LES OBJETS DES DISPARUS. EXHUMATIONS ET USAGES DES TRACES MATÉRIELLES DE LA VIOLENCE DE MASSE

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Objects from the missing: Exhumations and uses of the material traces of mass violence

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"A boot is more human than a bone"
Layla Renshaw[1]

In his latest film, *El botón de nacar*, Patricio Guzmán[2] continues his exploration of Chilean memory. It is a common theme running through his artistic output. In the film, an object — the pearl button that gives the film its title — becomes the metaphor for a dark past shaped by two intersecting stories. The first is that of Jemmy Button, a South American Indian who comes from the Yaghan ethnic group in the Tierra del Fuego. Button is said to have been sold to the English in 1830 for transportation back to the United Kingdom in exchange for a mother-of-pearl button. The second story is about a button found attached to a railway track at the bottom of the ocean in Quintero Bay (Valparaíso province). It was recovered during recent investigations into the crimes committed by General Pinochet's regime, instituted after the overthrow of Salvador Allende in September 1973. The regime used railway tracks to make the bodies of the "disappeared" — the victims of the dictatorship, who had usually been tortured beforehand — sink to the bottom of the sea. Both the recovered railway track and the button were transferred by Judge Juan Guzmán to the Villa Grimaldi museum in Santiago in 2004. These material traces, evidence of the crimes committed, are now an integral part of an installation called the Monumento Rieles[3], which was unveiled in 2007. This one object then, the mother-of-pearl button, thus serves as a metaphor for the condemnation of a double crime, one committed against the indigenous people of the American continent

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[1] Testimony of one of the leading members of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, quoted by Layla Renshaw, *Exhuming Loss. Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*, Walnut Creek, California, Left Coast Press, 2011, p. 159.

[2] The film was released in the US on 23 October 2015 and in the UK on 18 March 2016 under the title *The Pearl Button*.

[3] Images can be found on the Villa Grimaldi museum website: http://villagrimaldi.cl/parque-por-la-paz/monumento-rieles-2/, accessed 31 October 2017.

by the European colonists, and the other against the political opponents of the Pinochet regime. The ocean echoes with the voices of the Patagonian Indians and the thousands that disappeared during the dictatorship.

This issue of *Les Cahiers Sirice* is dedicated to these objects, the material traces of mass killings, which have been exhumed either by chance or as a result of deliberate campaigns. As the metaphor woven by Guzmán suggests, an object is at once a source of knowledge about the past, the material proof of a massacre, and the sign of a memory reactivation charged with emotion, whose subsequent fate reveals the varying symbolic loads that present-day societies decide to accord to it.

Victims, mass graves, and the "forensic turn": the genealogy of a project

It is not by chance that this reflection opens with an example from South America. The Chilean and Argentinian dictatorship repressions in the seventies resulted in the mass practice of enforced disappearance. Arrested militants were swallowed up by the dictatorship jails, never to be seen again, while their families were left not knowing when, or if ever, their loved ones would be let out. This practice was the catalyst for the primarily female-led movement to condemn these regimes, where the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo would gather in Buenos Aires wearing white headscarves (alluding to their missing child's baby blanket) and the wives would dance the traditional Chilean courting dance, the *cueca*, alone (the so-called *cueca* sola)[4]. The disappearances raised such specific questions when it came to establishing the truth and administering justice that the mobilization of the Chilean and Argentinian victims as well as those from Brazil and Uruguay led to the legal codification of a new crime called 'enforced disappearance', which has been regulated by the United Nations since 1992[5]. This codification makes

[4] Antonia Garcia Castro, "Hors-thèmes. La mémoire des survivants et la révolte des ombres: les disparus dans la société chilienne (1973-1995)", *Cultures & Conflits* [Online], 24-25, winter 1996-spring 1997, made available online on 27 March 2007, accessed 30 October 2017, http://conflits.revues.org.ezproxy.univ-paris1.fr/2163.

