

Memory Inventory

The Production and Consumption of Memory Goods in Argentina

Thursday afternoon at the Plaza de Mayo, the Madres hold their weekly march, and several members attend to a stand around which a crowd gathers to buy products—ranging from books to key rings. On a sunny Sunday morning, tourists explore the street market of San Telmo, where an artist sells his photographs; one photograph portrays tango dancers, several others project the “memory theme” of the Madres’ marches. Monday night after a performance of the Teatro X la Identidad (a project developed by the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo), the public buys T-shirts outside of a downtown theater. On a windy Saturday afternoon, under the highway that replaced Club Atlético, a center for torture and extermination, dozens of people attend the inauguration of a new “espacio para la memoria,” and activists from H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos Por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio) concurrently sell T-shirts and calendars. The list goes on.

The above vignettes portray the city of Buenos Aires during the last months of 2007, the year that marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Madres and the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Three decades of persistent and courageous campaigns by activists, and a series of political measures taken by the Kirchner administration, have brought human rights and memory issues to the forefront of Argentina’s political agenda. A monument to the victims of state terrorism stands in the Parque de la Memoria. And society challenges the culture of impunity, both by prosecuting torturers and assassins and by recovering former torture chambers as spaces for memory



Figure 1. Madres de Plaza de Mayo bookstand at their weekly Thursday marches, September 2007. (Photograph by Laurie Beth Clark and Michael Peterson)

(e.g., the infamous ESMA, planned to house cultural and educational institutes run by human rights organizations).

The strong presence of this traumatic past in the public sphere, in an environment of trials and commemorations, creates a multilayered socio-political space for the production, giving, selling, and consumption of memory products/artifacts. This chapter inventories these products—a broad category of memory-message carriers that includes books, DVDs, videos, CD-ROMs, and appointment books, as well as souvenirs and memorabilia, such as T-shirts, key rings, calendars, mugs, posters, money clips, and magnets. It examines both the makers and the consumers of these objects, identifying who benefits, who buys, and what motivates the buying of these objects.

Framing the Discussion

This chapter focuses on the process by which these products come to embody the past; the messages transmitted through them; and the effects of

buying, using, and collecting memory artifacts on both the construction and the transmission of memories. I argue that human rights organizations and institutions largely control the production of memory artifacts. While the marketing of memory messages may or may not include the exchange of money, identifying the makers and consumers of these memory carriers helps to explain the political economy of memory. The following questions guide my analysis: What do individuals, organizations, and institutions sell? What will they never sell? How do these memory products interlink with struggles for truth and justice? How do they contribute to maintaining the memories of state terrorism? Are memories of the dictatorship becoming a commodity? Should we categorize these items as memory prods or memory kitsch? To frame the discussion, I consider the historical/mnemonic context; the marketing of memory; the consumption of the past; and the producers of memory goods.

The Historical/Mnemonic Context

As memories evolve over time, memory as an ongoing construction process must be analyzed within a specific historical, mnemonic, political, and cultural environment—in this case, the year 2007. During the last months of 2007 many debates, talks, conferences, and workshops centered on memories of the dictatorship. Discussions focused on this area revealed recurrent subjects: revolutionary activism, monuments, museums, and memory's presence in film and the arts.¹ Moreover, in 2007 the official memory discourse mirrored that of the Argentine human rights movement, characterized by strong alliances with, and official fiscal support from, federal and local government.

This historical moment in Argentina confirms that there are waves of interest when remembering violent periods. The most important events in one's memory occur between the late teens and early twenties.² On average, monuments, exhibits, and/or films depicting historical events emerge 20–25 years after an experience.³ One explanation for this phenomenon is that people try to distance themselves from devastating events immediately after they occur. A second, and compatible, explanation highlights the fact that after two or three decades, those directly responsible for the repression have withdrawn from public life.⁴ I offer an additional explanation: the process of remembering develops not only as a consequence of time, but also in response to particular political events. In the case of the year 2007, efforts in Argentina to put perpetrators on trial reawakened memory

around the events that had transformed citizens' lives thirty years earlier. Additionally, by 2007, the generation that had been terrorized by the military regime had acquired the political power to follow through on reengaging the memory project. In the broader political climate, however, not only does this particular generation remember, but also society as a whole has begun to reconstruct memory. Both the witnesses to the dictatorship and the younger generations have committed themselves to preserving its memories and thereby shaping the present wave of remembering. Youth has thus become central to societal organization, and new generations act as primary fabricators of mnemonic sites.⁵ Activists, such as H.I.J.O.S. members and others belonging to the post-dictatorship generation, engage in reconstructing memories of this past, both producing and consuming memory messages and goods.

The Marketing of Memory

The marketing of memories of state terrorism calls for considerations of message and product consumption. The critical citizen of reasoned judgment has turned into a consumer of packaged images and messages; consumption is a trait of our identity.⁶ Indeed, consumerism is so central to our culture that we pride ourselves on being politically correct consumers: we discuss conscious consumption and pay attention to how our buying affects our societies; and we buy green products, boycott sweatshop-produced merchandise, and shop for "red" products, when profits go to causes in which we believe. As consumption in contemporary society has become a form of sociopolitical participation, we need to analyze what and why we consume.⁷

Beyond the consumption of material goods lies the consumption of ideas—the focus of both political and social marketing. In presidential campaigns, for example, candidates aim to sell their qualities and to convince citizens that their election will contribute to the well-being of the nation. Similarly, human rights activists aim to persuade society and governments that truth and justice are essential for democracy. Social marketing campaigns employ strategies similar to those used for selling soft drinks, but aimed specifically at consumption for the purpose of changing behavior. Likewise, the marketing of memories of state terrorism has several goals. In an environment where different versions of the past compete for hegemony, human rights activists aim to broaden support for their specific points of view and demands. Through consumption, they encourage

the adoption of their ideological positions, hoping to modify behavior by prompting society to participate in their struggle.

