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Loss and Hope

Global, Interreligious and
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Peter Admirand

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Museum, among other relevant sights, are thus fresh in my mind. Much can be said about that haunting and moving architectural testimony to the Jewish historical and ongoing role in Germany. Many spaces of the museum abruptly end or consist of empty stretches, what Libeskin calls “voids” and yet the exhibits still resonate with life and hope. One area deserves mention: the 79-foot (24 meter) Holocaust Tower. It is reached via black doors after walking below ground and then along a vast corridor (deemed an “axes of death” with objects from Holocaust victims within the recesses of one side of the wall and the names of the concentration and death camps written on the opposite wall). The space one enters is initially dark and narrow. A sloping, silo-like ceiling reveals a sliver of light from a slanted window and so a possible link with the city above. But the light seems too far away: is its presence a false or inspiring hope?

In Emmanuel Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, there are many crushing scenes, but one passage is particularly draining with the curse of hindsight. After depicting the ever-worsening conditions of the Jews in the ghetto, a journal entry from June 26, 1942 sings with hope. The outside world has finally heard of their plight. “We have overcome every obstacle to achieve our end,” Ringelblum celebrates. But we know that instead . . .¹⁰

Helen “Zippi” Spitzer Tichauer, who did survive Auschwitz, once remarked: “It is hard to believe we were so crazy to have hope . . . in the middle of this nightmare . . . living hell. Even sometimes at night during all the gassing and burning pit fires, the burning of bodies, we still had hope. Were we crazy?”¹¹ One wants to answer unequivocally “no,” but ours is a world where even hope is tainted, causing at least a momentary hesitation.

Lastly, consider Jonathan Lear's analysis of the Native American chief Plenty Coup facing the Crow's cultural devastation at the hands of American conquest. Plenty Coup's response to such devastation is what Lear calls a “radical hope” that “anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to define it. What would it be for such hope to be justified?”¹² In other words, one hopes even without the available means or the words to do so. It is a hope rooted in faith, and somewhere crucially, in love. It is present as Plenty Coup continues to live even as his culture is threatened with extinction; while Mumbai slum boys who should be in school instead stretch their weary arms for a wad of aluminum foil; and a mythological woman opens a seemingly harmless jar. Loss may be certain and hope ambivalent, but it is that combination that makes prisons crumble, renewal commence, dialogue thrive, and even mountains move. These chapters seek to contribute to such worthy hopes.

Part One

Survivors' and Victims' Perspectives on Loss and Hope

A Collective Testimony by Argentine Genocide Survivors: "The Prison Walls Cry and We Laugh."

Alicia Partnoy

I believe that the most difficult aspect of the task we have tackled is that while writing is essentially an individual act, we are trying to write a book collectively.¹

Del otro lado de la mirilla

In short, you can always say everything. The "ineffable" you hear so much about is only an alibi. Or a sign of laziness. You can always say everything: language contains everything.²

Jorge Semprún

To tell you the truth, they wanted to make us crazy, with a calculated and systematic plan.

Jorge "Corcho" Destéfani³

It is a sunny, winter morning and I'm walking the streets around Parque Lezama in La Boca, Buenos Aires, with Daniel Bas y Mansilla. The former political prisoner—usually a calm and collected fellow—gets excited and points to his right, "Over there, in the Torquato Tasso community center, back in 1999," he enthusiastically explains, "we had the first big gathering! We were expecting sixty of us, about six hundred came."⁴ That meeting, he tells me, began a quest to incorporate the experiences of former political prisoners into Argentina's history.

Embracing the need to produce a collective account, and inspired by the writings of Holocaust survivor Jorge Semprún, Bas y Mansilla, along with 150 Argentine genocide survivors, continued socializing, remembering, and writing. They had all shared years in isolation, yet not *disappeared*,⁵ at the Coronda penitentiary, a high-security facility in the North Eastern province of Santa Fe. In 2003, their work gave its fruits with the publication of *Del otro lado de la mirilla: Olvidos y Memorias de ex Presos Políticos de Coronda. 1974–1979* (*The Other Side of the Peephole. Things Forgotten*

and Remembered by Coronda Former Political Prisoners). Their narratives, collected at a series of *asados* (Argentine barbecue parties) and other gatherings, are seamlessly assembled in a volume that reads like a novel. Three years later, another polyphonic⁶ testimonial text similar in its editorial dynamics, but radically different in its tone and content, was published. The writing process for *Nosotras, presas políticas. 1974-1983* (We, Women Political Prisoners),⁷ had also started in 1999. Including texts by 112 women jailed by the military dictatorship in Villa Devoto, a high-security facility located in a peaceful neighborhood of Buenos Aires,⁸ this project had been initiated by Mariana Crespo, a former political prisoner with active participation in the Liberation Theology movement.⁹ Crespo had in turn been motivated by her encounter with a Holocaust survivor, as reported by coeditor Viviana Beguán:

Around the year 1998, anthropologist Darío Olmo invited some of us . . . to tell him about our prison experiences, since from the testimonials [he and other anthropologists] had collected, they could detect a collective experience that was, for them, of great importance . . . Mariana had just returned from Europe where she had interviewed a concentration camp survivor who had spoken to her about the importance of memory, of writing, of telling . . . She took the proposal into her own hands and called a meeting to write the book.¹⁰

Beguán continued working on the project after Mariana's untimely death, and *Nosotras* is dedicated "to Mariana (Crespo) and the other dear compañeras who did not see this dream come to reality."¹¹

Likewise, *Del otro lado de la mirilla*, whose authors acknowledge the influence of Holocaust survivor Jorge Semprún, is dedicated to the four compañeros who died in Coronda.¹² They are the only prisoners identified by name in the narrative, with photographs and chapters paying tribute to them.

