecido el rostro que . . . en primero . . . que me dijo 'para mí es tu mamá.' Y era mi mamá.
(Horacio Pietragalla in *El último confín*)



Figure 15 Afiche from the campaign *Piedra Libre Sos Mi Nieto*

Up to this point my project has largely focused on the material/manmade object, both the everyday items that populated the lives of the disappeared before their detention, as well as those that were found or created in the concentration camp. However, in the period of the postdictatorship, as I began to explore at the end of the previous chapter in reference to *Nostalgia de la luz*, there is another important material remainder of the past that we must consider: the body. By this broad category I mean both the lack of the body that marks enforced disappearance of persons and the lack of an identified body that marks the erased identities of the children of the disappeared. Just as the material object offers a spectral testimony, the body, also capable of giving this same testimony, threatens reemergence and continues to haunt the everyday of the postdictatorship. In the quote above from the Argentine documentary film *El último confin*, Horacio's girlfriend, upon finding out the news that Horacio has discovered that his parents were not his birthparents—a testimony that comes from an analysis of his blood—finds such a striking similarity between a photograph of a disappeared woman she finds online and Horacio that she ends up locating his mother for him. A form of testimonio “en diferido” (*Interfaz*) the remains of the disappeared threaten to be uncovered by forensic teams such as the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF) and to reveal the crimes of the past, while the bodies of appropriated children also threaten to speak through their DNA, to uncover the crime of kidnapping, one of the only crimes that can still be prosecuted in wake of the partial amnesty rulings in the postdictatorship.⁴⁹ The body of the child, as

⁴⁹ After the passing of the Law of Due Obedience in June of 1987, “only three offenses were exempted from the new leniency: rape, theft, and falsification of civil status, the tactic by which the children of the disappeared were given false identities and delivered

seen above, need not even rely on DNA analysis to prove parentage, but in its very “incarnated” nature—by this, I mean as the living flesh-and-blood of the parent who disappeared—posits a destabilizing memory possibility in the present. Physical likeness creates doubt, in Horacio’s case that doubt led to action and the uncovering of a truth “Y era mi mamá.” Scarry, in her attempt to unpack the nuances of war and how the memory of pain is expressed and transmitted, explains how the body possesses a memory of its own:

There exist, of course, forms of bodily memory that are anterior to, deeper than, and in ordinary peacetime contexts beyond the reach of culture. The body’s self-immunizing antibody system is sometimes described as a memory system: the body, having once encountered certain foreign bodies, will the next time recognize, remember, and release its own defenses. So, too, within genetic research, the DNA and RNA mechanisms for self-replication are together understood as a form of bodily memory. (110)

In this attempt to understand the corporal body’s centrality to war and its decisively political outcomes, Scarry repeatedly emphasizes this bodily nature of memory stating “What is ‘remembered’ in the body is well remembered” (109; 110; 112–113). For his own part, Maurice Merleau Ponty contends that all experience has its root in the body, that the split between mind and body is not as definite as one might like to believe. He argues that objective thought comes out of perceptive experience, rooted in the individual

to other families. But torture, murder, arbitrary arrest, and misrepresentations to judges could now be overlooked if the alleged perpetrator was able to prove that he was just following orders” (Joyce and Stover 279).

body. The mind's idea (the process that identifies objects)—thought to be the same for all—is born out of a very individual perspective that originates in the body, in experience (71).⁵⁰

In this chapter I will explore the impact disappearance had and continues to have on society's view toward the capacity of the body to remember and to “speak” or “testify,” especially the bodies of the children of the disappeared that can be seen as the living physical material remainder of their parents. I will examine how the legacy of disappearance contributed to the creation of a “poetics of DNA” that continues to inform the narrative logic of advertisements, narratives, and art related to memory activism, and how this poetics combines with a spectral testimony that emerges via the body in the novel *A veinte años, Luz* by Elsa Osorio. Lastly, I will argue that the body of the child of disappeared parents is uniquely positioned to not only contribute forensic testimony, but in its very physical existence constitutes another type of artifact, a material that is haunted by the former activism of the child's parents and yields a spectral material testimony that continues to sow doubt and animate action in the present day.

Actively Reappearing Bodies in the Present: *Piedra Libre: Sos Mi Nieto*

Sunday, July 14, 2013: A group convenes in the *Casa de Militancia* space of the organization H.I.J.O.S (Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el

⁵⁰ Merleau Ponty writes: “Like the object, the idea purports to be the same for everybody” (71); “The whole life of consciousness is characterized by the tendency to posit objects, since it is consciousness, that is to say self-knowledge, only in so far as it takes hold of itself and draws itself together in an identifiable object. And yet the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness since it congeals the whole of existence as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it” (Merleau Ponty 71)

Silencio) located in a building on the property of the ex ESMA. There to participate in an activity convened by the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, to create *afiches* for the campaign *Piedra Libre: Sos Mi Nieto* [Figure 15], the large group expectantly waits for instruction. The activity begins. On three walls appear projections of the faces of distinct *nietos recuperados*.⁵¹ The participants advance, and carefully trace the features of each facial projection on large sheets of white paper. Line by line, the sketchy negative of what scarcely seems a definable face appears on the papers that are destined to be posted throughout the city of Buenos Aires. Paints are mixed, carefully shaded into varied gradations of color. As if children painting by number, the negative spaces of each sketch are slowly filled by the participants with tentative brush strokes. Distinctive features emerge from ghostly outlines, the identity that was temporarily obscured from vision becomes recognizable once again [Figure 16].

⁵¹ On February 9, 2014, the Facebook page of HIJOS announced the identification/recuperation of the 110th missing child of the estimated 500 appropriated children: “La hija de Liliana Acuña y Oscar Gutiérrez recuperó su identidad.”



Figure 16 *Afiche from the campaign Piedra Libre Sos Mi Nieto*

This activity is an example of the efforts of various organizations to fill the space of the former *Escuela Mecánica de la Armada* (ESMA) with culture, resignifying the prior space of violence, taking back history, maintaining vivid the memory of the past. The process itself, of outlining the features of a face, produces the sketchy outline that pertains to a person, yet temporarily hides his/her true physical aspect, momentarily erases identity. Then, slowly, but surely, and through much work, identity becomes visible again. The physical traits that serve as distinguishing markers emerge from what had been masked by shadowy pencil lines. Those who disappeared from vision reappear before our eyes, their faces become vivid and in their very *present* existence denounce the violence of the past, both urging others living in doubt to come forward and actively seeking to sow doubt in those who have never even questioned their past.

The process of this project, which actively reappears bodies of the children of the disappeared, relies on bringing the trace outline of known material features into acute relief. Through a simple artistic task meant to bring together a community of non-artists

to create *afiches* that are both visually appealing and politically meaningful, the project's steps mimic the plight of the many second-generation victims of the past political repression in Argentina: the work of filling in gaps of paint corresponds to the work of putting together the puzzle pieces of remnants of information from the past, all in order to reveal the truth behind the identity living in the present.⁵² But, the activity's significance also rests on the perception that has developed over time in Argentina that a fundamental truth can be revealed by the body, indeed lies in the body waiting to emerge and speak. The body, in all its physical detail, holds a capacity for clarification and truth-telling in the present. For this reason, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo have worked for so many years to urge children of the post-dictatorship generation to test their own blood, looking for the truth held in their own physicality's DNA, a truth that is always present, yet lies just below the surface of the skin, waiting to be revealed.

⁵² The Facebook page of *HIJOS - Capital* often underlines the existence of *a truth*, in the singular. The one truth that is most fundamental of all: that which lies in the body, waiting to be revealed: “¿Dónde están? Hay una sola identidad: la verdad” (January 2, 2014); “Para encontrar la verdad: EAAF - Iniciativa latinoamericana para la identificación de personas desaparecidas” (Promoting the blood bank initiative of the EAAF, January 6, 2014); “Nadie te puede robar el ADN, ni te pueden robar la sonrisa. Ni ahora, ni nunca. Hasta siempre, siempre” (November 29, 2013); “Nos gusta hablar de cuerpos, no de restos. Resto es lo que queda, lo que no se puede completar, lo restante de algo. Nos gusta hablar de compañeros, no de casos. Caso es una palabra del Poder Judicial. Cuando se identifican cuerpos de compañeros vuelve algo que los genocidas nos habían arrancado como pueblo: la identidad colectiva de los militantes, la reparación familiar, la verdad histórica” (October 2, 2013). In all of these posts, the truth of the body trumps other narratives, the body is the physical proof waiting to be read and revealed.

“The desaparecidos—those ‘vanished’ victims whose deaths have consistently been denied or covered up by the military—offer a particularly salient problem with regard to narrating the past precisely because their voices have been silenced forever . . . Because they are dead, they will never bear witness to the abominable horrors they suffered, nor will they tell of how their bodies were tortured, mutilated, disposed of in common graves or dropped from military planes into the sea. To be certain, they are the dictatorship’s most obstinate legacy: they stand as a marked narrative void in the history of the regime”
(Michael Lazzara, *Chile in Transition: The Poetics and Politics of Truth*, 101)

Body Talk: Disappearance and Disappearance With Life

One of the lasting legacies in the wake of the violence of the Southern Cone dictatorships is enforced disappearance of persons. During the repression in Argentina it is estimated that 30,000 people disappeared. In Chile, that number stands at roughly 3,500⁵³ and in Uruguay, according to a 2007 report from the EAAF, an estimated 150.⁵⁴ The Argentine *Nunca más* report concludes that there were multiple reasons for which disappearance became a strategy of the military junta’s reaction to subversive/dissident politics during the Dirty War. The report sustains that the disappearance or disfiguration of bodies was done in order to “paralizar el reclamo público”; “bloquear los caminos de investigación de los hechos concretos”; and “impedir por todos los medios que se manifestara la solidaridad de la población.” (desaparecidos.org)

The former dictator Jorge Rafael Videla explained the now seemingly universal term *desaparecidos* in response to repeated inquiries by mothers regarding the

⁵³ The Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report documented 3,428 cases of disappearance (see Howe 5).

⁵⁴ While the report estimates that 150 Uruguayans were disappeared, it also points out that 127 of them are believed to have disappeared in Argentina, a result of Operación Condor. The report also emphasizes that a larger number of people were imprisoned indefinitely in Uruguay as opposed to being disappeared.

whereabouts of their children.⁵⁵ He (now infamously) explained: “It is a mystery, a *desaparecido*, a nonentity, it is not here: they are neither dead nor alive, they disappeared” (qtd. in Ros 15).⁵⁶ With the 1994 adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons and the December 2006 adoption of the Disappearances Convention by the United Nations Assembly (see Howe 5), disappearance now has a concrete juridical category. However, what I am interested in pursuing in this chapter is an exploration of the cultural meaning of disappearance and how the lack of access to the bodies of the disappeared produced a new awareness of the important potential the physical holds to fill gaps of information when the subject is no longer present to speak his/her story. For, what the preoccupation with disappearance has at its core is a worry over what the body can reveal post-mortem, over what evidence is being left behind and how that information (even if unidentifiable/unreadable at the moment of the crime) might be used in the future. Above, Michael Lazzara eloquently identifies the *narrative void* left to impact society in the wake of disappearance in Chile. Like most considerations of *testimonio*, his comments rest on a privileging of the voice, in this case necessarily silenced and inaccessible due to disappearance. As I explored in the previous chapter, the voice, the ability or inability to speak and be heard, to transmit via language one’s experience has long preoccupied scholars of *testimonio*. Such

⁵⁵ I say “seemingly universal” because desaparecidos.org currently refers to political disappearances in 18 countries, not all of which are in Latin America, and invites those affected by disappearance in other countries to join the project.

⁵⁶In context in Spanish: “. . . en tanto esté como tal, es una incógnita el desaparecido, si el hombre apareciera, bueno, tendrá un tratamiento X, y si la desaparición se convirtiera en certeza de su fallecimiento, tiene un tratamiento Z, pero mientras sea un desaparecido no puede tener ningún tratamiento especial, es incógnita, es un desaparecido, no tiene entidad, no está, ni muerto ni vivo, está desaparecido” (Jinkis)

preoccupations resonate perhaps even more strongly in the wake of disappearance, where the testimonial voice cannot even make the attempt to speak and be heard. Disappearance, in removing access to the body, had the byproduct of producing an awareness of just how much information the material of the body can offer. In doing so, it impacted the present perception of the material's ability to speak in lieu of the voice, specifically the ways in which the bodies of the children of the disappeared are now perceived as a link to the memory of their parents, emphasizing the ability of their second-generation bodies (especially their DNA) to hold memory and yield a testimony about the past.

Disappearance, in not only ripping the subject from his/her life, but eliminating the possibility of encountering any telling physical/forensic trace of that subject actively (and purposefully) creates a gap in knowledge about the past. Even so, groups such as the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense work to recover remains and make them speak. In her study of the experience of the families of the disappeared, Ludmila da Silva Catela affirms that the search for the bodies of the disappeared “más allá de la necesidad de recuperar los cuerpos, se trata de una intensa voluntad de búsqueda de rescatar la historia de ese individuo” (126). Thus, the search goes beyond the need to recuperate the body itself and looks forward to the body's ability to render visible/readable the individual experiences of the person, the life, the voice that once animated the physical remains. In the Southern Cone, disappearance left a vacuum that continues to plague the ability to move on from the violent past in the time of the post-dictatorship. As Pilar Calveiro puts it:

La desaparición no es un eufemismo sino una alusión literal: una persona que a partir de determinado momento *desaparece*, se esfuma, sin que quede constancia de su vida o de su muerte. *No hay cuerpo de la víctima ni del delito*. Puede haber testigos del secuestro y presuposición del posterior asesinato pero no hay un cuerpo material que dé testimonio del hecho. (26, emphasis in the original)

I propose to reconsider Calveiro's assertion. While it is undeniably true that disappearance indicates the complete absence of body/voice and evidence of the crime, categorically dismissing that there is no material body that can give testimony to the event closes off the consideration of how second generation bodies may contribute to the reconstruction of this *narrative void* leftover from the past. As Alexis Howe urges in the case of Chile, "as a practice, disappearance invites us to rethink not only the dictatorship but also the persistence of disappearance, and its effects or new practices, in the present"

(3). In Argentina, one of the most iconic symbols of the effort to keep the memory of the disappeared present in activism is the use of their photographs/portraits and the emergence of silhouettes used to demarcate their absence.⁵⁷ Without a body to mourn, the silhouette in the form of a human body stands in to highlight absence and conjure forth a specter from the past. The legacy of *testimonio* is precisely this effort to relate a truth

⁵⁷ "En 1983, con el retorno de la democracia, una variante de las fotos [de desaparecidos] impactó durante algunos años y obligaba a acercarse a mirarlas: contornos de siluetas diseñadas sobre papel blanco aparecían pegadas en las paredes de muchas ciudades del país. En aquellos años las siluetas predominaban en las manifestaciones públicas. Montadas sobre papel, inscribían en su interior el nombre del desaparecidos y la fecha de secuestro. El tamaño 'natural' tenía como objetivo central 'hacer sentir a los desaparecidos en la calle,' poder ampliar el público que necesariamente pasaba a preguntarse sobre el objetivo de estos dibujos" (Catela 134). For an extended analysis of the strategy of using photographs and silhouettes to represent the disappeared, see Longoni.

about the past to the present. As I emphasized in the previous chapter, writing testimony is an act of memory transmission through time, meant to reconstruct information (often in order to denounce a crime) and fill a void of knowledge. In the case of the disappeared, these gaps, due to absence, in many cases remain unfilled. But this does not mean that memory work in the post-dictatorship—especially that undertaken by groups such as H.I.J.O.S—is not actively trying to fill these voids, most often through a reevaluation of the material world.⁵⁸

Calveiro proposed an examination of the concentration camp in Argentina in an effort to demonstrate how this understanding can help us “comprender las características de un poder que circuló en todo el tejido social y que no puede haber *desaparecido*” (28). In her own study, da Silva Catela proposed to examine the way in which families act out the acceptance of the disappearance of their loved ones, in an effort to understand the effect of disappearance on society:

En lugar de marcar y habilitar el pasaje del mundo de los ‘vivos’ al mundo de los ‘muertos,’ los rituales puestos en escena para dar cuenta de la desaparición de un individuo, transforman la ausencia del *cuerpo* en un capital de fuerza política y cultural, que se expresa en clave de denuncia. La desaparición de cuerpos, trajo junto a ella la expresión de una nueva muerte-no muerte y colocó al cuerpo y su

⁵⁸ One need only look to Lucila Quieto’s photographic project, *Arqueología de la ausencia* and its recycling of the photographs of the disappeared, in its creating of a new family portrait, of a new narrative in which daughter and parents finally emerge in the same scene, to see the power of the use of the body of the child of disappeared parents to highlight, humanize, and narrate the crimes of the past.

búsqueda como el *locus del dolor*, como centro común creador de solidaridades y acciones entre los que sufren. (158)

Similarly, my own work here re-examines the effect disappearance had on the valorization of the body and its capacity to speak, reconsidering how the body that testifies (through forensic or DNA analysis) conjures forth a silenced/hidden voice from the past and relays a spectral testimony to the generation in the present.

The figure of the *desaparecido* translates rather directly to the notion of a specter, an entity neither present (nonappearance constitutes the very core of being disappeared) nor absent (the figure of the *desaparecido* is now ubiquitous in discussions of the recent violent past). As I began to explore in my previous chapter, in *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida examines the state of Marxism in the current political field. Following a deconstructionist model he locates the present in an in-between space:

The disjointure in the very presence of the present, this sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself (this radical untimeliness or this anachrony on the basis of which we are trying here to *think the ghost*). (25)

Derrida argues that Marxism's presence remains in this temporality, as a spectral figure, a spectral moment, a living on with which we must learn to reckon (XX). This opening premise recalls Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the figure of the *Muselmann* as a being located in a point between life and death, between the human and the non-human, between subjectivity and desubjectivity.