The Consumption of the Past

The marketing and consumption of the past is done via “not-for-profit” and “for-profit” ventures. First, there exists a marketing of the memory message that does not involve selling goods. For example, the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo organized an exhibit of books by disappeared writers at ESMA,⁸ and the museum of memory in Montevideo owns a collection of objects that were made by prisoners as souvenirs. The proliferation of memorabilia sold around the world illustrates the profitable side of marketing and consumption, the focus of this analysis. “Souvenir society” thrives through the commodification of nostalgia. While this commodification proliferates around the world,⁹ in Latin America, the effort to turn the image of Che Guevara into profit-making merchandise provides one key example. Alberto Korda’s photo of the heroic guerrilla, one of the most-reproduced images in the world, can be found on tank tops, mugs, flip-flops, and beyond. Moreover, the public broadly allows for the business of profit-making through historical reproduction, as evidenced in storytelling products ranging from paperbacks to film.¹⁰ Although I do not focus on books and films in this chapter, we should be aware of the business of memory in relation to such memory products.¹¹

Producers of Memory Artifacts

The act of consumption, whether of ideas or material goods, requires two main actors: producers and consumers. There are several producers of memory messages and goods, including official representatives. The state shapes official memories and versions of history that may evolve or devolve, depending on the government in power. Its institutions produce messages that may or may not clash with human rights activists. In 1984 in Argentina, at the beginning of civilian rule, the rhetoric of “two demons” was the prevalent official discourse, which referenced the violence of the state as a response to the violence of guerrilla organizations. In 2007, however, official memory was advancing the agenda of the human rights movement, which emphasized that rather than “two demons,” in Argentina there exists (1) the victims of state terrorism; and (2) those guilty of crimes against humanity, who must be prosecuted.¹² On the other hand, civil society is active in the production of memory messages that may sup-

port or counter official versions of memory. Producers range from human rights groups to the media, from artists to academics. The transmission of memories in a society devastated by state terrorism involves everyone, even those who promote amnesia. Memory battles thus take place in several cultural realms and through various media, including the products discussed here.¹³

This chapter focuses on a selection of producers from three main categories. The first category includes human rights organizations comprised of relatives of the *desaparecidos*. These include the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (the mothers of the disappeared), which has divided into two groups: the *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo*—the group I analyze here—and the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora*, which is not part of this analysis. They also include the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (the grandmothers of the disappeared); and *H.I.J.O.S.* (the adult daughters and sons of the disappeared, murdered political activists, or activists forced into exile). The second category includes human rights institutions, illustrated by the *Instituto Espacio para la Memoria* (IEM) and *Memoria Abierta*. And the third category involves independent artists, consisting of photographers and a fashion designer.

Mapping the Memory Products/Artifacts

Human rights organizations and institutions actively pursue truth and justice. They link their messages, their activities, and the artifacts that they produce. Similarly, independent producers create memories with their work, both drawing on activists' campaigns and incorporating their own perspectives. A variety of symbols, images, and words transmit memory messages: discourses, events, and objects. They thus become the material carriers of diverse historical, cultural, and mnemonic meaning in which memory "takes root":¹⁴ they are the "technologies of memory" through which "memories are shared, produced, and given meaning."¹⁵

A variety of cultural products represent memory of the dictatorship. These objects reinforce specific representations of this past, encouraging memory or forgetting.¹⁶ Moreover, human rights organizations' messages are not frozen in the past, but are dynamic and dependent on the political climate and other surrounding circumstances. They make constant and changing links to the present. Human rights organizations thus avoid a nostalgic and sterile use of the dictatorship: theirs is a memory at the ser-

vice of justice—the exemplary memory defined by Todorov.¹⁷ Their products consequently reflect these evolving and interactive messages.

Human Rights Organizations

ASOCIACIÓN MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO. This group produces and sells the most memory artifacts. Their products link to the Madres' activism. Prompted by the military regime's illegal detention and disappearance of their children during the 1970s, the Madres demand accountability for the past and engage in new activities that continue the commitment of their disappeared children to social change. The products sold by the Madres include coffee mugs, T-shirts, key rings, magnets, postcards, posters, appointment books, buttons, and money clips. They also sell books and videos/DVDs, which are not all produced by or directly linked to the cause of the Madres. This merchandise is sold in two main locations: their bookstore and at a stand in Plaza de Mayo during their weekly Thursday marches. The memory merchandise that the Madres produce and/or sell must be further contextualized by their activities and projects, including: the weekly marches; a university, publishing house, bookstore, and coffee shop all founded in their name; their cultural center Nuestros Hijos in the School of Officers building of ESMA; and their housing construction program.

The white kerchief, meant to invoke the diapers of their children, has become not only a branding symbol of the Madres' struggle, but also the quintessential memory symbol of the Argentine human rights movement. Alluding to the strong mother-child link, the Madres wear it as a form of identification at all of their public appearances. This practice began with the annual pilgrimage to the Virgin of Luján in 1976, where they first collectively denounced the disappearances of their children by the military regime. Initially, they wore actual cloth diapers on their heads.¹⁸ Later, they replaced the diapers with white kerchiefs. Posters, publications, and all the Asociación's products reproduce this logo. It is also drawn on sidewalks and other surfaces where the Madres hold public appearances: an inscription of their struggle that marks the urban landscape.¹⁹

Over the years, the Madres have employed some mottos, one of which, "We want them alive," they inscribe on their kerchiefs. This motto summarizes their *raison d'être*; it is a statement calling for truth as a first and necessary step to justice. This rhetoric embodies many meanings: their insistence that the *desaparecidos* taken alive must reappear alive; the expectation that

those who kidnapped them, those who gave orders, and those who tortured and raped them must be exposed; and the idea that the respective families have a right to know the details of the *desaparecidos*' fate.²⁰

As long as those guilty for the crimes against their children remain free, the Asociación says it will consistently refuse reparations, offers of exhumation, and monuments. Other mottos thus portray the Madres' continuing demands for accountability: "We won't forget, we won't forgive, we won't falter," and "No to exhumations; no to economic reparations; no to posthumous homages." In parallel with these mottos, which express their central demands, the Madres also employ mottos in solidarity with other causes and movements. Examples include "No to the payment of the foreign debt," "Freedom for political prisoners," and "Democracy with hunger and impunity is a joke."