The 2006 publication of *Nosotras* coincided with the proliferation in Argentina of books by former political prisoners. Demonized and censored, when not annihilated by the thousands, dissidents had avoided the public sharing of their prison memories, even after the return to democracy. It is true that Jacobo Timerman's *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, and my own *The Little School. Tales of Disappearance and Survival* had enjoyed international recognition in the 1980s. Our books, however, dealt with the secret detention camps where the dictatorship tortured and assassinated thousands of political dissidents, to finally disappear their bodies and deny any knowledge of their fate.

While my own literary rendition of this tragedy was not published in Argentina until 2006, another survivor, Alicia Kozameh, issued there in 1987 the first literary work dealing with prison life: *Pasos bajo el agua*.¹³ Years later, María del Carmen Sillato, Carmen Cornes, Margarita Drago, and Graciela Lo Prete chronicled in their own books, life in Villa Devoto.¹⁴ *Nosotras* was the first collective work dealing with that prison experience.

Fewer books yet had chronicled life for male political detainees before the publication of the Coronda narrative: Miguel Angel Mori's *Las rondas y los sueños* alternates a narrative of his life as a political activist with chapters about the Rawson prison in the

South of Argentina. Pablo Bohoslavsky's *Cierta fortuna*, also dealing with the Rawson facility, includes 18 tales about his experience. Both works, like the Coronda book, are conceived as literary endeavors.¹⁵ All chronicle empowering practices that helped prisoners resist the isolation imposed by the regime, and its subsequent destructive effects. However, the collective identity performed in both *Del otro lado de la mirilla* and *Nosotras* is their most clever and successful achievement. It embodies a triumphant defiance of all attempts to erase solidarity.

José Luis Hisi Páez, one of the editorial team members for *Del otro lado de la mirilla*, himself a former prisoner, writer, and college professor, reports:

In Buenos Aires, compañero Bas y Mansilla found a book that was almost the inspiring totem for the editors: *Literature or Life*, by the great Spanish writer Jorge Semprún. That book helped us understand why we got together so many years after the facts to write the Coronda book! And it reassured us on the path of a literary version.¹⁶

In *Literature or Life*, Semprún recalls that after his liberation from Buchenwald he initially had questioned the "possibility of telling the story," finally to realize that:

The only ones who will manage to reach this substance, this transparent density, will be those able to shape their evidence into an artistic object, a space of creation. Or of re-creation. Only the artifice of a masterly narrative will prove capable of conveying some of the truth of such testimony. But there's nothing exceptional about this: it's the same with all great historical experiences.¹⁷

Those of us who produce and study testimonial texts might differ in our definitions of art, creation, or literature. However, I am convinced that the building of a discourse of solidarity with the victims is what ultimately will empower those who chose to tell and will encourage others to share their experiences.¹⁸ Jorge "Corcho" Destéfani's words at the beginning of this chapter illustrate the ways we continue building this discourse of solidarity. Hisi Páez had disclosed to me the following:

I remember something sad about the behind the scenes process around the writing of the Coronda book. Its brightest pages were written by compañero Corcho Destéfani . . . This guy wrote so beautifully that his was the only chapter that was included in the book without any corrections, by consensus and unanimous decision by all of us in the editing committee . . . It was the chapter with the highest literary value . . . And Corcho was a guy who was not a literary pro . . . That guy was Silvia Suppo's husband. She was recently assassinated in Rafaela. When that happened I found out he had died of an awful illness recently . . . The assassination of Silvia Suppo was "cleared" as a consequence of a robbery, but nobody believes in coincidences: she was an important witness in the trials . . .¹⁹

The fact that Hisi Páez decides to share this information after the death of Destéfani and the suspicious assassination of Silvia Suppo, continues building solidarity around

him and Silvia Suppo, a survivor and star witness in the trials against the genocide perpetrators. Suppo was assassinated after her testimony sent several of the accused, including a local judge, to prison. Her first husband had been killed inside a cathedral during the dictatorship, and she was also a key witness against the perpetrators.²⁰

One anonymous participant in the Coronda narrative explains how both solidarity and a will to resist destruction were at the core of this writing project:

Yes, I agree that main character needs fleshiness, but when we flesh out this collective character, it must be understood that we were active, that we were political activists: students, peasants, workers, intellectual people . . . On the line of what you said, it can be asked: Who are these fellows? . . . Why are they in these situations? And, what did they do so the dictatorship's extermination plan in the Coronda prison could not achieve that much? . . . These fellows won the battle, even when they lost the war . . .²¹

In another excerpt transcribing the lively conversations among survivors when they decided to write the book, the authors' goal to reach the youth is illustrated:

I don't know if I have told you this, but this entry, from my notebook . . . is what I remember from my experience, and I started writing it when my children were little, thinking that I was going to show it to them, or tell them . . . what I lived as a political activist in those days. Now they are teenagers and I believe it will be very nice to show them, instead of a notebook, a book written by all of us.²²

José Luis Hisi Páez elaborates on their strategy and its subsequent success: "We did it in the most entertaining way possible: one of my students' sister, a young eighteen years old woman, read the entire book in a weekend, as soon as it was published! Of course we had a lot of fun writing it too."²³

