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FROM PENAL INSTITUTION TO SHOPPING MECCA

THE ECONOMICS OF MEMORY AND THE CASE OF PUNTA CARRETAS

Victoria Ruetalo

As the 1980s drew an end to the repressive rule of the dictatorship in Uruguay (1973–1985), the doors to one of the state’s powerful ideological apparatuses, Punta Carretas Penitentiary, closed. The paranoid, bureaucratic structure, as theorized by Michel Foucault and others, suddenly became a fast-paced, neon-signed, food-chained Baudrillardian postmodern mall, an emblem for the newly democratic nation caught in globalization’s zeal. Today the new mall not only replaces the old prison space but recreates the original facade of the facility. Although at first glance they may bear no correlation to each other, the shopping mall and the prison do indeed share a common bond, one that may help to discern greater social trends. In the 1970s, as Mike Davis explains, Jeremy Bentham’s prison model inspired developer Alexander Haager in the design of more than forty shopping centers in low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Haager borrowed both blueprint and logic from the panopticon, theorized by his eighteenth-century colleague at the birth of capitalism, to maintain a sense of order and discipline within a different late capitalist context. With the installation of closed-circuit video, the electronic eye of the camera replaced the gaze of the guard surveillance in what Davis labels the “Panoptican Mall” (240–44). The main architect of the Punta Carretas project, Juan Carlos López, shares the same enthusiasm as he effortlessly makes this connection in an interview: “When I first entered the space of the ex-prison, I was impressed because it had three levels with rails facing a central corridor and I said to myself this is a mall, a *mall of prisoners*, and there sprouted the seed of a special idea that I couldn’t put out of my mind.” Estela Porada, another architect on the project, concurs: “At first we wanted to preserve more sections . . . but necessity led us to demolish certain parts, and, in function of

the shopping mall, what we did was *keep its spirit*" (quoted in Achugar; emphasis added).¹ Are the architects suggesting that this mall of prisoners keeps the spirit of the penitentiary? These quotes from those directly involved in the renovation of the space not only underscore Davis's observation about the interconnection between prisons and malls, particularly in their normalization function, they also raise underlying questions about the type of memory inscribed in the reincarnation of the prison as a shopping mall. What is forgotten or disavowed in the present recycling of the Punta Carretas building as a shopping center? What does this shift from prison to mall imply about the historical process, and how it is remembered in Uruguay? What are the economic and ideological implications of this architectural conversion?

In this article I would like to consider the repercussions such recycling has had for Uruguay as it grapples with the past, exploring some of the reasons behind such practices of memory (de)construction, explained by both economic and ideological impulses, an ideology that is not necessarily limited to the modern political categories of left and right.² The dictatorship imposed a conscious political crusade to forget, marked by what Argentine critic Josefina Ludmer calls a *modernizing leap*, a blind jump into the future that negates the national past (7). Such a drive is clearly echoed in the most recent look and feel of Montevideo, Uruguay's capital city, which for twelve years experienced the destructive pen of the authorities. The problem of architectural deterioration in this period was publicly exposed in the audiovisual show *Una ciudad sin memoria* (A City without Memory) produced by the Grupo de Estudios Urbanos (Urban Studies Group) in 1980.³ This representation, as Gustavo Remedi argues, provided an insight into architectural practices introduced by the military government motivated by economic reasons to meet the demands of the neoliberal city. It documented the demolition of historic buildings, the deterioration of patrimonial monuments, the precipitated edification of skyscrapers, the new construction of shopping centers in residential areas, and the sprawl of shantytowns, particularly into outskirts zones lacking basic public services (Remedi 353). While *Una ciudad sin memoria* expressed nostalgia for a falsified safe and familiar past place, exalting the myth of a Montevideo with a long tradition of both political and economic stability, it allowed contrast of its value in a

critical exchange with the present and foresaw the possibility of a better future. Understanding how the aging and disappearance of historically meaningful architecture in conjunction with the fever to construct new and modern buildings is yet another example of Ludmer's modernizing leap; however, it also permits us to interpret Punta Carretas within the context of a denationalizing agenda, consciously implemented during Uruguay's dictatorship years, that bears witness to underlying economic motives that continue to push forward similar policies in the neoliberal postdictatorship era.

The new face of the neoliberal Montevideo is the direct result of a shift in economic policies and practices executed during the dictatorship, ones that suited foreign interests and private capital and steered away from previous endeavors to boost national industries and local culture.⁴ These new priorities were evident in the economic model that emerged in national politics between 1974 and 1978. The Chicago School model of economics would adapt local practices to international markets and gain competitive advantage in the market with nontraditional-sector goods, such as leather and wool, in response to the plummeting in value of the nation's most important export, meat. Furthermore, it opened local markets more to international products and industries. Despite the silent shift in policy after 1978 toward internal problems, such as targeting the control of inflation and balancing debt payments, all these attempts to economically subsidize the nation essentially failed for the majority of Uruguayans. These strategies had a grand impact on a large part of the population, drastically reducing their purchasing power. For example the Real Salary Index in Uruguay shows steady increase in purchasing power from 1968 to 1972; however, from 1972 to 1982 these figures persistently decrease well below the 100 percent of 1968 to 67 percent in 1982 (Weinstein 69).⁵ While this economic issue merits a more complex analysis beyond the scope of this article, it is clear that the birth of the neoliberal city produced a palpable contradiction: the nation decorates itself with the latest consumption facilities and products, while sacrificing local history and culture, while at the same time the public that can *afford* to partake in such Late Capitalist leisure is much reduced.

Critic Hugo Achugar points out that public debate surrounding the Punta Carretas project reflects a microcosm of current debates

emerging in the postdictatorship period. One side sees the question, quite logically, as economic, echoing the drive to privatize national enterprises: the government could not maintain an empty, nonfunctional building on prime real estate. This was clear as well to the government, who had held a contest in 1989, when none of the suggested uses (educational projects, cultural center, or housing for the displaced) were feasible since none were accompanied by substantial financial backing. By 1991 the company Alian S. A., the highest bidder, bought the grounds. The new owners signed a contract with the Ministry of the Interior and the Municipal Government of Montevideo in which they promised to preserve as much of the original structure as possible (Erosa 48). What proved most controversial and thus motivated opposition to the transaction was that the agreement was arranged by Dr. Marchesano, Minister of the Interior, who was also responsible for the administration of the nation's prisons and would later join the group of investors of the new shopping center (Achugar). His connection spurred debate about the corruption behind the deal and the new government's convenient endorsement of globalization and the privatization of national industries and services while ignoring the wish of some to designate the building as a site of public memory for its role in recent history. Along the same contentious lines, Achugar interprets Punta Carretas's metamorphosis from penitentiary to mall by placing it within the present moment of the provisions for Mercosur. According to Achugar, Punta Carretas is part of a larger project to embellish the nation as it prepares to sell itself to its neighbors in order to be incorporated in the regional market.⁶ In negating the violent history of the dictatorship, Punta Carretas becomes a metaphor for the nation, a perverse and violent imposition of oblivion (Achugar). Yet in spite of Achugar's use of the mall as a symbol of the nation's disavowal of its history in order to meet the current demands of the market, he fails to place Punta Carretas within a longer continuum that reveals and interrogates the many *dark secrets* of the past rather than limit them to those of the present. More than a metaphor of *new* Mercosur and globalization tactics, Punta Carretas, I suggest, serves as an explicit link between past and present, one that consistently registers modernizing leaps into the future. Today's mall in essence can be classified as timeless, caught in a time warp that forgets as much as do its critics, stuck in the present and leaping toward the future