Similarly to the objects of the past, the bodies of the disappeared (with this I refer to their actual corporal beings) remain in this in-between temporality of an always

delayed forever-to-come.⁵⁹ The absence of their bodies has a spectral effect that undoes the opposition between past present and future present; there is a continual doubt regarding the possibility of their experience, of the encounter with their remains. What's more, even after that encounter with the material of the body, the frustration it produces in us as we attempt to read a whole truth from it, recalls to us simultaneously the demand for and the limitations of knowing. Derrida argues that the disjuncture in Marx's writings comes from the demand (which can never be always present, it can only be possible in order to remain a demand), from the immanence of revolution. The power of the disappeared, their ongoing political charge, stems from their absence coupled with the possibility of their return: "a funerary note already echoed there—crepuscular, spectral, and therefore resurrectional. Re-insurrectional" (Derrida 36). This re-insurrectional aspect of the presence-to-come does not need to wait for the body's re-appearance, for the act of re-appearing would negate its insurrectional quality; it would negate its power. This is the political power of the disappeared body that threatens return, this is why Derrida insists that we must learn to speak with ghosts.

The ghosts of the disappeared affect political power via their motivational quality (see Gordon). For this reason, we see the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo drawing inspiration from the past political acts of their children and wearing scarves with the names of their missing children in their efforts to create change in the present. The scarf is a spectral object haunted by the disappeared person, whose ghostly presence in society

⁵⁹ This recalls Michael Lazzara's assertion that "the disappeared persist in a kind of limbo *between* life and death—like specters haunting the living, wanting to be heard, acknowledged and remembered" (102).

conjures forth the always-to-come disappeared, speaking with their absence. In much the same way, the body of the child of disappeared parents is a spectral object haunted by this disappearance. The identification of his/her body as a present manifestation of the DNA of the past generation marks the child with the simultaneous absence of his/her parent as a living subject and presence of a part of that parent, in his/her own DNA. The identification/restitution of the child conjures forth the knowledge of the past, yet the continuing absence of the parent creates an ongoing expectancy/doubt over that which is to come. Reappearance through restitution of identity is only ever partial, yet it speaks with the absence of the disappeared parents and attempts to decipher information about the past.

As Derrida notes, there is not a singular specter of Marx that haunts, but a multiplicity of his previous being. Deciphering equals a species of transformation. In the case of Marx, deciphering re-codes his words. Similarly, the interaction with the specter of the disappeared changes from person to person, from child to child. Each invocation of the disappeared's specter remains marked by not only that particular spectral memory but also the subjectivity of the invoking person. It will never be the same evocation as the original, but it will always retain a piece of the original.⁶⁰ This evocation reads in

⁶⁰ The notion of the copy versus the original (and the evocation's variability) is important to consider in connection to the generation of HIJOS and the way in which the material body speaks through DNA. Victor Penchaszadeh, one of the members of the team that developed the DNA testing for grandpaternity that is used to identify children of disappeared parents when parental DNA is not available, explains: "An essential peculiarity of the genome is its *variability*. That is, any particular pair of genes for a given characteristic may differ within an individual and among individuals. . . Individuals vary in their genetic endowment and this variability is inherited . . . using a large number of markers it is possible to *exclude* paternity in almost 100% of cases in which the

Derrida's terms as "conjuring": "For to conjure means also to exorcise: to attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonized, diabolical force, most often an evil-doing spirit, a specter, a kind of ghost who comes back or who still risks coming back post-mortem" (48). This is the danger of the disappeared for efforts at transitional democracy that want to exorcise the demonizing memory of the past: "effective exorcism pretends to declare the death only in order to put to death" (48). The fact that "the dead can often be more powerful than the living" (48) is observed in the political activism by H.I.J.O.S and the Madres and Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo, all of whom formed as groups after, and as a direct result of, the disappearance of their parents, children, and grandchildren. The destabilizing/revolutionary efforts attempted by those who eventually disappeared now, after disappearance, after conversion into a spectral presence, reach their culmination, their lasting destabilizing effect: "La lucha que nos parió." Thus, while for Derrida "the enemy to be conjured away is Marxism" (50), in the case of postdictatorship Southern Cone Latin America, the enemy to be conjured forth (and away) is both the memory of violence, of trauma, the legacy of disappearance, and the legacy of a political fight stopped in its tracks. Yet, that cannot be done so long as material traces continue to emerge. For, each emergence, each new identification of a

putative father is not the real father. Conversely, the very fact of failing to exclude a putative father as the real father, assigns a high probability that the man is indeed the biological father. This is called the *probability of inclusion*" (295–97). While Derrida's comments refer to the individual who speaks with the ghost and the way in which each of these conversations brings with it a different background that nuances the encounter, the reading of the child's body is a conversation that does not change in this way. DNA results can be replicated, are invariable, and for this reason constitute a very concrete form of conjuring, of accessing the past.

disappeared child is a return of the ghost, a conjured moment of spectral testimony that works in the present to negate closure and to reactivate the fight for memory.

In lieu of ontology, Derrida argues for the practice of hauntology (a performative interpretation, an interpretation that transforms what it interprets). Thus, in the case of the postdictatorship, the study of the disappeared via an approximation of “hauntology” transforms the object of the disappeared (the discussion of their absent bodies) into a discourse that challenges the dominant, hegemonic narrative of forgetting. Derrida asserts that we have to “assume the inheritance” (54) of Marxism. In the case of Argentina, the children of the disappeared quite literally assume this inheritance, genetically continuing the material of the bodies of their parents by their very *being* in this world. The practice of “hauntology,” the transformation of the object into a discourse that challenges, is observed in the ongoing efforts to conjure forth the lost voices of the past via a performative interpretation of the material.

In 1984, the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF) was formed in order to “investigate the cases of at least 9,000 disappeared people in Argentina under the military government that ruled from 1976–1983” (eAAF.org). The group formed out of a request by the CONADEP and the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* for assistance from the Science and Human Rights Program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in order to search for children that disappeared with their parents. The AAAS sent a delegation to Argentina to help the two groups and in the process they found mass exhumations already underway. They called for an immediate halt to the exhumations until specially trained archaeologists, anthropologists, and physicians could

be called in to help. Among those in the initial delegation was reknown forensic anthropologist Dr. Clyde Snow who helped train the thirteen member team that currently makes up the EAAF (see Joyce and Stover). Forensic identification of bodies, both the remains of the dead who have been localized and the bodies of children of the disappeared, is an act of material reading (performative interpretation) that deciphers hauntings of material entities. But, what's more it's a reading of information that was present all along. Forensic anthropology simply acts as the translator that speaks with the ghost that haunted the remains waiting to be heard. The work of the EAAF conjures forth these ghostly traces of the past, deciphers their meanings and, in so doing, speaks in the present with the haunted remnants of the past: "Applying forensic anthropology and related sciences, and in close collaboration with victims and their relatives, EAAF aims to recover and identify remains, return them to families and provide evidence in court proceedings. Through this work, we seek to shed light on human rights violations, contributing to the search for truth, justice, reparation and prevention of violations" (eAAF.org). Carlos Somigliana, of the EAAF, explains how such decipherings suture together past and present:

La identificación lo que hace es atar esa distancia como un jarrón que está roto, lo volvés a pegar, podes volver a establecer toda la historia. Permite volver a ese hilo, reconstruir una realidad que es dolorosa, pero que termina de cerrar el círculo de esa vida en términos del conocimiento de lo que pasó. Cuál fue el final, con quiénes, de qué manera, en qué lugar, quién lo dispuso. Eso es lo mágico, abandonás generalidades en las que es muy difícil hacer pie y hablás de hechos

concretos y específicos en términos individuales, pero también colectivos.

(Dandan)

The work of the EAAF and of forensic anthropology is a direct example of the move away from the voice and toward the material in narrating the past. As Joyce and Stover assert: “Though the dead may speak softly, only failure to listen and interpret the evidence can dishonor their final testament” (241). One of the EAAF’s objectives is to “contribute to the historical reconstruction of the recent past, often distorted or hidden by the parties or the government institutions which are themselves implicated in the crimes under investigation” (eAAF.org). Even before the emergence of DNA testing, Snow created a procedure for accessing the past held in human remains that he calls “osteobiography”: “a very informative way of putting together the life history of the individual from the evidence preserved in the skeleton” (Snow qtd. in Weizman 68). Snow’s work in Argentina created the original experts of the EAAF and his findings with the group were used as forensic testimony in the 1985 trial of the military juntas. Regarding that experience, Snow observes: “to be effective as an expert witness, you have to learn that in a way you’re translating the skeletons themselves. The bones are the ones telling the story. Bones make wonderful witnesses: they don’t forget, they don’t lie.” (Snow qtd. in Weizman 72). The work of the forensic expert, then is the performative interpretation germane to *hauntology* as Derrida describes it.

However, it is important to recognize that such an interpretation tends toward the creation of a narrative that is of necessity quite limited. The reading of the body, the osteobiography created by Snow, the reliance on the revelatory capacity of DNA, does

not render the whole picture sought by families of the disappeared: it does not fulfill what is sought by the “intensa voluntad de búsqueda de rescatar la historia de ese individuo” (da Silva Catela), but rather creates a narrative limited to that material we have available with which to speak. Just as Pepe’s foot revealed an incomplete truth about the past to Vicky in *Nostalgia de la luz*, the spectral testimony we read in the material of the body at once gives us information we seek, and at the same time calls attention to its own incomplete nature. In the present, a similar phenomenon is occurring with the identification of the appropriated children of the disappeared. Restitution of identity simultaneously reveals a truth about the past and opens up a plethora of questions that conjure forth the violence of the past, that call attention to a hidden/inaccessible knowledge that the appropriated child to that point in his/her life was not even conscious that s/he was missing.

The children of the disappeared that were appropriated at birth, or shortly thereafter, and raised as the children of military families, are in some circles known as “*desaparecidos con vida*” (disappeared with life)⁶¹, the collocation of this identity sets them both in relation to their parents (both being *desaparecidos*) and apart from them (the children carry the adjectival identifier *con vida* while neither the same modifier nor its antonym [*con muerte*] can be attributed to their parents). Formed in 1995, the group H.I.J.O.S describes itself not as a political organization, but as “un agrupamiento [. . .] Una red. Es como encontrar a un hermano” (Martorell 163). H.I.J.O.S, animated bodies,

⁶¹ This is the terminology Ana Ros uses in her study to refer to the children who were appropriated during the dictatorship. It is also the term employed by Luz, the daughter of disappeared parents, to refer to her own circumstances in Osorio’s *A veinte años, Luz*.

living witnesses to the past existence of the disappeared (even if they don't remember them), tangible evidence of their parents having been, the physical remainder, the residue of their parents' former being, in this organization actively work together against the repression of the past. Felipe Pigna writes "H.I.J.O.S dio un nuevo impulso a la lucha contra la impunidad e instaló en la sociedad una novedosa forma de protesta: los 'escraches,' consistentes en señalar el domicilio de ex represores y difundir sus 'currícula.'" (197). Diana Taylor has argued that the participation of the children of the disappeared in such public activism as the *escraches* constitutes a DNA of performance, an inheritance drawing on the methods of the past generation: "Just as generations share genetic materials, which these groups have actively traced through DNA testing, there are performance strategies—what I will provisionally call the DNA of performance—that link their forms of activism" ("DNA of Performance" 154).⁶² Indeed, the campaign slogan of H.I.J.O.S, "La lucha que nos parió," emphatically marks the activism of the organization with a biological language connecting its fight to that of its members' disappeared parents – it is from their parents' struggles that the group draws its existence, both in inheriting the strategies they use to continue to resist the legacy of the repression of the past and in physically doing so with bodies whose biological origins lie within the disappeared bodies of their parents.

⁶² Ana Ros argues that through the *escrache* "the members of H.I.J.O.S. showed that the *desaparecidos* were a collective problem. The ultimate message was that collective awareness and punishment were crucial to rebuild community links broken by social trauma, and to start relating to each other outside of the dictatorial logic" (29).

For many members that make up the generation of H.I.J.O.S, their own status as children of disappeared parents is unknown, they remain disappeared.⁶³ This fact, this legacy of disappearance with life, has created the circumstances for a very specific narrative of bodily testimony, what I will call here (following Judith Roof) the “poetics of DNA.” Since 1977, the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* have been working to identify those children who remain “*desaparecido con vida*,” living victims who were kidnapped, deprived of knowing their identities and raised by military families as their own children. In 1987, after much activism by human rights groups such as the Grandmothers, *Ley 23511* (Law 23511) was passed and *El Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos* was created. The bank

surgió como necesidad durante la recuperación democrática para la identificación genética de hijos/as de personas desaparecidas por el Terrorismo de Estado entre 1976 y 1983 y que fueron privados de su identidad y apropiados por represores de acuerdo a un plan sistemático diseñado e implementado desde las más altas jerarquías de la dictadura militar. (Ministerio de Ciencia)

H.I.J.O.S’s slogan, the efforts of *Abuelas*, and the genetic data bank all merge within the post-dictatorship to create a rhetoric attached to the testimonial capacity of the body, a very specific manifestation of what Judith Roof has elsewhere referred to as the “poetics of DNA,” the phenomenon in which science looks for an accessible rhetoric with which to present its advances to the public, but during which, simultaneously, that public

⁶³ As Federico Finchelstein notes, “Los hijos en cautiverio también están en cierto sentido desaparecidos en tanto desconocen y por lo tanto continúan el robo de la identidad biológica de sus padres muertos” (165).

rhetoric turns back to influence science. In the postdictatorship it is not only science, but the merging of science with the desire for collective memory that influences this poetics. A clear example is the coordination between the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and researchers in the United States to develop a genetic test for grandpaternity when the appropriated childrens' disappeared parents (or, in lieu of these live beings, the materiality of their corpses) were unavailable to provide DNA samples (Gandsman 442). In this instance, the cultural desire for identity and the political circumstances of disappearance influenced the ongoing genetic research. The poetics of this research simultaneously turns back on society and informs publicity campaigns created by *Abuelas* (such as the one described at the outset of this chapter), and, again, is emphasized in the campaign slogan "la lucha que nos parió." In highlighting the bodily connection between one generation and another, such a poetics implicitly conjures forth the genetic continuity between the two generations, the material link held in parentage and emphasized in references to the truth-telling capacities of DNA. Such a poetics of DNA continues to inform narrative accounts of the fight to discover one's identity in the post-dictatorship and how memory/information is perceived to be stored in the body itself.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Here, I recall Elaine Scarry's repeated assertion in *The Body in Pain* that "What is 'remembered' in the body is well remembered" (109; 110; 112-13).

La identidad no se impone: The Poetics of DNA

The programmatic disappearance of identified “subversives” during the dictatorships was carried out not only on these peoples, but also contained an element which sought to eliminate further generations, kidnapping and re-indoctrinating children through their adoption into military and military-sympathizer families. As Diana Taylor asks of us, these bodies must be approached from the perspective of a “resistant spectator” (Disappearing Acts 21) who seeks to discern the ideological layers attributed to these biological objects. I say biological objects because, to some extent, the body of the child of the disappeared is emphatically scripted in the postdictatorship as a truth-telling *genetic* object (rather than a knowing subject), another piece of forensic evidence that offers itself up for reading and analysis.

Prior to the emergence of DNA testing as a method to confirm appropriation and reconstitute the child to his/her original identity, the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* were already emphasizing the bodily tie between mother and child in an effort to create awareness about their missing grandchildren. An advertising poster from 1977–1978, reads “mamá” across the top, marking it indelibly with a narrative of parentage. The poster features a pastiche of photographs of children (many held in the arms of grandmothers identified as members of the organization by the white handkerchiefs they wear on their heads), an image of a visibly pregnant woman, a card made by a child dedicated “para vos mamá,” and a poem that asks “¿adónde están?” (76.11 *Afiches* np). The child in this advertisement is linked to the figure of the mother, motherhood/birth (and thus, bodily inheritance and DNA) is depicted as the foundation of identity. Another poster from the

1980s shows a child seated on a street corner, two silhouettes, presumably those of his disappeared parents, walk down the sidewalk behind him, specters from the past always a step behind, they never fully arrive at the same place where the child sits. The advertisement reads “Estoy triste y espero”; “Y yo los voy a seguir buscando. Por vos papá, por vos mamá, por todos los papás desaparecidos, por los chicos secuestrados y la niñez que nos robaron. Te lo prometo papá habrá JUSTICIA.” (76.11 *Afiches* n .pag.). This advertisement elaborates a view of the child as haunted not only by the disappearance of his parents, but by the violence of the past. The child is the one who will carry on the legacy of the outcome of his parents’ revolutionary activities. The fight for justice is the child’s inherited legacy, engrained into his very being, passed down to him along with his genes.

Such advertisements, created by the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* produced a conditioned field in which those who discovered they were children of disappeared parents would need to adapt in order to exist. The image of the child haunted by the specters of his parents created at once a poetics of DNA, locating memory and a past truth in the body, and an expectation for action, based solely upon a genetic tie. In more recent advertisements, the focus on DNA testing as a form of identifying crimes committed in the past places the body of the child of disappeared parents in a privileged testimonial position. It is the body, its material, that holds the memory and evidence of what happened in the past. But, what’s more, in many cases, the physical traits of the children of the disappeared bear resemblance to those of their parents. Although they have now surpassed the age of their disappeared parents, the continuities between the two

generations stand out.⁶⁵ As anthropologist Marius Kwint argues: “human memory can be regarded as a mere elaboration of the basic ability of all organisms to ‘read’ the substances that surround and constitute them (beginning with their own DNA)” (2). Over the years, the publicity campaigns of the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* have highlighted this bodily capacity to tell, to create memory, to testify to a truth from the past that lies hidden in the present, and have drawn attention to Argentine society’s responsibility to learn to read such truths. For example, one advertisement [Figure 17] shows a hand, with cloth tied around each finger that obstructs the fingerprint from being read. Its tagline reads “la identidad no se impone.” The truth is there, in the flesh, and, even though it may be temporarily hidden, it may not be imposed. Identity and the body lie disappeared beneath the cloth, but are *present* and waiting to be revealed. The identity that cannot be imposed is speaking, waiting to be engaged in dialogue and heard.