The result is 37 short chapters illustrated with cartoonish drawings that depict aspects of prison life, and alternate with photos of the prison facility and the compañeros who died in captivity. The book entertains and captivates readers while painting in excruciating detail life and death inside the Coronda prison. The inscription "Obra Colectiva Testimonial" (Collective Testimonial Work) appears in red letters on the cover, where prison bars reflect on a pupil behind a peephole. Nobel Prize Laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel—himself a former political prisoner—writes the prologue, where he highlights the motivation to present a collective testimony: "This book by the former prisoners of Coronda, who decided, after several years, to get together and remember, is a contribution to the collective consciousness. It rescues human values and the ability to resist oppression."²⁴

Like Pérez Esquivel and Mariana Crespo, many secret detention camp survivors who subsequently spent years in Coronda, Villa Devoto, and other prisons, had a previous history in a Liberation Theology movement heavily targeted by the military dictatorship. To better understand their perspective, so removed from my own background as an atheist from a Jewish family, I turned to the work of Jesuit priest Ignacio Martín-Baró, a social psychologist and liberation theologian. Father Martín-

Baró was assassinated in El Salvador in 1989, along with five other Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter.²⁵

His writings highlight the reasons why dictatorships, both in El Salvador and in Argentina, were invested in the extermination of Liberation Theology leaders and followers. The Christian Base Communities that had engaged Latin Americans in grassroots work in the 1960s and 1970s adhered to what Ignacio Martín-Baró calls the "three most important intuitive truths of liberation theology." In the first place, he writes, "the promotion of life" is a Christian's most important task, and it has to be accompanied by a search for better living conditions for the people. According to this Christian martyr, these goals can be achieved by "liberating the structures . . . that maintain a situation of sin; that is, of the mortal oppression of the majority of the people." His third postulate addresses a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized.²⁶ What Father Martín-Baró calls "intuitive truths of Liberation Theology" are reworded by Peter Admirand in his chapter "Amidst Doubt, Despair and Destruction," when he proposes to include the voices of genocide survivors "in any theodic attempt": "Liberation theology's preferential option for the poor is a means to ensure that theology is centered on the marginalized and voiceless so that promoting the dignity of every person, formed in the image and likeness of God, is a goal and presupposition."²⁷

Before being gunned down by members of the Salvadoran armed forces, Martín-Baró had argued that there were two types of religiosity impacting the relationship between religion and politics: "vertical religiosity, which leads to alienation and social submission" and "horizontal religiosity, [which] leads to critical consciousness and social liberation." Horizontal religiosity was practiced in the Christian Base Communities that followed the Liberation Theology tenets. Martín-Baró further elaborates: "Faced with the possible 'subversive' effect of horizontal religiosity, the directors of the psychological war in El Salvador have tried to promote forms of religious conversion or membership that contribute to political passivity toward the established order."²⁸

While such passivity and submission were undoubtedly the goals of prison authorities all over Argentina, it is interesting to notice the diverging responses produced by survivors in these two books. *Nosotras*, a text that seeks to inscribe women's political participation in a national liberation movement, tiptoes around the religious aspect while male political prisoners discuss religious practices at ease in *Del otro lado de la mirilla*.

My own experience as a Villa Devoto prisoner, my talks with several authors, and a close reading of *Nosotras* led me to conclude that the authors' most empowering strategy was not to concentrate on their own religious beliefs and practices. Instead, they denounced the repressive actions of Hugo Bellavigna, the prison priest whom we had nicknamed San Fachón (Saint Big Fascist). His patriarchal and pro-dictatorial approach corresponded with the official position of the Catholic Church in Argentina.

The women of Villa Devoto constantly challenged Father Bellavigna's strategies, that sought to impose a vertical religiosity dear to the then official church. On the other hand, the Coronda inmates were empowered in their narrative by frequent recollections of their religious praxis during and before their incarceration. Daniel

Bas y Mansilla remembers that several political prisoners, including himself, had been seminarians, and that they would say mass on Sundays from their prison cells, screaming the words through the tiny windows, and risking cruel punishment. "The authorities," he remembers, "wanted to cause isolation, incommunication, and the breaking of any organized structure."²⁹ The prisoners were indeed so physically isolated, that when they met decades later to work on their book, they would recognize each other by voice since most had never actually met.

However, the Coronda inmates had enjoyed the visits of an exceptional bishop, as survivor José Cettour reports, ". . . I would like to tell you . . . about my experience with the church in Coronda, especially with Zazpe, then the Santa Fe bishop, very courageous, and highly respected by all of us, even though many of us are not believers."³⁰ Bishop Zazpe is remembered in *Del otro lado de la mirilla*: "He spoke when all kept silent, including so many who had the duty to speak out."³¹ Other religious leaders are recognized in the book:

It is fair to also remember other human rights fighters like the Methodist bishops Carlos Gattinoni and Federico Pagura and the Rabbi Marshal Meyer, who lobbied and risked their lives for us, although they were allowed just to visit us individually. And perhaps some other humble priest or pastor whose memory, unfairly we have not kept.³²

The courageous presence of Rabbi Meyer is also recorded in *Nosotras*. In Villa Devoto too, he was only allowed to visit some individuals. On the other hand, the official representative of the Catholic church, Father Bellavigna, would spend long hours trying to break the prisoners' spirits. Horacio Verbitsky—arguably Argentina's most important investigative journalist—published the first exposé of Bellavigna in an article he titled "San Fachón." Verbitsky—who has written extensively about the complicity of Church and dictatorship—is today the most visible critic of Pope Francis's role in the 1970s. The journalist reports in a newspaper article that the coup leader, General Videla, revealed in interviews conducted in prison "that the former papal nuncio Pio Laghi, the former president of the Argentine Catholic Church Raul Primatesta, and other bishops . . . advised his government on the way to handle the situation of the disappeared people in captivity." Verbitsky writes, "According to Videla, the Church 'offered its good services.'"³³ With the exception of a few persecuted and isolated bishops, high officials within the Argentine Catholic Church supported a government that is currently facing serious legal actions for kidnapping, disappearing, and appropriating dissidents' children and newborns.³⁴ Over 100 infants have been recovered by human rights advocates under the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo's leadership.

