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Writing and Reading Trash in *Fuenzalida* by Nona Fernández

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Since the 2000s, and more specifically General Augusto Pinochet's death in 2007, Chilean cultural texts produced by the generation known as *los hijos de la dictadura* have shifted towards a focus on family narratives featuring subjective and intimate points of view. Whether these explicitly take up the issues of post-dictatorial memory or childhood under the dictatorship, their prioritization of personal stories is symptomatic of a lingering generational and social debt with the past. In the post-Pinochet era, Chilean literature still includes an abundance of displaced protagonists (largely children) and familial frameworks, originally proposed by Rodrigo Cánovas in his work on the orphan figure as the post-dictatorial trope of Chilean literature in the 1990s. Building on Cánovas' original thesis, Sarah Roos claims that 21st-century literary works written by *hijos de la dictadura* are "relatos de filiación" that mix literary genres, located somewhere "en el límite borroso entre lo biográfico, lo autobiográfico y la ficción" (336).[1] This turn to the filiation story maintains a relationship with Chile's traumatic history: "El *relato de filiación* tematiza y testimonia también las marcas y huellas, a veces traumáticas, que deja la historia universal de un país en la convivencia familiar y en la historia subjetiva, narrada desde una perspectiva íntima" (Roos 339). These

[1] Along these same lines, later in her article, she explains that these texts are both semi-referential and semi-fictional (Roos 2013, 341).

works are often narrated by a child-turned-adult whose voice represents marginalized and alternative perspectives typically excluded from the dominant human rights memory narratives of testimonio by adult survivors (Roos 340). Writing about their families often provides these children with a pretext to reflect on their own memories, positions, and subjectivities, thereby rescuing their histories within the national memory landscape.

One particular example of Roos' filiation stories is Nona Fernández' novel *Fuenzalida* (2012), narrated in the first person by an unnamed narrator whose autobiographical details coincide with the author's life (336-37). Similar to Fernández, the female narrator works as a scriptwriter, for both *culebrones* and documentaries, and in her spare time she writes a novel that forms part of *Fuenzalida*. In fact, Fernández wrote the novel while she was a writer for TVN's *Los archivos del cardenal* (2011-2014), a series that revisits the human rights work of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad during the dictatorship, and for the documentary *La ciudad de los fotógrafos* (Sebastián Moreno, 2006). A "child of dictatorship" like Fernández, the narrator writes a novel about her estranged father, Fuenzalida, who abandoned her and her mother during her childhood under Pinochet's regime. As she writes the novel-within-a-novel, she includes a variety of father figures to explore which form to give her own. Ultimately, she imagines Fuenzalida as a martial arts hero based off of a Bruce Lee movie that she saw with her father and that marks one of her few clear memories with him. The novel is divided into five sections that alternate between a first-person narration of her life in which her son, Cosme, is interned in the hospital and the novel she is writing about Fuenzalida, including the *materiales adjuntos* that inform and inspire her writing. The novel-within-the-novel, however, lacks a conclusion and final scene, and *Fuenzalida* ends with the narrator abandoning the novel to spend time with her son, who engages in an imaginary game of speaking to his recently deceased grandfather over the telephone.

Of the few pieces of scholarship on *Fuenzalida*, Macarena García-Avello focuses on the novel's use of imagination to create and question memory (252). Instead of reaching a conclusion about a particular vision of the narrator's father, the novel sketches various possible versions of his life. These fictional sketches depend on the lack of referent that is Fuenzalida, as García-Avello explains, "la imaginación ofrece alternativas para los agujeros negros que invaden el pasado a condición de que se reconozca la ausencia de un referente en la realidad" (256). A more recent article by Gonzalo Maier reads the novel as a parody of Bruce Lee action films to ironically reflect

on national discourses regarding the dictatorship. In this insightful discussion of the links between the novel and *bruceploitation*, the author argues that "A Fuenzalida se lo revela así como una construcción desechable que se olvida en el vertedero," similar to the protagonist of a discarded Kung Fu movie (Maier 46). Instead of following the traditional Manichean script of these films, *Fuenzalida* opts for ambiguity and refuses to name winners and losers. Building on both of these interpretations, along with Resha Cardone's environmentalist reading of Fernández's earlier novel *Mapocho*, my analysis focuses on how the novel's engagements with garbage (*basura*) offer models for alternative memory practices and narratives. Complementary to Roos' claim that filiation stories rescue the children of the dictatorship's otherwise marginal perspectives, this novel's use of trash further highlights the importance of imagining and recognizing alternative interpretations and memories of the past through fiction. By analyzing the novel's material instances of trash along with what I deem trash poetics—its invocation of figurative language considered part of "waste literature" as outlined by Susan Signe Morrison—this article extends the existing scholarship on post-dictatorial Chilean culture, and on *Fuenzalida* more specifically, to consider how the intersections of trash and memory imagine alternative narratives of the past.

