



## **Clothing as Remains: Performance After Atrocity**

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by

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## Clothing as Remains: Performance After Atrocity

*There are dangers in seeing what should have been sealed up in the past. We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves.*

*~ Elizabeth Wilson*

*Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and modernity*

In October of 2016 I attended a performance by Colombian theatre collective *TramaLuna Teatro* as part of Aluna Theatre and Native Earth Performing Arts' co-produced festival *Rutas Panamericanas*, a biennial festival for political theatre and performance from across the Americas.<sup>1</sup> As the lights dimmed and the audience settled down, the music began and a group of barefooted women in black dresses and blood-red sashes slowly danced their way on stage in an eerie formation. The performance, entitled *Antigonas Tribunal de Mujeres* (Antigonas Women's Tribunal), is a re-telling of the Greek story of Antigone in the context of the contemporary Colombian civil war.<sup>2</sup> In the original, the king, Creon, decrees that Antigone's brother Polyneices, whom he says died a traitor, will be denied proper burial or return to his family. In defiance of Creon's explicit command not to do so, Antigone sets out to find her brother's body and to give him a proper burial (Sophocles 1228-1233). In *TramaLuna Teatro's* re-telling, all 9 women are the Antigonas, each searching for their disappeared loved ones and hoping to give them a proper burial and justice (Aluna Theatre 2016). The disappeared who are

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<sup>1</sup> I have written previously on this performance for a paper entitled "Performing Justice: Indigenous Artistic Responses to Systemic Violence and Judicial Failure in Canada" presented at the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) 2016 in Minneapolis, MN. Descriptions of the performance in both papers may be similar, although the focus of each paper is different.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all descriptions of the performance are from my own memory and notes I took when I attended.

the subject of the performance are what are called in Colombia *falsos positivos*, or false positives, which is what “the systematic execution of as many as 3,000 civilians [...] committed by army brigades across Colombia between 2002 and 2008” (Human Rights Watch) has been named. These civilians, usually poorer rural men, are kidnapped, dressed in the clothes of guerrilla fighters, then killed in order to falsely bolster the army’s kill numbers and prove the government’s progress in their efforts to eradicate guerrilla factions in the country (Human Rights Watch). The performance takes the form of a swirling pastiche of human rights abuse tribunals, political and historical commentary, ritual mourning, and personal storytelling. One by one, their stories punctuated by group songs, dances, and rituals, the women come forward to bear witness to the loss of their loved ones and to present, as evidence in a tribunal, the objects--collared white shirts, shoes, teddy bears, photographs--that recall their disappeared.

Objects in performances about disappeared persons are a pervasive trope, and clothing in particular is especially prevalent. When engaging with the pain of a disappeared body, particularly one which has been forcibly or violently disappeared, clothing stands in as a powerful reminder of the absence of that body. Clothing has been used over and over again in art, performance, and memorial, and each clothing performance is in some way ghosted by those that came before. In *Antigonas*, the white collared shirts presented as evidence in the tribunal recall Doris Salcedo’s “white collared shirt impaled on iron rebar” (Salcedo 2015)<sup>3</sup>, while the shoes in *Antigonas* may contain the echoes of the shoes in the holocaust memorial on the Danube in Budapest (Ochayon), the “300 Pairs of Shoes for 300 Murdered Women” found in downtown Santiago, Chile (Alvarez et al. 2015), or the 1700+ moccasin vamps constituting *Walking With Our Sisters* in Canada, a commemorative installation for the missing and murdered Indigenous women (Belcourt).

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<sup>3</sup> This work was originally assembled and displayed in Bogotá in 1990, but here I am citing from my own experience at the retrospective I visited at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in August of 2015.

In *Antigonas*, what stands out is the fact that the clothing (as well as most of the actors) are “real.” That is, the clothing and objects which the women present to the tribunal (the audience) are the clothing and objects that have been worn, used, and cherished by their loved ones before their disappearance. The majority of the women performing, with the exception of two or three of the performers who are the main artists in the collective, have in actuality had a family member forcibly disappeared and in their solo stories and testimonials they are telling the story of those family members. This performance in particular, and the use of clothing in performances about disappearance and atrocity more generally, raise a number of questions about objects in performance and the “real” on stage. What is the role of these clothing items in this particular performance? Are they performing as subjects or objects? Characters or props? Do they rely on their relationality to the actor-mourners,<sup>4</sup> or can they “stand” on their own, as it were, as subjects, or perhaps as ghosts instead? Or, following Aoife Monk’s article on “Human Remains: Acting, Objects, and Belief in Performance,” are they more akin to relics, remains that are imbued with the spirit of the dead and special meaning for the living? Further, what is the significance of the fact that these objects are ostensibly “real,” and does this change how the audience experiences them in performance?