[5] Declaration on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance, Resolution 47/133, General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted in plenary session on 18 December 1992: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CED/Pages/ConventionCED.aspx, accessed 31 October 2017.

the need to find traces (which are both proof of the crime and signs that allow the grieving process to begin) all the more pressing.

The mass use of enforced disappearance is evidenced in the territories focused on in this issue, namely Spain during the 1936-1939 civil war, Stalin's Soviet Union, Peru in the 1980s, and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Stalin's Great Terror removed 700,000 people between July 1937 and November 1938, with no explanations given to their families for many years. In Spain, it is estimated that more than 100,000 people are still buried in the country's 3,000 mass graves. In Peru, the International Commission on Missing Persons estimates that, at the beginning of the 2010s, there were still 15,000 people whom no-one had heard from yet[6], and in Bosnia, almost 30,000 people went missing during the war.

In a bid to make those who disappeared "reappear", the search for the mass graves began. This took some time, however, because nothing could be done until the regimes that had authored the massacres had come to an end. For example, the only excavations of the Stalinist graves prior to *perestroïka* were carried out by the Nazis when they occupied the west of the Soviet Union. In Argentina, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentino de Antropologia Forense)[8], which was responsible for carrying out the excavations to find the remains of the disappeared persons, was not set up until 1984, after the fall of the military junta. However, the end of the criminal regimes did not necessarily mean the systematic search for bodies began straight away. In Spain, for instance, General Franco had been dead 25 years before any significant move (which was civilian-led) was made to excavate the graves. These exhumation campaigns were part of a dynamic that was peculiar to the 20th century, marked, on the one hand, by extreme violence on an unprecedented scale and, on the other, by the evolution of the victim figure.

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6 https://www.icmp.int/the-missing/where-are-the-missing/peru/, accessed 1 November 2017.

7 Élisabeth Claverie, "Réapparaître: retrouver les corps des personnes disparues pendant la guerre en Bosnie", *Raisons politiques*, no. 41, 2011, p. 14.

8 Their website can be found at: www.eaaf.org. Most notably, it gives a historical account of their actions: http://eaaf.typepad.com/founding_of_eaaf/, accessed 31 October 2017.

The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of the victim in the public space. This now well-known phenomenon[9] fundamentally shapes our contemporary societies. The figure of the victim has supplanted that of the hero in national narratives promoting a "historiography of the vanquished"[10], where a tragic relationship with history prevails. At the same time, in anthropological terms, there has been a swing in the moral economy towards the recognition of suffering[11], which has resulted in the creation of a "trauma culture"[12]. The storing of "disasters"[13] in our memories is thus occupying a growing place in our societies, most notably in the form of the development of victims' sites of memory[14]. Victim status now entails the right to recognition[15], reparation, truth, and justice, and judicial procedures have changed dramatically as a result. They no longer centre exclusively on the accused but instead take better account of the victims' suffering, which, it is assumed, will have been assuaged by the end of the trial[16]. This so-called transitional justice, which has been imposed as a universal post-conflict dogma since the 1990s, is founded on the social recognition of the victims and the fight against impunity. Far from the mentality that espoused forgetting and amnesty, which dominated post-conflict logic for so long, the belief now is that we have to face up to the past, to

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[9] See Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La concurrence des victimes. Génocides, identités, reconnaissance,* Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 1997; Guillaume Erner, *La société des victimes*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006.

[10] Reinhart Koselleck, "Mutation de l'expérience et changement de méthode. Esquisse historico-anthropologique", dans *L'expérience de l'histoire*, Paris, Seuil, 1997, p. 312-313.

[11] Luc Boltanski, *La souffrance à distance*, Paris, Métailié, 1993; Didier Fassin & Richard Rechtman, *L'empire du traumatisme. Enquête sur la condition de victime,* Paris, Flammarion, 2007.