Discard studies still does not figure prominently in Latin American literary criticism, nor has it been widely applied to scholarship on Southern Cone memory.[2] Yet due to waste's "lived" materiality and its links with memory and capitalist cycles of production and consumption, I find it is a poignant trope for the enduring legacies of the region's recent dictatorial past. In her reading of *Mapocho*, Cardone explains that author Nona Fernández represents "Chilean history as the accumulation in the present of both spiritual and material contaminants—ghosts and trash," similar to *Fuenzalida* (Cardone 2). Significantly, the narrator of *Fuenzalida* deals with the human and material debris from the dictatorship through her writing. Recording practices of trash collection, repurposing discarded items/stories, and reimagining the past, the narrator actively remembers and engages with the rubbish of history, akin to Walter Benjamin's

[2] In this article, I avoid explaining some of the main concepts of memory studies because this would distract, in my opinion, from my main argument and focus on the novel itself. For more on memory in the context of Southern Cone post-dictatorships, please see Idelber Avelar's seminal work *The Untimely Present* (1999), Elizabeth Jelin's *Los trabajos de la memoria* (2002), and Susana Draper's *Afterlives of Confinement* (2012). On Chile specifically, Steve Stern's three volume *The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile* (2006, 2010) and Michael Lazzara's *Chile in Transition* (2011) are particularly informative. More generally, Marianne Hirsch's notion of "postmemory" (2012) is key to thinking through intergenerational trauma and the experiences of the children of the dictatorship.

ragpicker historian who collects the "scraps of society as evidence of another, alternative history" (Pye 2). This ethical move for memory praxis—attending to the haunting remnants of the past—hinges on the processes of writing and trash collection. As Gillian Pye notes, there are two broad lines of thought that come from theories of trash, the first deals with memory and the second with value systems (Pye 2-3). In my analysis of *Fuenzalida*, I ask then what role trash plays in remembering and forgetting as well as in constructing and challenging value systems. Using trash to remember grants discards another value, in an ethical move to engage with other histories, identities, and perspectives, including the non-human. An individual's interactions with trash reflect his/her identity—tied up in memories and values—because waste management "is part of the way in which we cultivate sensibilities and sensual relations with the world; part of the way we move things out of our life and impose ethical and aesthetic order. No matter how insignificant putting out the garbage may seem, the way we do it reflects an ethos, a manner of being" (Hawkins 4). This awareness and ability to listen to both self and other are imperative to memory work in post-dictatorial societies. Throwing away or deeming something "trash" categorizes what we no longer need; it is part of the process of delineating where we begin and end and constructing what we value and we don't. When we throw away and attempt to "contain" or forget what we consider unusable, we stave off, or deny, our own categorization as waste when we inevitably die. As a mirror for our inescapable end, our histories, and our values, engaging with trash can cause greater self-awareness, reflected in the narrator's meta-literary practices in *Fuenzalida*.

In addition to the ways in which waste practices communicate certain ethical and aesthetic values/order, *Fuenzalida*'s multiple instances of trash also reveal ways of conceiving and practicing memory as part of one's subjectivity and identity. In other words, how the novel deals with trash sheds light on practices of engaging with memory and approaching the past. I apply the following matter to the case of *Fuenzalida*: "We ask what role trash might play in the representation of memory and forgetting, functioning as it does as the point of intersection between institutionalized and private memory, between the forgotten and retained, visible and invisible" (Pye 3). Specifically, this article analyzes the narrator's "literal" or "material" habits of waste disposal, her invocation of trash to write, and the novel's own "poetics" of waste encoded in the rhetorical figures used by the author/narrator to elicit an ethical attunement to others. Insofar as they recycle and rethink meanings and tropes from the ambiguities of waste,

projects like *Fuenzalida* ultimately propose an ethics of memory that encourages self-reflection and positive empathy toward others. In the end, the novel (ironically) presents itself as a discard, making the reader ethically responsible for interpreting the trash-novel and becoming an active participant in narration, a model for working through the past and remembering.