The memory carriers produced by the Asociación employ both their symbols and their mottos. All are adorned with the white kerchief, either used alone or in multiples forming a semicircle. Most of the T-shirts, key rings, magnets, buttons, money clips, and coffee mugs sold by the Madres also portray this white kerchief, or a semicircle of kerchiefs, over a blue background, and bearing the organization's name. One example, the image of the kerchiefs marching around a stool with a military cap on it, implies a metaphorical trial of the military by the Madres. In 2007, some of the products (such as money clips and magnets) placed the semicircle of kerchiefs around the iconographic image of Che Guevara with his black beret and a red star. While the Madres have always publicly professed their admiration for this revolutionary leader, this design explicitly links the Madres with Che, thereby uniting two powerful icons of Latin American political imaginary in a single product. The Madres also link imagery with mottos; for example, they sell key rings with the kerchief and the motto "Not a single step backward," and T-shirts with the kerchiefs encircling the military cap and the motto "30 years of life defeating death."

The Madres' publications include coffee-table books, books about their history, books of poems, a magazine, and other printed material, such as appointment books, posters, and postcards. These products, containing photographs of the Madres, usually document different facets of their activism. Such images act as a reminder of the scope and style of the Madres' struggle, and the diverse arenas in which it takes place—for example, at marches, in confrontations with military officers, at meetings with world leaders, or at rock concerts. The Madres' images also adorn postcards and

posters created by artists who have supported their struggle by donating these pieces.

The annual appointment books reflect the changes in the scope of the Madres' activism over time. In 1992, a time of weak prospects for justice, the inscriptions in the notebook reaffirmed the crusade for accountability. By 2007, the Asociación was endorsing the administration's official human rights policies, declaring that the government was no longer its enemy. On their thirtieth anniversary, the Madres' messages proclaimed their commitment to social change and the redress of injustice through the building of low-cost housing financed by the government. The site of the first of these projects, located in a shantytown, is called the "White Kerchief Neighborhood." Through this project, women and men are paid to develop construction skills and build their own houses. They thus become homeowners and also learn skills that will allow their reinsertion into the labor market.

The 2008 appointment book conveys the impact of the housing project "Sueños Compartidos" (Shared Dreams) on that community. Its images featured the neighborhood's transformation: mothers and workers/owners at the construction site, children at the kindergarten, a crowded cafeteria. Participants in the project, expressing how it had changed their lives, authored the inscriptions: "I am proud that, finally, I feel that I'm a model for my children" — "The Madres gave back to us the desire for living. I am 25 years old and never thought that I would enjoy so much waking up at 6 A.M." — "It's hard to tear down what is built with the heart." Participants also wrote mottos both about the past (the dictatorship), and about political matters affecting contemporary Argentina, such as "Jail for genocide," "The lack of jobs is a crime," and "We struggle for Latin American unity and against imperialism."

The white kerchief sometimes appears on construction helmets these days. The construction of the housing projects has emerged as one outcome of three decades of activism. This "manifesto" about teaching people how to build proclaims that, for the Madres, activism and memory link to contemporary issues and proposals to solve problems. It shows that their memory is not frozen in place or time, but rather connects past injustices with those of the present. This project also illustrates a fruitful collaboration between the organization and the government, which was absent in earlier eras.

ABUELAS DE PLAZA DE MAYO. For over thirty years, the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo have searched for their stolen grandchildren, mostly born

in clandestine detention centers to disappeared mothers. This search has involved the development of several strategies, including obstinate detective work and media campaigns. Since the seized babies have now grown into young adults (in 2007, most would have been around thirty years old), the Abuelas concentrate their efforts on reaching young people, encouraging individuals born during the dictatorship and doubtful of their identity to contact the Abuelas or CONADI (the Comisión Nacional para el Derecho a la Identidad). These first steps can then be followed by DNA testing and confirmation of identity. At the beginning of 2009, ninety-seven of the estimated five hundred children seized as the spoils of war had recuperated their identity.²¹

Identity is at the core of the Abuelas' activism and it remains the focus of their memory messages. Their goal is to create awareness in Argentine society that four hundred young people, many of them appropriated by military families, remain missing. A double task, of reaching the public with appealing messages and of educating the public about state terrorism, characterizes this search for identity. The carriers of these messages range from books to theater performances, from television programs to sports and music activities. Posters, print ads, radio spots, and television commercials promote these active campaigns through the slogan: "If you doubt your identity."²² The official and private funding given to the Abuelas, including from foreign sources, makes possible the production of printed material, as this organization does not sell merchandise. The books and other publications produced by the Abuelas are provided free of charge.²³ However, collaborators do make and sell products designed to honor the Abuelas and to raise money for their cause.

The Abuelas have several publications, including their (print and online) monthly bulletin *Mensuario* and various books. In commemoration of their thirtieth anniversary, in 2007, they compiled data and images documenting the organization's history and achievements, which they published in three books. The first, *La historia de las abuelas: 30 años de búsqueda*, describes the varying political contexts in which the Abuelas' searches have taken place. The second, *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo: Fotografías de 30 años en lucha*, is a small coffee-table book with scenes of family gatherings, recuperated grandchildren meeting their relatives, everyday work at the Abuelas' offices, marches, events honoring the Abuelas, and the For Identity projects (discussed below). A visual mosaic of the Abuelas' struggle, it combines the public and the more intimate moments of their activities. The

third book, *Niños desaparecidos: Jóvenes localizados en la Argentina de 1975 a 2007*, documents the Abuelas' activism. This book visually conveys the continuing presence of the abducted and the emptiness left by their disappearances, through photos of the parents of the missing grandchildren and of the grandchildren themselves. It also includes photos of recuperated grandchildren and estimated dates-of-birth coupled with an empty space where a photo should be for children born in captivity. This combination of photos and empty boxes represents the fragmentation of families and the many spaces that the Abuelas hope to fill through their search.