[12] E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, Rutgers University Press, 2005. See also J. C. Alexander *et alii*, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2001.

[13] Henry Rousso, *La dernière catastrophe. L'histoire, le présent, le contemporain*, Paris, Gallimard, 2012.

[14] David El Kenz & François-Xavier Nérard, *Commémorer les victimes en Europe, XVIe- XXIe siècles*, Seyssel, Champ Vallon, 2011.

[15] Axel Honneth, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance,* Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 2000.

[16] See Éric Wenzel, "Quelle place pour la victime dans l'ancien droit pénal?", in Benoît Garnot (ed.), *Les victimes, des oubliées de l'histoire?* Rennes, PUR, 2001, p. 19-29; Sandrine Lefranc, "La justice de l'après-conflit politique: justice pour les victimes, justice sans tiers", *Négociations*, 2, 2015, p. 102.

know what happened, to talk about it[17]. Exhuming the graves has thus become vital in terms of addressing the need for reparation for the victims, demanding the truth about the past, and calling for penal justice.

Excavating mass gravesites is, of course, nothing new for archaeologists, who have always seen funerary archaeology as an indispensable source of knowledge about the past. The First World War, for example, was "an unprecendented enterprise of repatriation and identification of bodies"[18], in terms of both volume and the technical innovations at the excavation sites. However, the last quarter of the 20th century saw a quantitative and qualitative step change, organised around this new social demand to make the dead reappear and around technical advances that included the use of forensic medicine and all its tools (particularly DNA analysis). This major change first emerged in Argentina with the previously mentioned Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, where a series of international specialists introduced new exhumation and mass grave analysis practices. These were shared, along with the specialists' experience, in many conflict zones, from Bosnia to Rwanda[19]. The war in Yugoslavia played a central role in this context with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia's (ICTY) order for mass exhumations. This was the first time the exhumations had been used by the court to understand the mechanisms as well as the degrees of intentionality and sophistication of the massacres and to establish whether genocide had taken place in Srebrenica[20]. After this,

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[17] Pierre Hazan, "Les dilemmes de la justice transitionnelle", *Mouvements*, 53(1), 1, 2008, p. 41-47.

[18] Elisabeth Anstett, Jean-Marc Dreyfus, "Why exhume? Why identify?", in *Human Remains and Identification: Mass violence, genocide, and the 'forensic turn'*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015, p. 2.

[19] Dreyfus and Anstett highlight the role of Clyde Snow, who was in Argentina and then Bosnia, *ibid.*, p. 4-5. Forensic Anthropologist Clea Koff's experience also springs to mind. Her book, an unexpected bestseller, tells of her experiences in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo): Clea Koff, *The Bone Woman: a Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo*, New York, Random House, 2004, 271 p.

[20] Élisabeth Claverie, "Réapparaître…", art. cit., p. 25-30.

exhumations of mass graves became more common, with sites in Cambodia, South Africa, Rwanda, Spain, and Iraq. The scale of the phenomenon remained variable, however. While it became very important in Rwanda and Spain, it remained marginal elsewhere (for example, in Russia). It should not therefore be seen as a largescale, widespread practice.

The initial search for and the subsequent excavation and examination of mass graves is a cumbersome process, requiring the mobilisation of many experts (archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, forensic experts) and the amalgamation of many different approaches and techniques. The process involves, for example, using oral testimonies, archival documents, aerial and satellite photographs, cadastral archives, and topographical analyses just to locate the excavation site. Then there is the actual administration of the site (marking out the zone, labelling the objects and the remains found, using metal detectors, etc.), and finally the DNA analysis of the remains in a laboratory[21]. As the exhumation professionals have gained experience, the process has been improved, structured, and even codified in scientific protocols, which have been established as guides to a successful exhumation. This has made the process more complex, however. There is a cost associated (not just in monetary terms but also in terms of time, labour, and materials), which is a real obstacle when the project is not supported by the state or by international justice. In Spain, for example, the pace of exhumations slowed down considerably when public subsidies were dramatically reduced at the end of the 2000s. A number of excavations have since been subject to a relatively amateurish approach and have seemed crude, unscientific even, as has often been the case in Russia, for example.