⁶⁵ The quote from the beginning of this chapter from Horacio Pietragalla highlights this aspect. He explains that in his quest to find out who he was: “Faltaba saber digamos de qué familia era. A todo esto, ya mi novia se había metido en internet y había encontrado una foto de la . . . de mi mamá. Y vio tan parecido el rostro que . . . en primero . . . que me dijo ‘para mí es tu mamá.’ Y era mi mamá” (*El último confín*). Pietragalla’s encounter with his mother takes place first through the perception of similar physical features - his own body an echo of, an encounter with, the specter of his mother.



Figure 17 *Afiches de la memoria*

In their insistence that all children be tested and that all identities be scrutinized, the *Abuelas* created a climate of doubt that surrounds all those born in the generation of HIJOS. They also created a collective memorial responsibility for this generation to learn to read such material from the past in order to contribute to the construction of that lost memory of their parents' generation. As Ari Gandsman notes, the attitude promulgated by *Abuelas* created an atmosphere in which genetic truth became *the* privileged way of knowing the past:

That genes have the power to reveal secrets is part of the popular ideology of contemporary genetics (Konrad 2003; Novas and Rose 2000). These secrets—the mysteries of our origins—are seen to provide truth. This genetic truth is a pure and fundamental truth held to be of a higher order than other truths. (450); Intuitive knowledge must be confirmed genetically. Intuitive knowledge can be deceptive, and genetic technologies can resolve doubt. (450)

This privileging of genetic identity as a confirmation of truth is founded on and disseminated by the poetics of DNA created by the advertisements made by *Abuelas*.

Angustia congénita: *A veinte años, Luz*

In the 1998 novel *A veinte años, Luz*, Elsa Osorio weaves the story of a child of disappeared parents who, upon giving birth to her own son, experiences the strange sensation that there is something about her origins that does not quite add up. The novel's depiction of Luz's discovery of her true identity as a child of a disappeared mother reveals the clear impact the emergence of this poetics of DNA has had on the perception of memory and identity as held in the body, and demonstrates how a spectral testimony held in the physical material of the body lies ready and waiting to emerge and speak a truth about the past.

At the age of 22, the novel's protagonist, Luz, embarks on a journey of self discovery, slowly unweaving the tale of her birth and true parentage (she was born to a mother being held in captivity during the Dirty War, who is later killed and disappeared while Luz herself is appropriated by a military general for his own daughter, Mariana, whose child is stillborn). While a fictional text, and thus not a *testimonio* according to the traditional definitions of the genre explored in chapter three, the novel relates an invented story of a young woman struggling to discover her disappeared identity that resonates with the stories of many HIJIS.⁶⁶ Due to this connection, Osorio's text has been marked by some as an alternative form of testimony. For instance, Nancy Gates Madsen relies on

⁶⁶ Here, I employ the gender-neutral term "hijis," as used by Mariana Pérez (a member of the organization HIJOS and herself an appropriated child) in her Blog Project *Diario de una princesa montonera*, as well as in her subsequent book published under the same title.

Kimberley Nance's definition of the genre as being defined by the text's activist role in order to call the novel *testimonio*, though Madsen cautions that the text, in its very specific representation of Luz's story, may elide, take away from, or even misrepresent the true stories of children who were disappeared with life.

The poetics of DNA and body memory⁶⁷ inform the narrative development of the novel in several ways. At the novel's center is the notion that the body holds a truth that has the potential to interrupt the narrative of forgetting (disappearing) that reigns from the repressive past. For this reason the body of Liliana, Luz's birth mother, must be effectively destroyed in order to both make her unidentifiable and to eliminate traces that she had given birth. Luz's captor mother, Mariana, throughout most of the text does not know of her child's true parentage. Nonetheless, the specter of Luz's birthmother continuously emerges (even before Mariana's discovery that her child is not biologically her own)⁶⁸ via Luz's genetic characteristics. In the text, Osorio employs a poetics of

⁶⁷ I am purposefully using the term "body memory" versus "embodied memory" here because it is important to keep in mind the distinction between memories that Luz is aware of and memory from the past that lies ingrained in her body, a phantom from the past that threatens to emerge at any moment, outside of the careful controls that have been put in place to inhibit this truth from coming to light.

⁶⁸ Mariana's father (Alfonso) pressures his son-in-law (Eduardo) to conspire with him to replace Mariana's stillborn son with a baby that Alfonso obtains from a woman who gives birth in detention, (in Pozo de Banfield), but Mariana herself remains oblivious to Luz's true origins. Similarly, Eduardo for a long time doesn't know exactly how Alfonso obtained Luz for them, just that she was not their true biological child. Luz affirms this, saying "No, no era un milico Eduardo. Y tampoco justificaba todo. No creo, de ningún modo, que Alfonso le haya dicho la verdad sobre la beba. Le debe haber contado cualquier cosa, que era de una mujer que no la quería. Es más, sé que no le dijo la verdad" (913). And when, through his own investigation, Eduardo's suspicions of Luz's past are confirmed, he fears that if he were to tell Mariana who Luz really is, she would refuse to continue to accept her as her own child: "¿quiere Mariana la nena que le

DNA to foreshadow the lingering truth of Luz's birth that is destined to eventually emerge. Throughout the text, the body is the ultimate hurdle to be overcome in truly suppressing, indeed permanently hiding, Luz's origin. The text emphasizes Luz's physical features ("Está tranquila, los ojos bien abiertos, claros, clarísimos" [2194]). An unchangeable aspect of her body, it is Luz's eye color that is inconsistent with Mariana's features, yet resonates with the descriptions in the text of Liliana, Luz's birthmother ("son como cuchillos esos ojos tan verdes que tiene [Liliana]" [1321]). The memory that lies in the body threatens to emerge and it has to be countered with a false narrative of invented excuses. Eduardo, in response to Mariana's question of whether their new baby has green or blue eyes, explains "en los bebés el color de los ojos no se define hasta más adelante" (2113). Luz's eye color (her genetics) cast doubt on her origin, both for her and for the rest of the family ("Pero en que son idénticos, se dijo Laura, si Mariana los tiene castaños y esta nena es obvio que los tiene claros . . . Aquí hay algo raro, Javier" [2689]). Luz's physical features are the hurdle that must be overcome in order to sustain the lie of her parentage: "Su consuegra le dio la razón: tenía algo de Eduardo, y para ser gentil añadió: aunque los ojos son los de Mariana" (2667). Yet, the lie cannot be sustained and the phantom of truth that haunts the material of Luz's body eventually emerges to be heard.

Upon finding out what Mariana's father did in replacing her stillborn son with a daughter he "acquired" from a woman who wants to give up her child for adoption⁶⁹,

consiguió vaya a saber como su padre? ¿está dispuesta a aceptar como suya una hija de otros?" (2073).

⁶⁹ Notably, Mariana's discovery of Luz's origins are still only half of the truth.

Eduardo explains how Mariana reacts and blames Luz's unacceptable behavior on her genes, reflecting:

Lo primero que te sacó de quicio fue cuando Mariana te dijo que ahora entiende algunas cosas de Luz que le parecían incompatibles, y le reventaban: Por qué gritaba así de chiquita, esas pesadillas, y ese hablar con cualquiera como si todos fuéramos iguales, a veces parece que le gusta más estar con Carmen [her nanny] que con nosotros, y otras cosas, no sé, cómo se levanta el camisón cuando se hace la que baila, su manera de moverse, ¡y tiene siete años!, esa desfachatez que tiene, cómo le sonrío a cualquiera. Mariana siempre se preguntó de dónde salían esas actitudes tan poco de una hija suya. Son cosas genéticas, seguro. (4654–4655)

Once she finds out Luz is not her own child, Mariana repeatedly blames Luz's genes for any behavior she perceives as contrary to how Luz ought to behave. Any and all signs of rebellion are blamed on Luz's genetics. Luz's body, these faulty genes, are inherited from her disappeared mother and along with them she 'assumes the inheritance' of the 'unacceptable' side of the political fight, both in body and in action, and the specters of this past return and re-emerge through her actions. Eventually, Luz experiences a repressed memory that makes her begin to doubt her true parentage and she embarks on a journey of self-discovery that plays out over the material. Mariana's preoccupation with Luz's genetics evidences a worry that ideology is also inherited:

Y después, cuando volvió con lo de clarita, ojos verdes, linda, porque no vamos a negar que es linda, pero también se heredan otras cosas, ¿o no? Eso es lo que me

preocupa. Quién sabe cómo era la madre, una cualquiera, una puta, bah, que otra cosa puede ser para regalar a la hija. (4654)

Mariana's turn to the body in an effort to understand the past shows that the poetics of DNA that emerged in the post-dictatorship affected not only those who truly hope for information about the past, but also the way in which the political actions of the disappeared are presented as coded in the bodily material leftover from the past even for those who wish to know nothing about them.

Later, when Luz is a teenager and Mariana has remarried, she explains Luz's behavior to Daniel, her new husband in the following terms: "Es así, ya sabes, desde chiquita. Es genético. Siempre angustiada, siempre con cara de perro asustado" (5614). Anguish, a sensation, an attitude, is engrained in Luz's body and comes and goes at uncontrollable moments. Regarding Mariana's remark, the Luz that narrates the novel reflects:

En cierto sentido mamá tiene razón. Yo siempre tuve esos estados de angustia, de desasosiego. Ese no saber qué hacer, sentir que no estoy en mi lugar, en mi casa. Y va más allá de las peleas con mamá, y del malestar que me producen las miradas de Daniel, sus 'monos,' porque antes me pasaba porque sí también, sin ninguna razón en especial. Un miedo a algo que no sé qué es, como si tuviera un enorme peso sobre mí. O en cualquier momento algo o alguien pudiera atacarme. (5614)

Luz is haunted by this "angustia congenita"—she feels it emerge through her, out of her control, "en cualquier momento." Like the object, haunted by a very specific past, Luz's

body is haunted by its past, by the past presence of her mother. Her actions, while observed by Mariana as stemming from her genes due to a faulty heritage, are symptoms of the ghost's comings and goings. Luz cannot dialogue directly with the anguish she feels, but she knows it is there and it affects her actions in the present.

Luz, while still a small child, suffers from nightmares. Mariana describes the crises that Luz has at night: “los ojos abiertos como platos, esos ojos tan claritos y brillantes que parecían incendiarse y esos gritos de terror, como si estuvieran matándola” (3198). Noticeably the night terrors are presented through a description of Luz’s eyes—connecting the terrors with the apparition of her disappeared mother. After taking her to a pediatrician who diagnoses the night terrors as nightmares, Mariana asks herself “Pero con qué puede soñar, tan chiquita” (3198). In the words of the novel, the anguish is congenital; it comes from something prior to her arrival at the home of Mariana and Eduardo: “Luz creció con esos padres, con alguna angustia congénita, como decía mama, pero con alegría también” (2858). The combination of nightmares as a child, described through the same physical comments that connect Luz to Liliana, and the diagnosis of a congenital anguish, mark the novel with a poetics of DNA and the notion that memory (especially traumatic memory, and, along with it, a hidden truth about the past) can be inherited through the body, lying dormant yet waiting to emerge and reveal itself.

The first notable return of the ghost of the past in the novel occurs with the emergence of a memory Luz has long forgotten. It is Luz’s physical contact with the rubber nipple of her newborn son’s bottle that first conjures forth negative memories and prompts her quest to find out her real parentage:

Mi búsqueda empezó por el simple contacto con la goma de la tetina de una mamadera que me regalaron cuando nació Juan. Es curioso, yo creo, no, estoy segura de que en algún lugar de la memoria, o de mi cuerpo, yo tenía marcado ese día. (2051)

The contact with this object conjures forth a memory that Luz has carried inside of her since infancy. The memory that emerges is the first sign of many readings of her body that are to come. Luz as a child was forced to wean prematurely due to her birthmother's captivity and subsequent death/disappearance. The woman who cared for her in those initial days of her life, Miriam, explains the moment she first gives Luz a bottle:

Lili [Luz] se arranca la tetina de la mamadera y llora. Abre la boca como desesperada buscando en el aire la teta de la mamá, y yo le encajo esa goma horrible y la vuelve a escupir. . . Me la pongo contra mí, para que sienta mi calor, como hacía Liliana cuando le daba de mamar, y al fin ella se prende, debe estar muerta de hambre. 'Sí, tomá, Lili, preciosa, tomá esta leche, aunque no sea tan rica como la de mami. Ella no está más, querida, vas a tener que tomar esto.'

(2051)

Luz's first experience with the rubber nipple of a bottle is a direct result of the death of her birth mother, a hidden/forgotten memory that later emerges via the body, via a reaction to an object nearly twenty years after the fact.⁷⁰ Luz (her body) as an

⁷⁰ In his discussion of the disappeared, Michael Lazzara remarks in passing that "a poetic device like metonymy—whereby a shoe, a ring, a pair of eyeglasses, or some other personal object belonging to a "disappeared" victim might, by its presence, allude to the stark absence of a real body—can also function in art to help us *feel* what is not there"

appropriated child is the evidence of the criminal act of appropriation; her DNA can prove that she is not the biological child of Mariana and Eduardo. Like this memory that emerges through her contact with her son's bottle, Luz has always carried an anguish within her, a phantom from the past waiting to emerge. She reflects:

Yo creo, pero claro que esto lo pensé mucho mas tarde, cuando empecé esta búsqueda, que cuando se convive con algo que se ignora, de alguna manera se lo presiente como algo horrible, inquietante. Y yo durante muchos años tuve esta inquietud . . . esta angustia, algo amorfo, que no siempre se apoyaba en algún hecho, que surgía así, porque si, como si fuera parte de mi personalidad. (3960)

This "inquietud," this "angustia congénita," lead Luz to believe and to continue to insist even after failing to find a match for her DNA in the genetic data bank established by the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo that she *is* the child of disappeared parents. Like the ghost that haunts the object (Chapter Three), the past presence of Liliana remains in Luz's body and this ghost of the past cannot be ignored; it is engrained in her genetics even if it cannot be transparently read:

Igual que el miedo, no sé a que, no es un peligro concreto sino *algo informe que esta siempre acechándome*. Es algo muy viejo, que me acompañó siempre, será 'genético,' como dice mama. (5627, my emphasis)

Luz continues to search, continues to insist that there is something in her that must be uncovered, even as the Abuelas themselves tell her that perhaps she may be mistaken. Her efforts finally do uncover the truth about the past, but only because she learns to

(103). For a consideration of how objects metonymically affect the general public in the wake of atrocity, see Saona.

dialogue with “esa cosa negra siniestra” (5639) as Mariana names it for Luz. Regarding this label, Luz reflects: “Puede ser que tenga razón porque eso que no sé cómo llamar es una cosa negra, que no deja ver nada, y lo tengo puesto desde que me acuerdo” (5640).

For Carlos, Luz herself is a specter from the past, who, upon learning to “read”/ “speak” with this inherited legacy, encounters her father, Carlos, in Spain. For Carlos, Luz is the return of the ghost of the child his *compañera*, Liliana, had lost after she was detained. Carlos explains that Liliana’s mother didn’t know her daughter had been pregnant⁷¹ and that even he believed Luz to have been a son who died.⁷² Luz begins to tell him her story and upon arriving at the point where Liliana is killed, pauses. She and Carlos: “Se quedaron largo rato en silencio, Luz con la cara agachada. Cuando Luz alzó la mirada y vio que Carlos la estaba mirando, los ojos enrojecidos, no tuvo ninguna duda de que el ya sabía, y lo creía, que ella era su nena. Su hija” (1969). Luz need not tell Carlos who she is, it is a realization that he comes to on his own. And, when Carlos realizes Luz is his daughter, he asks himself: “¿Que había allí, en el fondo de esos ojos verdes, incendiándose?, se preguntó Carlos. ¿Odio? No, pero un sentimiento tan intenso como el odio que Carlos lo recibió sin poder nombrarlo. No podía desprenderse de esa suerte de azote verde . . .” (2329). Even Carlos, who knows very little of Luz’s story, her search, identifies something in the back of her eyes, emerging through her body. Even if

⁷¹ “La madre de Liliana no sabía que estaba embarazada. Fue su decisión no decírselo, para no angustiarse más. La vio dos o tres veces desde que pasamos a la clandestinidad, pero entonces el embarazo no se le notaba mucho, y Liliana lo disimuló con un abrigo. Yo respete su decisión” (5159).

⁷² “Cuando llamó Teresa, mi padre le comunicó lo que todos creímos: que Liliana había muerto después del parto y que su bebe nació muerto. No había por qué luchar, qué buscar” (5159).

he can't name what he sees, the sense that is conjured forth for him is enough. This *angustia congenita*, this *sentimiento tan intenso*, this *cosa negra siniestra* from the past re-emerges through Luz at unexpected moments of her life. In the end it is this emergence from the past that brings her to her birthfather, that reveals to her the true story of her origins, a truth meant to be covered over and forgotten. Upon finding Carlos, he responds to her story of this "cosa negra siniestra" that animated her search with an analogy that once and for all connects Luz's plight to that of her mother: "Como el tabique. Una cosa negra que no deja ver nada. Pero te lo quitaste en fin" (5640).