The narrator's "literal" or "material" habits of waste disposal establish trash as a catalyst for artistic creation. At various points in *Fuenzalida*, the narrator takes trash out. The first example occurs towards the beginning, as she recalls leaving the trash on the street after her ex-husband, Max, moved out. The narrator describes herself and the house as "equivalentes a una bodega vieja donde se guarda lo que ya no sirve," prompting her to throw out everything that reminded her of Max (Fernández 23). The list of things thrown out includes "sábanas, postales, libros dedicados que no alcancé a leer, cuadros, ropa, teléfonos," as well as people and holidays, "amigos, el tío Pedro, la abuela Antonia, cumpleaños, pascuas, años nuevos" (Fernández 23). Then, she recalls the corporal effects of the trash collectors' ceremonious removal: "Cuando vi por primera vez mis bolsas caer al camión y escuché ese sonido metálico engullendo mis desechos, supe que ya no había vuelta atrás. Lo que se llevaba el camión era irrecuperable" (Fernández 23). With no mention of emotion or regret, what follows this intensely haptic scene is silence. The abundance of discarded items on the list is juxtaposed with the ensuing lack of noise in her neighborhood. As the narrator realizes that she cannot recover what she threw out, she engages in ethical listening, now attuned to the "silencio inquietante" and "desastroso" that surrounds her (Fernández 23). Taking out the trash, in the end, helps her process the painful separation, eventually leading to what she deems a "nueva conciencia dramática" that enables her to write fiction (Fernández 23).

Going from one extreme to the next, the narrator collects and repurposes objects in her home after getting rid of the items that remind her of Max. As she develops her life apart from her ex-husband, the narrator embraces the messy house: "Los altos de revistas, la colección de piedras y conchitas que tenemos junto a la ventana. El colgante hecho de vidrios rotos y clavos que separa el comedor de la cocina. Las paredes llenas de fotografías y letreros de tránsito que hemos recogido con Cosme en la calle" (Fernández 29). The objects themselves attest to the narrator's new approach to life alone with her son: collecting, finding, gathering, repurposing. What's more, she brings broken glass and other discarded items from the street into her home to decorate its walls. Instead of the home being a *bodega* of useless things, every item

serves a purpose. The house reveals that the narrator is attune to discards and that she has autonomy to form an identity apart from Max and his sense of order. Paradoxically, the accumulation of stuff liberates her imagination to fill in empty signifiers, similar to how she imagines her father, Fuenzalida. From these examples, both removing trash and collecting it are liberating: taking it out processes the loss of Max while collecting discarded, random items allows the narrator to define herself on her own terms and develop her own aesthetic.

In fact, holding onto objects that would become discards becomes a *modus operandi* for the narrator. Years later, the narrator only throws out daily trash and keeps everything else, since things inspire her creativity. By not distinguishing between people, things, and abstract concepts as her things of value, the narrator also "discards" traditional concepts of value like reason as a way of giving coherence to her personal story (cf. Scanlan 70-71). As Susan Signe Morrison writes: "To structure order, memory, story, and history, we need to designate what is valuable and that which should be forgotten" (57). In contrast to traditional, linear narratives, the narrator's collection of things reveals her openness to imagination and ambiguity—characteristics associated with waste—and rejects clear order in the plot, structure, and characters of the novel to embrace chaos or mess.[3] In this way, trash sustains memory because anything is possible; anything may inspire and communicate with another story.[4]

The narrator's interactions with garbage also reflect her relationship with her absent father, as she disposes of and holds onto trash objects to process the loss of her father and to create a narrative for both of them together. In response to Fuenzalida's abandonment of his family, the narrator's mother cut his head out of family photos. At one point, the narrator imagines her father's discarded heads from the photos in a garbage can: "Me pregunto dónde habrán ido a parar todas las cabezas de Fuenzalida que mi madre tijereteó de sus fotos. Imagino un grupo grande tirado en el tarro de la basura de su cocina. Muchas caras de Fuenzalida mirándome desde ahí dentro mezcladas con cáscaras de huevo y restos de arroz" (Fernández 2012, 137). For the

[3] Scanlan explains that under the age of Reason, children were considered walking rubbish since they had not yet been "disciplined" or brought into the order of adulthood (70-71). However, at the end of *Fuenzalida*, the imagination embodied by the narrator's son, Cosme, is celebrated over any clear sense of order or conclusion.

[4] Garbage embodies contradictory and conflicting symbols that are the stuff of creativity: waste materials "are dangerous and fascinating, the apocalypse, seduction, the *beauty* of the *unsightly*, and a relic and reminder of what is human. They are the sign of a threatening, ambiguous creativity since they are unpredictable and therefore unavoidable" (Vergine 23).

narrator, the pieces of photos thrown in the trash simultaneously complete Fuenzalida's body and decapitate him, representing his absence and death. Yet, her imagination places the mutilated photos amid food scraps in the trash bin, a metaphorical site of renewal that emerges through the narrator's writing by highlighting trash's potential transition from death to life (as in the examples above, too). Salvaging trash in the novel, then, becomes a way of rescuing the absent referent that is Fuenzalida and the narrator herself by creating another narrative (through her father's empty signifier).