This renewed interest from different populations in mass graves and their exhumation has also, in turn, attracted the attention of researchers, so much so in fact that some are talking about a "forensic turn"[22]. This is most notably the case for Francisco Ferrándiz and colleagues in Spain, for Zuzanna Dziuban and colleagues working on questions relating to the Holocaust,

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[21] See Mike Groen, Nicholas Marquez-Grant, and Robe Janaway, *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*, Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2015, 616 p. and, in particular, the contribution from Francisco Etxeberria, Lourdes Herrasti, Fernando Serrulla, and Nicholas Marquez-Grant, "Contemporary exhumations in Spain: recovering the missing from the Spanish civil war" (p. 489-498).

[22] Elisabeth Anstett and Jean-Marc Dreyfus, "Why exhume?...", art. cit., p. 4.

and for Elisabeth Anstett, Jean-Marc Dreyfus, and colleagues working on the European Research Council-funded 'Corpses of mass violence and genocide' project [23]. Their research focuses on human remains and their identification. This issue has chosen a different focus. It looks instead at the objects found in the graves and, in so doing, seeks to shift our gaze.

While mass graves[24] harbour the victims' human remains, they also contain a variety of objects that are just as important to the exhumation professionals and researchers as they are to the victims' families. The absence of any specific reflection on these objects may seem surprising given that they are at the heart of archaeological practices (especially funerary archaeology) and that they provide the history of material culture with its basic principles. However, this blind spot is in keeping with present-day social issues, which push us to focus our gaze on the human remains. Understandably, the most important thing for those who are mobilised is to find the bodies of their missing loved ones in order to tell the truth about what happened to them and to give them a dignified burial. The objects, too often abandoned and considered mere adjuncts to the skeletal remains, are nevertheless not only rich in information but also conveyors of emotions and many questions. Hence, this volume proposes to reflect on these objects (which are significant in themselves), on their function in exhumation practices, and on their subsequent uses in the practices of re-inhumation and maintaining memory.

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[23] See, for example, the *Human Remains and Violence* series, which has produced five published works (http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/series/human-remains-and- violence/), and the associated journal (six issues to date). See also Sévane Garibian, Élisabeth Anstett, and Jean-Marc Dreyfus (ed.), *Restos humanos e identificación. Violencia de masa, genocidio y el 'giro forense',* Buenos Aires, Mino y Davila, 2017. On Spain, see Francisco Ferrándiz's publications and projects: *El pasado bajo tierra. Exhumaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil,* Madrid, Anthropos, 2014 (cf. his H2020 Unrest projet: http://www.unrest.eu/home/). More generally: Francisco Ferrandiz and Antonius Robben, *Necropolitics. Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. On Latin America: A-M. Losonczy & V. Robin Azevedo (ed.), 2016, *Retour des corps, parcours des âmes. Exhumations et deuil collectif dans le monde hispanique*, Paris, Pétra éditions, 2016. For an example on Guatemala: Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rigths in Guatemala*. New-York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. Z. Dziuban (ed.), *Mapping the 'Forensic Turn': The Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond*, Vienna, New Academic Press, 2017.

[24] Our reflection is on deaths caused by human beings and therefore excludes those resulting from epidemics. It focuses on the civilian victims of conflicts and/or genocide. While the question of war is always present, it will not be discussed here.