Children of the Resistance / Children as Resistance: The Body as Material Ideology

Also included in *A veinte años*, Luz is a representation of the critique rendered by children of the disappeared toward their parents. Luz mentions to her biological father, Carlos, in one instance: "podrían haber pensado que quizás no eran condiciones para tener un hijo" (1719). When Carlos responds that they had wanted a child ("Lo deseábamos" [1719]), Luz counters:

No te parece que si estaban tan jugados a la revolución, podrían haber pensado si tenían derecho a exponer a ese hijo que querían tener a tales situaciones, a desaparecer, como ustedes mismos, a perder su identidad. Esos bebes no habían tenido la oportunidad de elegir en función de tal o cual ideología correr ese riesgo, como sus padres. Fueron ustedes quienes se lo impusieron" (1725); Ellos, los asesinos, pero antes mis propios padres, me expusieron a ese terrible destino de ser desaparecido . . . con vida (1725).

Luz's critique is not just an invention by Osorio, it is based on the very real sentiments of children who lost their parents.⁷³ However, at the heart of the matter lies Carlos's revelatory comment "lo deseábamos" (1725) which points to the child's very existence as a result of an independent desire on the part of the parents.

While the body of the disappeared subject (whether parent or child) offers a forensic truth about the past, it is also the case that the child's bodily existence is in itself an example of a spectral testimony left through the actions of his/her parents. The child's body is the material proof of his/her parents having been, it is the telos between past and present, regardless of whether that true parentage is known. In the case of a number of children, their body is also the haunted material manifestation of an ideology of resistance, of a deliberate act of rebellion within circumstances of great oppression. Like the artifact that stands as an extension of the prisoner as I explored in chapter two, the child's body, here, is the made-material agency of the parents. The child is the direct result of decisions made by his/her parents entirely of their own volition in situations and a political atmosphere in which they possessed very little independence or control.

The documentary film *Encontrando a Víctor* relates the quest of Natalia Bruschtein to find more information about her past, specifically her disappeared father, Víctor. The film dramatizes her search, but also reveals a schism between the *hijos* and their parents' past political resistance. Bruschtein critically questions her parents' decision to conceive and give birth to her amidst their militancy. As Ros notes, "the sons and daughters of *desaparecidos* often struggle with the idea of not having been important

⁷³ A compelling representation of the expectations and stresses imposed on the children of the disappeared can be found in Mariana Pérez's *Diario de una princesa montonera*.

enough for their parents to stay out of harm's way" (Ros 81). It is precisely this feeling that informs Natalia's challenge to her mother. Her mother responds by telling Natalia that for Víctor and herself, having a child was a continuation of their resistance, of bringing new life into a shared community of caring:

Since there was such a deep affective bond among *compañeros* and we all thought, loved and felt so similarly, you knew that if something happened to you, a comrade would immediately replace your affection for your child, it was going to be alright and protected; there wasn't a risk that he or she wouldn't develop well (Bruschstein 2005). (qtd. in Ros 69)

Natalia's mother addresses Natalia's resentment toward their having exposed her to the possibility of such a loss as the disappearance of her father, saying:

Yours is a *legitimate* feeling but, although we took much care of you, we never pondered whether in the future you will feel our absence or be angry because we exposed ourselves. Our priority was that you live in a fairer world. And this might sound like a *cliché* today, but it was also a *legitimate* feeling (Bruschstein 2005). (qtd. in Ros 70)

What these comments reveal is that Natalia's very existence is the material result of a deliberate act on the part of her parents, a making material of their agency. As their child, she is the living proof of the actions of both her mother and her disappeared father. In this sense, her survival is an artifactual forensic testimony to the ideological fight of her parents. They were the ones that *decided* to have her, to give birth to her, to bring her into a community and a world they were fighting to make a reality. Like the *artesanias*

carcelarias and the *manualidades*, Natalia's body is the ideological struggle of her parents made manifest, made material, made physical. It is the *remain* left as a lasting legacy for the future, a reminder from the past in the present "fairer world" her parents dreamed of and struggled for.

This making-material of the agency of the parents via procreation is also demonstrated in the extraordinary story of one prisoner in Uruguay, Yessie Macchi, who was detained, lost her existing pregnancy, and managed to—entirely of her own volition—become pregnant and have a child while being held hostage by the dictatorship. Macchi's experience exemplifies to an extraordinary degree how pregnancy and the decision to have a child was a deliberate act of resistance against repression.⁷⁴ Captured in June of 1972 (after returning to militancy upon her escape from imprisonment), Macchi was beaten by a group of officials and lost her first pregnancy:

Cuando vienen por atrás me pegan un culatazo, todos arriba mío y me empiezan a golpear y yo instintivamente me agarré la barriga y dije 'aquí no.' Cinco mintos antes estaba diciendo 'asesinos, no se animan a matar a una mujer.' Pero en ese momento recordé mi embarazo. Y ahí fue donde pegaron los culatazos. Ya en el camino al Hospital Militar tuve una pérdida. (Macchi qtd. in Werner 24)

⁷⁴ Both a group of men and a group of women were held as *rehenes* during the Uruguayan dictatorship. The male group was made up of Adolfo Wasem, Raúl Sendic, Jorge Manera, Julio Marenales, José Mujica, Jorge Zabalza, Henry Engler, Mauricio Rosencof y Eleuterio Fernández (Rosencof 10). The female group was consisted of eleven prisoners: Alba Antúnez, Cristina Cabrera, Elisa Michelini, Flavia Schilling, Gracia Dri, Yessie Macchi, Lía aciel, Maria Elena Curbelo, Miriam Montero, Raquel Dupont, and Stella Sánchez (Ruiz and Sanseviero np). Incidentally, Yessie's daughter would be named Paloma, bearing the same name as the place in which she was conceived.

In May of 1973, Yessie is moved with another group of women to another prison in the interior of Uruguay, held captive as *rehenas* (hostages) at the *cuartel* (prison) known as La Paloma. While in prison, Yessie asks for and is granted permission to construct a shelf along the wall of her cell, on which to place the small items she has been able to keep while in the *calabozo*. Another prisoner, Mario Soto, is told to help her construct it. The walls of the cell “eran finitas y se deshacían de nada” (Macchi qtd. in Ruiz and Sanseviero 170). After having met Yessie, using the tools he was allowed to have in his cell in order to make *manualidades*, Mario made a hole in the wall through which they “entablaron una intensa relación” (Ruiz and Sanseviero 170).⁷⁵ Their relationship grew until Yessie proposed to Mario that they have a child. Yessie explains what she was feeling:

No sé qué pasaba dentro mío en esos momentos, pero creo que no haber elaborado mis duelos, la bronca que tenía adentro por tantos cuarteles, tanta tortura, venía un milico de otro cuartel y te dejaban en un cuarto con él y otra vez el toqueteo y la ‘máquina.’ Yo tenía una necesidad de rebeldía muy grande, porque además ya había pasado por el juez militar que me baboseó, me dijo que antes de 45 años no salía. Y yo de eso estaba segura, porque no había ninguna perspectiva de nada. (Macchi qtd. in Werner 29)

For Yessie, the circumstances of the prison, the removal of all possibility of personal agency produces in her the desire for rebellion. She explains to Mario, “que sentía

⁷⁵ “Él tenía permiso para hacer manualidades, y con las herramientas había horadado las paredes, que se caían de viejas y húmedas, hasta hacer un agujero. Una y otro se tapaban con sus colchas de un lado y otro de la medianera, y hablaban de noche” (Werner 28).

necesidad, que yo 45 años presa por delante no me quedaba nada que esperar, salvo resistir, aguantarme, pelearla, pero quería dejar algo mío que quedara. Él lo entendió” (Macchi qtd. in Ruiz and Sanseviero 172). Mario trades *manualidades* that he has made with a guard in exchange for a friendly guard’s help in making arrangements for he and Yessie to be together: “Yessi mencionó que hubo seis encuentros entre ella y Mario en los días que el soldado amigo estaba de guardia, hasta que finalmente quedó embarazada” (Ruiz and Sanseviero 173).

Yessie is careful to defend that her pregnancy is not the result of rape by military officials (even though it is true that she has been raped during her detention), but of a relationship of her own volition from within the confines of incarceration: “Esto no es producto de violación, pero desde ya le digo que a mí me han violado. Esto es producto de una relación voluntaria con otro preso” (Macchi qtd. in Werner 30). Macchi emphasizes that her child was the result of her own volition, her own actions, her individual agency and not the result of a rape by a prison guard. The child, her body, her very existence is due to the deliberate actions of her parents. As Macchi explains, “yo estaba muy orgullosa con mi embarazo, me parecía que era lo más grande que había podido lograr en toda mi vida” (Macchi qtd. in Werner 31). In this sense, the child’s body not only offers forensic testimony in the form of identifiable DNA, but in its very being offers a spectral testimony that evokes in the present the past actions of her parents’ resistance. Ruiz and Sanseviero report that:

El embarazo de Yessie es reconocido como el acontecimiento que interrumpe la ronda, y muchas personas lo identifican como expresión de resistencia al orden

terrorista en al menos tres planos: como demostración de las fisuras en el sistema de operación, como recuperación de la agencia de la prisionera sobre si misma y como sustracción—aunque sea fugaz—de la iniciativa política de los represores. (Ruiz and Sanseviero 179)

Definitively, Yessie's pregnancy and the circumstances that surrounded it confounds military logic and leads to the conclusion that "las mujeres no sirven para estar en los cuarteles" (Werner 31). Soon after the officials find out about the pregnancy, Yessie and the other *rehenas* are moved back to the Penal de Punta de Rieles. Ruiz and Sanseviero point out that while pregnancy was not the only form of resistance observable within the detention centers (the *manualidades* come to mind as another form seen in the Uruguayan context), "el embarazo hace explícita una pérdida del control de los militares sobre el territorio que se proponían dominar en forma absoluta: el cuerpo, las emociones y la conciencia de las rehenas" (179). Such an assertion underlines that pregnancy and procreation were acts of resistance to the status quo and the exercise of absolute control by the dictatorship. But, what's more, intentional pregnancy from within these conditions intentionally created the child's body as a privileged testimonial vessel, the material proof of the actions of the parents' militant past.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Birth continues to be a trope that marks the continuation of the fight of the previous generation: "De los desaparecidos nacieron sus Madres, Padres y Familiares; de los nietos apropiados sus Abuelas; con los sobrevivientes se aferró la verdad; de las luchas nacimos todos nosotros, los hijos de la misma historia" (Facebook of H.I.J.O.S. Capital, Jan 7, 2014).

Conclusion

In her study of the objects the dead leave behind in the wake of their passing, Margaret Gibson considers the body and its meaning postmortem. She argues “our bodies themselves are relics (and remainders) of the dead. Through processes of identification and mourning we encrypt within our own embodied selves the embodied selves of significant others” (95). Gibson’s observations are arguably heard even more strongly in relation to children of disappeared parents, many of whom were never even able to meet their mothers and fathers, but whose own bodies constitute relics (and remainders) of the past.

For a concluding example of the body as a relic that contains remainders of the past capable of yielding a spectral testimony, I turn to Mariana Eva Pérez, who was twenty days old when she was taken from her parents. At the time of her disappearance, her grandfather had only seen her a few times. Mariana suspected her parents were not her biological parents and upon receiving the results of her DNA analysis, she finds herself being introduced to an old man (her biological grandfather) by a judge. The old man looks at her hands and declares “tiene las manos grandes como mi nieta” (35). He repeats this observation, takes her hands into his and holds them “con el mismo cuidado y la misma seguridad con que se toca un pájaro asustado” (35). Then, her grandfather tells Mariana “mi nietita tiene un lunar en la cadera en forma de aceituna” (35). Mariana to this point in her life has believed what her captor mother had told her, that the mark that has so ashamed her during bathing suit season was a birthmark, the result of a pregnancy

craving for black olives (*aceitunas negras*). After this remark, Mariana believes the old man is her grandfather. He explains to her that

A mi papá le gustaba mucho mi lunar. Que cada vez que me cambiaba los pañales me daba un beso ahí. Mi papá pintaba. Y mi abuelo cuenta que mi papá decía que era una mancha de tinta china con la que él me había marcado para siempre. A mi mamá le daba un poco de pena pensar que tal vez nunca iba a querer ponerme bikini por culpa del lunar. Tenía razón. Pero mi papá decía que ese lunar era como su firma al pie del cuadro, de su cuadro más logrado, que era yo. (36)

Learning to read the body's secrets means revealing how “esas marcas son el tesoro que los represores no lograron borrar ni arrasar: restos, trazos, para reconstruir en la historia singular la historia de todos. Memoria que escribe la identidad, identidad de un sujeto, de un pueblo, de una generación” (Martorell 166). It is not just that, as Colin Davis eloquently states “the dead inhabit the minds of the living” (15), but that the specters of the past, specifically of disappeared parents, inhabit the bodies of their living children. The *mancha* that so ashamed Pérez becomes (or was it always?) a physical mark that destabilizes the standard of forgetting that the dictatorship made such an effort to guarantee through programmatic disappearance. Pérez's body (reappeared with life) cannot be silenced. Even amidst the horrific legacy of disappearance, the body speaks, evidences, reveals a dynamic past that refuses to disappear completely. The work of H.I.J.O.S, “como red—afectan al poder que ordena olvidar.” They are, and in the case of Pérez quite literally so, “la mancha que declara con su presencia lo que no se puede borrar, porque son el retoño vivo de lo que se quiso arrasar” (Martorell 167).

Chapter Five: Reappearance—Learning to Live and Speak with Ghosts

Much of the horror and fascination with death, as well as its comfort, stems from the knowledge that we will become solely material and meld with our surroundings, that the subject will return to the object.
(Marius Kwint 9)

Están conmigo en cada momento de dolor y de alegría.
(Ines Ulanovsky, *Fotos tuyas*)

La gente que murió, básicamente, era gente que estaba viva . . . la gente viva . . . la gente . . . sobre de todo . . . Víctor o . . . o mis hermanos. Vidas muy vitales. Entonces, este parece injusto que el recuerdo de ellos se convierta en recuerdos de muerte solamente”
(Natalia’s Uncle Luis, qtd. in *Encontrando a Víctor*)

Vivenciar es volver a vivir, con el afecto que ello hace emerger, recobrar algo de lo perdido en el presente o vivir—incluso—aquello que no llegó a vivirse como tal.
(Elvira Martorell 146)

Without memory and the representation of memory in the tangible object (which in turn stimulates memory), the currency of living exchange, the spoken word and the thought, would disappear without a trace.
(Hannah Arendt, inscribed on a bridge in Berlin)

Calveiro describes the concentration camps in Argentina as “un sistema de *compartimentos* o *contenedores*, ya fueran de material o madera, para guardar y controlar cuerpos, no hombres, cuerpos” (47, my emphasis). She reports: “la desnudez, la capucha que escondía el rostro, las atadura y mordazas, el dolor y la pérdida de toda pertenencia personal eran los signos de la *iniciación* en este mundo en donde todas las propiedades, normas, valores, lógicas del exterior parecen canceladas y en donde la propia humanidad entra en suspenso” (Calveiro 62). In this space of suspended humanity, however, as I have explored in previous chapters, small acts of resistance took place that defied the dehumanization that reigned over detention, acts often of a creative and artistic nature. In this chapter, I will explore how the material narrative both created and left by prisoners

and discovered in the wake of disappearance is being used to recreate and transmit memory by second-generation actors in the postdictatorship. First, I will argue that projects such as the *Sala de Memoria* in the space of the former detention center Villa Grimaldi in Chile and the art project *Memorias de vida y militancia* undertaken by the groups that inhabit the ex ESMA in Argentina are using the former belongings of the disappeared in order to conjure forth their individual specters in an effort to rehumanize them and permit them to speak, thus resisting the emptying of their identities that lies at the core of disappearance as a systematic form of repression. Second, I will consider how the virtual art exposition *Proyecto tesoros* takes these projects further in an attempt to weave together the voices and materialities of the past and present generations in the creation of memory narratives that interrupt the impersonal and collective narrative of disappearance. Lastly, I will examine how the film *Cautiva* and recent theatrical productions by Lola Arias further enmesh the material and the voice in an effort to dramatize the testimonial encounter with the objects of the past, depicting a scene of communion in which the present experiences the ghosts of the past through an affective commingling and conversation with material belongings.

Reappearing the Disappeared: The *Sala de memoria* and *Memorias de vida y militancia*

According to Elvira Martorell, the fact that children lost their parents to disappearance means that these now adult children must give birth to their parents once again: “deben reconstruir la subjetividad de los padres y—al hacerlo—reclamar que la ley se vuelva a

escribir, que el pacto se renueve. Por ello la memoria, por ello la justicia” (158).

Martorell argues that in this process,

Si la desaparición apunta a la muerte subjetiva, podemos pensar que los hijos realizan la operación inversa: apuntan a hacer del desaparecido, de ese agujero en lo real, un sujeto, devolverlo a ese estatuto que se pretendió arrasar. Ahí, el padre es parido por el hijo vivo. (Martorell 158)

Today, this effort to return the disappeared’s subjectivity to him or her is taking place in the realm of the material—in the re-signifying of an absent subject through the display and narration of his/her material possessions. In putting together a pastiche of objects, or even selecting one particular object as evidential/emblematic of who the disappeared subject was as a dynamic being, the activism of subsequent generations in the present reconstructs the past and counters processes of forgetting through a marked turn to the material object’s power to narrate and witness the past.

The legacy of disappearance during the dictatorship produced other, secondary forms of disappearance in the postdictatorship, including that of the singular identity within the collective. The *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* are careful to balance the use of the individual identities of their children in their activism with the need to collectivize their suffering. Rather than bring attention to the individuality of disappearance, they opt to “socialize motherhood” and draw attention to the collective magnitude of the 30,000 disappeared. In his work, Emilio Crenzel argues that the trials of the military junta produced a *humanitarian narrative*, which de-politicized the past actions of those who disappeared, in another way disappearing who they were. Recently, Gustavo Remedi

reminds us of the need to remember, but also cautions us that this means “to remember the dead and the disappeared as they were when they were alive. We need to recover their lives, their struggles, their thoughts, their dreams, their plans. Their errors too” (215).