Mercosur.⁷ In considering the recycling of Punta Carretas from penitentiary to mall, I argue that this example is anything but unique, but rather fits perfectly within the political and economic agenda, implemented during the dictatorship years, to open the market to foreign products, despite the cost to local spaces and their role in memory construction, a price experienced in different social spheres from the transformation of prisons into malls to the production of television shows.⁸

To understand how today's neoliberal market economics influences the social grappling of the past it is useful to turn to Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory. For Benjamin, the ruin, the allegorical emblem par excellence, represented the melancholic worldview (*Wel-tanschauung*) in German Baroque tragedy. Benjamin reminds us: "In allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful" (166). By insisting that death and mourning are what lie at the origin of allegory, Benjamin's work provides for literary scholar Idelber Avelar a way of thinking about postdictatorship ruins. Avelar suggests that, symptomatically, some of the literature produced in and after the dictatorships in South America work through the fragments and ruins of the present as a way of mourning the trauma of the past (10). Consequently, those expressions trigger untimely eruptions of the past, ones constantly being erased through commodification of society that purposefully negates memory (Avelar 2). Punta Carretas, a ruin in and of itself, too, can be seen as prime material for these authors and other observers. The building encapsulates an allegory of the nation's history, proving Benjamin's idea that "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (178). What better marker of the passage of time than the traces found within the ruins of current buildings? As silent monuments that weave together elements to give the city space its layered concept of time, place, and history, these indicators provide access to memory of social, economic, and political pasts buried within the concrete documents themselves, despite institutional indifference to the erasure of such traces. Identifying Punta Carretas as an allegory implies that it is open to be read by the allegorist (in Benjamin's words) or the observer who is ethically obliged to give it meaning. By working through the remains

or rubble of the building, an act of mourning of sorts, the critic can unmask the present, much in the way that Achugar does. Yet allegory also may provide a critical tool for interpreting the past. In this case, past and present are not so distant. “In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the [current] setting” (Benjamin 179). Despite the difference of political agendas throughout Uruguayan history, the convergence of practices from nineteenth-century independence continued throughout the dictatorship years reveal the state implementation of a culture of exclusion defined by both economic and ideological differentiation, exercised in the penitentiary, and that will undoubtedly carry through in the reincarnation as the shopping mall. And yet, within this historical continuity, the twelve years of totalitarian rule have left a conspicuous wound on both city and penitentiary. The Punta Carretas example discloses the social, political, and economic practices of a tyrannical period. Meanwhile its history recounts how at this crucial juncture in 1991, when the building was sold for renovation, the nation—more specifically, the state—was not ready to face the horrific events of the recent past and opted to leap into the construction of a privately funded consumer’s utopia, one that consciously meant the erasure of that memory. Yet the ruins still remain, providing Punta Carretas with an allegorical value that can help its critic/observer/allegorist to demystify a falsely affirmative vision of the past and, consequently, of its present. By shattering these old relationships between present and past, history is opened up for reevaluation.

FOREIGN COPIES: PENITENTIARY REFORM AND ITS PRACTICE IN LATIN AMERICA

To reevaluate history and to understand Punta Carretas within a state-imposed agenda to perform both a modern function and an exclusionary role, in this section I compare and contrast, with the help of the foundational work by critics Roberto D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, the genealogy of the penitentiary in general with its adoption in Latin America. From this juxtaposition, I will make two main points. First, by placing the birth of the penitentiary parallel with that of capitalism itself, I argue that the penitentiary performs a role more complex

than its principle claim to reform criminals and prepare their reintegration into society. History will show that the penitentiary has been restrictive on many levels: economic, ideological, as well as social. By interrogating this past, the more recent economics and class exclusion explicit in the mall reveal a continuous link to its previous incarnation as a penitentiary. Second, the modernizing leap pushed by the state with the original construction of the prison and later with the endorsement of the shopping mall may at first appear to coincide with the national need to copy foreign models in search of the modern. While this argument has validity, I choose to follow cultural critic Roberto Schwarz's lead by showing that the problem with these stated projects is not that general ideas and structures were copied from abroad but rather that this copying materialized even more in the adoption of class structures and the mechanisms meant to maintain them.

In Europe and North America, the development of penitentiaries in the late eighteenth century coincided with the project of modernity. As society sheered toward capitalily driven, modern market economies, shifts in attitudes, sensibilities, and perceptions accompanied those economic patterns to call for more humane treatment of inmates and rationalization of reforms. Salvatore and Aguirre explain these changes as necessary for the construction of "modern economies, stable republican governments, and harmonical social relations" (1). While reform on the one hand may have been synchronous with the development of capitalism, on the other hand it represented society's quest for modernization. Through the work of Michel Foucault, Salvatore and Aguirre show that it is no coincidence that the genealogy of the penitentiary parallels a broader order of social differentiation and control within society, which includes the bourgeoisie's desire to instill capitalist work habits and ethics on the working classes.⁹ Accordingly, the birth of the modern penitentiary was linked to other social mechanisms that ensured the systematic operation and overall success of capitalism.

Penitentiary reform in Latin America can be described as historically untimely (Salvatore and Aguirre 18). The postindependence period in the region initially would serve as the perfect context for discussions about reform, much as it did previously in the northeastern United States. Nonetheless, as is already well documented, this period of Latin American history marks one of the most problematic political and social moments in the region. Independence from Spain had not

essentially revolutionized the social order of the newly founded nation-states. In general, as creoles (Spanish descendants born in the New World) politically replaced Peninsulares (Spaniards resident in the New World), the caste system remained in place. Even after slavery was abolished, it is difficult to speak of democratic and egalitarian societies until much later.¹⁰ “The restoration of a system of law after the upheavals of independence demanded the consolidation of old laws of punishment, not so much its criticism” (Salvatore and Aguirre 19). As many intellectuals and statesmen argued, society’s defeats came through its barbaric elements, especially from the least civilized, more racial lower classes.¹¹ These racially mixed lower classes, believed by many to be truly “unreformable,” were seen as contained only through traditional and private forms of justice.¹² During the volatile period of postindependence, the adoption of modern practices developed abroad would only occur to reaffirm the power of the new elites, the creoles, who may have borrowed some of the rhetoric of modernity to maintain old social structures passed on from the colonial experience in Latin America.