This work aims to be both comparative and multidisciplinary. The examples discussed are diverse. They focus on two principal spaces, Europe and Latin America, which are situated at the heart of the practical and theoretical regenerations explored above. Moreover, while the authors of this introduction are historians, we have sought to bring together specialists from a number of disicplines who do not always communicate with one another. This issue of *Les Cahiers Sirice* thus brings the approaches used by excavation site practitioners to open up graves and process their data face to face with the historian's reflection on the symbolic, political, and social uses generated by this practice. The texts gathered here have been written by archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and art historians. This multidisciplinarity is as evident in the perspectives as in the writing styles. Each of these articles has the power to surprise the other discipline specialists. At least, this is what we hope.

Two definite strands have emerged from our collective reflections. They are organised around what might be called the two lives of the object, namely its pre-inhumation life and its post-exhumation life. In terms of its pre-inhumation life, the object is a source, a link with the world that preceded the mass grave, the world of both the victim and the perpetrators of the crime. Once exhumed, however, the object begins a second life. What should be done with it? What will it become? What are its uses as a trace of mass death?

The object as a source

The object found in a mass grave is first and foremeost a material trace of the mass violence that was the reason for its burial. As such, it is a key source of knowledge, a material element that is exploited by archaeological, anthropological, and forensic expertise. Not all objects present the same usefulness, however, since this is dependent on their state of preservation, which can vary according to the nature of the soil and the time elapsed between inhumation and exhumation. The objects focused on here have generally been in good enough condition to provide valuable information, which the different experts are becoming increasingly skilled at extracting.

The primary objective in exhumations is to identify the buried remains in order, where possible, to put a

name to them. Combined with the archive documents, the survivor testimonies, the results from the archaeological analyses, and the DNA tests, the object is a key element in the identification process. Sometimes, the object is self-explanatory. This is the case, for example, with a soldier's identity tag or with identity documents found in a bottle placed next to a body, such as those found at the exceptional Pamplona cemetery in Spain (Jiménez & Herrasti). Clothes, shoes, jewellery, watches, and spectacles are all potentially recognisable by a victim's family member. In Yugoslavia (Jugo) and Peru (Saona), photo books of clothes have even been compiled and shown to families in the hope they will be able to recognise one of the items. When these items are not available, a uniform, a soldier's boot, coins, or buttons bearing acronyms can all contribute if not to providing a name, an individual identity for each of the buried bodies, then to shedding light on the origins and trajectory of the inhumed group of individuals (for example, their geographical origin and even their nationality [Shapoval]), their regiment if they were soldiers, and their social origin. Moreover, a shaving kit or a bun pin gives information on the victim's gender.

Beyond its use in the individual or collective identification process, the object, as an element of material culture, participates in the process of piecing together the history of the victims, their lives, and even the history of the massacre. The object gives us information on the victim's social condition, on their profession (tools), their beliefs and fears (crosses, rosaries, amulets), their habits (pipes, cigarette papers, pencils), and their lifestyles (combs, bun pins, razors, spectacles, mirrors). The object is thus able to reveal little-known practices, particularly those concerning the many adaptations made in everyday life to situations of conflict (uniforms customised to better respond to the realities on the ground, coats and shoes stolen from the enemy). Curiously, while archaeologists have always used the material traces found in excavation sites in this sense to tell the social and cultural history of the men and women who left them there, contemporary exhumations of the mass graves resulting from massacres do not focus on this dimension of the object, or at least only very secondarily. The exhumations reported on in this collection are no exception. Excavation reports aim above all to identify the bodies and explain the grave's existence as well as the conditions of killing. The memory issues of present-day societies take priority to a large extent over historical research issues.