Those who ran the concentration camps and detention centers believed themselves to be the “dadores de vida” (Calveiro 57) who had the absolute right to “dar y quitar la vida” (Calveiro 57). The exercise of this absolute power over death (and life) was used “como forma de diseminación social del terror para disciplinar, controlar y regular una sociedad cuya diversidad y alto nivel de conflicto impedían su establecimiento hegemónico” (Calveiro 59). Part of this exercise was the removal/erasure of individual identities, especially within the space of detention. Calveiro explains: “Los números reemplazaban a nombres y apellidos, personas vivientes que ya habían *desaparecido* del mundo de los vivos y ahora *desaparecerían* desde dentro de sí mismos, en un proceso de ‘vaciamiento’ que pretendía no dejar la menor huella. Cuerpos sin identidad, muertos sin cadáver ni nombre: desaparecidos. Como en el sueño nazi, supresión de la identidad, hombres que se desvanecen en la noche y la niebla” (47).

However, as we can see from the resistance efforts explored in the previous chapters, identity was never completely suppressed—there were small acts that expressed an agency still held by the prisoners even within the confines of detention. Through creation, through craftwork, through the organizing of a workday and the efforts to provide, even if only in a small way, for a family outside of detention, prisoners expressed their *individuality*, left remainders of their personalities (indeed of themselves in cases of pregnancy such as Yessie Macchi’s) and their past presence in the prisons and

camps. The *manualidades* on display in the MUME were not made by machines, but painstakingly crafted by individual hands aching to be heard. Each small piece of art is the antonym of the impersonal and massive manufacturing of modern day goods, these are handmade items that retain the *aura* of their makers. These *auras* of the past operate as spectral remainders of the disappeared. They remain attached to the small object, tethered to the material that was worked for hours on end by hands hoping to retain some aspect of their humanity.

At the same time, the disappeared were not born in the moment of their detentions—they were whole and dynamic individuals with life histories who left an impact on the world, left a material mark, in the years leading up to their detentions. While the individual people who disappeared are not here, in the present, to relate their stories, their belongings are. Such collections of personal belongings render an image of who each person was, give clues to their personalities, to their passions, to their beings. In the present, the material of the past is used to remember the disappeared not as the dead, but as “gente viva” who lived, as Natalia’s uncle in *Encontrando a Víctor* reminds us, “vidas muy vitales.”

In Villa Grimaldi: Corporación Parque por la Paz, the only structure remaining standing from the time in which the Chilean property was used as a brutal clandestine detention center is a small building that was formerly a guard shack. In 2004, that building was converted into the *Sala de La Memoria* of the peace park “con el fin de recordar la identidad y vida de las personas que murieron o desaparecieron en este centro de detención” (Corporación website). In the room, the public encounters sixteen small

display cases, each devoted to representing and humanizing a victim that disappeared from the site, using former belongings to make real to present and future visitors those identities and lives that risk fading into the expansiveness of the terror that took place in the space of the park.

A series of compartments are used this time not to isolate, dehumanize and disappear, but to illuminate, rehumanize, and deliberately re-appear individual lost loved ones. In her analysis of the Argentine postdictatorship, Martorell argues that the children who lost their parents during the repression are missing not only the memories (*los recuerdos*), but the experiences (*las vivencias*) of their parents: “La vivencia está constituida por la representación más el monto del afecto; no es sólo intelectual o racional. Hallamos, entonces, aquello que no pueden recordar porque eran niños—marcas inconscientes que funcionan como un saber-no-sabido, pero también una carencia—lo que no vivieron” (Martorell 145). The *Sala de memoria* creates the circumstances in which visitors—both relatives of the disappeared and strangers—can experience individual personalities, identities, and lives via an encounter with the objects that were important to the individuals they are arranged to represent.



Figure 18 *Marta Lidia Ugarte Román, Sala de Memoria, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi.*

The display cases, made by the families of the disappeared, use material objects to relate the essence of the lost subject, in an attempt to re-humanize the individual, display the experience of who s/he was before disappearance. Each case is devoted to celebrating the *life* of the person, not to agonizing over the horror of his/her death. This attempt to facilitate experience is done through the deliberate and careful staging of objects. The family of Marta Ugarte Román [Figure 18] explains:

El significado que tiene este lugar, de sufrimientos y agonías, están impregnados en todos los lugares de lo que fue la VILLA GRIMALDI, ahora PARQUE DE LA PAZ. A pesar de todo trataremos de exponer con estos pequeños objetos, dar a conocer a una mujer que entregó su vida en tan trágicas circunstancias solo por tener ideales. Recordar lo que fue en vida MARTA, es como tejer una fina tela abrigadora, cálida, eterna que nos da pena sacar. Ver y tocar este CINTURÓN que era del abrigo con que desapareció el 9 de agosto de 1976, está ahora aquí como mudo testigo. (*Sala de Memoria, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi*).

The experience of who Marta was as a unique individual is staged through the display of her former belongings. These are not just *representative* objects of who Marta was, but these are *the* objects that contributed to, and participated in, making her who she was in life. Our relationships with each other, with the world, occur only in part through the voice. Other components are, of necessity, mediated by objects. Our impact on each other occurs through communication on paper, through the creation of gifts, through a helping hand that produces work, through a making external of an interior state of sentience. Here, the object is made manifest to us, and although the belt is present only as a “mudo testigo” that cannot speak to us directly, its presence evokes the specter of Marta. Its past conjures forth into the present a past truth about who Marta was. Marta’s family explains:

En la tela de este cinturón están entrelazados recuerdos que son el testimonio de la personalidad de Marta, mujer, generosa, sensible, luchadora que también se preocupaba de darle a su arreglo personal un toque de armonía y delicadeza. Aquí está este pequeño collar que tiene una larga historia de aromas, viajes, tareas políticas, penas y alegrías que siempre compartía con su familia. (*Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi)

The belt that was worn by Marta carries her experiences—it was *there*, it was *present*, and therefore it can offer a form of testimony (I argue, spectral testimony) to who Marta was in life, and, what’s more, “aquí está” in the present. It is *here*, it was chosen by her, worn by her, it experienced life with her, and now *we* are able to experience *it*. While we have the words written by her family to explain the belt’s significance to us, the spectral testimony it yields continuously brings present to us the deferred nature of any

information we may gain from it. The residue (here, attached to the object) as Nelly Richard reminds us, is a remainder from the past that bursts forth to interrupt the discourse of consensus.⁷⁷ We want to know the *whole* truth about who Marta was and the belt simultaneously conjures forth that truth and reminds us of its inaccessible nature—we remain in an indeterminate and intermediary space of gray.

In her study of objects and mourning, Margaret Gibson argues “we knew the deceased only as the embodied being that they were” (9). For Gibson, the inseparability of spirit and matter grounds the spiritual in the material, gesturing toward what she calls the “other life” (10) of objects. Evidencing this other life of the object (what I argue constitutes the inaccessible but continuously present spectral side of the object), the display explains: “Entre las curiosidades que Marta guardaba está este BOTÓN que era su gamulán y que supo de sus preocupaciones, de sus largos viajes en que conoció otros países, idiomas, personas y por supuesto todas las bellezas de nuestro país” (*Sala de Memoria*, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi). We will never be privy to Marta’s worries, to her travels, her experiences, but *the button was* and its “other side” continues to be privy to Marta’s past even from the display case in the present. The button guards a secret, inexpressable to us, but undeniably there and creating change in the present space of the museum. This object by virtue of its testifying presence creates a punctum in the display. For Roland Barthes, photographs consist primarily of a studium (the context/the conceptualization of the image created by the photographer as artist) and a punctum, a

⁷⁷ See *Cultural Residues: Chile in Transition*.

point or object that stands out within the photograph, that commands our attention.⁷⁸ In the display, the object, which we know to have pertained to Marta, serves as a punctum that interrupts our consideration of who Marta was, humanizing her by conjuring forth her worries. It asks us to question what these worries may have been. But, it also casts doubt on our encounters with other objects we may find from the past.

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer have also studied this exemplary power of the object as a witness. Hirsch's canonical text, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* shed light on the nature of photography as an object with the power to call attention to the absence of the photographed subject, the life that is no longer, as well as its ability to mediate memory transmission from one generation to the next, contributing to the creation of what she terms postmemories in the second generation of Holocaust victims. Since writing that text, Hirsch's scholarship has moved from an analysis of the photograph itself to a consideration of other material objects, focusing on the way in which the object might function as a link from past to present, much like the image presented by the photograph. Together with Leo Spitzer, Hirsch argues that the object presents an alternative testimonial form, functioning as a point of memory that creates an intersection between past and present while calling attention to the work of remembering. Hirsch and Spitzer assert

In relation to memoir and testimony, and to historical accounts and scholarly discussions, as within new artistic texts, archival images function as supplements,

⁷⁸ See *Camera Lucida*.

both confirming and unsettling the stories that are explored and transmitted.

(“What’s Wrong,” 245)

This article, “What’s Wrong With This Picture? Archival Photographs in Contemporary Narratives,” builds on the discussion Spitzer and Hirsch began in an earlier essay, “Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender, and Transmission,” and explores the supplementary nature of both the photograph and object as a point—much like Barthes’ photographic punctum—(both spatial and temporal) of memory, a function that can:

Produce insights that pierce and traverse temporal, spatial and experiential divides. As points multiply, they can convey the overlay of different temporalities and interpretive frames, mitigating straightforward readings or any lure of authenticity. (“What’s Wrong,” 246)

For Hirsch and Spitzer, this function differs from Pierre Nora’s concept of the “lieux de mémoire” because it contains a personal (and, I would emphasize, individual) value, rather than a national, collective one. Hirsch and Spitzer argue that the elusiveness of the photographic image (and, later, they include the object) shows us a fleeting and evolving truth, one that is its own and that can teach us about the past:

It seems to us that this may be the clearest articulation of what we fantasize and expect of archival photographs: that they have a memory of their own that they bring to us from the past; that that memory tells us something about ourselves, about what/how we and those who preceded us once were; that they carry not only information about the past, but enable us to reach an emotional register.

That they require a particular kind of visual literacy, one that can decode the foreign language that they speak. (“What’s Wrong” 250)

In “Testimonial Objects” Hirsch and Spitzer consider a book of recipes and a miniature artists’ book, both found in Nazi concentration camps. This movement, from the photograph to the book-as-object, maintains a focus that asserts that both the photographic image and the material object work in similar manners, as memory punctures that interpellate the living with the memory of the dead.

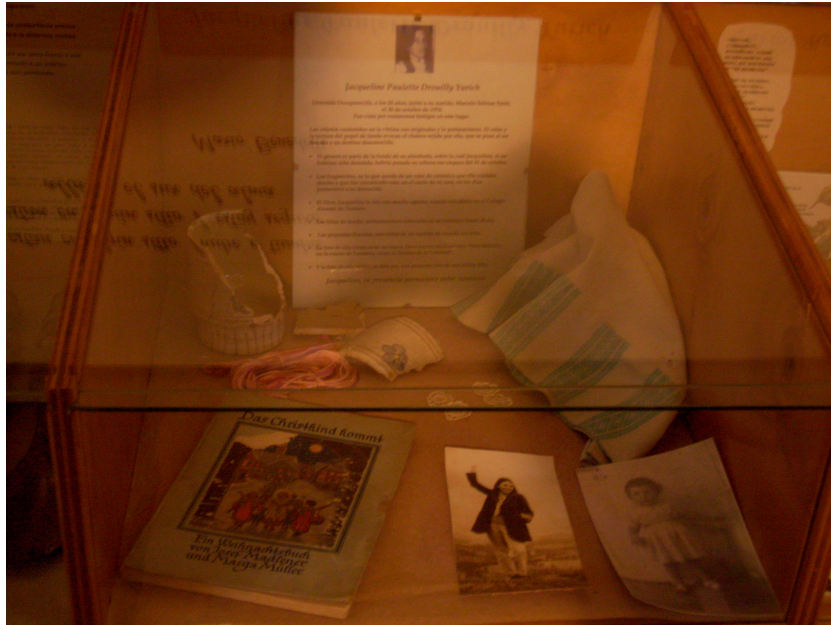


Figure 19 *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi.*

Another display in the *Sala de Memoria*, devoted to Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich [Figure 19], briefly and succinctly explains the horrific fate of a young woman: “Detenida Desaparecida, a los 24 años, junto a su marido, Marcelo Salinas Eytel, el 30 de octubre de 1974. Fue vista por numerosos testigos de este lugar.” A very short description, the introduction to the display avoids dwelling on the unchangeable fate of

the collective past. Instead, it shifts focus to the present, individual level and continues: “Los objetos contenidos en la vitrina son originales y le pertenecieron. El color y la textura del papel de fondo evocan el chaleco tejido por ella, que se puso al ser llevada a un destino desconocido.” By emphasizing that the objects are *original* and *belonged to* Jacqueline, the compartment emphasizes for the viewer that s/he is not encountering any ordinary representation of a life, but is commingling with, experiencing an aspect of *this* lost life. These objects are *orginal, authentic, proof*. They *belonged* to Jacqueline, meaning she, with all the complex facets of a human personality, selected these objects as hers, as the way in which she would interact with her world, with her friends, with her family.

The witness quality of the object is evoked to testify to, to prove, the violent nature of Jacqueline’s disappearance [Figure 20]: “Los fragmentos, es lo que queda de un vaso de cerámica que ella cuidaba mucho y que fue encontrado roto, en el suelo de su casa, en los días posteriores a su detención.” The other objects evoke the ghostly quality of absence [Figure 21]: “El género es parte de la funda de su almohada, sobre la cual Jacqueline, si no hubiese sido detenida, habría posado su cabeza esa víspera del 31 de octubre”; “Los hilos de bordar permanecieron intocados en su costurero hasta ahora.” Why emphasize that the thread has remained *untouched* since Jacqueline’s disappearance? By doing so, the display deliberately conjures forth the past presence of Jacqueline. These threads were last touched by the disappeared young woman. Their materiality is the lasting remnant of her hand’s presence. The last inscription in the

display also evokes the permanence of this presence. It affirms: “Jacqueline, tu presencia permanece entre nosotros.”

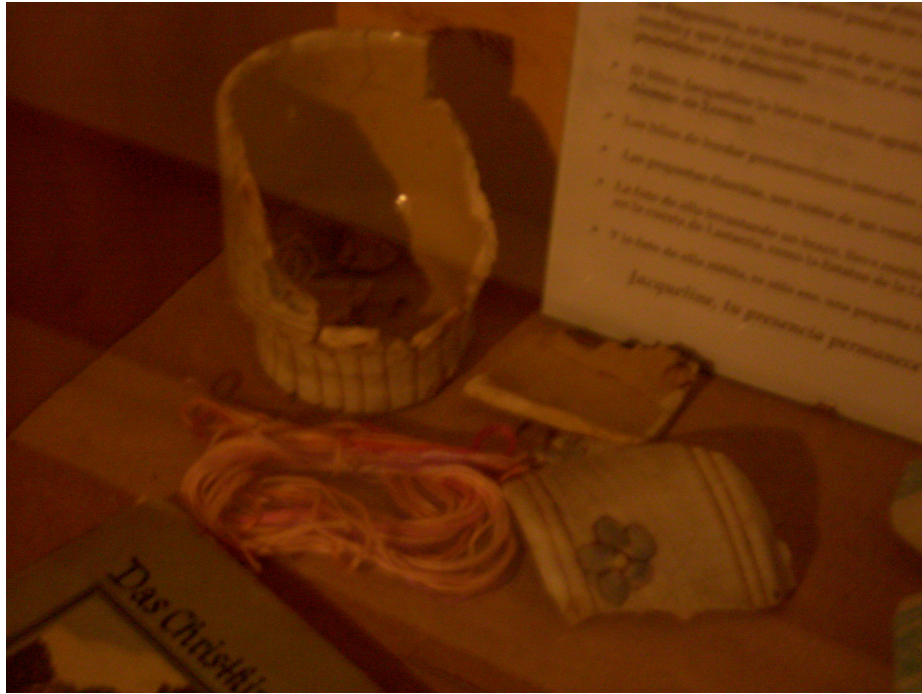


Figure 20 Detail (broken glass) of the display dedicated to *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi.*



Figure 21 Detail (pillowcase) of the display dedicated to *Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, Sala de Memoria, Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi.*

The use of the object to conjure forth a disappeared life is also palpable in one of the depictions of disappeared individuals in the series *Memorias de Vida y Militancia*—a project by the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos (ex ESMA) in Argentina—that devoted to Miguel Ángel Boitano. The premise of the project “busca recuperar las identidades individuales y colectivas de las personas desaparecidas y/o asesinadas en el centro clandestino que funcionó en la ESMA durante la última dictadura” (espaciomemoria.ar). The project consisted of the creation of postcards, montages that encapsulate a part of the essence of who the disappeared individual depicted was during his/her lifetime. Additionally, within the project, some of the postcards are expanded upon in short videoclips that enhance what is depicted on paper. Boitano’s postcard includes an image of a small plane that he constructed as a child. The back of the card

explains that the object is an: “Avión de madera realizado por Miguel Ángel Boitano.” Just as in the *Sala de memoria* in Chile, the past presence of Boitano’s hands is emphasized to the audience. The object’s *authenticity* is underlined and asked to speak.