In a recent effort to locate the estimated 400 still missing, the organization's president, Estela Barnes de Carlotto, met with Pope Francis. She asked him to open "the Vatican archives, those of the Argentine church and those of communities like the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (Christian Family Movement) where nuns received children from the [hands of the] dictatorship and gave them into adoption." After the

meeting, Carlotto reported to the newspaper *Crónica* to be happy and moved by his words: "Cuenten conmigo" (Count on me).³⁵

This is significant, since a serious accusation against Pope Francis is that he denied in court any knowledge of children's kidnappings during the dictatorship, although Grandmother of Plaza de Mayo Alicia de la Cuadra had personally begged him back in 1977 to help her find her granddaughter born in a concentration camp. In 1988, Emilio Mignone, a lawyer whose daughter was a disappeared catechist, published a book detailing the complicity of the church with the dictatorship and documenting the disappearances and assassinations of those involved in the Liberation Theology Movement.³⁶ Mignone reported how priests, nuns, and lay people who were involved in the Christian Base Communities were targeted for disappearance, torture, and assassination. The political persecution did not spare bishops like Monsignor Angelelli.³⁷

Unfortunately, then Pope Paul VI did not challenge the dictatorship, not even to protect his own bishops. A tongue-in-cheek reference in *Del otro lado de la mirilla* alludes to the lack of papal support for the political prisoners: "I am in my 97th day without outdoor recess and I don't know when I will step foot on the prison yard dust. So many are my faults, the last one to throw bread crumbs to the pigeons, that if the Pope does not send his amnesty, I don't know when I'll leave [this cell]."³⁸

Human rights organizations as well as our own relatives persistently knocked at the doors of the powerful in the Catholic Church, who as reported in the controversy surrounding Pope Francis, were at times sympathetic and at times cruel. The language used by a dictatorship that justified genocide by calling dissidents "subversive," "terrorists," or "rebellious," was often mimicked by religious leaders. Another author of the Coronda narrative, Guillermo Daniel Martini, reports:

What is true is the direct correlation between political "subversive" activism and a previous participation in Christian Base Communities, or the experience many of us had in groups connected to the post-conciliar church. The second aspect, the alliance military dictatorship and fascist ecclesiastic sectors, is obvious and widely recognized.³⁹

Because the Coronda prisoners were literally blessed by the presence of Zazpe and other courageous pastors and priests, their book pays constant tribute to their solidarity. Chapter 13, strategically placed toward the center of the book, is devoted to prison chaplain Father Guillermo Exner. He had been removed by the authorities shortly after the 1976 coup. Today he is described as "more worried about the present than about the past, active despite his age, and very involved in current events . . . the suffering of his people."⁴⁰ Father Exner tells the interviewers:

One of the things I really have admired in many is this, for example, those who suffered a lot in prison know whom they should talk to, and they talk to them, and they are normal people . . . It is fair to remember so history does not repeat itself; we are living the history of salvation . . .⁴¹

This interview's focus on solidarity back then and today, Father Exner's remarks about the former political prisoners, and the fact that the Coronda authors disseminate their memories to teach new generations, illustrate what Gottfried Bloch discusses in his book *Unfree Associations*. Bloch, a psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor, describes how his experiences in a concentration camp have returned to his memory in a painful, overpowering way, "intruding into present joy . . . magnifying (his) anxieties of tomorrow . . ." He calls them "unfree" associations.⁴² He then turns to Heinz Kohut's definition of "the time axis" as the subjective inner sense of the continuity of time within a person's life. He further elaborates:

Reestablishing such continuity after the kind of traumatic fragmentation I experienced was an important part of my return to a fulfilling life. The continuity of the time axis from its roots in the past connects to the future and relates to fulfilling one's earlier goals. Writing this book has for me completed the reparatory process begun in my analysis thirty years ago.⁴³

Bloch's words and journey will undoubtedly resonate with the Coronda authors. We can see the healing continuity of the time axis when the collective voice in their book shares that Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* "played . . . a decisive role in the preservation of my mental health."⁴⁴ He goes on by stating in the present tense a central concept in Steinbeck's work, "undoubtedly we choose every day to be or not to be Cain. To oppress, assassinate or not, our brother."⁴⁵ The authors of *Del otro lado de la mirilla* keep choosing solidarity over destruction, and the book abounds in accounts that illustrate their quest. As Peter Admirand reminds us: "To depict only violence and meaninglessness, or focus only on 'wretched' humanity, is to paint an incomplete picture of our world. [Liberation theologian Jon] Sobrino aptly encapsulates this idea with his term 'primordial holiness.' Where many only see exploitation and misery, he points to life and hope."⁴⁶

The Coronda narrative is published and disseminated by a nonprofit organization created by the former prisoners called Asociación Civil El Periscopio. The periscope was indeed a strong symbol of resistance inside the prison, as they share in a radio interview after the book's publication:

The periscope was our great combat weapon . . . Facing a very hard reality of isolation, much perversion, where they tried to push a person into his most intimate corner, let us say, to bring him closer to mental insanity . . . we had to confront that with what we had, and that meant we had to do something in our cell, to be able to sing, to talk to the *compañero* in the next cell, to do some gymnastics, to comment about a book, a movie. Then, for that we needed some kind of instrument to detect the guards when they walked into the cellblock.⁴⁷

Former prisoner Ricardo Rivero describes that instrument in the same interview, later transcribed by Miguel Espinaco and published in the blog of another editorial group member, Jorge Pedraza:

. . . that little device was a tiny mirror held with some bread crumbs . . . to be in turn held by a little stick, something like that . . . we would slide it under the door

of the cell to watch if any prison personnel walked into the cell block . . . it was used like a periscope in a submarine . . .⁴⁸

This so-called combat weapon that by happy coincidence was initially devised by movable-type printing inventor Johannes Gutenberg, joins several other resistance tools in the former prisoners' "arsenal." To help us deal with horror and pain, humor and laughter are also precious instruments for survivors. As a recently published prison anthology from Argentina proclaims in its title: "Laughter does not surrender itself." In their foreword, María Eva Cangiani and Martina Noailles state, "Laughter is liberation because it can make power lose, even when just for a short moment, its function as the manager of fear."⁴⁹

Former Villa Devoto prisoner María Claro, a major force behind the publication of *La risa no se rinde*, gave me the book in June 2013, when a second Spanish edition of *The Little School*—one tailored to be taught in schools—was presented at an event in Argentina's national senate building. In the back cover of "Laughter does not surrender itself," these words are inscribed:

Laughter was one of the main resistance tools for thousands of political prisoners, both "legally" arrested or kidnapped, for the persecuted, exiled, and political activists during the past military dictatorship . . . humor is a fundamental tool in the fight for a better world.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the former Coronda prisoners continue to disseminate their work and, as they announce in the last paragraph of their book:

The prison walls cry and we laugh . . . simply because we keep walking. [We keep] traveling the narrow surface of the road, in transit between those two worlds, like a symbol that would like to remind us that our journey takes place in the fragile border between life and death, between Coronda and freedom.⁵¹

They (and perhaps we) feel and act like Jorge Semprún, the Holocaust survivor and Spanish resistance fighter who was a strong inspiration for the Coronda book. In *Literature or Life* Semprún remembers his reaction after his liberation from Buchenwald: "I'm laughing, laughing to find myself alive."⁵²

Author's note

My gratitude to former Coronda prisoners Daniel Mansilla y Bas, José Luis Hisi Páez, José Cettour, Jorge Daniel Pedraza, Guillermo Daniel Martini, and others who gave me invaluable information on their collective writing process. I would like to thank Loyola Marymount University for a grant that facilitated this research, and Professor Jennifer Abe, who introduced me to the work of Father Martín-Baró.

To prevent any confusion here, I should clarify that the death of my husband was not strictly a gift from God because I would never want to believe in such a cruel God whose idea of a gift is to inflict pain. The divine gift is rather the successful process of and ability to accept such pain as an inevitable happening, which necessarily dragged my life's journey through a reflective purification process. Unlike the continuous, echoed misconceptions in the name of encouragement that I kept on receiving: "accept it as God's will," my process of accepting this painful loss was not because "God gives and God takes, blessed be God's name-Amen!" Rather, it was the ability to overcome depression and move toward acceptance in my grieving process. The gift was being able to embrace this loss as a shadow that can contribute to my wholeness and not the occurrence of death itself.

Loss and hope: Two sides of the same coin?

While loss can take so many other expressions apart from death, my story shows that whatever manifestation hope bears, it has to lead to healing and wholeness. It cannot be negatively about revenge and therefore a threat to life and wholeness. So while in Miss Havisham's case her desire to cause pain to men through Estella cannot in essence be hope, her dying realization of the pain she had been part of and Pip's growth into a better person could qualify as hope. Hope is more sustainable when it is born as a coexistent ally to loss because life's reality occurs in the tension of light and darkness, the shadow and the ego. When someone experiences loss through the death of a beloved, the vehicle to lasting and growing hope could be the mutual vulnerable accompaniment of family and friends. Somehow hope seems to be reached when life is lived holistically in the paradox or tension with loss.

This publication speaks to the tension of loss and hope in deeper ways than my story alone can sufficiently articulate. One clear connecting thread is how loss has to either coexist with, or be preceded by, genuine—and not cheap—hope for life to be livable in a meaningful way in the face of pain and violence. In a similar regard, each piece is a daring gem that speaks to this struggle in individual experiences as well as collective national struggles. Together the volume brings a holistic discourse that charts loss and hope within its various nuances and complexities. Amidst loss' tendency to talk more about deprivation and hope about looking forward to a better life, the work highlights the tension of both coexisting in life, thus making their explorations particularly vital.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (New York: Random House, 2012), 244.
- 2 Christian Meier, *A Culture of Freedom: Ancient Greece and the Origins of Europe*, trans. Jefferson Chase (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 102.
- 3 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), II.42 (149).
- 4 Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (San Diego: Harvest, 1995), 100.
- 5 Dalai Lama, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 31.
- 6 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*, trans. Jessie Coulson (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 18.
- 7 Halim Bashir, with Damien Lewis, *Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur* (New York: OneWorld, 2008), 216.
- 8 See Irving Greenberg, "Dialectic Living and Thinking: Wiesel as Storyteller and Interpreter of the Shoah," in *Elie Wiesel: Jewish, Literary, and Moral Perspectives*, edited by Steven T. Katz and Alan Rosen (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University, 2013), 173–189.
- 9 Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. and trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken, 1958), 296.
- 10 See, for example, Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2001), 214.
- 11 Jürgen Matthäus, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and Its Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), 110.
- 12 Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2006), 103.

