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**Cecilia Sosa**

## FOOD, CONVIVIALITY AND THE WORK OF MOURNING. THE ASADO SCANDAL AT ARGENTINA'S EX-ESMA

*This article addresses a controversial debate raised by an asado-party, which was celebrated by the end of 2012 at the former Navy Mechanics School (ESMA), the main clandestine detention centre where almost 5,000 people were held captive and tortured during Argentina's last dictatorship (1976-1983). In 2004, the former school was transformed into a "space of memory". Drawing upon the asado episode, I consider which kind of practices of re-occupation former landscapes of death may allow.*

*I first provide an overview of the interventions that took place at ESMA within the Kirchnerist period (2003-2015). Second, I bring into play some cultural productions of the new generations, as well as performances and philosophical ruminations regarding the asado as a main theme in the local culture. Finally, I put these materials in the larger context of memory politics to explore how food-reunions – and expanded tables might work as a public pathway for a collective digestion of grief. The question that is ultimately at stake is how to kindle alternative hospitalities and dialogues in landscapes marked by loss. Might the spectrum of activities that took place at the former ESMA during the Kirchnerist years suggest a new conviviality for the aftermath of violence?*

**Keywords:** Asado; Mourning; ESMA; Memory; Kirchnerism

### The scandal

At the beginning of 2013 a controversial episode made the rounds of Argentina's media. Newspapers reported that the Minister of Justice, Julio Alak, had organised an *asado* [barbecue] at the former Navy Mechanics School (ESMA), the place that had functioned as the main clandestine detention centre during Argentina's last dictatorship (1976–1983). During the military regime, more than 5,000 people – mostly left activists – were held captive and tortured there before being 'disappeared'. In many cases, inmates were drugged and thrown alive into the *Río de la Plata* to meet their death.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, the detention centre was transformed into a



**FIGURE 1** One of the few images that circulated of the asado party celebrated in December 2012 at the former ESMA.

‘space of memory’ by the former president, Néstor Kirchner. Since then, many cultural activities have been launched in this haunted space.

In fact, what was advertised as the ‘asado’ at the end of December 2012 was the annual end-of-year reception of the Ministry of Justice, which, instead of taking place at the downtown headquarters, was held for the first time at the former ESMA. The ‘catering’ included traditional meat sandwiches and sausages cooked on an improvised grill. The event took place at *La casa de la militancia* [The House of Militancy], the brand-new space owned by the organization of the Children of the Disappeared (H.I.J.O.S.). During the Kirchnerist period, H.I.J.O.S. grew close to *La C  mpora* movement, an enthusiastic, mainly youth organization, supportive of the left-Peronist strand of Kirchnerism, instrumental in evoking the cult of Néstor Kirchner’s remembrance.<sup>2</sup> As was later reported, about 1,000 public servants working at the Justice Ministry and a crowd of young activists attended the end-of-season party (see figure 1).

For many, the celebration emerged as an arrogant and over-confident gesture led by Cristina Fern  ndez de Kirchner’s administration, which had managed to transform the demands of a network of victims based on kinship ties into its own official narrative. The reactions were strong. The *asado* appeared to be especially flagrant, given the controversial resonances that the word had at the former ESMA during the dictatorship. As many survivors recalled for the media, back in the 1970s, the term *asado* referred to the cremation of prisoners’ corpses in the illegal centre within the military personnel’s slang. As Marguerite Feitlowitz acknowledges in her *Lexicon of Terror. Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (1998), *parilla* also referred to the metal rack where inmates were tortured by electric shocks delivered from a cattle prod (‘*picana*’). Thus, it was not difficult to understand why three decades later the celebration of something that recalled an *asado* on the premises of the former ESMA appeared to be in especially ‘bad taste’. In that heated context, the opposition parties took advantage and called for the resignation



**FIGURE 2** President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner launching the Museo de la Memoria at the Casino de Oficiales.

of the Minister of Justice (Clarín, 2013.)<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Human Rights Secretary dismissed the ‘obscurantist’ reaction, arguing that the choice of place was coherent for a government who had brought the perpetrators of human rights violations back into court and transformed memory into a matter of collective endeavour.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, even among those who supported the government, the resonances of the episode were so uncanny that even Minister Alak had to step back, arguing that the celebration was not a real *asado*, but just a few hundred burgers and sausages. Still, for some relatives and survivors, the party remained intolerable – or, as one might say, *indigestible*. If for a few weeks the episode appeared to threaten the stability of the government, eventually things calmed down, and a further two *asados*, albeit on a lesser scale, were hosted at the former ESMA during the period.<sup>5</sup>

Still, it seems to me that the episode represents a privileged opportunity for considering which kind of practices the re-occupation of former landscapes of torture and death may allow. Drawing on this, I will first consider some of the juxtaposed imaginaries that the *asado* managed to trigger in the local culture. I will suggest that the official reception at the former ESMA can also help us rethink the local scene, usually conceived of as unique, from a more multicultural and transnational perspective. In doing so, I follow Michael Rothberg’s invitation of ‘thinking outside the universal/particular opposition that marks much discussion of the politics of identity and cultural difference’ (2009: 21). In opposition to arguments that consider the ESMA as an incomparably dreadful hiatus of horror, I will contend that the spectrum of activities which took place at the former Navy School during the Kirchnerist period suggested a new form of conviviality in the aftermath of violence. Finally, while bringing other cognate examples into play, I will explore how food-reunions – and also new kinds of tables – might work as a public pathway towards a communal digestion of mourning. Ultimately, the broad question that



**FIGURE 3** One of the popular cultural events taking place at the Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti.

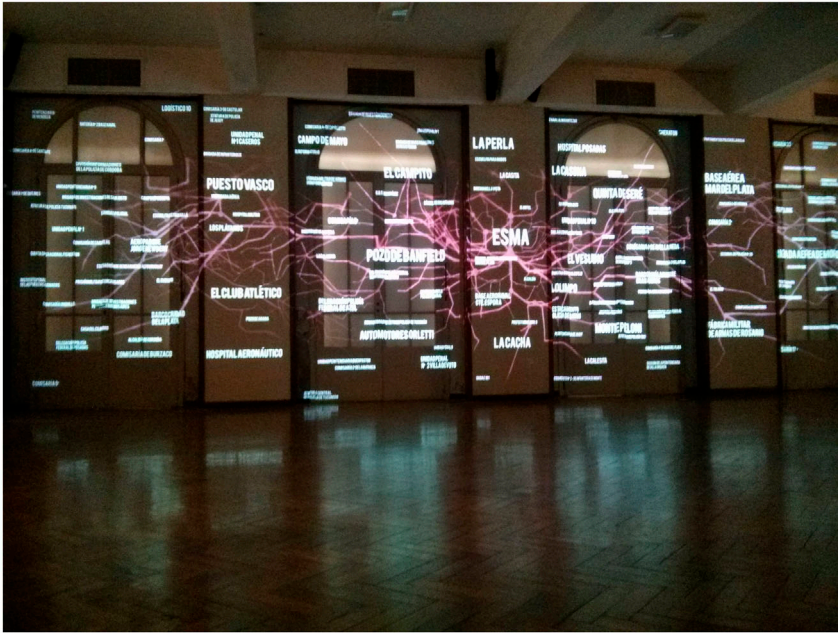
mobilises my intervention is how to kindle new hospitalities, exchanges and dialogues in expanded collective landscapes touched by loss.