By the 1880s, the newly accepted positivist social science of criminology had more impact on institutional practices throughout Latin America than other imports from Europe. Positivist theories and methods for police training—criminal statistics, fingerprinting, and prison architecture—were implemented in those nations that wished to replicate the modern institutions and practices found in London, Paris, and New York. In the Río de la Plata region, as the agricultural economy grew, police manpower was added, crime detection methods were employed, and new technologies to improve policing duties were sought (Johnson xii). These profound changes in society, much like in Europe, served not to enhance democracy but to maintain control by land-owning elite over possible threats to the republican order: peasant uprisings, worker riots, and rebellions by African and indigenous peoples. This approach to the criminal problem instead taxonomically medicalized it by creating a criminal class of “usually dropouts from the labor market or the victims of orphanages” (Salvatore and Aguirre 22). By this stage there existed the belief that reform was possible. To reinforce Schwartz’s argument, the copying of European progress in this instance would reaffirm class structures to ensure stable governments and social harmony. The late application of penitentiary reform

imposed by those in power meant that it would be influenced more by the science of criminology than by the zeal of reformers; however, Foucault's poignant argument about the intersection of modern reform practices with the development of capitalism, or the economic reasons supporting penitentiary reform (Foucault 78), are equally relevant in the case of Latin America and, more specifically, in Uruguay.¹³

As in other parts of Latin America, mainly due to the turbulent political situation spanning the nineteenth-century postindependence period, debate in Uruguay about the need to improve the conditions of incarceration buildings appeared as early as 1862 when President Bernardo Berro spoke against the poor conditions of these institutions (Johnston 136).¹⁴ With the succession of both Colorado (Liberal) and Blanco (Conservative) parties, the struggle to modernize came from the elite classes and their bureaucratic representatives, who borrowed foreign arguments that reform must be civilized to discourage barbarous behavior latent in the workers and peasants. This change in sensibilities (from the belief that the lower classes were "unreformable" to considering them "reformable"), coinciding with early twentieth-century modernization practices and criminology, was directed toward and linked to the practice of capital punishment, which was finally abolished in 1907 in both penal and military codes (Barrán 96).¹⁵ By 1879, the jails were already under the jurisdiction of tribunals and judges, and completely independent from the police force (Barrán 96). Penitentiary reform began in November 1882 with a penal code commission investigation report for President Máximo Santos that called for the implementation of a combination of the Auburn (nightly seclusion and collective work in silence) and Philadelphia (solitary confinement) systems of incarceration, a recommendation that was legalized and accepted by the penal code in 1889 and materialized in the first penitentiary erected in Montevideo (Barrán 96–97). By 1912 the Batllista president Hector Miranda abolished solitary confinement (Barrán 97). Even though much later reform came quickly and with little resistance, it is clear there was a general drive for reform and the desire to establish a functional system that would maintain social order and protect the interest and property of those in power.

The ideological contradictions between the law and its practice confirm the rather clumsily imposed form of order indicative of older traces of dealing with crime. Old ways were not easily forgotten. "The

punishment of whipping and striking [and] all the other corporal punishment . . . involving torture” were abolished on April 11, 1870 (Barrán 98).¹⁶ Yet in 1871, 1890, 1891, and 1902, the press exposed the violation of these laws (Barrán 98). Despite similar infringements found all over the world following the implementation of reform, in Uruguay in the 1970s, one hundred years after passing this law, these breaches had become common practice rather than exceptions as torture became the military’s tactic of choice to extract truths from its prisoners of conscience and the press was no longer able to unveil state injustices. Ironically, many of the prison conditions and practices during the infancy stage of penal reform would come to reign again during the dictatorship years, when these modern sensibilities of justice were quickly lost and overlooked to once again protect local elites’ interest, property, and power. Notwithstanding, by this time foreign investment and ties with the United States would also influence national politics.¹⁷ The political situation demanded critically harsh actions by the armed forces, which would produce the denial of rights to its citizens, regardless of class differences.

It could be argued that prisons played the most important role during the dictatorship in Uruguay. Human-rights documentation of endless cases of torture, imprisonment without trial, and inhumane treatment in solitary confinement demonstrates how Uruguay’s security forces quickly attracted international attention for their abuses and crimes. The United Nations Human Rights Commission, in an uproar, claimed that jails were “concentration camps where prisoners lived in subhuman conditions.” The small dictatorial nation, with a population of almost three million, succeeded in keeping chaos locked behind bars, and consequently five thousand people were incarcerated under the Prompt Security Measures Act (Kaufman 29). In 1976, Uruguay had the highest per capita rate of political prisoners in the world. Three years later Amnesty International estimated that one in every fifty citizens had been, at some point during the grueling time, the subject of interrogation. In sum, more than sixty thousand people are believed to have been arrested and detained during the twelve-year rule (Kaufman 29). Within this context, the space of the prisons continues to represent the site of a repressed politicization controlled under the vigilant eye of the state, which no longer tolerated acts of resistance. The institution of the penitentiary shifted to accommodate

a new type of criminal, one that threatened the whole social, political, and most importantly economic fabric of the nation. Testimonies, written after the fall of the regime when political prisoners were granted amnesty in 1985, chronicle the experiences of these ideological offenders.¹⁸ In democracy, conditions in jails did not improve; the same concerns resurface in the pages of a 1993 report titled *Voces del silencio* (Voices of Silence), compiled by Grupo de Trabajo sobre el Sistema Carcelario Nacional, a working group on the national jail system. Preventable death and inhumane treatment haunt the overcrowded cells housing 80 percent, an absurdly high number, of prisoners still pending sentence (37). These haunting figures divulge the state's incompetence in any attempt to recover from the situation it created during the despotic period. Hence, to better grasp the problems facing jails, I discuss in what follows the particular case of Punta Carretas Penitentiary as it waxes as an emblem of national modern pride but eventually wanes into a shopping mall. If the birth of the penitentiary signals the class inequality of the period, as elites are integrating into the new capitalist system, then it makes sense that Punta Carretas would become a hotbed for class struggle. Seen through this lens, Punta Carretas's trajectory from prison to mall can be seen as an allegory of the class and social struggles found on a larger scale throughout the nation's history. The ruins of the building provide the allegorist with fragmented hints and clues of such conflict.