The "For Identity" projects are a crucial component of the Abuelas' organization.²⁴ These projects have broadened the discursive and deliberative spaces of their struggle, particularly among younger Argentine generations. They incorporate strategies of entertainment education that involve designing messages to amuse, educate, create favorable attitudes, and change behavior.²⁵ For the Abuelas, memory is at the service of recovering their grandchildren; their campaigns thus entertain in order to promote investigations and gain allies for their cause. The pioneer venture of this sort was Teatro X la Identidad (Theater For Identity), an annual series of free performances launched in 2000.²⁶ As a collaborative project between the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and playwrights, actors, and directors, most of the plays address the kidnapping of babies and issues of identity. After each performance, the Abuelas and the actors give brief presentations that explicitly link the play to the campaign for identity.²⁷

The latest "For Identity" project was Televisión X la Identidad (Television For Identity), a series of three programs honoring the Abuelas' thirtieth anniversary, broadcast in October 2007 by a major television network, *Telefé*. It presented the organization's work through fictional representations of real cases of recuperated grandchildren. The series was a success, demonstrating the potential of commercial television as a vehicle for transmitting memories of state terrorism. It both generated good ratings and prompted increased calls to the offices of the Abuelas by young people who thought that they might be children of *desaparecidos*.

"For Identity" projects involve the participation of individuals and organizations that independently produce memory artifacts. This is the case with the T-shirts that organizers sell at the theater performances.²⁸ These T-shirts bear the inscription "Teatro X la Identidad" and the group's logo (a mask with a smiling and peaceful face between the two faces representing Comedy and Tragedy).²⁹ The printed mottos focus on the Abuelas' relent-

less search, and include inscriptions like: “There are still 400 disappeared children; we have to find them” or “When you assume responsibility for history . . . you become part of it . . . until the appearance of the last appropriated grandchild.” Hence, the T-shirts both help to cover the performances’ expenses and serve as carriers of the Abuelas’ message.

As noted above, there exist memory products whose sales benefit the Abuelas, although the Abuelas do not sell them. One month after the broadcast of *Televisión X la Identidad*, the network *Telefé* and the newspaper *Página/12* joined forces for the massive distribution of a DVD of the programs and donated the proceeds to the Abuelas. To commemorate the organization’s thirtieth anniversary, three filmmakers offered the Abuelas profits earned by launching a special edition of their films: Luis Puenzo’s *The Official Story*; David Blaustein’s *Spoils of War*; and Andrés Habbeger’s *(h)Historias cotidianas*. Both the television series and these films address the experience and effects of state terrorism on the children of desaparecidos. The films’ distribution has multiple advantages: the transmission of memory messages; support (both socially and fiscally) for the Abuelas’ search; and educating the public. Hence, while the Abuelas may give away what they produce, other groups and individuals involve themselves in the marketing of memory through the sale of several related artifacts.³⁰

H.I.J.O.S. The members of this powerful and noisy group have gained recognition through an intense presence in the streets. H.I.J.O.S. was organized in 1995 by the adult sons and daughters of the disappeared, and became famous for its *escraches*, creative campaigns of public condemnation aimed at shaming torturers and assassins who benefited from impunity laws.³¹ In spite of the nullification of these laws, certain criminals remain at large; in 2007, I partook in the renewed activism of H.I.J.O.S. through an *escrache* against a current prosecutor who had forged documents in order to steal property from desaparecidos.³² While the group divided into separate factions in 2000, by 2007 the faction that split off (HIJOS—no periods) had ceased to exist. Over the years, H.I.J.O.S. has grown to include members that do not have disappeared relatives, thus incorporating a new generation of activists into the human rights movement.

H.I.J.O.S. markets memory through messages that reflect the group’s goals and its support for other organizations. H.I.J.O.S. reproduces memory messages in banners and collage posters, which they bring to demonstrations and commemorations, that vindicate their disappeared parents’ activism; denounce torturers, assassins, and their accomplices; and inform the pub-

lic about legislators who have voted for the impunity laws. H.I.J.O.S. makes a point of providing precise data on those responsible for the repression and the legalization of impunity. Sometimes they sell memory artifacts, the proceeds of which help to cover their expenses. In 2007, these included a T-shirt with the image of the “Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil” monkeys, and the added inscription “Indifference is a pact with impunity.” In pairing these sentiments, H.I.J.O.S. members hope to raise the sensibilities of bystanders to the terror and of those who remain indifferent to current struggles for accountability. H.I.J.O.S. also sells blank notebooks with the inscription “The impossible only takes longer” on the cover. A snail image also appears on the cover, symbolizing the very slow pace of advancement in the long fight against impunity.

This organization maintains close ties with the Abuelas. The cover of their 2008 calendar reads, “Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, 1977–2007, 30 Years of Struggle For Identity and Justice. An Homage from H.I.J.O.S.” Images of the Abuelas and a fingerprint, symbolizing identity, adorn the calendar. H.I.J.O.S. has inscribed the back cover with a letter praising and thanking the Abuelas for their work in leading the search for the desaparecidos, and their promise to continue this work. Additionally, every page of the calendar provides information on what individuals should do if they doubt their identity, including contact information for the Abuelas, CONADI, and Hermanos, a group within H.I.J.O.S. that focuses on the search for stolen babies who are sisters and brothers of its members.

The calendar, a public representation of H.I.J.O.S.’s alliance with the Abuelas, further honors the Abuelas by summarizing important facts regarding their three decades of activism; and it portrays H.I.J.O.S. as both their collaborators and their heirs. Photos of the Abuelas demonstrating, descriptions of their main triumphs, explanations of the organization’s strategies, and their mottos fill its pages. Providing a chronology of the milestones achieved in the search for grandchildren, the H.I.J.O.S. calendar combines data on legal resolutions with slogans like “Let’s struggle together against impunity,” details on recuperated grandchildren, and information on the cultural projects/artists who collaborated with the Abuelas in the calendar. It both writes the memory of the organization and becomes another tool in the search for identity, an intergenerational collaboration exemplary of memory at the service of justice.