Fuenzalida's removal from the photos was meant to erase him from the family, yet the holes attest to his existence, providing a material trace of his body. The reminders of violence in the photos visibly repeat the silences that communicate trauma within the family and within Chile. Later in the novel the narrator compares her father to a disappeared (NN) when her mother informs her that he has died. The narrator remarks that everything is blank, similar to when she waits for her trash to be collected: "Todo se ha quedado en silencio. [...] En blanco. Completamente en blanco. Como si estuviéramos hablando de un desconocido, un NN, un muerto sin cédula de identidad. De golpe miro hacia atrás, pero ya no hay nadie. Ni voces que reconocer, ni rostros a los que mirar a la cara. Solo el vacío. La nada. El hueco de una fotografía recortada por una tijera" (Fernández 164). Silences and gaps like these abound in the novel, alluding to the absences of people, information, and memories. In the case of Fuenzalida, he is an absent referent for his daughter since she has no clear memory nor physical evidence of his existence. Imagination is again key to narrating and giving new meaning to the past: "La falta de referente imposibilita la recuperación de un pasado, pero no hay nada que impida re/elaborarlo mediante la imaginación. Según esta visión, la narrativa funciona como el testimonio de una ausencia que propone la imaginación como punto de partida para la re/narración" (García-Avello 2016, 253). In other words, due to the absent referent of Fuenzalida—and the empty signifier his name represents—the narrator finds a certain liberty to create his story since she is not tied to notions of "truth" about her father or her relationship with him (García-Avello 2016, 256). Filling in the gaps of her father's life also allows her to re-imagine her personal, familial, and national histories.

The narrator's imagination of her father's story stems from her attention to waste, or the nonhuman, present at the beginning of the novel. In the opening scene, she rescues a photo of a martial arts fighter in the trash on the street outside her house and subsequently alleges that the man in the image is her father, Fuenzalida. She begins to imagine her father's possible story years after he left her and her mother for another

family he had formed, prompted by the photo's image. What's more, when the narrator rescues the photograph, she explains that it grabbed her attention because of its reflection in the light, "una especie de voz de auxilio desde el cemento húmedo" (Fernández 17). Following Morrison's claim that "waste is inherently metaphorical" since it "allows us to see the fundamental similarity among us all, just as metaphor or simile allows us to see the affinity between two things or states of being not previously perceived," I interpret such instances of personification (a metaphor) and the narrator's engagement with garbage evidence of her attunement to nonhuman forces (Fernández 175). Personification, as such, finds and creates other modes of communication, between the human and nonhuman, using what could be considered an anthropomorphic sensitivity, or what the narrator deems her "conciencia dramática."[5]

The narrator explores the impossible moments of the photo's past and by extension, her father's, through creative writing. In the novel's first paragraph, the narrator mourns the impossibility of bringing the image in the photo to life again or of fully reconstructing its history:

> La imagen velada de algo que ocurrió en otro momento, lejos de esta calle vacía, el destilado de una escena imposible de resucitar. No hay forma de saber el camino que recorrió antes de llegar aquí. Cuánta gente la vio, por qué cajones anduvo, qué bolsillos cruzó. Tampoco se puede precisar en qué momento y por qué razón se transformó en basura. Cuándo dejó de estar expuesta en un marco o en las páginas de un álbum para ir a dar a un tarro con el resto de las mugres que ahora la acompañan. (Fernández 2012, 17)

Here, the photo, a material trash object, is further personified through the verbs *recorrió*, *anduvo*, and *cruzó*, revealing another way of connecting with and understanding the world. These verbs indicate the photograph's movement through spaces/times imagined by the narrator. By bringing to the forefront the impossibility of historical truth and the value of non-empirical space/time, the narrator undoes expectations of veracity and verisimilitude; yet at the same time this self-proclaimed recognition and transparency lend her a more credible voice. The narrator not only questions when and

[5] Whereas anthropomorphism allows a thing to act as human (think, speak, feel, etc.), perhaps as a projection of the human perspective, personification is a metaphor that temporarily and figuratively dons a nonhuman thing with human characteristics so as to paint a particular image. One of the common criticisms of anthropomorphizing within materialist studies is that it appropriates and romanticizes nature and matter to reaffirm a human-centric hierarchy of the world. However, Bennett contends that "a bit of anthropomorphizing will prove valuable" because "a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman 'environment'" (120).

why waste is made, but she also questions the testimonial power of the image. Instead, she proposes that fiction can restore reality, and that reality is constructed by fiction. She processes the very personal loss of her father by recovering and writing the remains of others' losses, represented here in the discarded photo.