Chapter 1

- 1 Asociación Civil El Periscopio, *Del otro lado de la mirilla: Olvidos y Memorias de ex Presos Políticos de Coronda 1974–1979* (Santa Fé: El Periscopio, 2003), 26: "Creo que lo más difícil de la tarea que nos propusimos reside en que la escritura es fundamentalmente un hecho individual, y nosotros pretendemos escribir un libro en forma colectiva." This and all other English translations of the quoted texts are mine.
- 2 Jorge Semprun, *Literature or Life*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Viking, 1997), 13.
- 3 *Del otro lado*, 244: "Porque a decir verdad, ellos querían volvernos locos, calculada y sistemáticamente." His name is not disclosed in the book, but for reasons to be discussed later in this chapter, former prisoner and editorial team member José

- Luis Hisi Páez revealed to me that those pages were written by Destéfanis. Personal communication. June 19, 2010.
- 4 Personal communication. July 24, 2010: “¡Allí, en la mutual Torquato Tasso, en 1999, fue la primera gran convocatoria! Esperábamos 60, llegaron como 600.”
 - 5 Argentina’s most recent dictatorship (1976–1983) disappeared about 30,000 people, mostly political dissidents, their families, and friends. Survivors were rarely released. After our time in secret detention centers, the regime usually sent us to maximum security prisons.
 - 6 John Beverly’s term alludes to a testimonio “made up of accounts by different participants in the same event” [“The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio (Testimonial Narrative)],” in *The Real Thing. Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. Georg Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University, 1996), 28 [23–41].
 - 7 Before the actual 1976 military coup, political power had shifted to sectors who facilitated it. Therefore in 1974, after the death of democratically elected Juan Domingo Perón, his wife—Vice-president María Estela Martínez de Perón (Isabelita)—supported the detention and torture of political dissidents at the hands for the armed forces, the police, and the paramilitary group Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA).
 - 8 For an extensive analysis of *Nosotras*, please see my article “Concealing God: How Argentine Women Political Prisoners Performed a Collective Identity,” *Biography* 36.1 (Winter 2013): 214–242.
 - 9 For an extended discussion of the role Liberation Theology, the Movement of Third World Priests (*Sacerdotes para el tercer mundo*), and the Base Communities (*Comunidades cristianas de base*), played in fighting for social justice and resisting dictatorships in Argentina, see Michael Burdick, *For God and Fatherland: Religion and Politics in Argentina* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1995).
 - 10 Personal communication. August 8, 2012. “Más o menos en el año 1998, desde antropólogos, Darío Olmo, convocó a algunas de nosotras . . . para que le narráramos nuestra vivencia en la cárcel ya que por los testimonios que habían tomado se evidenciaba una experiencia colectiva que tenía una gran importancia para ellos . . . Mariana venía de Europa y se había entrevistado con un sobreviviente de los campos de concentración nazis que le manifestó la importancia de la memoria, de escribir de contar . . . Ella tomó la propuesta y nos convocó para escribir el libro.”
 - 11 *Nosotras*, 8. For copious information in Spanish about these books, reviews, activities, and original documentation about Coronda, Villa Devoto, and other detention centers during the dictatorship, please visit the site created by the former political prisoners, Presos Políticos Argentinos.
 - 12 Daniel Gorosito, sick and deprived of medical attention, was brutally murdered by the police after his transfer to another facility (*Del otro lado*, 193–198); Luis Alberto Hormaeche (ibid., 209–214) and Juan Carlos Voisard (ibid., 165–171) died due to lack of medical attention and medication for their high blood pressure, and Raúl Manuel San Martín died as a result of malpractice, after contracting meningitis (ibid., 239–241).
 - 13 Translation published under the title *Steps under Water: A Novel*.
 - 14 María del Carmen Sillato, author of *Diálogos de amor contra el silencio: Memorias de prisión, sueños de libertad*, suffered the cruel separation from her son, born in captivity, when she was transferred to the Buenos Aires prison. Others, like Carmen Cornes, who told her story to Beatriz López in *Hasta la victoria siempre . . . Testimonio de Carmen Cornes, emigrante gallega y militante de la vida*, had learned in captivity about the disappearance of their own child. Kozameh, Drago, and Lo Prete