PUNTA CARRETAS, THE MODEL PRISON

Set as an example of turn-of-the-century aesthetics and practice, Punta Carretas Penitentiary, inaugurated in the outskirts of thriving 1910 Montevideo by President Dr. Claudio Williman, served as a model for all of Latin America.¹⁹ The vanguard institution was praised for its architectural wonder, which incorporated many aspects from its French archetype, Fresnes-lès-Rungis, a modern prison system based on the telephone-pole layout.²⁰ Built on fiscal lands in the outskirts of early twentieth-century Montevideo, the project was first envisioned as a female penitentiary and a correctional facility for minors (Gómez Folle 22). With its larger capacity, additional secure structural capabilities, and hefty budget (200,000 pesos), however, the new "modern"

model prison made sense as a replacement for the already old and smaller Preventative and Correctional Jail on Miguelete Street (built in 1889) for the housing of more dangerous, male criminals.²¹ Protected by tall and solid walls with foundations six meters deep, the penitentiary boasted of having the latest facilities. It had spacious cells of four by three and a half meters that housed one inmate at a time. Electrically run workshop facilities provided prisoners with the opportunity to work and earn money, the fastest road to becoming productive citizens in society. The facility had a barbershop, a pharmacy, a bakery, a pasta factory, a press, a shoe repair shop, carpentry facilities, and a kitchen. It was the perfect penal colony guarded by the latest security measures. Outdoors, the thick walls isolated prisoners from the community. Inside, the central observation tower, shielded by bars and alarms, provided the guards with a highly protective and lofty space from where to survey the cells below. The doors to each cell had ultrasecure locks with openings to allow the inmates to listen to communal mass or other conferences given in the corridors. Inmates were instructed on ways to reform and the ethics of a good citizen, sermons serving a similar function to the chapel in Fresnes-lès-Rungis.²² Doors to individual cells each had a centralized vigilance system through infrared glass, which allowed for one-way surveillance of the prisoners (Barrios Pintos and Reyes Abadie 42). In sum, the institution replicated a surveillance paradigm through a method of controlling the behavior and bodies of the inmates as it kept order and vigilance with the looming threat of sight.

Ironically, under the economic crisis of the 1950s, the promise of Uruguayan modernity became a cruel caricature of itself.²³ The once austere, controlled, and organized space of the penitentiary was already deemed “filthy, aged, male, metallic [and] sterile” (Fernández Huidobro 1:64).²⁴ The penal institution began to crumble in cynical harmony with the general state of the nation. As Latin America’s first welfare state with its own brand of nationalism degenerated, a political challenge from the left questioned the dysfunctional system and demanded change that would threaten the status quo and its class structure. The early twentieth-century mechanism aimed at reforming and educating became a breeding ground for revolution. The cells designed to house one inmate were housing three or more as the demographic explosion of “special” or political prisoners filled the wards,

military barracks, police stations, and provisional jails sixty years later. Imprisoned primarily for ideological reasons, prisoners from different parties and factions of the left were detained without trial.²⁵ Those members belonging to the urban guerrilla group MLN (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación) called the Tupamaros were considered the highest danger.²⁶ The upper echelon of the movement was kept in solitary confinement and calaboses, at times incommunicado from their families.²⁷ The less dangerous culprits worked their way through the different “real” and provisional jails set up by the state to wage a war against the left. Despite the state’s drive for building this modern prison system at the height of its national project, its evolution from exemplary prison to dysfunctional facility attests to the failed policies of the state, what would come to haunt the state during its most powerful historical moment. Unable to win the war, the resistance nonetheless triumphed on the Punta Carretas battle, mocking the early twentieth-century construction of a pristine and infallible institution. It is no coincidence that the two most famous mutiny attempts in the history of the prison were performed by anarchists in the 1930s and by the MLN in the 1970s. In both cases, prisoners threatened to abolish, among other things, class difference by attacking the economic structure established by the elite at the turn of the century.

The demise of the Punta Carretas Penitentiary finally came about when this highly secure institution, considered a fortress by many, was proven otherwise. In 1971, 106 members of the MLN fled from the cells of the facility along with five common prisoners, in what they called Operation “the Abuse” (el abuso). This very local group made it to the international pages of the *Guinness Book of World Records* for organizing the largest jailbreak ever. According to Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro’s testimony *La fuga de Punta Carretas* (Escape from Punta Carretas), carved holes, hidden until the day of the breakout, connected the cells. The second and third floors, therefore, were linked to the escape route located on the first floor. A tunnel was dug from a cell on the lower floor, which crossed the gate of the jail, the street Solano García, and led to a house across the street from the penitentiary. Fernández Huidobro’s text reconstructs the effort:

We would put away in small bags, carefully tucked underneath the beds, many tons of dirt from the tunnel. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of compañeros, would kneel and work on the job in unison, *with the discipline*

and order that only the struggle for freedom can bring. It would be the most complex action taken up until then by the MLN and we attempted after three escapes and a few weeks before the national elections. This massive operative we had to execute under the restraints of time.²⁸ (2:36; emphasis added)

The job, completed in twenty-two days, would have been impossible were it not for the cooperation of the many “*compañeros*,” as the testimony explains. The same discipline and order used to justify the existence of the penitentiary ironically stimulated completion of the daunting task. Yet, the success of the dangerous operation only highlighted the miserable state of the prison and its futile vigilance. In other words, by 1971 the overcrowded and understaffed institution was only a shadow of its former self, as 111 people attained freedom in the course of twenty-two days without raising suspicions from authorities.

“The Abuse” was not the first to challenge the regime of the penitentiary. In their quest for freedom, the MLN escapees came across a tunnel built in 1931 by a group of anarchists responsible for assaulting and robbing the Messina Currency Exchange (*Cambio Messina*) three years earlier.²⁹ With the assistance of fellow ideologues, who had set up a coal yard named “The Friendly Business” (*El buen trato*) across the street and excavated a tunnel from the storefront to a public bathroom in the penal facility, these dogged convicts once again attained freedom. This newfound liberty was short-lived, however; the escaped anarchists were soon caught, served their sentences, and were sent to Buenos Aires, where they had other sentences pending.³⁰ The three convicts who were transferred to Buenos Aires for further prosecution disappeared, never to be found.³¹ Rumors at the time suggest that their bodies were disposed of in the Río de la Plata, where many others would end up forty years later, reinforcing the already established bond between both periods and movements.³² Despite the eventual recapture or death of these escaped MLN members, the state instrument and model penitentiary architecture was proven ineffectual, allowing resistance to brew under the established power network and state apparatus. Notwithstanding, unlike the MLN, the anarchists, in their first attempt to challenge the system, performed a typical jail-break with outside help. By 1971, the MLN’s feat revealed the degenerate condition of the facility, since the operative originated from inside its decaying and overcrowded cells.