In the context of the Chilean dictatorship, which used metaphors of waste to justify imprisoning, torturing, murdering and disappearing people, the narrator's decision to rescue the photo from the street acquires political significance as a mode of resisting the oppressive authoritarian regime.[6] The anti-capitalist subtext of her gesture is a further critique of the economic system implemented by the dictatorship since waste—a literal and metaphorical component of capitalism—paradoxically defines what one has and who one is.[7] Yet photos that are discarded and collected as trash objects alter the capitalist (life) cycle, as in *Fuenzalida*.[8] The novel's photo highlights a tension between art and capitalism as related to memory and its absence. As an artistic and material object, the photo is imbued with social and personal memory; however, it is also placed in the garbage and as such, is inserted into the seemingly perpetually present cycle of capitalism, devoid of history.[9] By placing the photo-as-trash-object at the center of the plot and writing a novel that is thrown into the garbage, *Fuenzalida* occupies this tension between art and capitalism to reclaim "trash" and other empty signifiers for memory work.

Sensitive toward otherness in things and in trash, the narrator is able to imagine and engage with other memories, experiences, and identities. How she interacts with the nonhuman may also propose a more ethical relationship with other humans and their memories. The narrator explains that she writes *culebrones* based on what she deems "materiales adjuntos." In an attempt to adequately define a *material adjunto*, the narrator

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[6] "While the metaphor of waste has often been used for destructive purposes, the articulation of a waste aesthetics can reveal the humanity we share. Metaphor—reduced language thickened and intensified like a savory sauce—bridges cultures and can open us to ethical understanding" (Morrison 13).

[7] Cardone also recognizes the intertwining of waste and the dictatorship's economic policies in her analysis of *Mapocho* when she writes that Chile's "present is nevertheless polluted with history's refuse, including the ghosts of those killed unjustly in the name of economic progress as well as the everyday trash needed to sustain the market economy" (4).

[8] For more on the relationship between trash, collecting, and value, see Tahl Kaminer's chapter "The Triumph of the Insignificant".

[9] "The fact of its discarding confers on it a biography, though at least partially forgotten, which connects it to real, lived life, whilst its status as found thing may empower the finder who takes it upon him or herself to determine a new status, function and value for the thing. This status of trash as simultaneously present yet absent, empty and yet replete with potential, is what makes it especially attractive against a background of anxieties about durability and order and the relationship between self and other, present and past" (Pye 7).

describes it as "Ese lugar de conjuro personal, ese pedazo de realidad con el que se convoca el relato" (Fernández 120). In her creative process these items are fictional and real, including the photo in the street, a newspaper article about Sebastián Acevedo and the story of his daughter, a memory of the radio announcement about Sebastián, a childhood photo with her cousin, and the Bruce Lee movie *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973). Reflecting her ethical "listening" to objects and their own lives, the narrator personifies the *materiales adjuntos*, explaining that "no se encuentran, llegan solos, sin que se les busque" (Fernández 120). Since, according to the narrator, the ideas and inspiration for writing a story come from these materials, she equates them with the story's "bing bang." According to her, anything can serve as one of these materials: "Una fotografía vieja, una película en la tele, una noticia escuchada en la radio, un recuerdo confuso, un chiste, todo puede llegar a ser un material adjunto" (Fernández 119). As this example shows, the novel's own style—similar to the neo-baroque aesthetic of Latin American culture—imitates the accumulation of waste by stringing together adjectives, objects, and texts. This collection of references—embellished through fiction—mirrors the decoration of the narrator's house. Following this idea, the narrator's attunement to found materials for her novel reflects "a more refined sensitivity to the outside-that-is-inside-too" (the vibrant materiality in all of us) which I find in line with intertextuality (Bennett 120).[10]

Fuenzalida's use of both inter- and intratextuality blurs the line between reality and fiction as a way to interrogate memory as a static concept and create transparency, highly valued in the post-dictatorship although still not entirely achieved (García Avello 2016, 257). Both memory and transparency are at the center of this novel in its introductory quote "Inventa un cuento que te sirva de memoria." This intratextual quote comes from a letter (a fictional *material adjunto*) that Fuentes Castro, the "villain" in the narrator's novel, writes to his daughter. In other words, *Fuenzalida* begins with a quote from the narrator's novel, or the novel-within-the-novel, legitimizing its own fictional voice and incorporating itself as an external text on the inside. What's more, the reader doesn't know that this quote comes from the narrator's novel since it is provided without context or authorial credit. *Fuenzalida* plays with time by foreshadowing a "future" text for the reader and disrupting (narrative) linearity. In