H.I.J.O.S. distributes memory messages through several carriers. However, selling memory artifacts is not integral to all of their public appear-

ances; their disruptive and festive escraches remain the central carriers for their message. For example, while they offered T-shirts and calendars at the inauguration of a Space for Memory, H.I.J.O.S. members sell no products during an escrache; instead, they focus their efforts on chanting slogans against the target of the escrache, painting the sidewalks with motots, and giving away flyers with information about the crimes perpetrators committed.

Human Rights Institutions

The two institutions that I discuss here, the Instituto Espacio para la Memoria (IEM) and Memoria Abierta, were developed in collaboration with human rights organizations and activists. Both institutions organize educational, academic, and cultural activities, including conferences, workshops, public talks, screenings, and the production of memory artifacts—demonstrating how actors in the field of human rights combine efforts for the preservation of memories of state terrorism.

INSTITUTO ESPACIO PARA LA MEMORIA. The IEM, created in 2006 by the government of the city of Buenos Aires, consists of several human rights organizations, members of the city's government, and public figures committed to the defense of human rights.³³ Its work, centered in Buenos Aires, denounces the crimes of, and the policies that originated and supported, state terrorism. Its memory products—useful educational devices—disseminate data obtained through investigations. The institute also coordinates activities, including visits to former torture centers, like ESMA.³⁴

The IEM has several publications, many of which can be accessed through its website. Among the material that it distributed for free in 2007 was the *Sculpture Prize* book on the international contest for the sculptures created for the Parque de la Memoria. Photos of the winning projects and comments by the artists about their motivations to participate in the contest, as well as the rationales for their artwork, comprise this book. It therefore offers insights into the debates about representations of the past and decisions about what belongs, and why, at an officially funded memory site.³⁵ Another important IEM publication is a report of their activities since the institute's creation, which offers details of the nature and scope of its collaboration with different organizations and governmental institutions. IEM also provides postcards, bulletins, and posters, such as a giant map of the clandestine torture centers that operated in Buenos Aires.

The institute exemplifies the deliberative space between civil society and

the state. The objectives of IEM's activities, the content of its messages, and the goods that it distributes result from interactions with an administration that supports policies developed by human rights organizations. Official funding is key to the organization of events and the free distribution of costly educational materials. The political will of future administrations could thus greatly affect IEM and make other actors responsible for its maintenance. A changed political context could mean that IEM will have to compete for alternative funding from national and international sources that support human rights causes.

MEMORIA ABIERTA. This organization represented the coordinated action of several groups: Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (APDH); Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS); Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina; Madres de Plaza de Mayo—Línea Fundadora; and Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ). Its mission is to preserve the memory of what happened in the period of state terrorism and to foment cooperation between different archives that contain information about the period.³⁶ As with the IEM, funding is central to the activities of this institution, which currently has the support of the government and several international foundations.³⁷ Memoria Abierta has more varied funding sources than IEM, however, and thus less dependency on official support.

This institution sells memory products that complement its work, as the means for distributing its research projects. A primary activity of Memoria Abierta is the writing of memory through interviews with human rights activists, opinion leaders, intellectuals, artists, victims of state terrorism, and average citizens who witnessed the terror. In 2007, the archive had over five hundred oral histories, an invaluable resource for researchers and educators.

Memoria Abierta produces knowledge aligned with its mission and the politics of memory put forth by human rights organizations. The products on sale serve as educational devices. At the end of 2007, it had published a set of three CD-ROMs entitled "De memoria: Testimonios, textos y otras fuentes sobre el terrorismo de estado en la Argentina."³⁸ Texts and testimony about the massive mobilizations and the growth of social and political movements in the 1969–75 period comprise the first CD-ROM, "La primavera de los pueblos." The second CD-ROM, "El 24 de Marzo 1976: El golpe y el terrorismo del estado," includes texts and documents about the social and political environment preceding the military coup and the consolidation of the dictatorship. The final CD-ROM, "1983: La transición democrática y

el camino hacia la justicia,” includes testimony, source material, and texts that address the beginning of civilian rule, the debates related to the search for truth and justice, and the different proposals promoted by human rights activists and the state. Another multimedia product of this institution is an interactive CD-ROM about El Vesubio, a former torture center; it combines testimony and source materials, including animated reconstructions of the demolished building. Drawing on the words of the poet Juan Gelman, we can say that the institution is helping to weave the quilt of the nation’s collective memory.³⁹

Independent Producers of Memory Artifacts

In addition to human rights organizations and institutions, several independent producers represent and transmit memories through a wide range of goods. To illustrate this category, I focus on creative entrepreneurs who sell objects with a memory theme.

PHOTOGRAPHERS/ARTISTS. In 2007 I identified several artists who sell photos of activists, particularly of their marches, that have become memory landmarks of Buenos Aires’ landscape. In these photos, sold on the street of Buenos Aires, politicized portrayals of the Madres, Abuelas, and H.I.J.O.S. are juxtaposed with cultural portrayals of tango dancers. Turko Alí sells his pieces from a stand at the San Telmo neighborhood street fair, which attracts a large public packed with tourists. His photos depict many themes, including street scenes and architecture, and are framed in wood or mounted on wood to create *retablo*-style, three-dimensional displays. His memory-themed pieces include images of the Madres’ marches and the H.I.J.O.S.’s *escraches*. Turko Alí is an artist/activist involved in several projects; his political ideology and support of these activists’ work inspires this particular merchandise.⁴⁰

Portrayals of the Madres, the Abuelas, and other memory activists are also part of the collections of photographers who sell images of tango dancers and additional scenes of Buenos Aires culture at the Sunday fairs at Plaza Dorrego, San Telmo, and at the Caminito in La Boca neighborhood, another common stop for tourists. These artists’ appreciation of human rights action motivates their choice to incorporate such themes into their own work.⁴¹ Some examples of the scenes captured by the photographs include the monument in the square facing the Congress building, with a large graffito of the words “Neither oblivion nor pardon”; and images of the Madres demonstrating, some with the banner of H.I.J.O.S. behind them.