### Theatrical landscapes of mourning

In order to do so, I will consider spaces of memory in general, and the former ESMA in particular, as theatrical stages of public mourning. As Erica Lehrer, Cynthia Milton and Monica Eileen Patterson suggest, spaces of memory tend to stage a particular combination of bodies, flesh and rituals in the public scene (2011: 1–23). Spaces of memory can be thought of as bridges across disparate times: they harbour a queer temporality, one that emerges in between the dead and the living. There, conflictive publics with conflicting demands – including researchers, scholars, curators, educators, policy makers, artists, relatives, survivors and the so-called ‘non affected’ visitors – find themselves in the face of the past, before the others, trying to do something about the future.

To some extent, the *asado* scandal also showed the extent to which spaces of memory also became places for the *digestion* of mourning during the Kirchnerist years. The term ‘digestion’ usually signposts an organic bodily process, which includes breaking down the food followed by the absorption, assimilation and incorporation of nutrients. In a parallel way, an emotional shock or an overwhelming traumatic event might also need to be *digested*. They are both physical processes in which something related to the body has been affected. During the period





**FIGURE 4** Virtual map depicting the network of detention centres in Argentina. Museum of Memory, ESMA.

2003–2015, spaces of memory provided the affective landscape where both the process and the effects of an ongoing trauma had the rare opportunity of being incorporated and assimilated in a public and collective environment. Thus, spaces of memory also emerged as contorted landscapes where the experience of mourning could be ‘worked through’ and, potentially also elaborated in such a way that it can provide some forms of ‘affective reparation’, to use David Eng’s expression. Drawing on recent discussions around the concept of post-memory (Andermann 2012; Hirsch 2001, 2008, 2012; Serpente 2011; Sosa 2012, 2014), I also contend that, particularly in Kirchnerist Argentina, spaces of memory were stages upon which a process of transmission took place. This not only concerned those ‘directly affected’ by the violence of the dictatorship, but also those apparently unrelated witnesses who, for the first time, also attempted to partake in loss. For them, spaces of memory could emerge as affective architectures where new affiliations can be kindled in the wake of grief.

Finally, I will try to demonstrate how these effervescent processes resonated and intersected within Argentina’s so-called ‘spaces of memory’ during the Kirchnerist years. When the institutionalisation of sites of repression and political terror coincided with the reopening of trials, broader debates around affective reparation and responsibility also prompted as a sort of affective *excess* that could not be contained within legal trials, as Vikki Bell shows in her study on the arts, ethics and aesthetics of post-dictatorship Argentina (Bell 2014). In this context, spaces of memory became privileged landscapes for exploring embodied forms of the transmission of trauma. To develop this argument, I will first provide an



**FIGURE 5** *Asado en Mediolaza*, Marcos Lopez's recreation of the 'last supper'.

overview of some of the interventions that took place at the former ESMA within the period 2003–2015. Second, I will bring into play some particular performance-installations and philosophical ruminations regarding the *asado* as a main theme in the local culture and a form of 'carnivorous phallogentric experience'. Finally, I will put these provocative materials in the context of a larger frame of memory culture and politics in Argentina during the same period. The question that is finally at stake in these is which alternative forms of affiliation can be forged in the aftermath of violence.

### A metamorphic icon of trauma

The former Navy School of Mechanics emerges as a magnifying stage on which to explore this possibility. For many years, this icon of violence and trauma located in the middle of the city concentrated most public anxieties. The story is well known and now almost mythical. On 24th of March 2004, the recently elected President Néstor Kirchner removed the portraits of the commanders of the Military Junta from the walls of the main building. The gesture, which became an object of cult for new generations of *Frente para la Victoria* activists, marked the official transfer of the grounds to civilians. In front of a crowd that had broken into the Navy School's premises, Kirchner promised to convert the site into a 'space of memory'.<sup>6</sup>

Following the official handover in 2004, a fiery debate began. The administration of the city opened a public contest inviting different sectors of civil society to submit proposals for reoccupying the space that covered some 170,000 square metres.<sup>7</sup> In the analysis of those projects, Jens Andermann argues that three main positions were finally delineated: the *testimonial* option, which takes the entire site as 'unalterable heritage'; the *museal*, which argues for the 'pedagogical functions' of the space; and the *performative*, which maintains that only by 'handing over' the place to 'future-oriented artistic and political activities can this space be wrested from death and its executioners' (Andermann 2012: 85).

Curiously, the former camp witnessed a peculiar combination of all these strategies during the Kirchnerist years. The former Navy School hosted national



**FIGURE 6** Hebe de Bonafini. The radical Mother cooking at ESMA.

offices, archives and a TV channel. For many years, the *Casino de Oficiales*, the former torture unit, was preserved empty and remained almost untouched, only opened to controversial free guided-tours organized on the basis of survivors' testimonies, which the scholar Katherine Hite has recently analysed most wisely (Hite 2015).<sup>8</sup> Yet, an innovative and challenging initiative was recently launched in the building. After long discussions, the contentious *Casino* now hosts its own Museum of Memory, which comprises a carefully curated journey of stations where the historical and (para)military uses of the building are exhibited. The new site, which was spectacularly inaugurated by former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner during a highly publicized media event in May 2015, allows the visitors to circulate around the site without guidance (see figure 2). A strong team of experts, including architects, curators, filmmakers, historians and journalists, led by camp survivor and art historian Alejandra Naftal, crafted a compelling state-sponsored museal script, albeit with a creative and provocative twist. Still, there was a crucial constraint that director and experts had to bear in mind: given that the events that took place during the dictatorship at the *Casino de Oficiales* were still under legal investigation, the building itself could not be touched, as it remained part of legal evidence. Therefore, the display of the recently launched museum mostly consisted of a mix of life testimonies and archival research supported by screenings, lights, documentary projections and sounds; almost a gigantic virtual installation, an *unplugged* artwork, as some of the creators like to call it, which both protects and enhances the impressive character of the building (see figure 4). Even so, the main survivors' organizations and some other human rights groups were not keen on accepting what they considered to be a 'disrespectful' initiative, which was also



described as a ‘show of lights’.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the original project had to be adjusted. Nonetheless, and still long after it had been scheduled, the brand-new Museum of Memory is now open to the general public, highlighting not only ‘one of the most carefully curated trauma museums of the world’, but also the metamorphic character undertaken by the ‘space of memory’ at the former navy school.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, the stylish Haroldo Conti Cultural Centre became a key space for artistic and memory events. Its agenda includes lively theatre events, film screenings, concerts and exhibitions, as well as spectacles for children including clown, circus and street performances (see figure 3). Entrance is public and free. Overcoming their original reluctance, most of the associations of relatives of the victims also moved their headquarters to the contested premises. Following the lead of both groups of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, H.I.J.O.S. and relatives’ organizations, on 24 March 2014, the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo’s *Casa por la Identidad* [House of Identity] opened its doors and launched a permanent exhibition to celebrate the recovery of (so far) 119 grandchildren.<sup>11</sup> In less than a year, the house received over 12,500 visits (Página 12, 2014).<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, in June 2014, the brand-new Malvinas and South Atlantic Islands Museum was inaugurated. This new space, run by the Ministry of Culture, included not only a memorial for those who died during the 1982 war, but also a high-tech interactive exhibition. The display comprises four ‘thematic stations’, which offer visitors different sensory experiences. For instance, the audience can physically experience the wind typical of the islands, the sound of the sea, and even of the warplanes. The war memorial, located in an open square, can be reached across a little stream that connects the museum with an outdoor space recreating the geography and landscape of the islands. The theatrical enactment of this remote geography also includes an artificial lake.