Conversely, the history of the massacre is of great interest to those involved in the exhumation process. Personal objects can provide information on the nature of the group targeted (men, women, civilians, military, rural populations, city populations, etc.), the time of death (time the victims' watches stopped), and the methods of execution. Many of the objects found in the graves relate directly to the violence perpetrated, such as handcuffs, pieces of rope or cloth used to bind wrists together, scarves used to blindfold the condemned, and spent bullets and cartridges from the weapons. Hence, the exhumed object is not just a source of information on the victims but also on the intentions and practices of the executioners. Dating the time of both death and exhumation is thus considered essential for an understanding of whether the condemned were executed next to the grave, whether they were executed elsewhere and then transported to the grave, or even whether their bodies were transferred from one grave to another. In Russia, the absence of cartridges evidences a practice that was specific to the Great Terror, where the prisoners were killed in the dentention centres and then transported to the graves that had been dug further afield (Nérard). In Bosnia, the perpetrators sought to cover their tracks by creating secondary and even tertiary graves in which to bury the bodies and objects exhumed from other graves (Jugo).

Moreover, the munitions found in the graves and the execution practices uncovered as a result contribute to identifying the authors of the massacre. This is crucial in terms of attributing responsibility and combatting negationist behaviour in the most contested cases, where accountability has not been clearly established and is subject to key political and social concerns. In Bosnia, Peru, and the former Soviet Union space, for example, identification procedures are central in the construction of a shared historic account and in maintaining the memory of the massacre. The object as a source of knowledge can therefore be put forward as evidence in legal proceedings. Likewise, the grave as the scene of the crime contains clues that can be crucial when it comes to determining historical and criminal responsibility. This was the case in Bosnia, where objects from the graves were used as incriminating evidence in the ICTY.

However, as with any source document or piece of evidence, the object can be misleading or can even have been deliberately falsified. On its own, it is not enough, and it can lead to errors being made. For example, a piece of clothing may have been worn by

several individuals in succession, shoes may have been stolen from bodies buried elsewhere, and soldiers' regimental numbers may have been swapped. It is also possible, as was the case in Bosnia and Ukraine, that an object was buried deliberately to confuse any potential future search (Jugo). This is why experience-based scientific protocols invite caution and insist that the object is compared to other sources found in the grave or elsewhere, such as in the archives or in information gathered from families or potential witnesses.

The object as a sign

Used as a source of identification and evidence for investigation purposes, the object gives us information on its first life as an item belonging to one of the protagonists at the crime scene. As soon as we begin to ponder its post-exhumation future, however, it takes on a whole host of other meanings. What does the object become when it emerges from the soil? Who will it be returned to, in law and in practice? What second life does it enjoy after the death of its previous owner?

Once it has served as a source of identification or evidence, once it has been examined, photographed, and temporarily sealed, the object is generally then just disposed of in the most ordinary way. It has fulfilled its primary purpose, and it is no longer useful, so it just disappears. Those objects that are not destroyed, whether because of scientific, judicial, or ethical scruples, are wrapped in plastic and sent to gather dust on one of the innumerable shelves in the forensic expertise institutes or the basements of the courts of justice. Laying alongside them are the remains of the victims that have not been claimed and which sometimes nobody knows what to do with. Alternatively, the object may quite simply be reinterred at the gravesite, as was the case at the Bykovnia site in Ukraine (Shapoval), where all the objects exhumed during different campaigns were gathered together in boxes and re-inhumed at the same site alongside boxes containing the human remains. Destruction, collective re-inhumation, or storage therefore seems to be the fate of most of these objects.

Sometimes, however, the object has another, highly pragmatic use, which is very often overlooked because of its immoral aspect. Having either been stolen or recovered legally by the family members, the object can quite simply be sold for its market value. This has been the case with gold jewellery and, perhaps more astonishingly but ultimately very commonly, gold teeth

that have been removed from the victim's jaw. The history of objects stolen from the bodies of both the living and dead victims of the Holocaust has long been of interest to researchers. The fact that they are so rare speaks volumes about Nazi despoilment. They ensured that every corporal (such as hair) and material (clothes, shoes, dentures, etc.) element of the victims was turned to good account (they were subsequently used for industrial or commercial purposes). Many objects were stolen and resold on the black market by civilians from the surrounding areas. Hence, in an emotionless interview at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Regina tells the story of her gold tooth, which she still had in her mouth and which she politely showed the camera (Klinger). There was also the Andean peasant girl, who wanted to recover her murdered mother's gold tooth in order to pay the burial costs and have a little extra as a post-mortem inheritance (Delacroix). The object thus retains its utilitarian function beyond the death of its previous owner.