[10] "Vital materiality better captures an 'alien' quality of our own flesh, and in so doing reminds humans of the very *radical* character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and the nonhuman. My 'own' body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human" (Bennett 112).

addition to this literary self-referentiality, the narrator incorporates her own *culebrón*, or *telenovela*, into her novel. *Unidad de urgencias*, a *culebrón* for which she was a screenwriter, parallels her life as it plays in the background at the hospital while she waits for her son to recover from surgery. The narrator also lists the ingredients for a successful *culebrón*, which then appear as the characteristics of her own novel, resulting in a meta-fictional combination of author and narrator.

By blending a variety of literary and audiovisual genres, such as the novel and the *culebrón*, in her meta-fictional writing, the narrator does not place them in a hierarchical order of value or truth, similar to a trash pile. As a largely indeterminate mound, trash's ambiguity threatens our sense of boundaries and order.[11] However, *Fuenzalida* draws attention to the fluidity of these boundaries, moving between different texts and genres both inside and outside the novel itself. The "feminine" telenovela and the "masculine" action or martial arts films, both metaphorically "trashy" because of their association with popular culture, appear in the novel as frequently as the dominant memory narrative of *testimonio* and the classical "great" literary genre of the novel (García-Avello 257). The structure of *Fuenzalida* demonstrates this mixture of genres, divided into numbered sections and descriptive "capítulos," which can be chapters in a book or episodes of a TV show. By mixing audiovisual (TV, feature film, documentary film) and written genres (letters, testimonio, novel), *Fuenzalida* combines the characteristics typically associated with these genres: popular vs. high culture, feminine vs. masculine, melodrama vs. action, emotion vs. violence, fiction vs. reality. The narrator even characterizes her novel as hybrid, as she describes the mixture of influences on her writing:

> Hace poco había estado trabajando en el guión de la película documental de unos amigos y pensé que ese sería el tono justo de la escritura. Un tono realista, testimonial, que me asumiera a mí como narradora, sin disfraces, expuesta como nunca antes lo había hecho, y que mezclara ficción y realidad en un híbrido extraño. Después pensé que no, que debía ser un thriller político, o mejor, una historia de acción ambientada en los tiempos de mi infancia, escrita con la estructura de capítulos de culebrón, o mejor, como el tratamiento de los capítulos de un culebrón. Luego concluí que debía ser las dos cosas al mismo tiempo, documental y culebrón, realidad y ficción, verdad y mentira, o más bien mentira sobre mentira, porque al final de la historia qué otra cosa es escribir. (Fernández 259-60)

[11] A mixture of waste items "can begin to undermine categories of order and classification, becoming in the process threatening or even subversive. By suggesting possible combinations and mergers not foreseen by human design, by crossing the boundaries of classification, such things may appear dangerously unstable" (Pye 6).

As hybrid, the novel straddles various classifications of literature, reflecting the narrator's own in-betweenness as well as the itinerant journey she traces through writing based on the trash she follows. Again, she makes transparent the contradictions in her voice. The novel's hybridity—defined above as a combination of what may appear to be contradictory genres, tones, and truths—thus embodies the fluidity and ambiguity of the trash poetics it proposes.[12]

In addition to the novel's parody of martial arts films, the fact that the narrator follows her advice for a *culebrón* when writing her novel suggests that she is parodying the popular TV format.[13] The novel highlights the heightened emotions as well as the emotional violence of *culebrones* and TV melodrama, which often hinge on family drama and secrets. Imagining the past through the lens of these audiovisual genres is both ironic and therapeutic: "La operación, como sabremos con el correr de las páginas, es básicamente irónica—cuestiona, por ejemplo, la figura del derrotado o el antihéroe ético de la postdictadura (cf. Amar Sánchez)—y a la vez terapéutica, pues la narradora busca subsanar la ausencia de recuerdos concretos" (Maier 44). Parody, as an ironic imitation, makes use of humor from a critical distance, allowing the narrator to work through the emotional, psychological, and physical traces of trauma from familial and national wounds, in what can be deemed therapeutic recycling. Given the multiple ruptures in the narrator's life, the *culebrón* is important for working through the emotional voids of her family's estrangement, since melodrama is characterized by exaggerated sentimentality and family relations. Considered a form of intertextuality, parody hinges on the relationships between two or more texts and is a feature of waste literature.[14] Seen in this way, parody may allow for empathy since the narrator must place herself in another's situation, even if to make fun of it. She writes from various perspectives—of victim, witness, daughter, father, hero, villain, etc.—and moves through a range of responses; this imagination or re-imagining of others' emotions and actions may further allow her to process her own.