Drawing on theories of fashion studies, costume scholarship, and forensic anthropology for human rights, as well as discourses of the theatre of the “real”, this paper will argue that the “real” clothing in *Antigonas Tribunal de Mujeres* attempts to perform onstage as subject, relic, and as what I am calling non-cadaverous human remains. Taking *Antigonas* as its main case study, but with forays into the worlds of high art installations by Doris Salcedo and Jamie Black’s

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<sup>4</sup> It is very common in art and performance about disappearance and human rights crimes for artists and mourners (those who have lost their loved ones to these crimes) to work together. It is also very common for the mourners to be the artists and vice-versa, such as in *Walking With Our Sisters*, which is a collaborative installation of over 1700 moccasin vamps (unfinished upper pieces), each pair beaded by different individuals or families who have lost a loved one to violence against Indigenous women. In this instance, the mourners are the artists as well. Recognizing this duality, I have taken to calling these collaborators artist-mourners or actor-mourners to keep in mind the complex roles and relationships to the performance and subject matter they most likely have.

outdoor public installations of *The ReDRESS Project*, this paper will also ask whether the “real” quality of the clothing is important and how a deeply interrelated understanding of clothing and selfhood contributes to the affective nature of empty clothing in performances of disappearance. At the same time, this paper asks whether body-less clothing might actually maintain more vitality and ghostly energy when they stand alone, rather than when they are manipulated by a human actor or performer.

Before we can explore how these clothing items function or perform in *Antigonas* and other performances, we must first understand how clothing and personal identity are interrelated. There are a number of vantages from which we might approach the question of clothing and identity, and work to understand the conflation of body and clothing, identity and adornment, in the performances at hand. A number of scholars have written about clothing as identity from a fashion and dress scholarship point of view, while others such as Aoife Monks, approach the question through costumes and actors, and scholars such as Nina Felshin adopt an art historical approach. Another potentially fruitful point of entry, and one which is especially relevant to this line of inquiry, is forensic anthropology for human rights, a field which uses both human remains and clothing as remains to do the work of identifying and returning the bodies of disappeared and murdered people to their loved ones, as well as to provide evidence for the prosecution of human rights abuses, all of which *Antigonas* also performs. Following the discussion of clothing, the body, and individual identity, this paper will turn to a discussion of the “real” in performance to examine the role of the “real” clothing in *Antigonas* in contrast to Salcedo and Black’s use of clothing to address real issues, without using the actual clothing of the disappeared.

To begin with, we take a look at scholarship coming from the fields of fashion and dress studies, fields which have made a strong case for the intimate relationship of identity, personhood, and clothing. In the introduction to their edited collection entitled *Body Dressing*, Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson identify a gap in scholarship in matters of body and

dress (3). Despite previous scholarship on clothing and fashion (Entwistle and Wilson 2-3), and a more recent turn across disciplines to matters of the body and embodiment (Entwistle and Wilson 3), Entwistle and Wilson lament the lack of scholarship investigating what they see as an obvious connection and overlap between the two. This collection then, is their attempt to address the gap and to begin the conversation on the body and clothing.

In her article in the collection, entitled “Dress Needs: Reflections on the Clothed Body, Selfhood and Consumption,” Kate Soper revisits Descartes’ second *Meditation* in which he is concerned with “the existence of the so-called external world” (17). In this *Meditation*, Descartes asks whether his intuition of the world is solely “acquired through the act of sight” or also “by intuition of the mind” (Soper 18), and uses the example of “human beings passing in the street below, as observed from a window” (Descartes qtd in Soper 18). Even though he may not be able to see actual human flesh, as it is obscured by hats and coats, he can understand despite this that there are underneath these hats and coats, humans beings. Following this reflection, Soper explains that

“the point is not that clothing is essential to personhood, but only that, once clothed the presumption of personhood is overriding [...] Clothing, then, signals a human wearer, and in doing so is tied into our conceptions of dignity, personhood and bodily integrity” (18)

It is important here to note that the *context* of the clothing is also important and not immutable. While Descartes saw clothing in motion on a street below his window and could thus intuit a person wrapped up therein, clothing on a rack or pressed into stacks in a department store may signal something rather different. While a hat and coat walking below a window may indicate an immediate person beneath those clothes, an oft-worn crumpled shirt on a bedroom floor could indicate an individual with whom the viewer may have a personal relationship, and a never-worn pressed stack of shirts may suggest instead the future *potential* of bodies--and the potential of

consumers--in those clothes, while a dress hung by a highway with flowers or a wreath might suggest a lost and mourned body.