Figure 22 *Memorias de vida y militancia*—Miguel Ángel Boitano

While Boitano’s image also appears in the photograph [Figure 22] (he’s the man on the right), the object featured on the card conjures forth in an acute fashion his personhood. In July of 2013 I spoke with Miguel Ángel’s mother, Ángela Catalina Paolin de Boitano (Lita, for short), who explained to me that when she first saw the postcard’s design it was around the time she gave her testimony in the third Megacausa ESMA—trials that are currently still underway in Argentina. Lita tells me she was taken aback by the presence of the plane, which she immediately interpreted as an allusion to the *vuelos de la muerte*

that ended the lives of so many of those who disappeared from the ESMA.⁷⁹ It wasn't until one of the people who had created the project explained to her that it was the plane that Miguel had made when he was young that she made the connection to her son's childhood. Through the object we see the fruits of a small child's creative labor. The object brings the mother—and ultimately the viewer—back to her son's individual personality, acting as a memory punctum, it rehumanizes him in the face of the monumental atrocity of the death flights. Miguel Ángel's hands carefully constructed the plane—his mark on this world via the crafting of the plane cannot be denied. In the videoclip that expands upon the postcard project, Lita describes who her son was as an individual. Like a proud mother, she mentions his accomplishments in school, the fact that he was rewarded with a trip to Italy, and that he had “pasta de líder,” demonstrated through his actions with the Juventud Peronista in the Architecture school of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. The videoclip presents a montage of still images of Miguel Ángel, juxtaposed with letters from his friends (also shown in the postcard design). What is marked about the videoclip is that the only animated movement (aside from an intermittent shot of Lita speaking to the interviewer) is the small handcrafted plane that happily flies through the scenes, looping in carefree circles as if driven by a stunt pilot, bursting with life. The plane acts as a memory punctum in both the postcard and the videoclip, breaking the paralysis of the still photographs, conjuring forth the work of Miguel Ángel's hands and calling his individuality to the viewer's attention. Observing

⁷⁹ Lita's shock at the plane's presence, apart from the memory of her son's possible fate, is perhaps explained by the underlying tone of these projects that seek to represent *lives* and not the grim circumstances of *deaths*.

the plane juxtaposes the viewer in the present with the individual being of the past. It creates a moment in which to experience a part of the personality of Miguel Ángel, it stops the viewer in his/her tracks and begs him/her to think about Boitano's humanity, not just his tragic end.⁸⁰ The plane opens a space for a new experience with the past, for the creation of a ghostly *vivencia*.

This use of objects is repeated in many of the postcards that make up the project: In the postcard related to Carlos Alberto Chiappolini, the background is made up of his chessboard and in the lower right-hand corner appears an image of “una réplica del arma en madera que talló para obsequiarle a su suegra”; The background of Franca Jarach's postcard is a painting she made while in France; The background of Hugo José Agosti's is a “cortinado familiar”; The background of Jorge Simón Adjiman and Estela María Gache's is “el diseño de un jarrón pintado por Estela Gache”; The background of José Antonio Cacabelos and Cecilia Inés Cacabelos's is “un entramado realizado por Cecilia en su cuaderno-diario”; and the background of Jaime Eduardo Said and Alberto Ezequiel Said's is a “libreta de recuerdos escolares de Alberto.” Within the repeated incorporation of specific objects in the backgrounds of these images, as well as in the use of personal objects in the *vitrinas* in the *Sala de La Memoria* in Villa Grimaldi, there exists a specific relationship to the object in the wake of disappearance, especially in regards to personal objects—whether made by the hands of those who disappeared or mass-produced objects that were for some reason or another special to the disappeared person. This specific

⁸⁰ As observed in Lita's reaction to seeing the plane, the project even creates the circumstances for her, as a mother, to break free from focusing on her child's tragic end and to think for a moment about who he was prior to his militancy.

relationship has produced a reliance on objects to help give testimony where voices are lost, to evoke how such objects help create an individual in the past.⁸¹ Such projects demonstrate how after death or disappearance, we hold a new relationship to this object world. Margaret Gibson observes: “As signs of the interface between personal and social, objects reveal the social construction of identity” (26) and affirms “objects matter . . . because they are a part of us—we imprint objects and they imprint us materially, emotionally and memorially” (23).

Gibson asserts that “for those who outlive a loved one, the objects that remain are significant memory traces and offer a point of connection with the absent body of the deceased” (2). The object thus acts as a suture, linking temporalities, memories, as well as individuals. However, Gibson observed that not all objects hold this power equally. Gibson comments that in the interviews she conducted for her research, “almost everyone talked about photography and clothing” (4) and that mass-produced, common items did not trigger feelings of attachment, such as refrigerators or televisions. Yet, Gibson observes “the material legacies of death are often quite ordinary—a vase, a tea set, a pipe, a toy, a blanket, a chair, rings, books, clothing, photos; any number of personal and household objects” (9). Objects become imbued with these material legacies via their imprintation with a trace of their former owner, such that they are transposed “into quasi-subjects, moving into that now vacated bereft place” (24).

⁸¹ Margaret Gibson writes: “there is something in this movement of objects from the commercial to the private sphere, from public display to private ownership, from the generalized other (or generalized consumer) to the particular consumer and self” (12).

Gibson's study considers objects in mourning in present-day Australia, unmarred by the jarring political context of the countries in the Southern Cone. In the case of the post-dictatorship this imbuelement of a quasi-subjectivity of the object is strengthened. Due to the disappearance of the body in these cases, the absence of confirmation of death, the lack of a body to mourn, the negation of a final place of rest at which to visit the deceased, and for many the abruptly negated possibility of forming experiences with the dead combine to enhance the material object's importance as a stand-in for the disappeared person. Like a photograph, the former possession becomes the only material remainder of the disappeared body, the only residual presence of their past existence. Once imbued with metaphorical meaning by a third party, witness to the once present tie between the object and the disappeared subject, the object/artifact testifies to the continued presence of the disappeared ghost that is always to come, continually haunting the present material memories of the past.

By using objects in current activist projects, new generations are working to speak with the ghostly remnants that remain attached to the objects of the past, to the belongings of the disappeared from the period before their detention. The virtual memory project, *Proyecto Tesoros*, an initiative of the group *Colectivo de hijos*, is yet another example of how this haunted relationship with the objects of the past is being put to use in the post-dictatorship in order to create encounters—new experiences/*vivencias*—with those who disappeared. The project's webpage explains that the initiative's "principal objetivo es la creación de un archivo que contenga los registros de aquellos objetos y documentos que pertenecían a nuestros padres, detenidos-desaparecidos y asesinados por

el último genocidio en nuestro país” (proyectotesoros.org). Again in *Proyecto Tesoros*, ownership of the objects is emphasized, tying the authenticity of the objects to the disappeared relatives. Yet, this project differs in an important way from the ones explored thus far in this chapter—rather than found objects of the past, the ones in this project are pieces that have stood throughout time in place of the parent. As Colectivo de hijos explains, many of these “objetos y documentos nos acompañaron a lo largo de nuestra vida otros los hemos descubierto con el tiempo. Todos dan cuenta de nuestra experiencia, que es particular pero también compartida con muchos otros” (proyectotesoros.org). In place of the parent, the affective relationship built through time (“nos acompañaron a lo largo de nuestra vida) is with the object; the experience is with the material not the person.

In *Proyecto tesoros*, the evocation of the parent’s story, of his/her personality is not direct, but rather occurs mediated by a contemplation of the object, of the experience with the *material* not with the *person*. In place of the parent, the companionship felt between child and mother or father is with the object, the experience is with the material and not the person. This, of course, is out of necessity. As Martorell notes, these *vivencias* with their parents are precisely what the children of the disappeared lack. While the family members that created the *Sala de memoria* and the postcards in *Memorias de vida y militancia* are setting the stage for others to experience the children/family members that they already had gotten to know in the past, in *Proyecto Tesoros* many of the participants never met their disappeared parents, or were too young to create true experiential memories of them. Thus, their experiences are with the objects left in the

wake of disappearance—that relationship of affect that Martorell identifies as crucial to the creation of *vivencias* occurs in an encounter with the objects their parents once held. The use of the object in *Proyecto tesoros* truly relies on its spectral testimonial nature and creates the circumstances for a new set of ghostly *vivencias* to occur. *Colectivo de hijos* affirms that it is “a través de estos fragmentos que podemos hoy hablar de nuestra propia condición, la de ser huérfanos producidos por el genocidio. El Proyecto intenta dar visibilidad a estas experiencias, y es por eso que elegimos una herramienta virtual para extender lazos hasta donde nos sea posible” (proyectotesoros.org). The Project created a series of videos in each of which the object is presented while each child explains what the object is and what his/her relationship is with it. The site explains:

Además de fotografiar los objetos y documentos, registramos el relato de quien los atesora y les da un sentido, centrándonos en la relación de esos objetos con la propia historia. También realizamos tareas de restauración y conservación, con recomendaciones para guardarlos de la mejor manera posible para que no se deterioren.(proyectotesoros.org)

In *Proyecto tesoros*, it is not “irrelevant” whether the biographical authors (the disappeared) of these objects are alive or dead, because the project is founded to create awareness of precisely this aspect. The point is that these objects *remain to be read*, or perhaps better stated, *remain to be engaged*. The projects explored in this chapter all engage these “dead” texts; appealing to the object world’s durability to retain some possibility of dialogue with the dead. While the object can’t answer in a language we speak, we can listen to the object, contemplate this lack of voice, in the *Sala de La*

Memoria we are asked to do precisely this, we are asked to reflect upon not a mass of disappeared bodies, but on the individual lives of young people who were never heard from again. We are asked to create an experience with these people, via their personal belongings.

With *Proyecto tesoros*, the children of the disappeared re-create the circumstances by which they were able to come to know a part of their parents. The visitor to the project's site experiences the same process that the child now narrates. As the visiting public, we look to the object, know it has a specific past, know it knew the disappeared person during his/her lifetime. We desire to know the truth, to dialogue with the ghost, yet we can never achieve that transparent dialogue which we seek. The specter it conjures forth remains a mute witness and leaves us suspended in our own desire. But, that same desire is also powerful. It both affirms the horror of the past and animates us in the present. In truncating our desire to know, in frustrating us, it elides the construction of a smooth historical narrative. As Colin Davis affirms:

Hauntology is a part of an endeavour to keep raising the stakes of literary study, to make it a place where we can interrogate our relation to the dead, examine the elusive identities of the living, and explore the boundaries between the thought and the unthought. The ghost becomes a focus for competing epistemological and ethical positions. (Davis 13)

The ghost, here made manifest via the object, creates disruptions, it raises the stakes, it causes actions and promotes the ongoing contemplation germane to the fight for the protection of human rights, thus contributing not only to the reconstruction of the

narrative void left from disappearance, but honoring the legacy of the past in working to affirm that such atrocities never again occur in the future.

Ghostly *Vivencias*: Reappearance and Personal Belongings in *Cautiva*

In *The Comfort of Things*, Daniel Miller—one of the foremost proponents for the study of materiality in the field of anthropology—argues that “possessions often remain profound and usually the closer our relationships are with objects, the closer our relationships are with people” (1). Miller recognizes that “language is often defensive, restricted and carefully constructed as narrative” (2) and, instead, proposes that his study pose its questions “to the interior of the house” (2). Miller ponders the paradox of speaking with the material in his study, whilst at the core of that same study he interviews *people* in their homes and asks them to speak on behalf of their living quarters:

Objects surely don't talk. Or do they? The person in that living-room gives an account of themselves by responding to questions. But every object in that room is equally a form by which they have chosen to express themselves [. . .] these things are not a random collection. They have been gradually accumulated as an expression of that person or household. Surely if we can learn to listen to these things we have access to an authentic other voice. (2).

Miller's call for us to listen to things to gain “access to an authentic other voice” (2) and echoes the issue that lies at the core of many of the considerations of testimonio that I explored in chapter three. Miller's stance is that the material belongings of people create a very individual aesthetic, one which we can engage in our search for information about

the person.⁸² For Miller, this aesthetic stems from the individual, it is not random, nor “simply a repetitive system of order” (296). The aesthetic is “above all a configuration of human values, feelings and experiences” (296). The difference between Miller’s study and the project at hand is that Miller is consistently able to visit the homes of the people who appear as subjects in his anthropological “portraits” of their possessions and speak with them at the same time that he views their living quarters.⁸³ He remarks in one case study: “To see the bridge between concern for objects and concern for people in Mr. Clarke requires listening carefully and putting together different stories” (27). Miller’s subject is alive and well, he is able to answer questions and clarify points of contention. What happens when this same close-listening (reading?) is applied to the analysis of the former possessions of a person with whom a one-on-one dialogue is no longer possible? It is at that point in which the individual aesthetic combines with the ghostly aura attached to the object-as-witness and produces a spectral testimony.

⁸² People are not fully determined culturally, or parentally; but neither are they free agents who choose who they may become. Through the reinforcement of various influences at particular times, certain traits and styles develop which come to characterize them, not as individuals but as networks of relationships. This produces what I have called, at different times in this book, an aesthetic. I do not use this term to implicate the arts. Rather, it refers to pattern—sometimes an overall organizational principle that may include balance, contradiction and the repetition of certain themes in different genres and settings. (*The Comfort of Things* 293)

⁸³ My employ of the term “portraits” here references the schematic Miller employs to order his study, divided into 30 portraits, each of which profiles an individual household, both its occupants and their material possessions, on a random street in London. Miller explains: “By choosing this term I don’t mean anything technical or artistic, and certainly I hope nothing pretentious. It simply helps convey something of the overall desire for harmony, order and balance that may be discerned in certain cases—and also dissonance, contradiction and irony in others” (5).

To see this combination at work, I turn to Gastón Biraben's film *Cautiva*, in which a young woman discovers that she is the child of disappeared parents through an act of investigative analysis by a judge after she has surgery on her appendix. Once again engaging a poetics of DNA (as was explored in chapter four) Cristina's blood speaks a truth from the past unbeknownst to her, revealing that her parents are really her appropriators and that her real birth occurred a year earlier than she has been told, on the day Argentina won the World Cup in 1978. Born to two young architects, who disappeared but whose family has been searching for her for years, a resistant Cristina is restituted to her birth identity, Sofia. Sofia's re-encounter with the disappeared parents she never knew in person occurs first only through old photographs, then, gradually—with the help a friend who also has a disappeared father—her investigation yields more and more information. She is able to ascertain where her parents were held captive and her friend is able to locate one of the nurses that was present when Sofia's mother gave birth to her. Aside from these scant details, Sofia's encounter with her mother occurs through the discovery of the objects that belonged to her before she disappeared. The mother's room is a treasure trove of objects, each of which contributes to the creation of a material portrait, an aesthetic of who her mother was during her lifetime.

The film ends just after Cristina confronts her appropriators and accepts her “new” (true) identity as Sofia. After this volatile confrontation, she flees to the home her birthmother designed (she was an architect) and in which her mother's sister now lives with her family. Sofia is then shown crying over the photographs of her disappeared parents, then, in the next scene, in the midst of a conversation with her maternal

grandmother. Her last line of the film is “Nana, lo de la desaparición de ellos, es eterno?” This comment marks Sofia’s transition from her initial reluctance and refusal of a relationship with her blood grandmother to her acceptance and use of the family’s affective term “Nana” to refer to her. The camera then slowly scans over the objects that populate the bedroom used by Sofia’s disappeared mother prior to her disappearance. In a long panout that gradually becomes an aerial shot of the city, Sofia is seen standing on the balcony of the house, gazing out into the night. This last line, asking if disappearance is eternal, immediately followed by a visual inventory of the belongings of her disappeared mother, reveals a new valorization of things left in the wake of disappearance. While Sofia’s parents may be gone forever, these material proofs of their personalities remain behind, waiting for an encounter. At the same time, another, more explicit, narrative of hauntology also marks the film. The grandmother’s house is “haunted” according to Sofia’s cousin. As he enthusiastically tells Sofia, he even saw a ghost there once! Sofia herself experiences the ghost in a dream the first night she stays with her grandmother. In the end of the film, as she stands in the balcony of what was to be her childhood home, gazing out on the city, a breeze blows through the curtains that hang in the doorway behind her, perhaps another gesture toward the ghostly state of the places and the things of her newly restituted past. The re-encounter with the mother’s room uses an aesthetic of the individual who disappeared to reveal the network of relationships she had not only with people (presumably those family and friends who put together the case), but with the material world: her possessions. The image that emerges is an aesthetic which produces a life narrative: the individual emerges out of the

collective, the personality of the living person from the past is evoked, the conditions for an experience with her are created. In the film this aesthetic runs parallel to what the vitrinas in the Sala de Memoria were designed to do: individualize and humanize the often faceless and gargantuan violence of the past.

Merging Voice and Object: Spectral Testimony in the Work of Lola Arias

By way of conclusion, I would like to examine one last instance of the activation of the spectral testimonial capacity of the object in order to reconstruct and transmit knowledge about the past. The theatrical productions *Mi vida después* and *El año en que nací*, conceptualized, written, and directed by Lola Arias, take the still-life initiative of projects such as the *Sala de Memoria* and *Proyecto Tesoros* one step further by not only presenting objects and their stories, but creating a theatrical experience in which voices and objects combine to communicate to audiences—not only Argentine, Chilean, or Uruguayan, but international⁸⁴—the memory of the recent past. Arias explains the creation of her recent work, *El año en que nací*, a play that enmeshes the voice and the object to recount the multiple and often conflicting experiences of living during the Chilean dictatorship:

In 2009, I did a play called *Mi vida después* in which a group of young people born during the Argentinean dictatorship (1976–1983) reconstruct the life of their parents with the help of photos, documents, [and] family films. I was invited with this piece to Santiago de Chile and in parallel to that, I did a workshop with the

⁸⁴ For instance, I saw *El año en que nací* in Minneapolis, Minnesota where it was presented in Spanish with English subtitles in January of 2014.

same concept of the Argentinean piece but with Chilean stories. I was looking for people whose stories reflects [sic] the 17 years of dictatorship in Chile. I wanted to have people with different backgrounds: people whose parents were in the guerrilla or in the military or went into exile or were indifferent to politics. (Program, *El año en que nací*, Walker Art Center 2014 p. 7)

Arias's work has been identified by Anne White-Nockleby as *teatro documental*, plays that “entienden, investigan y construyen este *antes* de la conciencia a través de *fragmentos*—de objetos, reproducciones y rumores que parecen haber sido sacados de la vida real de los actores” (2). White-Nockleby explains that *Mi vida después* was written

A partir de entrevistas con los actores en las que ellos le contaron sobre las vidas de sus padres y le mostraron las pertenencias—fotos, ropa, cartas, grabaciones en cinta—de sus vidas reales. Desde allí, Arias escribió la obra. Así los espectadores sienten de manera visceral la relación entre las historias de los personajes y la vida de los actores que existe fuera del escenario. (3).