- had been arrested and tortured under the rule of President María Estela Martínez de Perón while the military coup was in gestation. Drago published *Fragmentos de la Memoria: Recuerdos de una experiencia carcelaria (1975–1980)/Memory Tracks: Fragments from Prison (1975–1980)*; and Lo Prete’s *Memorias de una presa política* was published posthumously under her prison alias La Lopre, after her suicide.
- 15 Other testimonial and literary texts produced by male former political prisoners have appeared in anthologies like María del Carmen Sillato’s *Huellas*, the book *Eslabones*, concentrating on the experience of survivors from the Córdoba province, and most recently, *La risa no se rinde*, that includes excerpts from the Coronda narrative.
 - 16 Personal communication. June 19, 2010: “En Buenos Aires, el compañero Bas y Mansilla consiguió un libro que fue casi el totem inspirador de los redactores: *La escritura o la vida*, del gran escritor y guionista español Jorge Semprún. Ese libro nos ayudó a comprender por qué era que nos juntábamos tantos años después a escribir el libro de Coronda! Y nos confirmó en el camino de la versión literaria.”
 - 17 Semprún, *Literature or Life*, 13.
 - 18 I have further discussed these issues in “Cuando vienen matando: On Prepositional Shifts and the Struggle of Testimonial Subjects for Agency.” *PMLA* 121.5 (October 2006): 1665–1669.
 - 19 Personal communication. June 19, 2010: “Estoy recordando algo triste de los entretelones de la escritura del libro de Coronda. El que escribí las páginas mas brillantes del libro fue el compañero Corcho Destefanis . . . redactó con tal hermosura . . . que fue el único capítulo que entró directo al libro, sin correccion alguna, por consenso y decisión unánime de los que estábamos en la comision redactora! . . . y es uno de los textos con mas vuelo literario que se haya logrado. Y el Corcho era alguien que no se dedicaba a la literatura . . . Ese cumpa era el esposo de Silvia Suppo, la compañera. que fue asesinada hace poco en Rafaela. En ese momento me enteré que él ya había fallecido pocos meses antes de una enfermedad muy fea . . . El crimen de Silvia Suppo se ‘aclaró’ como un delito de robo, pero nadie cree en las coincidencias: ella era un testigo importante en los juicios por la verdad.”
 - 20 After her killing, security measures for all witnesses and survivors testifying in the trials were increased. When I went to testify on the case of the killings at The Little School, where I had been held captive, tortured, and disappeared, I was very aware of the risks and sought the protection of the Ministry of Justice.
 - 21 *Del otro lado*, 53: “Sí, estoy de acuerdo con que hay que darle carnadura al sujeto, pero cuando le damos carnadura a este sujeto colectivo, se supone que estamos en acción, que somos militantes populares: estudiantes, campesinos, trabajadores, intelectuales . . . Un poco todo esto que vos planteabas. ¿Quiénes son estos tipos? . . . ¿por qué están en estas situaciones? Y ¿qué hicieron para que el plan de aniquilamiento de la dictadura en la cárcel de Coronda no diera tanto resultado? . . . Estos tipos ganaron la batalla, aunque perdieron la guerra . . .”
 - 22 Ibid., 28: “Yo no sé si les conté o no, pero este escrito, del cuaderno mío . . . que es lo que recuerdo de mi experiencia, lo empecé a escribir cuando mis hijos eran chicos, pensando en mostrárselos, o contarles . . . lo que viví como parte de mi militancia en aquellos años. Ahora son adolescentes, y creo que va a ser muy lindo mostrarles en lugar de mi cuaderno, un libro que escribamos entre todos.”
 - 23 Personal communication. June 19, 2010: “Lo hicimos de la manera más entretenida posible: ¡la hermana de una alumna mía, una jovencita de 18 años, se lo leyó en un fin de semana, ni bien salió el libro! ¡Por supuesto que nosotros también nos divertimos un montón!”

- 24 Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Prologue to *Del otro lado*, 11: "Este libro de ex prisioneros de Coronda, quienes decidieron después de varios años, reunirse y hacer memoria, aporta a la conciencia colectiva, rescata los valores humanos y la capacidad de resistencia frente a la opresión."
- 25 On each anniversary of this massacre, massive demonstrations take place to demand the closing of WHINSEC (Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). This is the morphed version of the US military facility known as the School of the Americas (SOA), where some of the perpetrators, members of the Atlacatl Battalion, had been trained.
- 26 Ignacio Martín-Baró, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, trans. Tod Sloan (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994), 26.
- 27 Peter Admirand, *Amidst Mass Atrocity and the Rubble of Theology: Searching for a Viable Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 63.
- 28 Martín-Baró, *Writings*, 143.
- 29 Personal communication. June 19, 2010: "Las autoridades querían imponer el aislamiento, la incomunicación y la ruptura de toda estructura organizativa."
- 30 Personal communication. June 29, 2010: "... me gustaría contarte... de mi experiencia en Coronda con la Iglesia, mas que nada con Zazpe, en ese entonces arzobispo de Santa Fe, muy jugado y muy apreciado por todos nosotros, a pesar de que muchos de nosotros no somos creyentes."
- 31 *Del otro lado*, 121: "Habló cuando todos callaban, incluídos tantos que tenían la obligación de hacerlo"
- 32 *Ibid.*, 121: "Es justo también recordar a otros luchadores por los derechos humanos como los obispos Metodistas Carlos Gattinoni y Federico Pagura, y el rabino Marshal Meyer, quienes también presionaron y se jugaron por nosotros aunque sólo les permitieron visitas individuales. Y quizás algún que otro humilde cura o pastor, cuya memoria, injustamente, no hemos retenido."
- 33 Horacio Verbitsky, "Buenos Oficios," *Página 12*, July 22, 2012.
- 34 See Uki Goni, "Jorge Rafael Videla Convicted of Baby Thefts." *The Guardian*. July 5, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/05/jorge-rafael-videla-convicted-baby-thefts>.
- 35 "... le solicita la apertura de 'los archivos del Vaticano, de la iglesia argentina y de comunidades como el Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, donde monjas recibían niños de la dictadura militar y los daban en adopción'" ["El Papa a Estela de Carlotto: 'Cuenten conmigo.'" *Crónica*, April 24, 2013. <http://www.cronica.com.ar/diario/2013/04/24/46064-el-papa-a-estela-de-carlotto-cuenten-conmigo.html>].
- 36 Verbitsky's extensive research includes Mignone's sources and elaborates on Pope Francis's role. Of particular importance are his book *El Silencio* and his recent article "Cambio de piel."
- 37 Msgr. Angelelli's death in 1976 was promptly dismissed as a car accident. See Burdick, *For God and Fatherland*, 205, for a list of other priests assassinated in those days. Recently, the investigation was reopened and General Videla is one of the accused. At the time of his death, Angelelli was carrying evidence of the recent assassination of two priests from his diocese. See "Videla a juicio por el asesinato del obispo Angelelli," *El Nuevo Herald*, July 28, 2012.
- 38 *Del otro lado*, 177: "Llevo 97 días sin salir al recreo y no sé cuándo pisaré la tierra del patio. Son tantas las faltas cometidas—la última: tirar migas de pan a las palomas, que si no viene una amnistía del Papa, no sé cuándo saldré. Pero esas circunstancias a uno le agudizan la capacidad de observación, el tiempo disponible es un factor determinante para desarrollarla."