While Soper's initial discussion of Descartes' second *Meditation* is somewhat semiotic in nature, suggested in her assertion that clothing "signals" a human wearer, but failing to ascertain whether clothing *is* in the end "essential to personhood" (18), she goes on to identify what makes clothing poignant; that it outlasts our fleshy, human bodies while also being in many ways *of* the body. She writes "it is arguably this combination of proximity with the organic body and alterity from it that is responsible for the poignancy of lost or no longer needed clothing." (Soper 22) With this in mind, we might begin to think about the disembodied clothing of the disappeared as a form of human remains, as that which is of the body and individual in life but remains much longer after death. Even more pertinent to this discussion is Soper's assertion that

"behind the horror of the holocaust images of piled-up clothing and jewellery is the sense of a world from which all personalizing sentiment has been deliberately eliminated or, worse, preserved, but only in an involuted mode in which it is made an object of derision." (21)

If the mass accumulation and haphazard effect of the piled-up clothing in the holocaust images suggest dehumanization and derision for life and dignity, then we might ask how a single item of clothing once owned and worn by a now-disappeared person, framed in a performance and demonstratively cherished in performance by a performer-mourner, suggests the inverse; dignity, individual identity, and affection. Further, Soper suggests that "garments bereaved of their owners" display a certain "ambiguity between adornment and relic," an assertion that is demonstrated in *TramaLuna Teatro's* ritualistic treatment of the items once owned by the disappeared and cherished by their loved ones, and which we will return to later in a discussion of clothing as relics in performance.



Joanne Entwistle, in her contribution to the collection, entitled “The Dressed Body,” also makes a case for the intimate relationship between body and dress, clothing and personhood. Tracing phenomenological arguments, as well as fashion theory, Entwistle pushes the connection further even than Soper, asserting that “the importance of the body to dress is such that encounters with dress divorced from the body are strangely alienating.” (36) She describes the relationship as a dialectical one, in which “dress works on the body, imbuing it with social meaning while the body is a dynamic field which gives life and fullness to dress” (36). In this description, each is infused with some aspect of the other, blurring the boundaries between cloth and skin. Indeed, Entwistle pushes the idea so far as to assert that dress “becomes an extension of the body which is like a second skin” (45). Following this, Entwistle’s treatise goes on to connect this co-constituting relationship between dress and body to an inter-subjectivity outside the body. That is, that dress is a “social phenomenon, an important link between individual identity and social belonging” (47). While her assertion might suggest that we think about dress as a social phenomenon and social belonging in the sense of belonging to a culture or community (as a concrete example, we might think of Hasidic Jewish men donning black hats and coats), we might also think about dress inter-subjectively as having meaning and affect personally between individuals. For example, in her book *The Bone Woman*, a memoir of her work as a forensic anthropologist for human rights, Clea Koff describes how women in Bosnia helped the anthropologists exhuming the mass graves identify their loved ones by the stitching on their clothes--stitching they themselves had crafted and easily recognized (152). Here, the personal act of stitching a loved one’s clothing marked out that loved one as recognizable even after their bodies had gone beyond recognition. The identification based on those stitchings attests to a strong inter-subjective relationship between individuals as mediated by clothing.

In visual arts, disembodied clothing exploded as subject matter in the 1990s, more than in any decade before. Nina Felshin writes

“Clothing, more than any other object or possession, is closely identified with the body of the absent wearer. It acts as a surrogate by suggesting his or her presence. It can also signify loss. In the context of the AIDs crisis, which has had a devastating impact on the art world, it is hard not to read this art of empty clothes as a literalization of loss or a *memento mori*, a reminder of death” (20).

The 1990s also saw the end of many of the dictatorships in Latin America, many of whom practiced forced disappearance as a device for terror, and in many Latin American artworks we see these losses “literalized,” as Felshin calls it, in empty clothing (Salcedo 2015).