During the night of 15 November 2014, the former ESMA took part, for the first time, in the so-called Night of Museums. The whole site remained open until the early hours of the morning offering concerts, exhibitions and a broad range of activities at different spots across the site. In recent years, the ‘performative offer’ has not stopped diversifying. Since the eviction of the Armed Forces, during the Kirchnerist administrations, the former camp has hosted international workshops, art exhibitions, book launches, concerts, theatre and cinema events, film shootings, marathons, political meetings of various kinds, and even the harvesting of potatoes.<sup>13</sup> For many sectors the process of reoccupation of the ESMA has got out of control. In a context of radicalized political divisions, the *asado* appeared not only as a symptom, but also proof, of this *messiness*. At least for a while, the seemingly naïf celebration managed to call into question the politics of memory of the Kirchnerist administration, which has been considered as one of its most commended endeavours. How could this have been possible? To understand this, it is worth considering how sites of memory have the capacity to highlight the social dramas that affect society as a whole.

## A family drama

Within her research on ‘traumatic tourism’, the American scholar and visual artist Laurie Beth Clark has visited hundreds of trauma sites over the world. Far from a

mere fascination with atrocity, she found there an opportunity for visitors to perform their identities in public space and to be ‘socially transformed’. Moreover, Clark contends that sites of memory function as ‘heterotopias’, or even ‘counter-sites’, bracketed-off mirrors of reality where dilemmas of the parallel (real) world are played out within more limited parameters (Clark 2011: 69). In these spaces, social dramas that concern society as a whole are enacted in small scale. Bearing in mind Clark’s fruitful insight, I would like to consider what particular dramas took place in Argentina during the Kirchnerist years. I would like to suggest that they were mainly related to a process of transference: a work of mourning that struggled to circulate from direct victims and survivors to more vicarious audiences. In this context, the *asado* scandal brought to light the risks, contradictions and limits of a politics of mourning when it became an official narrative.

In order to unpack the particular drama that was enacted during the *asado* scandal, it is necessary to consider first how Argentina’s process of loss mostly followed the trope of a broken, but still normative, family (Sosa 2014). In the wake of the dictatorship, the network of associations created by relatives of the victims took the form of what I have referred to as a ‘wounded family’ (Sosa 2011, 2014). For more than 30 years the evocation of a community of blood had worked as an instrument of political intervention. *Madres*, *Abuelas*, *familiares*, *hijos* and *hermanas* of the disappeared evoked their biological ties to the missing to put forward their claims for justice. This broken lineage had been the guardian of a national grief, and its entitlement was founded on blood. However, more than a decade ago a new scenario emerged in the country. In the period initiated in 2003, the familiar shape of the national trauma was brought into an official frame. For the first time the Kirchnerist government embraced the position of the victims to adopt mourning as a national commitment. ‘We are the sons and daughters of the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo’, declared the former president Néstor Kirchner during his inaugural speech in 2003.<sup>14</sup> For some critics, this strategy was perceived as a dubious manoeuvre on the part of a government that had no ‘heroic narrative’, on which to build popular appeal (Suszterman 2011). In an unintentional way, the official discourse implicitly contested the biological normativity that had governed the transitional democracy. Self-invested as the figure of the ‘son’, the former president showed how the affects and effects of trauma did not only concern bloodline sons or daughters, but rather, they could be adopted by more ‘illegitimate’ witnesses, too. Within my research I read this displacement as a form of *queering* of the bloodline normativity of the ‘wounded family’ (Sosa 2011, 2012, 2014). In fact, this expanded version of kinship was one of the promises endorsed by the Kirchnerist period, iterated and reinforced during Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s administration.<sup>15</sup>

Within the period 2003–2015 new actors complicated the dispute. Younger generations – mostly led by the descendants of those missing – brought to light new vocabularies and images related to loss. Usually relying on playful and ironic imaginaries and slang, their production also offered empowering and non-victimizing accounts of trauma, which confronted the official idea of a duty to remember. Drawing upon Sara Ahmed’s critique of normative forms of happiness (Ahmed 2010), I suggest that the upcoming series of critical narratives can be thought of as a *killjoy series*; that is, a whole cultural production, which contested the organic

solidarity built around and beyond the ‘wounded family’. Yet, within this artistic and intellectual collection, the trope of the family remained insistently present.<sup>16</sup> Even so, in the work of the local post-memory generation traditional bloodline ties became estranged, mocked, and even subverted. As I have argued elsewhere, for the new generations family inscriptions emerged as a form of *countersignature* and also as a mode of transitioning into more expanded forms of kinship (Sosa 2012: 221–33).<sup>17</sup> The very process of iterations, displacements and countersignatures allowed the resonances of trauma to circulate among an expanded network of non-kin beholders. It enlightened the extent to which new forms of love and care could always emerge from grief.

Just to give a sense of this transformation that emerged during the political period that finished in December 2015, I would like to briefly comment on two cases: the autobiographical fiction *Los topos* [The Moles] (2008), by Félix Bruzzone, and *Diario de Una Princesa Montonera. 110% Verdad* (2012), a former personal blog, which was transformed into a non-conventional diary by Mariana Perez. Both Bruzzone and Perez are children of missing parents. In *Los Topos* (2008), a wild autobiographical novella, Bruzzone proposes a love story between a son of the disappeared and Maira, a transvestite sex worker, suspected to be the protagonist’s missing sibling who was stolen from his mother’s arms when she was held captive at the ESMA during the 70s. Through Maira’s character, Bruzzone brings to light a new constellation of desires that manage to ‘transvest’ (cross-dress) the purity of the ‘wounded family’. Arguably, much like the former president, Néstor Kirchner, Maira is the one who has no clear affiliations. Thus, the reader – and conversely the expanded population – is invited to ‘adopt’ her as her own vicarious relative. This is, after all, a similar process to the one undergone by civil society during the Kirchnerist period. In this movement, Bruzzone’s novel also provides original elements to conceive the expansion of audiences, which emerge through provocative curatorial practices taking place at former landscapes of mourning such as the ESMA.