Not unlike narcissistic intratextuality, the narrator's parody of her own novel, her readers, and herself, creates a complex meta-literary narrative. The novel-within-the-novel ends with a fight between two characters that represent martial arts films

[12] It's worth recalling Roos' description of contemporary filiation narratives, in which she places Nona Fernández' work, as hybrid (336).

[13] On the use of parody and violence in the novel, see Maier (2017).

[14] "Figurative and recycled literary waste, such as digressions, leftovers, puns, parody, and intertextuality—all are peculiarly—even touchingly—human" (Morrison 12-13).

(Fuenzalida) and *culebrones* (the narrator). The narrator imagines the final fight scene in the novel at the trash dump and says that the "gran combate final" will not be "muy solemne porque yo no soy una combatiente de artes marciales, soy solo una escritora de culebrones que se mueve mal y sin gracia, pero que podría llegar a sostener una pequeña pelea, por mediocre que fuera, por lo menos una que sirva de punto final" (Fernández 268). Although the narrator juxtaposes these two extremes of gender representation, she ultimately throws them both out. In Rosi Braidotti's proposal for nomadism as feminist theory and praxis, she writes "the force of the parodic mode consists precisely in striving to avoid flat repetitions, which bring about political stagnation" (2011, 28). Viewing parody in this way, *Fuenzalida*'s parodic representation and reflection on the narrator's childhood under the Chilean dictatorship advocate for alternative modes of narration, avoiding the "political stagnation" of memory and its commodification. Parody becomes self-reflexive, self-deprecating, and emotionally therapeutic since the author/narrator makes fun of herself as a telenovela writer. She ultimately embodies ambiguity in her multiple writing professions, crossing various genres, like her house's aesthetic and her novel's poetics.

Trash, like memory, is not a fixed entity or concept; instead it moves, shifts, and changes. The text mimics the trajectory of discarded items through the intertextual traces it weaves into the narrative. In this way, the novel recycles or "re-purposes" other texts in order to create meaning (Morrison 10). This is why the narrator decorates her house—a "fixed" building—with discarded items—forever mutable. By bringing movement and life to her home, the trash objects challenge notions of stillness, order, and cleanliness that are associated with the "perfect home" (Scanlan 243). Likewise, the narrator's mixture of *materiales adjuntos,* her own writing, and various literary and audiovisual genres undermines the ideas of a finished work of art and of fixed memories.[15] By citing other sources—both real and fictional, external and internal, material and non-material—the novel proposes what I interpret to be a sustainable memory practice. Likened to recycling, intertextuality makes use of other texts to re-contextualize and re-purpose them with new meanings (Morrison 2015, 10). These textual and material traces are also related to memory since they "presence" the past by

[15] "La yuxtaposición de una multiplicidad de géneros confunde los límites entre los distintos tipos de 'texto'. Esta intertextualidad promueve la subversión de la obra de arte cerrada, autosuficiente y autónoma[...] Las películas de acción, las telenovelas, la fotografía y la narración autobiográficas aparecen como parte de un mismo proceso de escritura, cuya configuración en una trama marcada por las convenciones pone en entredicho la transparencia del lenguaje" (García-Avello 257).

inscribing a former text in another, performing a memory act. Similarly, in her work on trash, Pye writes that "the discarded thing appears to make the past, or at least the potential past, visible in the present" while "it also denies access to that past precisely because it has lost its function and value" (5) Movement and mutability are thus both memory and trash poetics in that they work to keep history open to multiple possibilities/narratives. In other words, memory is sustainable through constant re-invention, imagination, re-interpretation, and unfinished stories.

On a broader scale, the narrator seems to parody the "search for truth" that is present in traditional endings, whether in literature or television. Similar to how junk art rethinks the framing of conventional art, the narrator plays with traditional expectations of literature in her novel by incorporating a variety of genres, mixing the lines between fiction and reality, and abandoning her novel at the end, with no simple or "happy" conclusion that ties up loose ends. The novel-as-trash simultaneously designs a new artistic object outside the chain of production and reinserts a discarded/useless item into the chain of production/consumption, creating a community of waste-readers/consumers, thereby both challenging and parodying the reader and the divisions between low/high art. *Fuenzalida* encourages reflection on the commodification of memory through an object (book/garbage) that simultaneously belongs to and resists market logic itself. Beyond repurposing objects for the novel or making the novel trash in the end, *Fuenzalida* also remakes the narrator's father and Chilean history. Making garbage into art—"the simple act of 'making' something *what it is not*"—is the basis of the narrator's memory work (Scanlan 48). The narrator/author parodies the work of making memory fit into "neat" or "clean" narratives by applying a trash poetics to her novel. Memory, in the end, does not fit into only one format or order, but is rather hybrid.