However, as highlighted by the Spanish activist in the epigraph to this introduction, "a boot is more human than a bone" [25]. A bone is a bone, and a skull is a skull, but an object is unique and recognisable. The object thus becomes a sign, a sign of the disappeared person, of the loved one, of the person the family has been looking for, or quite simply of the existence of a human being. The object, as a metonymy for the man or woman who owned it, thus has considerable evocative, emotional power. While the gaze of many of the families and indeed many of those involved in the exhumations (archaeologists, anthropologists, volunteers, journalists) has become rather anaesthetised to the sight of endless skulls and tibias, they report being deeply moved at the sight of a pair of broken spectacles, a comb, or a sewing kit. Exposing a personal object is like a sudden intrusion on the intimacy of a life. Those involved begin to imagine fragments of that life, such as a marriage when they see a ring, a run-of-the-mill shaving scene when they see a blade and a mirror, the elegance of a woman with long hair when they see sophisticated hairpins, the innocence of a child whose future was snatched away when they see a small shoe decorated with a pompom, and a soldier's hope that he will be protected from the dangers of the war when they see a lucky charm necklace. The object gives flesh to the inanimate bones, and our insertion into this ordinariness

[25] Testimony of one of the leading members of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, quoted by Layla Renshaw, *Exhuming Loss, op. cit.*

of everyday life contributes to a sensitive understanding of the appearance of the unthinkable, the horror in the life of a human being. The object's emotional power explains why a second life can be accorded to it and why it becomes, to borrow a term used further on by Admir Jugo, a "relic".

Generally speaking, when families find the body of a loved one following an exhumation, both the remains and the personal objects are given back to them, as was the case in Spain and Peru. The objects thus return to the private space they should never have left, and as such they contribute to the grieving process, which could never have finished without them. When a loved one dies and there is no body, the family is kept in an indefinite state of uncertainty, and, in the absence of any burial rituals, they are prevented from grieving properly. Dorothée Delacroix shows that for the Indian communities living on the plateaux of the Andes, the deceased becomes a lost soul when no body is found, wandering the earth and haunting his widow's dreams. A piece of his clothing, despite the fact it may be stained with blood, thus serves to ease the deceased's transition into the other world through ritual practices that the communities have reinvented to respond to these exceptional situations. Hence, whether the object is re-inhumed along with the deceased for ritual reasons or whether it is returned to the bosom of the family to take pride of place on the mantelpiece next to a photo of the missing loved one or to join other keepsakes in a box at the bottom of a cupboard, it plays an essential role in the grieving process and in maintaining the memory.

This same evocative power explains why the object has become a key element in museographical spaces dedicated to the history and memory of mass violence. While some memorials choose to exhibit skulls and bones, as is the case in Rwanda, the majority in the West prefer to exhibit archive documents, photographs, testimonies, and objects[26]. The object found at the scene of a massacre or exhumed from a mass grave takes on a collective dimension and a universal significance while, at the same time, retaining its power to individualise the victim. Through the object, the visitor creates a

[26] This is especially the case with the 9/11 memorial in New York, whose collections bring together more than 11,000 objects. The museum services have published a book containing a collection of photographs of the objects found at the Ground Zero site or donated by the victims' parents. Michael Bloomberg, Clifford Chanin, Alice M. Greenwald, and Joe Daniels, *The stories they tell: artifacts from the National September 11 Memorial Museum. A journey of remembrance*, New York, Skira Rizzoli, 2013, 160 p.

palpable link with the victim when they were still alive and, as such, is able to understand the tragedy differently. Jane Klinger talks of the "survivor object", the material trace of the crime, a trace that takes on particular significance when no traces have been found in the mass graves. This is most notably the case with the Holocaust, where each object acquires a historic value and a testimonial of great magnitude. The "survivor object" takes on a universal, even sacred, dimension when it concerns the objects that were deliberately concealed (buried under the extermination camps or near the graves) by the condemned Jews in a final act of defiance and liberty, further justifying Jugo's use of the "relic" notion.