In her *Diario de una Princesa Montonera*, Perez dazzlingly draws from her perspective of a ‘daughter’ of the disappeared who has, allegedly, been expelled from the *Abuelas* organization for not getting along with her ‘recovered’ brother. In her unusual, sometimes fictional diaries, Perez becomes what I have described as ‘the rebel sister’ in order to dissect what she calls the human rights ‘ghetto’, ‘*el temita*’ of the ‘*hijis*’ [the Children of the Disappeared’s little issue]. In so doing, she pokes fun at the progressive politics of memory carried out by the Kirchnerist administrations during the last 12 years, which she depicts as ‘the *Disneyland des Droits de l’Homme*’ [the Disneyland of human rights] (see Sosa 2014).<sup>18</sup> In doing so, Perez countersigns the privileges of blood still championed by the ‘wounded family’. She is the killjoy princess. Within her production, however, humour becomes a critical medium to generate expanded forms of identification across wider audiences. In an early passage of her diaries, Perez describes an erotic scene with her partner during a visit around the premises of the *Casino de Oficiales* at the former ESMA, before it was reopened as a refurbished Museum of Memory in 2015. The suggestive encounter took place on the stairs that go from *Capucha* to *Capuchita*, through which inmates were taken, hooded and handcuffed, between each torture session inside the unit. She writes: ‘The group returns and heads towards Capuchita. She

intends to continue. They climb the stairs to *Capuchita*, she is the penultimate person, Jota is at the end. Jota takes advantage and touches her ass. She is happy' (Perez 2012: 18).<sup>19</sup> Thus, the killjoy princess manages to add a new layer to the otherwise painful, asphyxiating atmosphere of such a horrendous landscape. In doing so, the erotic, seemingly frivolous scene co-exists with the unbearable, shedding light on a still precarious dimension of playfulness and novelty within the traumatic past. Moreover, the mischievous encounter takes place precisely in the context of an ostensibly rigid and predictable tour-visit around the former torture unit. Similar to Bruzzone's novel, I suggest that Perez's provocative image, alongside others that have recently emerged in relation to former trauma sites, now also inhabits the ESMA's premises. Precisely, the juxtaposed and contradictory set of 'multidirectional memories' (Rothberg 2009), which are held by the haunted space, are the ones that have now been opened to unusual uses, projections and appropriations. This was also part of the novel affective atmosphere that emerged since the former military school was recovered by civil society in 2004.

This new collection of images managed to interrogate ESMA as a conventional – rather sacral – site of mourning, while opening other potential – and perhaps more performative and creative – political futures. Yet, could a suggestive autobiographical scene located at the steps of the most horrid torture unit appeal to an expanded audience as much as a provocative final-year *asado* celebrated in the surrounding premises? It might indeed. I would suggest that, regardless of their disparate inspiration, both postcards managed to show to which extent pains and pleasures might come together in the aftermath of grief.

### About *asados*, sacred suppers and phallogentric ruminations

Drawing upon Rothberg's model of 'multidirectional memories', in this section I will argue that the *asado* scandal shed light on what he calls an 'open-ended field of articulation of struggle' (2009: 21), in which different vectors of conflicting claims managed to overlap, instead of a playing a zero-sum game. In order to do so, I would like to consider first some of the different resonances that the *asado* evokes in the local culture. As is widely known, the *asado* is deeply embedded in Argentina's cultural imaginary, one of its most touristic clichés that goes beyond gastronomic pleasures. Among the different inscriptions of the traditional meal in the local culture I would like to explore two particular ruminations, which might provide some extra nuances and textures to the ESMA scandal: a picture (followed by an installation) performed by the internationally well-known Argentine photographer Marcos López, and a feminist meditation proposed by the vegan activist and philosopher Mónica Cragolini.

The aesthetics of the *asado* usually works as a metonymic image to evoke the idiosyncratic foundation of the local culture. For instance, Argentina's massive political, economical and social hecatomb in December 2001 was somehow anticipated by *Asado en Mediolaza*, a striking picture taken by López in October of that year (see figure 5). The picture shows Lopez's version of *the last supper* taking place in contemporary Argentina, as a sort of *final asado*. Along with Biblical reminiscences and flesh inspirations – including a large amount of *chimichurri* seasoning



– the image stages an ante-apocalyptic gathering around a long and precarious wood table portrayed at midday under a cruel sunshine in Córdoba. The *mise-en-scène* looks unreal, theatrical and loosely embedded in the massive flows of alcohol that the guests are enjoying at the table. Some of the guests are bare-chested, others wear Argentina's national squad shirt and at the centre there is a local shirtless Jesus, showing off a rounded and wholesome belly, cutting the meat and staring at the camera. Thus, López's pop version of the *last supper* becomes almost prophetic of the social disintegration coming ahead in the following months. 'I would be eternally grateful of having envisaged this photograph. Ultimately, the staging becomes a documentary. It documents a way of life, a culture, a time ... and this is what art is for, right?', said López.<sup>20</sup> To set the scene, López asked his friend Hugo Olmos, a theatre producer and actor (who is portrayed in the picture pouring cheap wine), to organize a colossal *asado*. Friends and local visual artists eventually gathered in the small village of Mediolaza, near Córdoba's airport. As López confessed in an interview, the production expenses just included the meat and, of course, lots of wine.<sup>21</sup> 'When I took the picture everyone was already quite drunk', he said. The resulting image managed to speak about the untidy textures and crossings at stake in the local culture, unwrapping the extent to which resonances of the global imaginary of a sacred supper might get captured in the stickiness of an improvised wooden table with no tablecloth.

Last year, the photographer decided to go a step further. Drawing on *Asado in Mediolaza*, which had already become a cult object and a key piece of contemporary Latin American photography, he decided to put the picture into flesh.<sup>22</sup> For the Museums Night in 2014, López recreated the *asado* scene in a performance that had the flavour of an urban caricature. While the original photograph was exhibited on one of the polished walls of the palace, López set a long table as the scenography for the iteration of his famous *asado*. Once again – but this time live – the all-male guests delivered a sort of gaucho bacchanal surrounded by red velvet curtains. The performance, which lasted for hours, involved an ironic displacement of the original, including some extra blonde wigs and Argentine T-shirts to highlight the provocation of the quote. The space chosen to set the installation was one of the most distinguished museums of the city, the Enrique Larreta Museum, a Hispanic neo-colonial palace built in the beginning of the 1900s. The media were immediately interested: 'Surprise at the Museum Larreta', was the cover title in the main national newspaper, 'an *asado* taking place at a Spanish Renaissance palace'.<sup>23</sup> Once again, the vibrant image contrasted with the sophisticated features of the Larreta Museum. By that time, López explained: 'My work draws upon exaggeration as a texture of underdevelopment; the copy of the game, the original and the copy, while reflecting on the true and false in a space which has already something theatrical' (Clarín, 2014).<sup>24</sup> For López, urban culture had become a sort of food corner inside an artificial mall. As he admitted, within his work, he likes playing the role of a theatre director to exaggerate that urban cartoon. Ultimately, his *asado* installation at Museo Larreta managed to bring the *conventillo* [tenement] inside the palace.

I would suggest that something similar happened in relation to the controversial *asado* that took place at the former ESMA by the end of 2012. On the one hand, it could be argued that a similar displacement of an expanded table of friends

– embodied by public servants and young activists – managed to inhabit the former Navy School’s landscape of mourning while proposing a provocative festive postcard that for many turned out to be unbearable, or better, unpalatable. Moreover, a compelling game of original/copy also took place in that iconic site of trauma. Rather than a ‘last supper’, the celebration portrayed the victorious turn to an official culture of grief, which came to be blessed through a fleshy baptism. Clearly, the high-impact nature of the postcard caused strong disapproval among the government’s political adversaries. In this way, the embodied iteration of the *asado* pushed forward the boundaries of what might be considered ‘tolerable’ within a space of mourning.