While not the top sellers, these photographs represent initiatives of production and distribution of memory artifacts independent from those of the human rights organizations. Moreover, the photos that the artists sell in street fairs provide one of few opportunities to buy memory artifacts for tourists who cannot attend the Madres' marches or other "memory acts." These products—both through their production and in their final material form—support human rights memory and are an option for those seeking to buy "politically correct" souvenirs, which in Argentina link to known social movements.

FASHION HONORING THE ABUELAS DE PLAZA DE MAYO. The designer Teo Gincoff, who employs fashion as a communication medium, based his 2007 fashion line *Moda X la Identidad* on identity. The collection honored the Abuelas for demanding the right to identity and for their struggle in concurrently restoring memory and family to their grandchildren. When he approached the Abuelas, Gincoff had already produced fashion with an ecological orientation, using natural fibers and dyed cloth from indigenous communities.⁴² The artwork chosen to decorate the 2007 T-shirts was from a series of paintings of the Abuelas wearing white kerchiefs by celebrated artist Milo Lockett.⁴³ (Most of the Abuelas are also Madres of desaparecidos, but they do not always wear kerchiefs in their public appearances.) This demonstrates a three-pronged link between committed artists who admire the Abuelas, socially responsible "green" fashion, and the human rights movement.

Gincoff used the Abuelas' photographs as a resource.⁴⁴ He designed 1970s-style raincoats inspired by images of the Abuelas marching in the rain. He produced orange garments, the color of the Abuelas' media brochures. His collection also included dark-colored clothing, which symbolized the years of terror; long collars partially covering the face, and thus hiding the identity of the wearer; and outfits with white hoods that represented kerchiefs. For the presentation of his line, Gincoff invited an actress who played the daughter of a desaparecido in a popular television series, *Montecristo*, to model. If we add to this picture the presence of several Abuelas and supporters at the event, and the fact that Gincoff gave away over one hundred T-shirts to the public, we see that the designer managed to perform an act of memory in the often frivolous sphere of the fashion world.⁴⁵ The fashion show, and its broadcast for over three months by a TV fashion channel, undeniably meant an opportunity to promote the Abuelas' struggle in a sphere that conventionally ignores the human rights movement.⁴⁶



Figure 2. T-shirts honoring the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, produced by Teo Gincoff, artwork by Milo Lockett. (Photograph by Susana Kaiser)

While a unique and contributive production, the memory project behind the fashion line may not have effectively reached the public. Press releases sought to promote this collection in circles less familiar with the work of the Abuelas, but they only provided sound bites of the designer's rationale for his creations. While press coverage did involve a discussion of the meaning behind the garments themselves (e.g., that they "cover the face, representing the lack of identity"),⁴⁷ they lacked an explanation of the choices and motivation behind the design of specific items.⁴⁸ Media appraisals of the fashion line thus failed to reflect the diverse motives that led the designer, the artist, and the Abuelas to collaborate in this venture. This demonstrates a unique translation of three decades of searching for kidnapped grandchildren into products that must compete in a specific market.

The fashion collection certainly presents a new twist in the production and distribution of memory goods. Indeed, simply creating an association between the Abuelas and the fashion world is a bold move. The Abuelas' agreement to participate in the project further suggests a willingness to

explore new venues to convey their message. Although it is the only case that I found with this kind of representation of an organization's struggle, it opens the possibility for similar ventures and products in the future. But the question remains: how can they contribute to transmitting memory messages, and who (if anyone) benefits from the monetary profits that are realized in such creative endeavors.

About the Consumption of Memory Artifacts

Since the consumer is at the other end of the production process, s/he must be addressed in understanding memory artifacts: Who consumes memory? How do people respond to memory artifacts? How do these representations of the past impact the user? Barbara Kruger's iconic image "I Shop Therefore I Am" became a motto symbolizing a society obsessed with consuming. Going beyond this general characterization of a materially preoccupied society, how does what we buy define us? Are we what we consume? Does the consumption of memory artifacts turn us into memory-keepers and transmitters? T-shirts, for example, as walking billboards decorated by numerous slogans and symbols, may become vehicles for people to voice their ideological positions. What does it mean to wear these messages?

We need to study the use of memory products in the same way that we study media audiences.⁴⁹ Media research today centers on the social act of consuming media, on the analysis of the encounter between the message and the people.⁵⁰ Whatever the intentions of human rights activists and independent artists in producing a memory product (the encoding), its meaning will have different interpretations depending on who uses and consumes it (the decoding).⁵¹ While the encoding of the message is the point of departure, its circulation and reception are also moments of the production process. Who we are shapes our interpretations of what we read, watch, listen to, and, I would argue, the memory products that we buy, give away, use, and wear. Differences of age, gender, ethnicity, and knowledge of a particular topic affect people's diverse interpretations of messages. An Argentine teenager wearing an H.I.J.O.S. T-shirt and a Spanish tourist who attends a Madres' march and buys a money clip as a souvenir are very different.

The reasons why we buy and consume memory products vary depending on the individual engaged in this process, who can be a local or a foreigner, a supporter of the human rights movement, or someone simply looking

for a special souvenir. Motives may include helping the cause, wanting a memento from a group or event, expressing a political position on the dictatorship, and actively promoting a human rights memory by using and/or giving away these products. The characteristics of the product also influence the motives of consumption. Books and CD-ROMs serve as informational and educational devices. Goods such as key rings and coffee mugs conform to a separate category of collection or gift-giving.