The play's use of the objects of the past, of “photos, letters, tapes, used clothes” (Program 4) infuses the very personal stories enacted by the actors with a spectral testimonial quality. While it is true that these items are being primarily utilized as props to accompany the actor's voice and actions, it is important to remember that these items, invoked within the scene, are also used to demonstrate and convey the memories (often in conflict even as they are presented on stage) that the second generation affected by the repression has from the generation of their parents. Some memories remain incomplete, and the actors are forthcoming about this. The play is, after, all a work in progress: “The

piece is re-written because life is re-written all the time. Whenever something new happens in the life of the performers, it becomes part of the piece. The piece is like a living creature that is growing with the years” (Program 5).

Ultimately, in the same way that the animation of Miguel Ángel’s plane in the videoclip of *Memorias de Vida y Militancia* creates a memory punctum that interpellates the present-day viewer with the past and facilitates a ghostly *vivencia* with the disappeared, the combination of the voices of the actors (who communicate their personal histories on stage) with the object from the past in these plays enmeshes the material and the voice in an effort to dramatize the testimonial encounter with the objects of the past, depicting a scene of communion in which the present experiences the ghosts of the past through an affective commingling and conversation with material belongings.

Recent scholars in the field of memory studies, especially those who focus on the period of the Jewish Holocaust, have also been revisiting the use of the material in the reconstruction/rediscovery of the past. Literary scholar Liliane Weissberg contends that “human beings give testimony. Testimony is also given by objects” (21). Commenting on a mountain of shoes on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Weissberg writes: “Once worn by living human beings, these shoes are now evidence of their death, and of the anonymity of their owners, the anonymity they found in death. Homogenized as one group, these shoes speak as a mass and exemplify mass murder” (23). The objects that make up the *Sala de memoria*, *Proyecto Tesoros*, and are used in Lola Arias’s plays perform the exact opposite task—while the piles of objects from the Holocaust testify to the incomprehensible scale of the violence, the use of objects in

projects such as those explored in this chapter work to re-individualize the disappeared, to put individual faces and personalities to those lost in the collective of disappearance, all the while calling attention to the incomplete nature of this commingling.

All of the projects explored in this chapter demonstrate that new generations have identified a productive power held in the (haunted) objects of the violent past and are turning to that potential in an effort to dialogue with the lost voices of the dictatorship (to speak with the ghosts) via the material and, at the same time, to facilitate that same conversation for others. Throughout this project I have limited my discussion of the ghost to Derrida's notion of the productive specter, turning away from thinkers such as Abraham and Torok who posit that the phantom is a psychic manifestation meant to protect the individual by carefully guarding a potentially traumatizing secret, thus repressing rather than revealing information about the past. I have done this, primarily, because the archival and artistic projects I found in my research all seem to hold a common, hopeful, outlook toward the objects of the past, a desire to turn to them in an effort to fill gaps in memory. Using *things*, such projects work to produce a material narrative capable of re-appearing the lost voices of the past and attempt to teach us to speak with the specters that lie on the "other" side of objects.

Conclusion

This project began with my own frustration with not being able to make-up/make-real in my mind an image of the scenes I was reading in the testimonial accounts of the dictatorships that I encountered during my research. My privilege of growing up in the safety of a small city in the Midwest where to this day my relatives leave their homes unlocked when they leave, coupled with my never having known violence (outside of the movies) meant that I had very little, if anything, in common with the survivors whose accounts I read. I could not fathom their pain, could not visualize the magnitude of their mistreatment, even with pages and pages of description of sounds, of walls, of smells. Even amidst such a wealth of sensorial detail, I found very little with which I could identify in order to visualize the scenes the authors attempted to describe. I could empathize with the weight of their words, but I could not “see” this past. Except for the objects (or so I thought). Alicia Kozameh described an iron and I could create its image, imagine its weight in my hand. A drawing of a tin cup appeared in her text and I could feel the tin cups my grandfather favored in the summertime on my lips, could taste the commingling of cold water with metal. Alicia Partnoy described a ragged blanket and I saw the comfort of the (now ragged) blanket from my childhood. Jorge Tiscornia described a pillow and I looked to the pillow on my sofa. It was through objects that I found a small element of common ground with these voices and it made me stop and deliberate as to why these everyday things helped me get to a space in which I could begin to visualize this past.

Objects mark our experience with the world. In any given day I sit where others have sat—on the bus stop bench, on the bus seat, in an office chair, in a classroom desk or a lecture hall seat, in a restaurant booth, even on a public toilet. I move through the same object world as those around me, sit where others have sat. At the same time, I also touch particular, less public, objects. I favor one pen over another when I sit down to write, I choose one shirt over another in the morning when I dress, have a “favorite” and “most comfortable” pair of shoes, wear a jacket and carry a bag by which my friends recognize me from afar when we happen to pass each other at a distance. My desk is differentiated from others in our shared office space by small pieces that communicate my personality. Yet, most of the time, I myself notice none of these things. Until the pen runs out of ink, my shirt rips, my shoes begin to pinch, or the strap on my bag gives out. As Heidegger points out to us, the broken tool no longer hides from view. We notice the *thing*, the work it was doing all along, its (as Harman puts it) *tool-being*. When these things happen, I *notice* the things around me. I *notice* the *tool-being* of objects: that my working pen made an impression on my paper, thus facilitating my writing, that my shirt kept me warm, that my shoes made it comfortable to walk long distances, and that my bag extended and amplified the carrying power of my arms, of my body.

Yet, even this seemingly common ground I found with objects is deceiving. As I further examined the narratives I explore in chapter one, I realized that in the concentration camp or the detention center, the order of *things* is different. One is stripped of all personal belongings, stripped down to, as Marcelo Estefanell puts it: “un hombre numerado,” without individualizing identity. Objects meant to alleviate pain

become producers of pain—everything has the potential to be a weapon. But, at the same time, the subject, broken down by the process of unmaking his/her world, undergoes a change. The subject can no longer help but notice the objects around him/her. It is not the tool that breaks here, revealing its tool-being, but the subject that breaks and in the process acquires a new relationship to the world in which s/he cannot help but notice the *tool-being* of things. Useless objects (a water faucet, a matchbox) become the most crucial of allies. In chapter two, one sees how this new relationship to objects produced a material testimonial legacy in the *artesanías carcelarias* and the *manualidades*. The most scant of items were turned to in order to make real and exterior the seemingly inexpressible. The most common of items became crucial for survival, stepping in to fill the void of that which could not be accessed, to suture oneself to a semblance of individual agency and action. What we see left over from this process are bread crumbs that became beautiful and intricate floral sculptures, crayons as the basis of masterpiece works of art.

Testimonial narratives reveal this different relationship to objects, to the potential for survival they offer to the subject with their *tool-being*. In the camp or detention center, *things* like the iron never break, their purpose is simply modified. The change undergone by the subject produced an entirely new order of extraordinary things, a new utility of objects largely unconnected to their understood use. I was wrong to believe that my visualization of the object from my experience as a reader could approximate a common ground with these voices, for, as Alicia Kozameh puts it, I “don’t know what a jacket is” (75). Thus, the iron described by Kozameh and the ragged blanket described by

Partnoy may be imaginable in my mind, but their true meaning for the detained subject remains inaccessible to me. These objects, haunted by their pasts, bring me, the outside reader, to a place of shared sentience, but at the same time the difference between my subjectivity and that of the survivors' keeps my relationship to the object separate and different. That is the meaning of spectral testimony in this project. These objects, many made by the hands of those who are no longer here to speak, others emblematic of who these individuals were before disappearance, are at once the lasting, durable remainder we have of the past and a conscious reminder of the inaccessibility of the "truth" of the violence of that moment. In that sense, the spectral testimony yielded by objects is both frustrating and extremely productive.

As I delved further into my research, it became clear that this simultaneously frustrating and productive nature of the testimony of objects is being engaged with growing frequency in the post-dictatorship. Perhaps emerging out of the circumstances of the limitations of life, as many of the individuals who still hold live, vivid memories of the disappeared age and pass away, taking with them the firsthand knowledge of those individuals, more memory projects are turning to the material as a lasting form of accessing the past. Perhaps revealing that in the wake of the violence of the dictatorships, in the aftermath of the collective loss of 30,000 disappeared, even society-at-large undergoes a transformation in its experience with the material world, producing a new *noticing* of the memory capacity of things. Projects such as the museums of memory in Chile and Uruguay, the *Sala de Memoria* in the Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi, *Proyecto Tesoros*, *Proyecto Vestigios*, and *Memorias de Vida y Militancia* all recognize

that while a lifespan (and thus, a narrating voice) may be limited by nature, the material object remains with seeming permanence. *Things*, material witnesses remain to tell us their stories, but they simultaneously call to our attention the impossibility of narrating the past, the magnitude of the violence that cannot be put into words. Object witnesses, with their silent and non-communicative *tool-being*, continually bring us back to the very frustration with which I began this project, but in that process they force us to undergo a journey that confronts this frustration, that experiences the labors of memory and along the way realizes an aspect of the past and animates us to work toward assuring that such abuse never again occurs in the future.

While many of the projects I explored in this project, especially in the period of the postdictatorship, ultimately document or communicate the object to the viewer via a photographic register (be it still-image or video), this register in the end is simply a medium through which to disseminate accessibility to the object for the viewer. The object's witness quality derives from elsewhere. Walter Benjamin's lament of the loss of the auratic character of art⁸⁵ is largely tied to photography and film, but his observation that the "changes it [the work of art] may have suffered in physical condition over the years . . . can be revealed only through chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction" (220) are apt for the discussion of the objects this project has explored. Benjamin posits that "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its

⁸⁵ "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin 220)

testimony to the history which it has experienced” (221). Unlike the photograph, the object, what I have compared to Agamben’s “complete witness,” retains the aura of the past subject; the living “firsthand” witness remains attached to the object, becoming the firsthand object witness. In a discussion of used clothing, Nelly Richard has posited that “the fabric of used clothing is a repository of odors and secret stains” (79) and that such residues “introduce doubt, it posits uncertainty, it casts a suspicion that infects the sterilized vision of the world” (79). This aura, this secret stain on the object, this ghost, not only introduces doubt, but provides a productive possibility for memory to those who seek to dialogue with such hidden phantoms of the past.

Thus, due to such an auratic memory possibility, the objects such as those in the MUME remain protected under glass, revered for their authenticity, carefully preserved by archivists, while at the same time I am free to purchase reproductions of such carefully crafted and relied upon items (a deck of cards, Tiscornia’s *almanagues*) and carelessly toss them in my backpack to take home with me from the museum. These reproductions are not haunted objects, for they lack the auratic character of the originals. They do not ask me to learn to speak with their ghosts because those ghosts, those residues simply do not exist. Conversely, the cross María Alicia made in *Tres Álamos* and carefully placed into my hands as she explained to me that its material came from a chair in *Villa Grimaldi* is an object that is haunted—it’s not a copy it’s *the* original [Figure 23] and as such it retains the aura, the ghost, of the past.



Figure 23 Cross made by María Alicia Salinas in Villa Grimaldi

Feeling the tiny, fragile cross in my hands, I *know* I am holding a piece of history. As I carefully turn it to examine the material of which it's made, I ask myself who sat in the chair, who touched the material with which this cross was made? What secret stains lay enmeshed in the fragile material forms that make up this cross? From that authentic character derives the object's role as witness. María Alicia's voice breaks as she explains to me that this cross is one of three that she made for herself and her other two friends, also named María. Realizing that of the "Tres Marías" (and the three crosses), María Alicia and *this* cross are the only ones who survived the dictatorship makes my keenly aware of the historical weight I hold in my hand. What I hope to have shown in this project is that much as Claudia Bernardi explains that in her work "skeletons in a mass grave give me a profound tenderness . . . I am touching history with my hands" (29), the same power is held in the object. The small cross gives me a profound tenderness. I am touching a very specific and personal history with my hand.

While chapter four's focus on the body appears to take a detour away from the manmade object to consider the bodies of the children of the disappeared, specifically the

corporal materiality of the body (not the subject's consciousness), it is important to recognize this bridge between the discourse associated with the evidentiary power of human remains and what I am proposing here in connection to objects. While not the same discussion as the other chapters of this project, considering the specifically material corporalities of these subjects is important because much of the discourse around this generation (as demonstrated by the emergence of a poetics of DNA) centers on the ability of the material to relay a truth to the present; thus, the reliance and hope that is placed on DNA's capacity to tell. Yet, even so, this reliance falls into the realm of my discussion of spectral testimony because at the same time that blood/DNA analysis reveals a prior context of the body, those subjects' memories of their parents remain in the realm of the inaccessible past. The body reveals that past's existence, yet the limitations of the mind impede the accessibility of that prior context, those early and distant memories. The body is different, but the frustration in reading its content is the same.

Thus, Mariana Eva Perez's mole is a witness to her father's love for her. Here, the subject (Mariana) cannot be a witness to her past, for the memories were formed when she was too young to truly remember them. However, the body-as-object can perform this function. Its DNA leads Mariana to her paternal grandfather, who then reveals the ghostly truth hidden in the body witness, just beyond reach. Chapter five then took this discovery of the "forgotten" or, in the case of appropriated children, "erased" past and examined how objects are being turned to in an effort to create, or access the memories that lie in this newly discovered, yet still hidden past. Thus, in chapter five I demonstrated how the spectrality of objects is producing new *vivencias* with the past,

how families and children of disappeared parents have turned to haunted objects in an effort to facilitate for both themselves and others an experience with their lost loved ones, in an effort to encourage reflection on and learning from the violence of the past.

With this project, I aimed to explore the simultaneous existence of the human and the material, untangling some of the nuances that occur within this relationship when it is altered by extreme acts of violence. I sought to position the object in the role of witness, as an ally in the prisoner's struggle for survival and as a made-material testimony of that person's resistance. In introducing the concept of "spectral testimony" I offered a means of theorizing the object-as-witness in the temporality after violence, examining how the *thing's* past is used in the present in an effort to create memory about the past, to rehumanize those who lost their lives in a confluence of present voices, phantom subjects, and past material truths.

Works Cited

- Achugar, Hugo. "Historias Paralelas/Ejemplares: La historia y la voz del otro." Ed. John Beverley and Hugo Achugar. *La voz del otro: Testimonio, subalternidad y verdad narrative*. Ciudad de Guatemala, República de Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2002. 61–84. Print.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone, 1999. Print.
- Agosín, Marjorie. *Inhabiting Memory: Essays on Memory and Human Rights in the Americas*. Texas: Wings Press, 2011. Print.
- Alzugarat, Alfredo. *Trincheras de papel: Dictadura y literatura carcelaria en Uruguay*. Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2007. Print.
- Andrades Alfaro, Marcela. *Blog: Taller de Manualidades—Soporopo*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.
- Arias, Arturo. "Rigoberta Menchú's History within the Guatemalan Context." *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*. Ed. Arturo Arias. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 3–28. Print.
- Arias, Lola. *El año en que nací/The Year I Was Born*. Program. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 30 January 2014.
- Avelar, Idelber. *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. Print.

- _____. "Five Theses on Torture." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 10.3 (2001): 253–271. Print.
- Barnet, Miguel. *Biografía de un cimarrón*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2001. Print.
- Barratta, Raquel. "La noche de la tijera." *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985: Testimonios, entrevistas, documentos e imágenes inéditas del Uruguay autoritario* Vol. 2 (2006) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental. 39–41. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981. Print.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Fatal Strategies*. Trans. Philip Beitchman. London: Pluto, 1990. Print.
- Becker Eguiluz, Nubia. *Una mujer en Villa Grimaldi*. Santiago: Puhuén Editores, 2011. Print.
- Benedetti, Mario. *Pedro y el capitán: Pieza en cuatro partes*. México: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1979. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 217–251. Print.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. London: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.
- Bernardi, Claudia. "An Angel Passes By: Silence and Memories at the Massacre of El Mozote." Ed. Marjorie Agosín. *Inhabiting Memory: Essays on Memory and Human Rights in the Americas*. Texas: Wings Press, 2011. 28–50. Print.

- Beverley, John. "Torture and Human Rights: A Paradoxical Relationship?" *Human Rights in Latin America and Iberian Cultures*. Ed. Ana Forcinito, Raúl Marrero-Fente, and Kelly McDonough. *Hispanic Issues On Line* 5.1 (Fall 2009): 98–109. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.
- _____. "Prólogo a la segunda edición." Ed. John Beverley and Hugo Achúgar. *La voz del otro: Testimonio, subalternidad y verdad narrative*. Ciudad de Guatemala, República de Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2002. 9–16. Print.
- _____. "The Margin at the Center." Ed. Georg Gugelberger. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 23–41. Print.
- Bustamante, Javiera and Stephan Ruderer. *Patio 29: Tras la cruz de fierro*. Santiago: Ocho Libros Editores, 2009. Print.
- Calveiro, Pilar. *Poder y desaparición: Los campos de concentración en Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1998. Print.
- Calvo, Adriana. "Campos." *Ni el flaco perdón de Dios: HIJOS de desaparecidos*. Ed. Juan Gelman and Mara La Madrid. Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1997. 97–115. Print.
- Castillo, Gabriela, et. al. "Mano a mano: un lenguaje para resistir." *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985: Testimonios, entrevistas, documentos e imágenes inéditas del Uruguay autoritario*. Vol. 1 (2006) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental. 11–22. Print.
- Cautiva*. Dir. Gaston Biraben. Cacerolazo Producciones, 2004. Film.