As much as in López’s performance, a new future emerged, at least transitionally, from the dust of the horrid past in the imaginary of the public servants toasting over burgers and sausages. The image embodied functioned as a consistent and also compelling ritual of victory for an administration that managed to transform memory into the ‘happy object’ for an expanded community of victims officially supported by the State. I wonder if the photographer recalled the *asado* scandal to suggest the analogy. After all, his intervention at the Larreta Museum took place in the midst of the discussions going on at the former ESMA. In any case, the resonances were already in circulation within the public sphere, passing from different states of embodiment, iteration and decomposition. In some sense, the aftermath of a scandal had multiple iterations and recollections and it also transmuted into a performative installation, which captured the centre of the scene while proposing a different form of digesting mourning. To put it again in Rothberg’s terms, the *asado* event did not result in a zero sum, but rather in an exponential reproduction of bacchanal images that deeply touched the root of the local culture.

There is another reflection on the *asado* culture, which might contribute to shed light on the ESMA affair from a totally different perspective. The Argentine philosopher Marta Cragolini, who is also a vegan activist, argues that the *asado* culture has usually been perceived as mainly a male tribal encounter. Moreover, she contends that this male culture is basically constructed around the sacrifice of the animal; this is the sacrifice of the Other.<sup>25</sup> Drawing upon these premises, Cragolini asserts that ultimately the whole economic, affective and symbolic capital in Argentina relies on the idea of sacrifice: ‘Our national identity is constructed from a sacrificial scheme through which the living becomes naturalized, and cannot even be questioned without being accused of being *cipayo* [non-patriotic, non-Argentine]’. In those terms, she refers to foundational literary texts such as *El Matadero* [The Slaughterhouse] by Esteban Echeverría (written in 1848, although not published until 1871), and the epic poem *Martin Fierro* by José Hernández. She highlights one of the latter’s most famous quotes: ‘Every walking creature goes to the *asador*’ [barbecue] since ‘when feeling hungry, men sink their teeth into anything that moves’ (De Santo, 2014).<sup>26</sup> Drawing on this literary image, Cragolini refers to Jacques Derrida to construct a quite remarkable argument: she proposes that the *asado* ritual can be thought of as a point of departure of a carno-phallogocentrist atmosphere that seems to be inevitably encrypted at the core of the country. Echoing an argument that Juan José Saer subtly developed in *El entenado* and also within his essay ‘El río sin orillas’, Cragolini ironically states, ‘The *parrilla*

designates a brotherhood of men who devour other animals but also devour each other, competing to see “who has the longest” [phallus]’.<sup>27</sup>

In particular, Cragnolini’s point suggesting an intersection between the *asado* culture and the carnivorous destiny of the nation is appealing to reassess the ESMA case as an extreme sign of governmental phallogocentric power, at least an interesting allegation for an administration paradoxically led by a woman. Arguably, one of the Ministry of Justice’s main missteps was to assume a sense of ownership over the infamous site of death. To some extent, from the eyes of the survivors and also the political opponents, the ministerial party might have created a sense of disrespectful intimacy in relation to the bodies of those who were once tortured and eventually murdered at the detention centre. The Kirchnerist government could have been held responsible for betraying the painful resonances of the traumatic past. This partly explains why, for many bystanders, the *asado* emerged as a border object, a sort of ethical and moral ‘marker’ of what should not be done. In fact, while discussing the performativity of disgust, the queer scholar Sara Ahmed contends that the feelings of rejection can be easily transferred from the event itself to the bodies of those others who are held responsible for the event (Ahmed 2004: 97). Building upon this argument it is not difficult to grasp why the ‘bad taste’ attributed by the opposition to the ministerial party might have got rapid dissemination within the media and, in midst of a furtive war, emerged as the fetish carno-phallogocentric object that saturated by calling into question the official narrative of grief. For many, it was the perfect excuse to claim that the Kirchnerist politics had become (or indeed had always been) *disgusting*.

On the other hand, as Andermann has made me notice, the main lines of this vegan/feminist argument also tend to iterate a major critique that has been a pervasive force in the local culture since the emergence of the Peronism. This is the whole iconography of the ‘popular feast’, which has been largely developed within the national culture, from Echeverría’s *El Matadero* to Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares’s *La fiesta del monstruo* and beyond. Precisely, without the symbolic link ‘asado/Peronism’ as a form of barbarism, the ‘scandal’ could have never been inscribed in such way. Importantly, the Ministry’s reception has been constructed as an *asado* only ‘a posteriori’, and mainly by the opposition media. Thereby, the rejection of the event as bearing some sort of ‘obscenity’ can also be associated with traditional repertoires, which tend to conceive popular/populist power as barbaric and bestial. In this sense, the vegan criticism, built upon Cragnolini’s work, can also be acknowledged as an update and re-inscription of the anti-populist trope of the Other as bestialized/animalized carnivore, only now in the name of the latest novel and ‘progressive cause’ (the imbrications between veganism/feminism), not so far away from what Borges and Bioy Casares had in the name of ‘anti-fascism’.<sup>28</sup>

Without doubt, the *asado* scandal managed to put more pressure on the already ‘spectacularized’ field of memory culture, which scholars around the world have described as a ‘memory boom’ (Huyssen 2003: 18). Nonetheless, the juxtaposed and contorted landscape that emerges from the Southern Cone does not reproduce traditional victimization narratives. By contrast, even the controversial *asado* affaire already stresses a bold statement of power that neglects victimization, let alone its arguably phallogocentric investment, which might even have created some sort of penis envy from its political adversaries. But does this mean that no forms of gatherings or

celebrations can be hosted in the face of grief? Not necessarily. By contrast, it might be worth imagining a politics of memory not based on a ‘carnivorous virility’ subjectivity (Derrida 1992), but on a politics and ethics that can encourage a less compulsive digestion of grief. After all, kinder inspirations should be kindled in the wake of loss, mainly involving a non-sacrificial way of living-with. In particular, I would suggest that the strange conviviality of disparate activities taking place at the former Navy School managed to transform the former detention centre into an experimental site of mourning. In fact, this conviviality can be thought of as part of the *newness* of the space: it is actually what makes the space so conflictive and also so rich. This argument provides me with a unique opportunity for exploring embodied forms of transmission of trauma that might have become available to wider audiences, beyond headline victims and official supporters.

In order to test this, I would like to focus on a different food-case that precluded the *asado* scandal and that still raises provocative echoes with the controversial event. Hopefully, this other intervention will manage to provide other images, other flavours, which might contribute to an alternative digestion of grief. In so doing, I attempt to explore further how a former site of death can help kindle ‘postmemorial affiliations’ in the wake of loss.

### The cooking Mother and the ‘digestion’ of grief

When working on my doctoral research, I became especially interested in one of the activities that had taken place at the ESMA a few years previously: the cooking sessions led by Hebe de Bonafini, the most radical of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, at the Centro Cultural Nuestros Hijos (ECuNHI). From the start, I was captured by the way in which the controversial Mother engaged with the former detention centre as a form of *doing*, a perspective which contrasted with that of former political prisoners and their relatives who resisted any kind of activity on the premises and wanted to preserve the place as the ‘material testimony of genocide’.<sup>29</sup> While prestigious scholars were keen on supporting an ultimate ‘irrecoverability’ of the former detention centre, Hebe de Bonafini’s intervention seemed to suggest that the former Navy School should not – and indeed could not – be reduced to a mere landscape of horror.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the 85-year-old Mother has continuously insisted upon transforming the ESMA into ‘a place where life wins over death’, a sort of self-created tag-line that has been adopted by the Kirchnerist administration during recent years. Quite surprisingly, loss and pain emerged in Bonafini’s discourse as a source of affirmative power, something that in her own words appeared to be articulated as *life*.