A final defiance to the state and its unerring institution came in 1972, one year after Operation “the Abuse,” when thirteen other incarcerated Tupamaros faked an illness in order to be taken to the prison hospital, where an opening led into the sewer system. The MLN members constructed carts that were designed to travel the narrow passages, enabling them to traverse eight hundred meters underground.³³ Unlike the other escape attempts, there exists growing suspicion that guards in the penitentiary turned a blind eye to the mutiny.

These persistent and direct assaults on the authority of the state substantiate the fallaciousness of a structure once celebrated for its architectural wonder and its role in providing a sense of security for the status quo. The penitentiary, however, became vulnerable to the same resistance that was developing on the streets of the capital, as the two breakouts confirm—just as it had in 1931 with the anarchists. All three examples of resistance, at first, seem to question the notion that the knowledge of one being observed exerts a certain level of discipline on the bodies and minds of those surveyed. Yet, the eventual recapture of all the escapees verifies that the walls of the penitentiary spill out onto the rest of society, where surveillance continues the work of the state penal institution. Both in society and within the confines of the prison, the authoritative state was to emerge victorious. When the coup d’état dissolved parliament in 1973, the military had already succeeded in its quest to obliterate the Left. With the advent of democracy in 1985 came impunity, acceptance, and forgiveness of military power, and erasure of the state crimes (assassinations, tortures, detentions, disappearances, and so on) that took place during those dark years.³⁴

In an awkward twist of fate, Punta Carretas emulated its original model Fresnes-lès-Rungis as it fell under authoritarian rule during World War II.³⁵ Unlike Fresnes, today considered France’s predominant penitentiary, Punta Carretas’s cells mutated into individual shops displaying the latest merchandise for consumption. The fiery embrace of modernity reinforced during the pomp and ceremony of its inauguration in 1910 burned out as the facility endured the great flight of 1971, which limited its role during the regime and eventually led to its demise. Henceforth, even though the historical document of the Punta Carretas building may indirectly refer to the authority of the dictatorial regime and the postdictatorship leap into globalization, it

further allegorizes, on a national level, the state's inability to maintain complete power as resistance brews within the very same cells meant to perform a disciplinary function, a resistance that by no accident attacked the economic structure of the nation. These successful attempts to resist relegate Punta Carretas to a transitional space, in which prisoners were housed temporarily until they reached the "real," more severe cells of the inappropriately titled Libertad (Liberty) Penitentiary. It is no surprise that this story remains buried in the rubble of the past, one that the newly elected democratic government would rather forget.³⁶ Moreover, as I have suggested throughout this article, the economic and ideological exclusion witnessed throughout the history of the penitentiary provides in the shopping mall a resumption of that exclusion, as the lower economic sectors, the majority of the population, are barred from rather than locked in Punta Carreta's elite consumption circles.

PUNTA CARRETAS PLUNGES INTO AN EXCLUSIVE SHOPPING CULTURE

As the mid-1980s drew an end to the political rule of the military, so did the prison come to its own conclusion. In 1986 an uprising took place after the guards interrupted yet another struggle for freedom (Barrios Pintos and Reyes Abadi 44). The shootout between guards and prisoners lasted five hours, leaving two convicts dead and many wounded. The event finally motivated the newly elected democratic Colorado government to shut the doors to the once forward-looking institution. Faced with only one option, to allow its reconstruction as a mall, the government shut the doors on the past and avoided facing the obvious class and social problems that erupted behind Punta Carreta's penal walls. The prison was replaced by Punta Carretas Shopping, a leisure paradise, which opened to the public in 1994. This 42 million dollar investment included a glass copula for a roof that allowed for natural light to invade the space's 160 shops (Erosa 48–49). The mall was equipped with two movie theaters, a play center for children with all the latest video technology, and an all-glass food court that opens up to a view of the sea just blocks away. Outside, the state-of-the-art parking garage and Sheraton hotel make it an attractive location,

luring suburbanites and foreigners alike out to seek the latest commodity and enjoy an afternoon stroll.

Despite the historical importance of the building, the only plaque to commemorate this past is the facade, which was kept intact and is guarded by new eyes. Shoppers must physically cross the threshold of the past, since the facade stands separate from the main shopping complex, to enter the present/future found in the consumers' mecca. Nothing institutionally recognizes the space as a historic landmark: this is not surprising since the state-led agenda of oblivion culminated in 1986 with the pardoning of the perpetrators of human-rights abuses. This oblivion is clearly reflected in the materiality of the building. The passage of the Punitive Law of Caducity, which was ratified in 1989 by a referendum (54 percent of the population voted to forgive, while 46 percent demanded punishment), pardoned and forgot the crimes committed during the dictatorship. And yet, despite all this evidence of a desire to neatly hide away this past, physical and virtual traces remain in the aura of Punta Carretas, making a complete and ultimate erasure quite difficult. For instance, Mauricio Rosencoff, one of the leaders of the MLN, whose testimony *Memoria del calabozo* (Memory from the Calaboose, 1987) recounts his experiences as a highly dangerous political prisoner, resides two blocks from the mall and continues to be a highly public figure. Rosencoff is a living ruin of this past and his testimony played a crucial role in constructing a public memory of the atrocities committed during the dictatorship. Along with the other testimonies (Fernández Huidobro's and González Bermejo's) that have helped to fill in gaps about the role of the penitentiary during those dark years, there exist many reminders on the Web, which exalt some of these myths (stories of the flight and other stories about what happened in the jail) while replicating themselves virtually. Writers have also found in these stories material for further tales. Eduardo Galeano in *Las palabras andantes* (Walking Words) writes the following:

He was imprisoned for more than twenty years when he discovered her. He waved to her, from the window of his cell, and she responded from the window of her house. Later he spoke to her with colored rags and large letters. The letters made up words, which she read with binoculars. She answered back with even larger letters because he did not have binoculars. And that's how their love grew. Now Nela and Negro Viña

sit back to back. If one leaves the other falls. They sell wine across the street from the ruins of the Punta Carretas jail in Montevideo.³⁷ (239)

In this book fascinated with the art of storytelling and the important function of words, Galeano mixes two well-known stories in his “Window on the Word (VII)” to remember the now-ruined Punta Carretas. Viña was a common prisoner who joined the MLN after many of its members were imprisoned in the jail. The other story, a love tale about a prisoner’s flirtations with a woman who lives across the street from the penitentiary, is yet another tale that one finds in the testimonies and on the Web. The ruins on which its newly built walls are erected, and those surrounding its aura, allude to the muffled cries of the past. Through these ruins the past comes alive, contradicting official history while constructing a fragile public memory. Such memory as Galeano’s text exemplifies does not necessarily construct events as they were, since he mixes two different stories into one; however, it helps repeat the many myths of the past as it is written down. For this reason, it has been necessary to bring together all of these gaps to allow the observer to make more connections between past and present and to foresee possible connections with the future in the Punta Carretas Shopping.