According to the narrator, the two options for finishing her novel are a "happy" ending in which she reunites with her father or "el gran combate final" between them both (Fernández 268). In the imagined final scene for her novel, she waits for dawn among the rubbish at the dump:

> Imagino latas, cenizas, cáscaras de naranja, papeles higiénicos, caras recortadas con una tijera bajo mi cuerpo, entremedio de mí [...] solo voy a elucubrar la escena imposible por la que se inició este relato. En ella un hombre vestido de kimono negro emerge de entre los desperdicios cuando los primeros rayos del sol comienzan a iluminar la basura [...] Llego a su lado y nos miramos el uno al otro como quien se mira en un espejo. (Fernández 266-67)

The narrator proceeds to imagine the dialogue that would take place between Fuenzalida and her, using phrases like "quizás, o tal vez no" because she is uncertain how the scene would be, since, after all, it is impossible. Or, perhaps she simply chooses not to distinguish between what's real and what's invented. With regards to this, García-Avello remarks that "En definitiva, la narradora esboza distintas alternativas, pero rechaza la posibilidad de obtener una visión definitiva del pasado paterno" (2016, 253). Because of this, the novel-within-the-novel lacks an ending and distorts linear chronology, opting instead for ambiguity and open possibilities by following the trajectory of trash. The narrator's trip around the city is described with language that mixes reality and fiction in the conditional tense: "Me alejaría de mi propia casa. Vería mi frontis naranjo, las rejas de mis vecinos, el hogar de ancianos, la panadería de la esquina que no existe, la camioneta del viejo del cloro que sí existe, y me iría con mi basura, con todo lo que ya no me sirve adonde me lleve ese camión" (Fernández 266). She has selected what will remain in the scene from reality (what exists) and from pure invention (what does not exist), combining both to write another story.

The route to the dump is imagined as a "ceremonia de la basura," which the narrator compares to a funeral earlier in the novel (Fernández 265). Further paralleling her novel's ending, a few pages earlier the narrator describes her *culebrón*'s final scene, which takes place at the Santiago cemetery Parque del Recuerdo, where the female protagonist Genoveva Urqueta observes her estranged father's funeral from a distance. The dump, like the funeral procession and the gravesite, contains a mystical appeal that reinforces an analogous attraction/aura surrounding Fuenzalida and the *materiales adjuntos* for the narrator. By making the analogy between trash and death, the novel and the narrator partake in the burial ceremony, an act of public mourning, burying the absent father without his physical body. Whereas the book incarnates Fuenzalida (thus the title) and the narrator's possible home/life with him. As Maier explains, the narrator needed to invent Fuenzalida in order to bury him at the dump since he had previously been absent/non-existent. Indeed, she turns him into garbage (Maier 47). But, by doing so, the narrator does not completely reject her father since, as has been discussed, she appreciates trash. Instead, making him "trash" gives him a place in her life, albeit one that will continually change.[16]

[16] The narrator's past "no se recupera, sino que se construye, y al hacerlo influido por el presente, es susceptible de reconstruirse de diferentes maneras según los distintos momentos" (García-Avello 251).

Ultimately, everything ends up at the dump or in the trash, including the novel, the narrator, and her father. Whereas the narrator waits for her trash to be collected at other points in the novel, by the end of the novel she participates in the trash collection and possibly as a trash object as well, stating, "Toda la basura caería y yo caería con ella" (Fernández 266). Furthermore, although the Kung-Fu-style fight appeals to the writer because it would provide a dramatic ending that recalls her first memory with her father, she abandons it: "La tiré al tarro de la basura lo mismo que muchas otras cosas más" (Fernández 268). Similar to her decision not to reveal how the fight between the heroic Fuenzalida and the villainous Fuentes Castro ended, the narrator ultimately stops writing the ending to this story as well and labels it as "garbage." In the end, the narrator's novel itself is trash—the remains of an abandoned writing project. By converting us into readers of trash, we too, must be ethically attuned and open to ambiguity in order to interpret and value this ever-changing trash object. In this way, the novel approximates the indeterminacy of garbage and memory, and performs its own proposed poetics of waste.

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