- 39 Personal communication. September 13, 2010: "Lo que es seguro es la correlación directa entre la entrada en la militancia 'Subversiva' con la participación previa en comunidades de base o experiencias en grupos ligados a la iglesia postconciliar en muchos de nosotros. Lo segundo, alianza milicos—sectores fachos eclesiásticos se cae de maduro y es ampliamente conocido..."
- 40 *Del otro lado*, 126: "Más preocupado por el presente que por el pasado, activo a pesar de sus años y muy compenetrado de la realidad... las desdichas de su gente..."
- 41 *Ibid.*, 127: "Una de las cosas que realmente admiré de muchos es eso, por ejemplo los que sufrieron mucho en la cárcel, saben con quién hablar y hablan con aquellos, y son gente normal... Y justamente hacer memoria para que no se repita la historia, estamos viviendo la historia de salvación..."
- 42 Gottfried R. Bloch, *Unfree Associations: A Psychoanalyst Recollects the Holocaust* (Los Angeles: Red Hen, 2004), 3.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 44 *Del otro lado*, 262: "La trama de Steinbeck, jugó... un papel decisivo en la conservación de mi salud mental."
- 45 *Ibid.*, 263: "Indudablemente todos elegimos todos los días ser o no ser Caín. Oprimir o asesinar o no al hermano"
- 46 Admirand, *Mass Atrocity*, 284.
- 47 "El periscopio... fue nuestra gran arma de combate... O sea, ante una realidad muy dura, de aislamiento, de mucha perversión, de tratar a la persona de llevarla a sus rincones más íntimos, digamos, para acercarlo a la locura, teníamos que confrontarlo con lo que teníamos, y eso significaba poder hacer algo en la celda, poder cantar, poder hablar con el compañero de la otra celda de al lado, hacer algo de gimnasia, comentar algún libro, una película. Entonces para eso necesitábamos algún instrumento que nos permitiera controlar el ingreso de los guardias al pabellón." Miguel Espinaco, "El periscopio fue nuestra gran arma de combate."
- 48 *Ibid.*: "que fue un aparatito que era un pequeño espejito... sostenido con miga de pan... que se sostenía con una pajita... se sacaba por los agujeritos que hay abajo de la celda y se miraba el ingreso del personal penitenciario al pabellón."
- 49 María Eva Cangiani and Martina Noailles, Foreword, 5: "La risa es liberación porque tiene la capacidad de hacer que el poder pierda, aunque sólo sea por un breve instante, su función de administrador del miedo."
- 50 "La risa fue una de las principales herramientas de resistencia de miles de presos políticos 'legales' y secuestrados, de perseguidos, de exiliados y de militantes populares durante la última dictadura militar" (Contratapa). (Back cover).
- 51 *Del otro lado*, 291: "Los muros lloran y nosotros reímos... simplemente porque seguimos caminando. Viajando por la estrecha franja de la ruta, transitando entre esos dos mundos, como un símbolo que quisiera recordarnos que nuestro camino transcurre en el frágil límite entre la vida y la muerte, entre Coronda y la libertad."
- 52 Semprún, *Literature or Life*, 10.

Chapter 3

This chapter is based on the paper that was presented at the 9th Biennial Conference of the International Network of Genocide Scholars (INGS) which was held in Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero in Buenos Aires, Argentina on July 19–22, 2011.

- 1 The war between the Sinhala-majority-dominated GoSL and the LTTE continued nearly for 30 years with several unsuccessful ceasefire agreements and peace

holistically personal. For the purpose of the discussion on loss and hope, engaging further into what this shadow represents in the development of personality traits falls outside the realm of this discussion, but the use of the shadow depicts a more general understanding of an experience that can be considered as a deprivation of the ideal situation: in this case, the death of my husband as deprivation, and therefore the temptation to categorize it the same way unacceptable traits are, as a shadow. For more discussion on this, read Robert A. Johnson, *Owning Your Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams, eds, *Meeting the Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin, 1991); and Peter A. Levine with Ann Frederick, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (Berkeley: North Atlanta, 1997).

- 6 The conception of hope was based mainly on the teaching of "life after death" in the eschatology teaching of the Christian faith. It was mainly made alive by the physical presence of friends and family that kept on reminding this teaching to me through prayers, songs, and continued narrative in response to my grieving. When this presence was not easily accessible, I started experiencing the dry spell of doubt at whether God was present anymore. Within that reality of the silence of God, it was the possibility of embracing this loss of death partly through the practice of spiritual discipline as espoused by Ignatius of Loyola that I learned to live in the tension or embracing my shadow. See Fulata L. Moyo, "A Narrative Theology of Eschatological Hope as Healing," 243–257.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 252.

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