Since August 2008 and for almost two years, the ‘Cooking and Politics’ sessions took place at the ECuNHI cultural centre opened by the Association of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo at the former ESMA. Attendance was open and free. While the ‘Mother’ cooked, the public debated local political affairs and exchanged recipes (see figure 6). In the end, participants ate and drank together. Thus, the cooking sessions managed to transform the former military school into an open space where ordinary people gathered to combine political discussion with practical food recipes. Moreover, the presence of a brand-new kitchen at the ESMA



suggested an alternative religion, almost a secular Eucharist. Having attended these sessions many times, I got the feeling that something that largely exceeded official discourse and a traditional politics of memory was taking place there: a peculiar displacement between the family rituals around the dinner table and the collective affect involved in the process of grief. More than this, the process of sharing food proposed a non-biological mode for the transmission of trauma: an experience of food-conversion, which at the same time managed to bring new desires to the table. 'Cooking at the ESMA is like having dinner at home. It is like a party', Bonafini once told me.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the scene also brings some resonances from Lopez's re-enactment of *The Last Supper* for his *Asado en Mendiolaza*. If within the Catholic tradition bread and wine are the Eucharist species that change in substance to become the Body and Blood of Christ, during the food sessions at the ESMA the ingredients of a non-normative grief are created and even *transubstantiated* in the bodies of the audience by the ingestion of activist food – ultimately an alternative form of sacrament. At the same time, Bonafini's intervention seems to undo common understandings of human rights activism from a terrain quite unfamiliar for memory scholars: the kitchen. At the same time, traditional patriarchal scripts also happen to be disrupted by the way in which the Mother learned to bring the so-call 'women's world' into play during her cooking sessions at the former ESMA. Bearing all this in mind, I have decided to approach Bonafini's intervention at the former centre as a sort of female solo performance. In these terms, it was worth considering Nicholas Ridout's argument that certain contemporary performers manage to shed light on sets of relations that are not necessarily visible or representable (Ridout 2009).<sup>32</sup> Drawing on this, it could be argued that Bonafini's intervention at the ESMA also managed to bring the *real* on stage. In fact, her food-performance succeeded in activating a net of social relations that are not usually attached to spaces of trauma.

In her review of the artists who have used food as a medium of performance, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that 'Food is already larger than life. It is highly charged with meaning and affect. It is already performative and theatrical. Food like performance, is alive, fugitive and sensory' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999: 1). Drawing on this, Bonafini's insistence on 'bringing life into a place of death' might not only work as a personal statement. Rather, it could also be thought of as an opportunity to inhabit, and maybe 'recover', a site of mourning by means of the sensory affects involved in the act of cooking. By proposing an activation of the audience through the experience of sharing food, Bonafini's intervention brought to light a net of social relations that were not usually attached to sites of trauma and death. Her kitchen created a new stage for a ritualistic incorporation of grief. While including the audience through an experience of sharing food, the cooking sessions staged a theatrical scene for the collective digestion of mourning among less implicated publics. In the small unit where the Mother operated, the ad hoc kitchen of a former detention camp, life became inseparable from work: more specifically, it became a non-normative *work of mourning*. It could be argued that this has been the 'affective labour' mobilized by Bonafini's work (Hardt and Negri 2000: 293). Food emerged as an expanded way of partaking in mourning: it proposed a collective digestion of grief. In so doing, the Mother staged an

alternative narrative of mourning for those who might not feel ‘naturally’ enabled, non-kin fellows in grief. During the Kirchnerist years, the right to grieve became expanded to all those who attended the ESMA to share a common meal. In this sense, Bonafini’s food-performances also expanded the table of the victims. Her cooking sessions offered an alternative way of digesting the experience of loss among non-traditional audiences. Thus, the gastronomic performance set up at the ESMA managed to suggest a novel system of kinship on the basis of mourning.

Since then, I have been increasingly interested not only in food-performances, but also more broadly in the way in which *tables* can help to create new affiliations in the aftermath of violence. In tune with the latest reassessment of Hirsch’s notion of ‘post-memory’ as an expanded form of transmission of trauma among vicarious witnesses (2012), I was curious about how other reoccupations of former sites of death during the Kirchnerist administrations helped to expand the traditional table of victims. If the *asado* organized by the Ministry of Justice at the end of 2012 was perceived as ‘offensive’, I wondered whether other experimental practices could keep alive those impressions left by the missing while encouraging affective forms of sharing for those who might not feel ‘naturally’ enabled.

## On tables and kinship

In her work on politics and emotions, Sara Ahmed described the table as a kinship object that gives form to the family. For her, the table becomes the tangible thing over which the family gathers and becomes normatively socialized (Ahmed 2006: 559). She also suggested that a queer politics might offer a different angle on tables to include those ‘whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place. The table becomes queer when it provides such support’ (2006: 570). To some extent, both Bonafini’s cooking sessions and the ministerial *asado* brought new tables to the former detention centre. Indeed, for the families of the victims some of the ‘external supporters’ of the *asado* – the Kirchnerist activists – also looked ‘strange’ or ‘oblique’ when celebrating and toasting in that particular marked space. In multiple ways, both interventions queered the table of the victims generating alternative forms of community. They staged conditions through which trauma could be incorporated within non-biological families. Yet, the official *asado* presented the former Navy School as the terrain of a battle already gained. In a silent manner, the celebration assumed a ‘happy’ sense of ownership over the past, which tended to conjure up the ghosts still haunting their premises. In that light, the ESMA appeared as a ‘trophy’ in the hands of the official party. Seen in this way, the ministerial table showed the limits of a politics of memory when it sought to be officialized. Conversely, the detractors could argue that the *asado*-table was as arrogant as it was restrictive.

While describing queer gathering as family encounters, Ahmed was keen on having joy in the uncanny effect of a familiar form becoming strange (2006: 569). Similarly, by approaching interventions that took place at sites of memory as queer gatherings, I would like to stress the potentiality of these particular spaces to create other tables and, thereby, to help make room for new audiences, which might have felt like ‘strangers’ within bloodline narratives of grief. Those endeavours run far

beyond official meetings and trophies. In fact, many activities that flourished in the ESMA during the recent period beckoned that possibility. For instance, in the wake of the 2013 anniversary of the military coup, the 'Espacio Memoria' launched a series of advertisements showing different people doing different things at the former ESMA. There was a retired old man attending drawing sessions, young historians learning how to teach about the recent past, artists using its premises as a source of inspiration, students of journalism writing chronicles on memory and loss, and so on. During Kirchnerist times, the former Navy School became a site of *practice* for everyone, where different forms of getting undone by grief could be experienced. Quite interestingly, the protagonists of these institutional videos were neither survivors nor 'direct victims'. Brand new academic degrees were then offered at the H.I.J.O.S. headquarters. More than 50,000 students enrolled on an educational programme related to the Bicentenary anniversary at the ECUmHi. In 2014, a joint degree in graphic journalism offered by the University of Buenos Aires and the Human Rights Secretariat received 250 registrations.<sup>33</sup> Independent artists even created a pop song to greet the experimental site.<sup>34</sup>

Those different experiences allowed the emergence of different, diasporic and fleeting communities. A new affective atmosphere circulated in Argentina during the Kirchnerist years. The process seemed to be exceptionally condensed within the haunted former ESMA detention centre. It was also in tune with the playful and sometimes irreverent language that new generations created to relate to loss. Maybe, it was even its counter token. All those forms of *doing* were in dispute at ESMA for more than a decade. They were all forms of affective *recovery*. They offered another stage in the digestion of grief. From many sides, the biological foundation of the 'wounded family' was queered.