While Mike Davis’s “Panopticon Mall” may hold true in the case of Punta Carretas’s design, the luxurious shops in the complex do not “recapture the poor as consumer” (240), as Davis argues in his conceptualization of Los Angeles as a fortress. In fact, I would argue quite the contrary, the same emphasis on modernity, society’s continued plunge toward progress and economic exclusion found in the penitentiary, reappears in the reincarnation of the shopping mall, albeit in a different way. Critics agree that the democratic government of Uruguay inherited a severe economic crisis from the dictatorship. By implementing foreign economic policies, the regime left its brand of a neoliberalism meant to propel the nation to adapt to international market demands. These measures severely impacted major sectors of society and their subsequent possibility of participating in their own economic future. In other words, in order for neoliberalism to function more or less appropriately, the population must at least possess a degree of buying power, which is what was and continues to be missing for most Uruguayans. Able to freely roam the corridors of the new

mall as voyeurs, the majority of Montevideans, ironically, cannot afford the latest and hottest commodities readily available for their consumption. Statistics show that the economic decline in the period confirms this. The salary of the average worker was reduced by 40 to 50 percent from 1968 levels, in real terms (Arana and Giordano 151). The gross national product belonging to wages dropped from 36 percent in 1973 to 28 percent in 1983, yet the percentage of wages earned by the richest 5 percent rose from 17 percent to 23 percent (Arana and Giordano 152). Further witness to this economic decline are the ever-growing “number of carts pulled by indigent people, which daily crisscrossed the city, covering tens of kilometers to scavenge the garbage heaps of the rich—salvaged materials, food scraps, different types of metal, wood, cardboard, which they sold, fed to their domesticated farm animals, or in extreme cases, consumed themselves” (Arana and Giordano 152). Here, men and women stroll along the aisles of a deserted urbanity where shopping can be done without cash or plastic, and the shelves are stacked with recyclable debris, products free for the taking. A parody of consumer culture gone awry, this type of shopping has become more routine in the postdictatorship era for many more than a stroll through the expensive shops of Punta Carretas. In this context architect Juan Carlos López’s words quoted earlier, “a mall of prisoners,” implies something else. Who is imprisoned in this new mall? Is it those protected by the hallways of Levi’s and Lacoste or those restrained from these same leisure activities due to economic reasons? It is only by seeing Punta Carretas as an allegory that some of these links can be established, in a process of memory work allowing the possibility of mourning past traumas on a greater social level.

A tribute to one of the most repressive apparatuses in Uruguay’s recent history, Punta Carretas Shopping, as a ruin, reminds the observer of what lay there before—on the one hand honoring it—while the consumer-based system that replaced it simultaneously helps erase those memory-bearing walls. One must ask whether the citizens’ and tourists’ intrusion into this historical time capsule in order to search out and purchase the latest commodity bear the memory of the prisoners that were contained there or their resistance? Do they remember how this modern and forward-looking institution, meant to educate and reform, became an oppressive and integral part of Uruguay’s most shameful history? Do they remember that the impulse of this

dirty history had and continues to have an economical, not just an ideological, face? Or has the tragic context of the recent past and the present already become victim to its own oblivion, yet another modernizing leap into globalization's vacuum?

Notes

1. "Mi primer impacto fue cuando entré a esto que era una cárcel," comenzó recordando Juan Carlos López; "Me impresionó porque eran tres niveles con bandejas hacia una plaza central, y me dije: esto es un mall, un mall de presidiarios, y allí había una idea especial que me quedó muy grabada." "Al principio queríamos conservar muchas más cosas," acotó Estela Porada, "pero las necesidades nos fueron llevando a demoler ciertas partes, y en bien funcional del shopping lo que hicimos fue mantener el espíritu." This is my translation. All translations that follow, unless otherwise noted, are also mine.

2. This was especially true in the postdictatorships in the Southern Cone. The 1990s defied ideological categorization while presidents of the left and right opted for the neoliberal way. For instance, heads of state such as Brazilian Henrique Cardoso, a Marxist sociology professor who had inspired a whole generation of social scientists with dependency theory, and Peronist leader Carlos Menem in Argentina were both executing neoliberal policies at all levels, including the privatization of state industries.

3. The group was led by architect Mariano Arana, who would later become mayor of Montevideo (1994–2005) and would help to restore many historical parts of the port city. During the dictatorship, Arana chose to work outside the government-controlled Faculty of Architecture to maintain autonomy and find ways of critiquing the architectural policies of the authorities, meanwhile avoiding political repercussions. After the exhibition of the audiovisual show, a book was published in 1983, with photographs and texts documenting the city in ruins.

4. The dictatorship opened a path to neoliberalism and its mantra of privatization, liberalization, and deregulation with the embrace of the Chicago model of economics. This model sought to destroy the import substitution industrialization (ISI) model that grew in the 1930s to emphasize the creation of domestic industry and provide products for national consumption that were previously imported. Nationalists made industrialization in this period a point of pride.

5. The Real Salary Index is indicative of the level of real income and the purchasing power of the people of a nation. It is calculated by taking the Salary Index (SI) and dividing it by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This is always relative to the base year (100 percent), which in this case is 1968.

6. Although precursors to Mercosur precede the dictatorship and postdictatorship eras (in 1960 the Asociación Latinoamericana de Libre Comercio [ALALC] was formed, and was replaced in 1980 by the Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración [ALAI]), the current version of the agreement directly grew out of the

Treaty of Asunción, signed in 1991 and ratified in 1994, the same year that Punta Carretas Shopping opened its doors.

7. Beatriz Sarlo in *Scenes from Postmodern Life* discusses the amnesia implicit in all malls.

8. I make the same argument elsewhere, with a slightly different angle, by suggesting that recent state initiatives at the level of the municipal government to motivate local television production coincides with the interest of the three private channels to produce little and at low cost. As a result, local shows like *Subterráneos* were canceled, disappointing audiences who were awaiting identifiably local products.

9. In North America and Europe, modern police departments emerge alongside the growth of a proprietor class demanding increased protection of individual goods and property and a more orderly society (Johnson xi).

10. Slavery was abolished in the mid-nineteenth century in Uruguay, yet fifty years would have to pass before political stability and democracy was established, with the presidency of José Batlle y Ordoñez, the patriarch of the nation.

11. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's book *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (1845), a perfect example of this belief, is emblematic of the ideas of class and race shared by intellectuals and creoles alike. Building up the nation's hegemonic body through different types of writing (treatises on medicine, health, and hygiene; manuals of conduct, courtesy, rhetoric, and grammar; catechisms and constitutions) would generate a clean, controlled, and capially productive citizenry for the new and developing nation states (see González Stephan).