Differences also emerge based on the seller and location of selling these objects. Locations where memory acts take place reveal interaction between the public and relatives of the *desaparecidos*, moments with a strong presence of those who are absent—and where buying can imply a form of dialogue with them. This can be seen at the Plaza de Mayo during the Madres' marches; after a performance of Teatro X la Identidad, where the public is emotionally touched by a play; and at a commemoration where attendees have talked to members of H.I.J.O.S. These occasions compare to people's interaction with memorial sites, where dialogue between visitors and the dead may nurture a society's memories.⁵²

While we ponder if memory-themed photos are just another souvenir for tourists, we might also ask if there is a way to contextualize the delivery of memory products as presents, for we may wonder how friends and relatives will appreciate and understand the meaning of these objects. As a woman from Buenos Aires shopping at the Madres' stand told me: "I buy one [mug] each time that I come here and then keep them for when I need to give a present." Irrespective of the familiarity of her friends with the Madres, whenever they use this mug at their homes or in their workplaces they will engage with the Madres' message, and thereby memory transmission will take place through this product.

Those buying from independent artists may not have attended any memory events. As the Madres and the Abuelas are well-known abroad, it is foreign tourists who buy most of their products.⁵³ According to the photographers I encountered, however, those who shop for memory-themed photos know about human rights activists.⁵⁴ With regard to items of fashion that honor the Abuelas, we can only speculate about decoding by those who bought garments. Despite their sell-out success, these products have not been the subject of any systematic market research about their consumers. Designer Gincoff speculates, however, that consumers are conscious of the political meaning behind his fashion memory goods.⁵⁵

Hence, we should continue to explore the consumption of memory arti-

facts by realizing their complex interaction with consumers: whoever consumes them is at once decoding particular and different meanings and also contributing to the transmission of a message. Consumers thus become a link in the memory chain.

Memory Goods or Memory Kitsch

In Argentina, we cannot yet identify a commodification of memories of state terrorism. It is hard to imagine that the white kerchief will ever be for sale. While memory goods may be used primarily to expand knowledge and reawaken memories of the past, they may also be exploited to expand consumption. At this time, I believe that they are primarily produced and employed in the spirit of the former, more altruistic practice. Argentina is characterized by a strong commitment not to turn memory into a commodity.

The fact that human rights organizations and institutions dominate the production of memory artifacts suggests that these items do not have massive distribution or generate substantial profits to help cover expenses. It is too early to see how the organizations will run their projects at ESMA, or to know what types of memory products will be distributed there. We cannot ignore the possibility of museum stores, which can contribute to the sustainability of a museum's operations, something applicable to all spaces for memory. We should remember, however, that monetary profits do not monopolize or negate possible gains from selling (or giving away) memory products. The goods discussed here, whether sold or distributed freely, contribute first and foremost to the continued presence of this past in the public sphere, to the current construction and transmission of memories.

As for the production of independent artists, there is no indication that sales of these artifacts generate substantial profits. While sales of the many concrete manifestations of "Never Again" may generate revenues, I did not identify any cases in which the use of this past has resulted in profitable merchandising. There also exist instances of independent producers donating the proceeds of such sales to human rights groups. How these organizations assess the value of such contributions will determine their feasibility and incorporation into their projects. Since there is undeniably a commercial angle, this will require careful consideration, in order to avoid endorsing or co-opting the production of memory artifacts of no value to their cause.

There is, however, no simple distinction between memory goods for knowledge dissemination and memory goods for profit. Whenever sale transactions occur, we must differentiate between who controls the production and who profits from it. A manufacturer may profit monetarily, for example, from the massive distribution of the kerchief that is printed on all kinds of merchandise. Activists may, however, at the same time profit from expansion of knowledge of their cause. Additionally, symbols may evolve as commodified products. Over the years, the Madres have given away kerchiefs to thank key supporters; similar to Walter Benjamin's analysis of the work of art in an era of mechanical reproduction, the white kerchief became an award embodied with the aura of a unique object. The Madres may opt in the future to reproduce this object so as to fiscally benefit their cause. How can we analyze or judge if they decide to do a global sale of kerchiefs for raising funds? Who can question their authority to do so? How would we classify a project like this?

Based on the examples of political memorabilia and memory kitsch (e.g., the Che paraphernalia), we should, however, refrain from saying "never" to a shift in focus of memory goods production from knowledge to monetary profit. I am writing at a moment in which this situation could change along with social and political transformations. Human rights organizations and institutions do not control what independent artists produce and sell. More significantly, generational issues do and will affect the production and consumption of memory goods. After more than thirty years of activism, the Madres and the Abuelas are growing old and many have passed away. A younger generation may utilize different strategies of goods production in their wake, in the wake of this broad wave of memory, and in new waves of remembering.⁵⁶

This chapter has discussed the marketing of memory in the year 2007, a snapshot into the ever-changing memory scenario during its latest wave. This wave must be contextualized by a government explicitly supportive of human rights causes, as well as by cooperation between victims of past terror and younger generations. Whether the projects of human rights organizations and institutions, or the initiatives of independent artists and corporations, the production of memory goods will continue. This production may focus in the future on the distribution of goods primarily for knowledge or for profit. The scene in Argentina in 2007, however, showed resilience, emphasizing the former and avoiding the transformation of memory goods into memory kitsch. Concerns and debates on this topic

will continue, as will the different approaches for carrying out memory work that does not negotiate, let alone negate, its integrity.