## Epilogue: an experience of conviviality

From the emerging field of New Museology it has been argued that 'to curate' sites of trauma ultimately involves a form of taking care of the past (Lehrer, Cynthia and Monica Eileen 2011: 4). From this perspective, a 'successful curation' should encourage a change in the sense of ownership of the traumatic past (Lehrer, Cynthia and Monica Eileen 2011: 9). If in Argentina the ownership of trauma has been mostly attached to a bloodline family of victims, the intensity generated around spaces of memory during the Kirchnerist administrations showed the extent to which a new sense of ownership was in the process of emergence during those controversial and critical years. The conflicts and 'scandals' that took place during that period also shed light on the consequences that a novel and 'extended ownership' of the past might trigger.

Here, I have presented spaces of memory as affective architectures: peculiar sites where the smells of the past intersect with flavours and desires cooked in the present. Far from leaving stories of loss behind, spaces of memory during the period that concluded in December 2015 emerged as amplified stages where trauma was rehearsed in the present. They became live sceneries to 'work through' painful resonances of the past. Eventually, spaces of memory also enabled an extended digestion of grief. In particular, those practices of reoccupation which took place at

the ESMA showed how mourning not only has the capacity of destroying spaces, bodies and subjectivities, but also might have the empowering force to recreate them. The former Navy School emerged as the contested stage where those alternative lineages were formed. These lineages did not concern only those directly touched by military violence but also an untidy network of 'adoptions' of trauma developed by second-degree witnesses, which were facilitated during the contorted and sometimes also flamboyant Kirchnerist times.

Different from more stable sites of remembrance, the strange conviviality of activities which took place at the former ESMA from 2004 to 2015 pointed towards live and embodied forms of digestion of grief. Instead of a compulsory acknowledgement of trauma, the precarious character of those venues was deeply imbricated with the feelings of exposure and vulnerability that emerged from loss. In this sense, the harvesting of potatoes, a cooking session or even a drawing workshop emphasized their fugitive condition against traditional repertoires of memory. In contrast to memorials, artworks or museums, many of those interventions do not seem to have a clear legacy. It was precisely their elusive character that might have helped expanded audiences to glimpse other forms of support and *care*, and ultimately generate another relation to loss. The projections that those interventions will have in the following years are still uncertain. The latest economic, political and cultural decisions taken by the brand new neoliberal government, led by the entrepreneur Mauricio Macri and his 'CEO cabinet', do not leave much space for hope.<sup>35</sup> Rather, the interventions that took place during the Kirchnerist period invite us to consider an alternative form of ethics, one that is closer to fragility and contingency. This will need to be protected from a privatizing neoliberal state. For the new administration memory is not a priority. By contrast, even before taking over the new President announced the intention to 'desideologizar' [de-ideologize] the Mercosur region (El País, 2015).<sup>36</sup>

A major feature that distinguished those activities hosted at the ESMA during the Kirchnerist years was that audiences did not come 'ready-made' to the former detention centre. By contrast, they were forged in the space of performance itself. It could be the mostly young crowd that joined the 'marathon for memory' across the ESMA's premises, a group of ordinary people who got attuned before a video-light installation at the *Casino de Oficiales*, which spectacularly portrays the condemnation of the military repressors ending in a sudden light entering through the windows of the *Salón Dorado*, or those who arrived for the first time at the Malvinas Museum to attend a pop concert during the Museums Night. Those seemingly minor encounters brought new publics into being. They reconfigured the relation between stage and audience, between life and death. Rather than reconciliation, those forms of recovery spoke about a way of making the past return in the present. They staged a peculiar intersection of corporeality, space and time. Hopefully, the former Navy School will be able to remain as an experimental 'Human Rights City'. In any case, it will always be inhabited by its past.

During the Kirchnerist years, as the controversial responses to the *asado* extensively showed, no respectful silence inhabited the ESMA's premises. By contrast, the former Navy School was governed by contorted intensities, an unusual effervescence, which managed to infuse a strange vitality into the process of mourning. At least for a limited period of time, and as paradoxical as it may



sound, spaces of memory were alive in Argentina. I do not merely mean here that the recovery of the ESMA infused the place with new life. Rather, I suggest that the former detention centre managed to create new life itself. This vitality was central to conceiving a process of transmission, which managed to displace traditional bloodline ties. The activities hosted at the former centre, during that particular period, showed how inhabiting a place could be a way of transforming it, and also a way of sensibilizing it to new scenes, flavours and smells. In that re-occupation, new guests were invited to join the table. Thereby, an alternative form of conviviality could finally emerge out of the experience of violence. It also enlightened the opportunity to recreate a non-kin sense of care. There was a pleasure involved in that encounter; an unusual, fragile layer of joy coming out of loss.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

1. This killing machine developed by military personnel is now known as the *vuelos de la muerte* (death flights). The procedure was first officially revealed by the former Captain Adolfo Sicilingo and later reported by the journalist Horacio Verbitsky in his book *El vuelo* (Planeta 1995).
2. In fact, *La Cámpora* was founded in 2003 by Máximo Kirchner, Néstor and Cristina Fernández’s son, but gained major visibility after Kirchner’s death in 2008. The group used as one of its main symbols the figure of *Nestornauta*, a stylised image of the protagonist of *El Eternauta* (1957–59), the classic comic by Oesterheld and Solano López, with his face replaced by that of Néstor Kirchner.
3. See ‘Dos organismos de DD.HH. y la oposición piden la renuncia de Alak por el asado y brindis en la ESMA’, *Clarín*, 3 January 2013, [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Piden-renuncia-Alak-brindis-ESMA\\_0\\_840516109.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Piden-renuncia-Alak-brindis-ESMA_0_840516109.html) [accessed December 31, 2014].
4. After decades of impunity, in 2006 the trials against humanity were re-opened in Argentina. The one which focuses on the former ESMA has been the largest in terms of the number of accused ever recorded. See ‘Un juicio que llega a la