12. For instance, duels were outlawed by the penal code in Uruguay, yet this personal form of justice remained a common practice. As Chasteen argues, the use of violence in the borderlands, particularly knife dueling, was not an exception but part of everyday life and served a symbolic as well as an instrumental function (Chasteen 48). In more elite social circles, despite its illegal status, the peasant and barbaric form of knife dueling was superseded by gun duels, commonly used as a form of individual justice to defend one's honor. Few gentlemen would be penalized for deaths resulting from duels, as hunting was used to explain the resulting "accidents." The paradox is found with the example of President José Batlle y Ordoñez, a strong supporter of state intervention and social justice, who turned to this form of private justice regularly when not in office. Most of these duels were politically motivated and drawn between Blanco (Conservative) and Colorado (Liberal) party members. The most famous of Batlle's duels took place in 1920 in which he fatally shot Washington Beltrán, cofounder of *El País* (a Blanco newspaper, today one of the nation's most important) for a slanderous article he had published in the same (Pelúas 188–91).

13. Gómez Folle confirms that many of the administrative changes that took place over the history of penitentiary institutions were inspired by scientific developments, not reform movements.

14. Independence was achieved in 1828 with the aid of British commercial intervention and an agreement signed by Brazil and Argentina to establish an

independent buffer zone between the two large neighbors called the República Oriental del Uruguay. After a constitution was adopted in 1830, there was a seventy-year period of turmoil and civil war fought between antagonists identified by the color of their headbands worn in battle, the *Colorados* (Reds), representing liberal urban interests, and the *Blancos* (Whites), led by rurally based conservative landowners. The election of José Batlle y Ordoñez (1903–1907, 1911–1915), who was responsible for the advanced social legislations and the democratic traditions of modern Uruguay, brought about political stability and social modernization.

15. To further confirm Salvatore and Aguirre's arguments on the untimeliness of change, the implementation of this law occurs almost one century after independence is won.

16. "la pena de azotes o palos [y] todas las demás penas corporales . . . que importen tortura" (Barrán 98).

17. There is growing evidence that the dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s were influenced by the administration in the United States. One of the reasons for the new dictatorships was the perceived need to maintain hemispheric control after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The National Security Archives has declassified documents that establish a direct link between the coup in Chile and the U.S. administration. More recently, documents concerning the role of the United States in the Uruguayan case are being declassified.

18. Upon release, many prisoners wrote testimonies about their experiences in incarceration. The top-selling testimonies were David Campora's *Las manos en el fuego* (1985; written by Ernesto González Bermejo) and Mauricio Rosencof's *Memorias del calabozo* (1987). *People's Prison* (1973), written by Geoffrey Jackson, the English Ambassador to Uruguay, describes another prison term. The book outlines his experiences in a people's prison after being kidnapped in 1971 by the MLN.

19. The Colorado Party leader and President Claudio Williman was the hand-picked successor of José Batlle y Ordoñez. Williman served a presidential term from 1907 to 1911, a period falling between the two served by Batlle y Ordoñez.

20. Fresnes-lès-Rungis, currently the largest prison system in France, near Paris, was designed by Francisque-Henri Poussin and constructed between 1895 and 1898. As a model prison, Fresnes exemplifies the telephone-pole design, a radical concept of prison architecture adopted worldwide. Cell houses extend crosswise from a central corridor that connects all the cells and other facilities. To this day, many consider this prison structure the most modern and secure.

21. Relative to other Latin American nations (Brazil 1836, Chile 1847, Peru 1862, Argentina 1877), Uruguay was late to erect its first penitentiary (1889) implementing the new ideas from Europe and the United States. Yet Punta Carretas (1910) would be the first to adopt the telephone-pole model.

22. Fresnes had a chapel where prisoners frequently were taken to be instructed in the ways of society. Wearing pillowcases in order to isolate and be protected from further corruption by peers, inmates walked to the chapel and sat at individual pews, secluded yet again only able to see the spectacle. The practice of using pillowcases to blindfold inmates is similar to the practice of hooding during

the dictatorship in Uruguay. Prisoners were at times hooded as they were taken to clandestine detention centers for torture, a method that ensured the anonymity of the torturers and confusion and fear for the detainees.

23. The economic crisis of the 1950s can be traced to the overall failure of the political elites to change policies in the face of emerging realities. The exhaustion of the import substitution industrialization model stunted growth as the nation fell, in the 1960s, to have the second lowest growth rate in the hemisphere (after Haiti). Uruguay quickly went from a civil, participatory, distributive, and stable political and economic system to a declining mess (see Weinstein, chapter 4). While conditions in the prisons were not as neglectful as they are today, in 1947 the General Director of Penal Institutions, Juan Carlos Gómez Folle, is already complaining about the inadequate conditions of the nation's prisons.

24. "Sucia, vieja, macha, metálica, [y] árida."

25. The most sought-after criminals were from the following parties and organizations: Tupamaros (MLN), anarchists FAU, militants of OPR 33, Student Worker Resistance, Oriental Revolutionary Movement (MRO), Oriental Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARO), and Socialist Party (MUSP). All citizens were categorized into three groups (A, B, C) according to the level of danger they posed to society. Once captured, the prisoner's fate depended solely on the perceived danger. Those belonging to parties of the left and trade unions were given less severe sentences, spanning between five and fifteen years. The more *dangerous* threats were posed by members of the MLN who were given forty-five-year jail sentences.

26. The name was a triple reference to: Tupac Amaru, rebellious Inca leader executed by Spaniards in 1782 in Cuzco; Independent Uruguayan gauchos of the early nineteenth century who fought against Spanish rule and identified themselves as Tupamaros after the Incan leader; and the song by the Olimareños, a folk duo popular in the 1960s (Camnitzer 45). The MLN, considered an organized group of "urban guerrillas," were working toward changing the quasi-democratic system dependent on and feeding imperialism. They refused to call themselves guerrillas, however, because the term "guerrilla" already implied active attempts to destroy the strength of the opposition through violent means. Julio Marenales explains that the MLN was but a strategy for political action and change, instead of a military circle. The group grew out of the Plumbers Union in the north of the country until it became a full-fledged organization, responsible for resisting the authorities during this tumultuous period. Many, such as art critic Luis Camnitzer, argue that the MLN exemplified an "aesthetified politics" whose activities can be identified as artistic rather than political. He goes on to assert that they subverted the "lore of art as property and insisted on the class issues related to art" (Camnitzer 41). In a December 22, 1966, confrontation, the police killed one MLN member. This incident helped authorities discover the then-underground group and determine its possible threat. The investigation into the life of the killed Tupamaro forced as many as twenty-two members into the clandestine world. In 1968, with the advent of the new President, Jorge Pacheco Areco, the war against these "subversives" began. From 1968 to 1971, the country was under a modified

version of martial law. On September 9, 1971, Pacheco Areco put armed forces in charge of antiguerrilla activity. This state of war intensified in 1971, when the incoming president, Juan María Bordaberry, was sworn in. By the time the dictatorship dissolved the power of the president in 1973, most of the Tupamaros had been exiled, imprisoned, or killed.