As we discover from Margarita Saona and Stephenie Young in this issue, artists are also claiming these objects and placing them at the heart of an engaged art, which forms part of the collective memory processes currently underway in Peru and Bosnia. Far from being a relic, the object is transformed and revivified. The notion of "forensic imagination" developed by Stephenie Young places the emphasis on the disruptions caused to the memories by this growth in the practice of scientific exhumation. These disruptions are such that the arts in turn claim them, creating spaces beyond the tribunal and laboratory walls that are conducive to awareness, contemplation, and reflection.

The photographs of the exhumed object, taken either by the exhumation experts themselves or by professional photographers (who have been called in specifically to give the event media coverage or else attended the site independently), are often used in journalistic, activist, or educational information dissemination initiatives. When objects go missing or deteriorate, the photographed image is particularly useful as supporting evidence in legal proceedings or as a clue to help identify victims, as is the case with these so-called books of clothes, which are in fact books of photographs of clothes that have been presented to the families. Hence, the image of the object in turn becomes an object, a piece of evidence. Bosnian artists thus go in search of their own evidence. They photograph or film materials found at the scene of the crimes and then make them available to the public. These "living memorials" can be found on the internet or in museums. One example is the artist Sejla Kamerić's installation, which is in the form of a huge fridge, similar to those

found in laboratories, filled not with human remains but material forensic evidence (Young). The Peruvian artists presented by Margarita Saona offer an aesthetic, sensory experience of the traces of violence in the way that they work the materiality, the texture, the very fibre of a piece of fabric or a bullet hole in a skull or a piece of clothing. In the same way that contemporary artists like to use the photographs of victims because they are the most immediate way of representing the image of the disappeared person, the photographs and filmed images of objects also acquire an aesthetic dimension, which extends the imagination of the massacres differently in the public space to around the scene of the mass grave.

The eight articles assembled here inform this project each in their own way. The first group of articles study the material traces of three conflicts (the war in the former Yugoslavia, the Spanish Civil War, and the Stalin Terror). Situated along the continuum of exhumations, from Bykovnia, near Kiev, in 1941 to the most recent in Spain in the 2000s, they establish a dialogue between an anthropologist (Admir Jugo), two archaeologists (Jimi Jimenez and Lourdes Herrasti), and a historian (Yuri Shapoval). The second group of articles examines practices relating to the exhumation of objects and their meaning. The chronological context of an exhumation is thus highlighted by François-Xavier Nérard (Stalin's mass graves), while Jane Klinger reflects on the few traces left behind by the Holocaust and on the particular importance of the objects found. Anthropologist Dorothée Delacroix looks at the re-use of objects exhumed from mass graves in Peru and on the meaning that should be given to them. The reappropriation of exhumed objects by contemporary artists is addressed in the final two articles of this issue. Margarita Saona examines the Peruvian context, while Stephenie Young concludes the volume with a study of the former Yugoslavia.

As we close this introduction[27], we cannot help but think of the terrible drama currently unfolding in the Mediterranean, where thousands of

[27] This issue forms part of a continuation of an international conference organised in Marseille in November 2015. It is the product of intense exchanges between all its participants, to whom we are very grateful. The project has been supported by

refugees are dying every week, transforming the sea into one huge mass grave filled with wreckage, corpses, and the objects abandoned by these desperate victims. Will these remains, these material traces of a tragedy that is happening as we speak, be found, exhumed, and analysed one day so that their story can finally be written and their dignity restored?

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