- etapa final', *Página 12*, 27 December 2014, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-262784-2014-12-27.html>.
5. A new *asado* was reported to be taking place at ESMA on 3 September 2013. See <http://www.infobae.com/2013/09/03/1506140-denuncian-otra-organizacion-un-asado-la-ex-esma>.
  6. See Guillermo dos Santos Coelho, 'Kirchner inauguró el Mueso en la ESMA y pidió perdón en nombre del Estado', *Clarín*, 24 March 2004, <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2004/03/24/um/m-730116.htm> [accessed 10 August 2013].
  7. The consideration of the proposals was entrusted to the *Instituto Nacional de la Memoria*, <http://www.institutomemoria.org.ar/exccd/esma.html> [accessed 2 August 2013].
  8. Former inmates and survivors contended that the *entire* premises of the former camp should be preserved as the untouched testimony of state terrorism. The proposal from the *Asociación Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Association of Former Detainee-Disappeared) can be found here: <http://www.exdesaparecidos.org.ar/propuestaesmaedd.htm> [accessed 2 August 2013].
  9. The light-installation set in the *Casino* met with criticism. See <http://www.lapoliticaonline.com/noticias/val/92643-6/el-kirchnerismo-quiere-un-%E2%80%9C9Cshow-de-luces-en-la-esma-y-se-enfrenta-con-los-ex-detenidos.html>.
  10. Upon visiting the Museum of Memory in December 2015, the Italian specialist on trauma Patrizia Violi also highlighted the 'very good balance among good conservation, information, involvement on the side of the visitors, but without the usual attempt of pretending to make them feel and experience what the victims did, which I personally dislike' (personal communication).
  11. In December 2015, the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo announced the recovery of grandson number 119, Mario Bravo in Las Rosas, a small town in Santa Fe. Mario Bravo was 38 years old at the time, having been separated from his mother immediately after she gave birth. [http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/12/151201\\_argentina\\_nieto\\_119\\_mario\\_bravo\\_sara\\_irm](http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/12/151201_argentina_nieto_119_mario_bravo_sara_irm).
  12. See 'Cuando la memoria convoca multitudes', *Página 12*, 27 December 2014, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-262756-2014-12-27.html>.
  13. The potatoes' initiative 'Cosechar-Multiplicar' ('Harvest-Multiply') was an artistic project conducted by Marina Etchegoyen between October 2009 and February 2010 at the *Madres* cultural centre ECUNHI. See <http://www.marinaetchegoyen.blogspot.com/> [accessed 11 December 2013].
  14. It was the 25th of September 2003 during Kirchner's first speech at the United Nations.
  15. Néstor Kirchner held the presidency from December 2003 to December 2007, when his wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, replaced him up until 10 December 2015.
  16. I am referring, for instance, to the exhibition *Familias Q'Heridas* [Beloved-Wounded Families] (2011), which gathers paintwork produced by Jorgelina Molina Planas, Ana Adjiman, María Guiffra and Victoria Grigera, all daughters of the disappeared; *Huachos* [Orphans] (2011), the art exhibition produced by an artistic branch of H.I.J.O.S., which defined themselves as 'orphans scientifically produced by state genocide acts'; and also *Filiación* [Filiations] (2013), Lucila Quieto's photographic collection recently released at the former ESMA.
  17. I have developed this argument in my analysis of Lola Arias's performance *Mi vida después* (see Sosa 2012: 221–33). Apart from Bruzzone and Perez's work, I

am also thinking of *Cómo enterrar a un padre desaparecido* (2012), a fictional memoir written by Sebastian Hacher, which shows an interesting hybridization between the figure of a daughter who seeks to deface her missing father and a ‘non-affected’ author who adopts her voice. The TV series *23 Pares*, directed by Albertina Carri and Marta Dillon, has also proposed an alternative form of queering the bloodline family of victims.

18. The original is in French.
19. My translation.
20. In the original: ‘Estoy eternamente agradecido porque se me haya ocurrido hacer esa foto. Finalmente, la puesta en escena se hace documental. Esa imagen, está documentando un modo de vivir, una cultura, una época... ¿Para eso dicen que sirve el arte, no?’ See <http://www.infoeducasares.com.ar/?p=118>.
21. See <http://www.infoeducasares.com.ar/?p=118>.
22. See *Le Monde Diplomatique*, <http://www.eldiplo.org/agenda/marcos-lopez-asado-en-el-larreta/>.
23. In the original: ‘Un asado en un palacio renacentista español’. See *Clarín*, November 16th, 2014, [http://www.clarin.com/ciudades/noche\\_de\\_los\\_museos-asado-Marcos\\_Lopez\\_0\\_1249675042.html](http://www.clarin.com/ciudades/noche_de_los_museos-asado-Marcos_Lopez_0_1249675042.html).
24. In the original: ‘Mi obra es la exageración como una textura del subdesarrollo de la copia del juego de original y copia, reflexionar sobre lo verdadero-falso en este espacio que tiene algo de escenográfico en sí mismo’. See *Clarín*: [http://www.clarin.com/ciudades/noche\\_de\\_los\\_museos-asado-Marcos\\_Lopez\\_0\\_1249675042.html](http://www.clarin.com/ciudades/noche_de_los_museos-asado-Marcos_Lopez_0_1249675042.html).
25. See Magdalena de Santo, ‘De carne somos’, *Página 12*, 31 October 2014, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/soy/1-3686-2014-10-31.html>.
26. In the original: ‘Todo bicho que camina va a parar al asador’, pues ‘cuando la hambre se siente, el hombre le clava el diente a todo lo que se mueve’. See de Santo, ‘De carne somos’, *Página 12*, 31 October 2014, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/soy/1-3686-2014-10-31.html>.
27. In the original: ‘La parrilla signa la fraternidad de los varones que se devoran al otro animal, pero que también se devoran entre ellos, compitiendo para ver “quién la tiene más larga”’. See de Santo, ‘De carne somos’, *Página 12*, 31 October 2014, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/soy/1-3686-2014-10-31.html>.
28. I owe the inclusion of the vegan/feminist perspective entirely to Jens Andermann’s thoughtful critique. I have incorporated some of his ideas in this passage. His early reading of this piece provided me with sophisticated nuances that enabled me to strengthen the main argument.
29. In the original: ‘testimonio material del genocidio’ (my translation). I am referring to the project of the *Asociación de Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos* (AEDD).
30. This, for instance, is the position of the Argentine philosopher Alejandro Kaufman, which Andermann defines as a ‘radical testimonialism’ and finally accounts for the ‘irrecoverability’ of ESMA (see Andermann 2012).
31. The quote belongs to an interview I conducted with Hebe de Bonafini on 19 April 2009 at the *Madres’* House.
32. I am considering here a paper that the British scholar Nicholas Ridout presented at Chelsea Theatre on 3 November 2009 during the Sacred Festival. The paper is entitled ‘Performing the Real: Economics and Aesthetics’ (unpublished). I am grateful to Ridout for giving me the permission to quote from his notes.

33. See 'Cuando la memoria convoca multitudes', *Página 12*, 27 December 2014.
34. The project 'Tocame el Rock', led by the Argentine artist Roberto Jacoby, includes a collection of songs composed by different musicians, featuring a video clip shot at the former ESMA.
35. Within his first week of administration, President Macri introduced a team of ministers who were trained originally in the corporate world. [http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201512/129347-macri-gabinete-el gabinete de los CEO \(Télam\)](http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201512/129347-macri-gabinete-el_gabinete_de_los_CEO_(Télam).).
36. See <http://www.elpais.com.uy/mundo/macri-desideologizar-region.html>.

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