27. These dark holes are similar to the calaboses employed during other instances of Uruguay's past but particularly exploited during the dictatorship. Prisoners were clandestinely kept enclosed in a dark, humid, small space, usually underground. Many of the MLN leaders caught were kept in calaboses as punishment. Leader and playwright Mauricio Rosencoff was jailed in an underground calabose for much of his ten years of isolation under inhumane conditions.

28. "Varias toneladas de tierra de un túnel que iríamos guardando en bolsitas, prolijamente, abajo de la cama. Centenares tal vez miles de compañeros, trabajando ahincadamente, como un solo hombre, en la empresa, con la disciplina y el orden que sólo da la lucha por la libertad. Sería la acción más compleja llevada a cabo hasta entonces por el MLN y lo intentaríamos luego de tres evasiones y a pocas semanas de las elecciones nacionales. Este gigantesco operativo debíamos ejecutarlo bajo la tiranía de un brevísimo plazo."

29. They were expropriator anarchists who did not make a livelihood from stolen goods but saw this activity as a purely revolutionary tactic meant to weaken the heart of capitalism and advance the collective cause. As Argentine writer Osvaldo Bayer explains in the documentary *Acratas*, there is no historical evidence that any of the expropriator anarchists used the funds they stole for personal gain. The MLN also partook in Robin Hood-type expropriator activities, where they would steal and distribute the wealth to neighboring shantytowns (Camnitzer 40).

30. During the same period, an Argentine feature-length fictional film titled *La fuga* (The Escape), based on what it claims to be an undocumented escape in the nation's capital, was made. Although the film is based on an urban legend, undocumented apparently because of inside corruption brewing in the Buenos Aires Penitentiary (designed by Ernesto Bunge in 1872), the similarities between the Uruguayan history and the Argentine film are uncanny: in it anarchists and other convicts dig a hole from inside their prison to their getaway, a coal yard across the street. The fluidity of the anarchist movement in the Río de la Plata region in the 1920s and 1930s may account for this appropriation of the story as part of Argentina's national history. Individuals, ideas, and actions traveled into the Río de la Plata region from Europe and brought with them their accompanying activities. The connection between both ports is made apparent in Virginia Martínez's documentary *Acratas*.

31. José Félix Uriburu ousted Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1930 in a coup d'état, ending fifty years of democratic government in Argentina. Uriburu's regime repressed worker organizations and political radicals. His fascist regime targeted leftist organizations and political parties. The coup meant the restoration of oligarchic order, and, consequently, Buenos Aires became a more heavily policed society (Kalmanowiecki 203). After the 1930 coup, the police structure developed

its capacity for “vigilance, surveillance, and repression,” which consolidated the police’s role as an appendage of the state’s political power, whereby Argentina’s primary social evil was already perceived to be political and social subversion rather than common criminals (Kalmanowiecki 205). During the authoritarian regime of José Félix Uriburu in Argentina (1930–1932) and his democratically elected right-wing successor Agustín Justo (1932–1938), the fate of these political convicts foreshadowed that of many more in the 1970s.

32. Fernández Huidobro explains, “Por allá se fueron ellos. Por aquí nos iremos nosotros. Después averiguamos: el predio de la vieja carbonería “El Buen Trato” daba exactamente a los fondos de la casa del escribano Curi o sea, era lindero con la casa de Billy” (2:84). [They left from there. We will leave from here. Afterwards we found out: the property of the old coal yard “El Buen Trato” was exactly in lawyer Curi’s backyard, that is it bordered Billy’s house.]

33. In Montevideo, there is a maze of underground tunnels that date back to the colony days. As in all port cities vulnerable to foreign invasion, a system of escape routes was constructed to provide a safe getaway for officials in the event of an attack. Much of it is lost today. Researcher Roberto Bonada accounts for the historical loss: “Varias defensas subterráneas y túneles a que hacen referencia diversos cronistas de la época fueron olvidadas o removidas por el asfalto y el crecimiento de la ciudad.” [Various underground defense mechanisms and tunnels referenced in chronicles of the period were forgotten or removed as a result of the growth of the city] (“Historia del Montevideo” 16). Some of these tunnels, nonetheless, still exist and have been discovered throughout the years. Yet another access to the underground can be found in Montevideo’s intricate sewage system. Curiously enough, after stealing the blueprints for the city sewers from the Municipal Government of Montevideo, the Tupamaros advantageously used these underground tunnels to organize activity in the urban space of the capital.

34. In an assessment of the crimes committed, excluding imprisonment, Weinstein asserts: “Best estimates are that approximately ninety people died during torture, forty-nine disappeared in Uruguay, and 123 Uruguayans disappeared in Argentina, apparently as the result of joint actions of Argentine and Uruguayan security personnel” (53).

35. Once France was captured by Germany, Fresnes was used by the Germans to detain British agents and members of the French Resistance, particularly communists and anarchists threatening to pollute social ideology. Held in horrific conditions in dark holes, these prisoners were tortured and many executed, as exemplified by the case of Bertly Albrecht, cofounder of the Combat movement belonging to the French Resistance. Fresnes took on the role of a transitional space where prisoners were housed before being sent to concentration camps (see Wasserman 83–99 for more details).

36. The question of remembering seems to permit only certain types of memory. Down the road from the penitentiary, the Punta Carretas neighborhood, with its large Jewish community, houses the “Memorial Holocausto del pueblo,” a monument dedicated to Holocaust victims. The award-winning memorial was designed

by architects J. Fernando Fabiano González, Gastón Boero, and Sylvia Perossio and inaugurated under the Alberto Lacalle government in 1994, the same year that the doors to the mall opened.

37. "Llevaba más de veinte años preso, cuando la descubrió. La saludó con la mano, desde la ventana de su celda, y ella le respondió desde la ventana de su casa. Después, le habló con trapos de colores y con letras grandes. Las letras formaban palabras que ella leía con largavistas. Ella contestaba con letras más grandes, porque él no tenía largavistas. Y así les creció el amor. Ahora Nela y el Negro Viña se sientan espalda contra espalda. Si uno se va, el otro se cae. Ellos venden vino frente a las ruinas de la cárcel de Punta Carretas, en Montevideo."

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