- Charlo, José Pedro and Jorge Tiscornia. *El almanaque de Jorge Tiscornia*. Montevideo: Yaugurú, 2012. Print.
- CONADEP. *Nunca más: A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. Print.
- Cortiñas, Nora. "Diccionarios." *Ni el flaco perdón de Dios: HIJOS de desaparecidos*. Ed. Juan Gelman and Mara La Madrid. Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1997. 171–179. Print.
- Crenzel, Emilio. *Memory of the Argentine Disappearances: The Political History of Nunca Más*. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.
- da Silva Catela, Ludmila. *No habrá flores en la tumba del pasado: La experiencia de reconstrucción del mundo de los familiares de desaparecidos*. La Plata: Ediciones al Margen, 2001. Print.
- Dandan, Alejandra. "Son de campos que no hacían traslados aéreos." *Página 12*. 21 Jan. 2013. Web. 7 April 2013.
- Davis, Colin. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. Print.
- de Arteagabeitia, Rodrigo. *Vicaría de la Solidaridad (1976–1992): Abierta a todos*. Santiago: Gráfica Nueva, 1992. Print.
- desaparecidos.org, "Proyecto Desaparecidos: Por la memoria, la verdad y la justicia." Web. 21 Mar. 2014.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

- _____. *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. Print.
- DGO. “Entrevista a una llave de agua.” *Diario de Chacabuco* 73. 23 Dec 1973. Santiago, Chile: Museum of Memory and Human Rights. Archive.
- Dorfman, Ariel. “Código político y código literario: El género testimonio en Chile hoy.” Eds. René Jara y Hernán Vidal. *Testimonio y literatura*. Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1986. 170–234. Print.
- Duchesne, Juan. “Las narraciones guerrilleras: Configuración de un sujeto épico de nuevo tipo.” Eds. René Jara y Hernán Vidal. *Testimonio y literatura*. Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1986. 85–137. Print.
- EAAF. *2007 Annual Report, Uruguay*. Web. March 3 2014.
- _____. “History of EAAF.” *eaaf.org*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.
- El Buen Pastor: Una fuga de mujeres*. Dir. Matías Herrera Córdoba and Lucía Torres. Cine El Calefón. Córdoba / Argentina, 2010. Film.
- Eduarne Portela, M. *Displaced Memories: The Poetics of Trauma in Argentine Women’s Writing*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009. Print.
- El último confín*. Dir. Pablo Ratto. 2004. Film.
- Encontrando a Víctor*. Dir. Natalia Bruschtein. 2004. Film.
- “ESMA: Entregaron fotos de desaparecidos arrojados al mar.” *TN.com.ar* 15 Dic 2011. Web. 21 Sept. 2013.

- Estefanell, Marcelo. *Un hombre numerado*. Montevideo: Ediciones Santillana, 2007. Print.
- Finchelstein, Federico. *La Argentina fascista: Los orígenes ideológicos de la dictadura. Nudos de la historia argentina*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2008. Print.
- Fundación Solidaridad. *Dignidad Hecha a Mano 30 años: Handmade Dignity 30 years: 1975–2005*. Fundación Andes, Banco Estado, 2005. Print.
- Gandsman, Ari. “ ‘Do You Know Who You Are?’ Radical Existential Doubt and Scientific Certainty in the Search for the Kidnapped Children of the Disappeared in Argentina” *ETHOS* 37:4 (2009): 441–465. Web. 7 Dec 2013.
- Gates Madsen, Nancy. “Bearing False Witness? The Politics of Identity in Elsa Osorio’s *My Name is Light (A veinte años, Luz)*.” *Pushing the Boundaries of Latin American Testimony: Meta-morphoses and Migrations*. Eds. Louise Detwiler and Janis Breckenridge. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. 87–106. Print.
- Genefke, Inge and Peter Vesti. “Diagnosis of Governmental Torture.” *Caring for Victims of Torture*. Eds. James M. Jaranson and Michael K. Popkin. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1998. Print.
- Gibson, Janice T. and Mika Haritos-Fatouros. “The Education of a Torturer.” *Psychology Today*. 20 (1986): 50–58. Print.
- Gibson, Margaret. *Objects of the Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008. Print.
- Giudice, Pedro. Personal Interview. 12 August 2013.

- González-Echeverría. “*Biografía de un cimarrón* and the Novel of the Cuban Revolution.” *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature*. Ed. Roberto González Echeverría. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985: 110–123. Print.
- Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. “Darwin and Feminism: Preliminary Investigations for a Possible Alliance.” *Material Feminisms*. Eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. 23–51. Print.
- Gugelberger, Georg. “Introduction: Institutionalization of Transgression: Testimonial Discourse and Beyond.” Ed. Georg Gugelberger. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 1–22. Print.
- _____. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. Print.
- Harman, Graham. *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*. Chicago: Open Court, 2002. Print.
- _____. *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing*. Chicago: Open Court, 2007. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. “The Thing.” *The Object Reader*. Eds. Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins. New York: Routledge. 113–123. Print.
- H.I.J.O.S. Capital. *Facebook*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

- H.I.J.O.S. and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, *Piedra Libre: Sos Mi Nieto*. Poster Campaign. Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. Print.
- Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. "Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender, and Transmission." *Poetics Today*. 27:2 (Summer 2006): 353–383. Web. 15. November 2011.
- _____. "What's Wrong With This Picture? Archival Photographs in Contemporary Narratives." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*. 5 (2006) 229–252. Web. 15. November 2011.
- Howe, Alexis. (2011) "Rethinking Disappearance in Chilean Post-Coup Narratives." (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Web. 5 Jan. 2014.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. California: Stanford University Press, 2003. Print.
- Jara, René. "Prólogo." Eds. René Jara y Hernán Vidal. *Testimonio y literatura*. Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1986. 1–6. Print.
- Jara, René and Hernán Vidal. *Testimonio y literatura*. Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1986. Print.

- Jelin, Elizabeth. *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. Trans. Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anatuvia. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- Jelin, Elizabeth, and Victoria Langland. *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales*. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, S.A., 2003. Print.
- Jinkis, Jorge. "Ni muerto ni vivo." *Pagina 12*. Web. 5 Jan 2014.
- Jiménez, Francisca. "Los 36 años de la Fundación Solidaridad." 27 August–3 September 2011. Web. 8 September 2013.
- Joyce, Christopher and Eric Stover. *Witnesses from the Grave: The Stories Bones Tell*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991. Print.
- Kwint, Marius "Introduction: The Physical Past." *Material Memories*. Ed. Marius Kwint and Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley. Oxford: Berg, 1999. Print.
- Kordon, Diana, et. al. "Forced Disappearance: A Particular Form of Torture." *Caring for Victims of Torture*. Eds. James M. Jaranson and Michael K. Popkin. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1998. Print.
- Kozameh, Alicia. *Pasos bajo el agua*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1987. Print.
- _____. *Steps Under Water*. Trans. David E. Davis. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. Print.
- La Venda*. Dir. Gloria Camiruaga. ADOC, Santiago, Chile. 2000. Film.
- Laub, Dori. "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Eds. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. New York: Routledge, 1992. 57–74. Print.

- Lazzara, Michael J. *Chile in Transition: The Poetics and Politics of Memory*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006. Print.
- Link, Daniel. "Qué sé yo. Testimonio, experiencia y subjetividad." *Crítica del testimonio: Ensayos sobre las relaciones entre memoria y relato*. Ed. Cecilia Vallina. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2009. 118–131. Print.
- Longoni, Ana. "Fotos y siluetas: dos estrategias contrastantes en la representación de los desaparecidos." *Los desaparecidos en la Argentina: Memorias, representaciones e ideas (1983–2008)*. Ed. Emilio Crenzel. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2010. 43–63. Print.
- Martorell, Elvira. "Recuerdos del presente: memoria e identidad. Una reflexión en torno a HIJOS." *Memorias en presente: Identidad y transmisión en la Argentina posgenocidio*. Ed. Sergio J. Guelerman. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2001. 133–170. Print.
- Masiello, Francine. *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. Print.
- Menchú, Rigoberta and Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*. México D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1997. Print.
- Merleau Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. Routledge: New York: The Humanities Press, 1962. Print.
- Miller, Daniel. *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997. Print.
- _____. *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010. Print.

_____. *The Comfort of Things*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008. Print.

Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología, e Innovación Productiva: Presidencia de la Nación.

“Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos (BNDG)” Web. 21 Dec. 2013.

Moreira, Alejandro. “Nuestros años setenta. Política y memoria en la Argentina contemporánea.” *Crítica del testimonio: Ensayos sobre las relaciones entre memoria y relato*. Ed. Cecilia Vallina. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2009. 66–102. Print.

Moya Paiva, José Danor. Personal Interview. June 28, 2013.

Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, *Interfaz: Prisión Política y Recintos Carcelarios en Chile 1973/1990*. Santiago: Ograma, 2012. Print.

Nora, Pierre, and Lawrence D. Kritzman. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Print.

Nostalgia de la luz. Dir. Patricio Guzmán. Atacama Productions, Blinker Filmproduktion, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), 2010. Film.

Osorio, Elsa. (1999). *A veinte años, Luz* [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.

Pardal, Naipes “La Gayola” Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria—MUME. Object Reproduction. Montevideo, Uruguay.

Partnoy, Alicia. *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival*. Trans. Alicia Partnoy and Lois Athey and Sandra Braunstein. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. Print.

- _____. “Cuando vienen matando: On Prepositional Shifts and the Struggle of Testimonial Subjects for Agency.” *PMLA* 121:5 (2006): 1665–1669. Web. 12 March 2012.
- Paulson Benevadente, Mario Alejandro. *Contar para saber: Chacabuco, Puchuncaví, Tres Álamos 1973–1975*. Santiago, 2003. Print.
- Pelaez, Rosa Elvira. “Soporopo no está a la venta” *GRANMA*. July, 1976. Print.
- Pelaez, Rosa Elvira. “Carta.” *GRANMA*. July, 1976. Print.
- Penchaszadeh, Victor B. “Abduction of Children of Political Dissidents in Argentina and the Role of Human Genetics in their Restitution.” *Journal of Public Health Policy*. 13:3 (Fall 1992). 291–305. Web. Jan 18, 2013.
- Pérez, Mariana Eva. “Manos grandes.” *Re-encuentros: Por la identidad y la justicia. Contra el olvido y el silencio*. Fundación Contamíname, 2007. Print.
- Pi, Sofía, et. al. *Historias debidas: 11 entrevistas a ex presos políticos*. Montevideo: Ediciones del CIEJ, 2013. Print.
- Pigna, Felipe. “La letra con sangre no entra.” *memoria en presente: Identidad y transmisión en la Argentina posgenocidio*. Ed. Sergio J. Guelerman. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2001. 171–198. Print.
- Presidencia de la Nación Argentina. *76:11 afiches: Momentos que hicieron historia*. Buenos Aires: Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros de la Nación Secretaría de Comunicación Pública, 2011. Print.
- Proyecto Tesoros*. Colectivo de H.I.J.O.S. Web. 7 April 2014.
< <http://www.proyectotesoros.org/>>

- Quieto, Lucila. *Arqueología de la ausencia*. Photographs. Museo de Arte y Memoria. La Plata, Argentina.
- Randall, Margaret. “¿Qué es y cómo se hace un testimonio?” Ed. John Beverley and Hugo Achugar. *La voz del otro: Testimonio, subalternidad y verdad narrative*. Ciudad de Guatemala, República de Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2002. 33–57. Print.
- Rasmussen, Yuyo and María Noel Domínguez. “Todo está guardado en la memoria.” *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985: Testimonios, entrevistas, documentos e imágenes inéditas del Uruguay autoritario*. Vol. 4 (2006) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental. 61–66. Print.
- Remedi, Gustavo. “Tell Me How It Happened: Unbinding the Discourse on Memory, the Political Crimes of the Recent Past, and Human Rights.” *Layers of Memory and the Discourse of Human Rights: Artistic and Testimonial Practices in Latin America and Iberia*. Ed. Ana Forcinito. Hispanic Issues On Line (Fall 2013): 215–230. Web. 20 Mar. 2014.
- Rey Piuma, Daniel. *Un marino acusa: Informe sobre la violación de los derechos humanos en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: TAE Editorial, 1988. Print.
- Reyes, Stela. Personal Interview. 13 August 2013.
- Richard, Nelly. *Cultural Residues: Chile in Transition*. Trans. Alan West, Theodore Quester, and Jean Franco. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004. Print.
- Rodríguez, Ileana. *Liberalism at its Limits: Crime and Terror in the Latin American Cultural Text*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. Print.

- Rojas, Marta. "El testimonio en la Revolución Cubana." Eds. René Jara y Hernán Vidal. *Testimonio y literatura*. Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1986. 315–323. Print.
- Roof, Judith. (2007). *The Poetics of DNA* [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.
- Ros, Ana. *The Post-Dictatorship Generation in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay: Collective Memory and Cultural Production*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Print.
- Ruiz, Marisa and Rafael Sanseviero. *Las rehenas: Historia oculta de once presas de la dictadura*. Montevideo: Editorial Fin de Siglo, 2012. Print.
- Sala de Memoria*, Corporación Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi. Object Exposition. Comuna de Peñalolén, Santiago, Chile.
- Salama, Mauricio Cohen. *Tumbas anónimas: Informe sobre la identificación de restos de víctimas de la represión ilegal*. Buenos Aires: Catalogos Editora, 1992. Print.
- Salinas, María Alicia. Personal Interview. June 29, 2013.
- Sanjinés C., Javier. "Beyond Testimonial Discourse: New Popular Trends in Bolivia." *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Ed. Georg Gugelberger. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 254–265. Print.
- Saona, Margarita. "Plain Things and Space: Metonymy and Aura in Memorials of Social Trauma." *Layers of Memory and the Discourse of Human Rights: Artistic and Testimonial Practices in Latin America and Iberia*. Ed. Ana Forcinito. Hispanic Issues On Line, (Spring 2014): 73–90. Web. 18 March 2014.

- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.
- _____. "Beauty and Social Justice." *Pain in Performance and Moving Beauty*. Cambridge University. 22 May 2010. Keynote Speech. Web. 9 April 2014.
- Seguel, Roxana et. al. "Londres 38: Prospección exploratoria. Búsqueda, recuperación y análisis de evidencia biológica y cultural en un centro de detención y tortura." Santiago: Dirección de Bibliotecas Archivos y Museos, Londres 38, Centro Nacional de Conservación y Restauración, 2012. Web. 21 Sept. 2013.
- Sklodowska, Elzbieta. *Testimonio hispanoamericano: Historia, teoría, poética*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992. Print.
- Smith, Elizabeth Irene. " 'The Body in Pain': An Interview with Elaine Scarry." *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 32:2 (Sept. 2006) 223–37. Web. 17 Sept. 2013.
- Sondrol, Paul C. "1984 Revisited? A Re-Examination of Uruguay's Military Dictatorship." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. 11:2 (1992): 187–203. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.
- Sosa, Mercedes. "Cuando estoy triste." *A que florezca mi pueblo*. Universal Import, 1975. Album.
- Strejilevich, Nora. *El arte de no olvidar: Literatura testimonial en Chile, Argentina y Uruguay entre los 80 y los 90*. Buenos Aires: Catálogos, 2006. Print.
- Sutherland, John. "Americans' Right to Bear Arms Also Provides the means for Them to Stop Future Wars." *The Guardian*. 6 November 2005. Web. 17 Sept. 2013.

- Tandeciarz, Silvia R. "Citizens of Memory: Refiguring the Past in Postdictatorship Argentina." *PMLA* 122:1 (2007): 151–169. Web. 3 February 2012.
- Taylor, Diana. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War."* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. Print.
- _____. "'You Are Here': The DNA of Performance." *TDR* 46:1 (2002) 149–169. Web. 3 Jan 2012.
- Tavani, Eduardo. "Las marcas de la memoria." *Las marcas de la memoria: 30,000 detenidos-desaparecidos ¡Presentes!* Ed. Eduardo Tavani. Buenos Aires: Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2012. 9 Print.
- Tiscornia, Ana. "Una memoria, un documento histórico, una obra." *El almanaque de Jorge Tiscornia*. Eds. José Pedro Charlo and Jorge Tiscornia. Montevideo: Yaugurú, 2012. Print.
- Tiscornia, Jorge. "La llegada." *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985: Testimonios, entrevistas, documentos e imágenes inéditas del Uruguay autoritario*. Vol. 3 (2006) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental. 65–81. Print.
- _____. "Los almanaques." *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985: Testimonios, entrevistas, documentos e imágenes inéditas del Uruguay autoritario*. Vol. 2 (2006) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental. 3–21. Print.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Les abus de la mémoire*. Paris: Arléa, 1995. Print.
- Treacy, Mary Jane. "Double Binds: Latin American Women's Prison Memories." *Hypatia*. 11:4 (1996): 130–145. Web. 17 Jan 2012.

- Vestigios*. Memoria abierta. Web. 19 October 2012. <<http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar/vestigios/>>
- Vidal, Hernán. *Chile: Poética de la tortura política*. Santiago: Mosquito Comunicaciones, 2001. Print.
- Weizman, Eyal. "Osteobiography: An Interview with Clyde Snow." *Cabinet*. 43 (Fall 2011) np. Web. 1 May 2012.
- Werner, Fabián. "Sobre Yessi Macchi 'En esos días no podía pensar, lloraba.'" *Cuadernos de la historia reciente 1968 Uruguay 1985* Vol. 3 (2006): 23–32. Print.
- White-Nockleby, Anna. "Fragmentos del pasado: lo documental en el teatro de una nueva generación." Web. 9 April 2014.
- Yañez, Antonia. Personal Interview. 12 August 2013.
- Young, James. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. Print.
- Yúdice, George. "Testimonio and *Postmodernism*." Ed. Georg Gugelberger. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 42–57. Print.