NOTES

1. See the presentations at the panel "Memoria y Espacios Sociales," 1a. Feria del Libro Social y Político, Buenos Aires, 26 September 2007; and the presentations at the conference "Modernidad, Religión y Memoria," Buenos Aires, 10–11 October 2007.
2. Gaskell and Wright, "Group Differences in Memory for a Political Event."
3. Pennebaker and Banasik, "On the Creation and Maintenance of Collective Memories," 17; Igartúa and Páez, "Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events."
4. Igartúa and Páez, "Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events."
5. Nora, "Generations," 526.
6. Benhabib, "Models of the Public Space," 93; Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," 391.
7. García Canclini, *Consumidores y ciudadanos*.
8. The event, held on 30 April 2008, celebrated the thirty-first anniversary of the first march at the Plaza de Mayo.
9. For some examples of memory marketing from around the world, see Andrea Stone, "Souvenir Invasion Turning Normandy into 'Disney World,'" *USA Today*, 3 June 1994, sec. A; Don Oldenburg, "For the Big Day, Cartloads of After-Dinner Mementos," *Washington Post*, 15 January 2005; Daniel J. Wakin, "Mementos from Post-war Prison Depict Turning Point for Japan," *New York Times*, 28 July 2004, sec. B; and Schrift and Pilkey, "Revolution Remembered."
10. Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory," 208–9.
11. Even when the "for-profit" marketing of memory products was not significant in 2007, the consumption of the past, including state terrorism, remains at risk of commodification.
12. See Juaretche, *Violencia y política en los 70*, 23–24.
13. Ibid.; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*.
14. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 9.
15. Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 9.
16. Igartúa and Páez, "Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events"; Nora, "Between Memory and History"; Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory."
17. Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire*.
18. Bonafini, *Historias de vida*.
19. See Kaiser, "The Struggle for Urban Territories."
20. For the Asociación's communication strategies, see Kaiser, "The 'Madwomen' Memory Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo."
21. See Mensuario de Abuelas #78, March 2009, at www.abuelas.org.ar/comunicados.php?comunicados=mensuario.
22. Author's conversation with Rosa T. de Roisinblit, vice-president of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, 31 October 2007.

23. For example, the Italian government funded many of the publications that celebrated the group's thirtieth anniversary.
24. See www.abuelas.org.ar.
25. See Singhal and Rogers, *Entertainment Education*.
26. In Spanish, "X"—the multiplication sign—is expressed as "por" (= "for"); hence its use replacing the word "por."
27. In addition to Teatro X la Identidad, this chapter explores two other "For Identity" events—Televisión X la Identidad (Television For Identity) and Moda X la Identidad (Fashion For Identity). Other "For Identity" events have included Deporte X la Identidad (Sports For Identity); Rock X la Identidad (Rock For Identity); and Arte y Cultura X la Identidad (Art and Culture for Identity), through which the Abuelas have joined photographers, filmmakers, choreographers, and musicians to organize tango, dance, film, and photography contests.
28. Conversation with Rosa T. Roisinblit, 31 October 2007.
29. Teatro X la Identidad, www.teatroxlaidentidad.net/editables/TxItos.asp.
30. The Abuelas have also recently received one of the buildings at the ESMA compound to house a Casa de la Identidad. The creativity that the organization has shown over the years suggests that this project will set new parameters in the search for identity. This new center will probably incorporate the Abuelas' projects. It may also serve as an arena for the distribution of memory products.
31. For escraches, see Kaiser, "*Escraches*."
32. Escrache to Oscar Hermelo, Buenos Aires, 28 November 2007.
33. The organizations involved are Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo; Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos; Buena Memoria Asociación Civil; Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas; Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina; Hermanas de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia; H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio); Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre; Madres de Plaza de Mayo—Línea Fundadora; Movimiento Ecueménico por los Derechos Humanos; and Servicio Paz y Justicia.
34. Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, www.institutomemoria.org.ar/.
35. This text has an English translation that is intended for distribution to foreign audiences.
36. Memoria Abierta, www.memoriaabierta.org.ar/.
37. Memoria Abierta's website lists funding sources.
38. "De memoria" means "by heart." The title implies a thorough compilation of accurate data.
39. "Qué manto de memoria colectiva se podría tejer con esos pedacitos" (Juan Gelman, "Del silencio," *Página/12*, 13 August 1998, Contratapa).
40. Conversation with author, 30 September 2007.
41. Conversations with photographers in La Boca, 14 November 2007, and in San Telmo, 4 May 2008.
42. See the 22 March 2007 press release at www.abuelas.org.ar/comunicados/varios.htm.
43. Interview with Milo Lockett, 1 July 2008.

44. Interview with Teo Gincoff, 5 July 2008.
45. The distribution of the line was limited to a few cities (*ibid.*).
46. "Moda X la Identidad," Comunicado de Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo del 22 de marzo, www.abuelas.org.ar/comunicados/varios.htm.
47. *Ibid.*
48. E.g., the reason for choosing the color orange (in the brochures) was not discussed, nor was the inspiration for the raincoats themselves (see "Moda X la Identidad," Comunicado de Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo del 22 de marzo, www.abuelas.org.ar/comunicados/varios.htm and "90+10: Diseño, creatividad y comunicación," 6 April 2007, <http://www.gomasio.com.ar/moda/2007/04/tatu-diffusin-otooinvierno-07.html>).
49. For the Argentine post-dictatorship generation's interpretation of media texts, see chapters 8 and 9 in Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror*. Kansteiner also highlights that theories of media and cultural studies can help us understand the reception of memory artifacts (Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory").
50. Ang, *Living Room Wars*; Moores, *Interpreting Audiences*.
51. I am referring to Stuart Hall's classical model of encoding/decoding (Hall, "Encoding/Decoding").
52. Sturken illustrates this potential for communicability using the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., as an example (see Sturken, *Tangled Memories*).
53. Conversation with photographer in San Telmo, 4 May 2008; and ethnographic observation at the Madres' stand during Thursday marches, October–November 2007.
54. Conversation with photographer Turko Ali, 30 September 2007.
55. Interview with Teo Gincoff, 5 July 2008.
56. One area of further research is funding, as fiscal matters cannot be delinked from discussions of the political economy of memory in Argentina. The administration of sites that produce educational material, and allow for the giving away of memory products, is highly funding dependent. And while official funding in 2007 was central to human rights movements and institutions, private funding may become more important for the functioning of these entities in the future. It will be up to human rights organizations and institutions to evaluate the strings attached to accepting funds, just as they must evaluate the repercussions of producing, selling, and/or giving away memory goods.