Across their works, fashion theorists Soper, Entwistle, and Wilson, and art historian Nina Felshin seem to agree that disembodied clothing, whether a costume discarded backstage (Monks 140), an outfit on a mannequin in a museum (Wilson 1), or a silver mylar dress on a bed of the same material (Felshin 21), inevitably conjures feelings of melancholy, the uncanny, ghostliness and haunting, and unease. The absence of the body suggests something off, wrong, or unnatural. Indeed, if as Entwistle suggests, “the dressed body is a fleshy, phenomenological entity that is so much a part of our experience of the social world, so thoroughly embedded within the micro-dynamics of social order, as to be entirely taken for granted” (36), then dress without a body jumps out at us, disrupting our “normal” experience of the world and our ability to take it for granted. Turning to empty dress performances and artworks with forced disappearance and mass murder as their point of inquiry, we can see how the disruption of the normal, and the feeling of unease, are hugely magnified. Wilson writes “there are dangers in seeing what should have been sealed up in the past” (1). Her use of the phrase “should have been” is crucial for our inquiry here. When people are forcibly disappeared, such as the *falsos positivos* in Colombia, and never returned to their loved ones, the living are left in limbo, unable to fully grieve or put to rest their loved ones. Clothing and personal items become remains of the disappeared, but also reminders of what “should have been” and what has not been: the proper recovery and burial of their loved ones remains.

Fashion and clothing studies are not the only fields which explore the relationship between identity and clothing, and in a discussion of performances that foreground mass disappearance and violence, we would do well to seek to understand how other fields close to this subject matter understand or conceive of the relationship between clothing and bodies. Forensic anthropology relies heavily upon clothing in the work of recovering and identifying victims of crimes. As anyone who has watched CSI or other forensic or crime shows knows, clothing and cloth fibres are often the keys to identifying a victim or murderer in these dramas. Turning to the sub-field of forensic anthropology for human rights more specifically, which is generally practiced by NGOs including the United Nations and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team,<sup>5</sup> during or after mass atrocity takes place, we can begin to unpack the scientific and affective roles of clothing in both identifying un-identified bodies, serving as evidence in human rights tribunals, as well as in the grieving processes of families whose loved ones have disappeared. In her memoir on her work for the United Nations as a forensic anthropologist for human rights in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, anthropologist Clea Koff returns again and again to the importance and usefulness of clothing to the forensic team in helping to identify the bodies they exhumed from unmarked mass graves.<sup>6</sup> Writing about her first dig in Kibuye, Rwanda, Koff recalls:

From working in the autopsy tent, I already had a good idea of what I would be seeing: clothing, passports, baptismal cards, books. These items might be our only leads on people's identities [...] Bill told me that we might be able to stage a Clothing Day, when

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<sup>5</sup> In Spanish, *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF)*. More can be read about them here: <http://www.eaaf.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> I have written on Koff's book and Adam Rosenblatt's chapter "Digging for the Disappeared" in a previous paper for a course. While some of the quotes I pull might be the same, the focus of each paper is rather different. While the previous paper focused more generally on performance as forensics and alternative forms of justice, here my concern is with the performance of clothing on stage and in artworks as possible ghosts, relics, and perhaps even subjects in their own right. This paper certainly builds on ideas I started with in the previous paper, but takes a material-centric and dress-studies approach.

survivors of the Kibuye attacks would come to the church, look at the clothing recovered from the grave, and make presumptive identifications (60).

Of course, as Koff points out, “clothing really does provide just a presumptive identity” for forensic anthropologists (70). Clothing gets borrowed and stolen in situations of crisis and survival. While for scientific purposes clothing is just one key to identifying bodies and providing evidence of crimes against humanity, Koff refuses to negate the affective and personal importance of clothing to the survivors whose loved ones were killed. This becomes especially clear when she discusses a father and daughter who attended the Kibuye Clothing Day despite the fact that they knew his wife and her mother had died there, because they “still wanted that bit of proof or that bit of memory” (Koff 73). Later, in her recollections of her time in Bosnia after the war, Koff, as mentioned previously, describes how the women of Srebrenica could recognize their dead through the stitching on their clothes (152). Living under siege for so long, Koff explains, the women had patched and re-patched clothing, creating unique and easily identifiable stitching and patch patterns (152). She writes,

they could recognize their own stitches, could describe the type of mending they did and what material they used, and remembered exactly what part they had mended. In the morgue we found that where, say, head hair was no longer present on a body, a triangular fabric patch was still holding together the inside of a trouser pocket, the color of the thread still vibrant, a beacon illuminating the varied stitchwork that could identify the man whose trousers they were (152).

Despite the scientific limits of these “preliminary” identifications, for our purposes here, this link between clothing and identification after atrocity, as well as the suggested affective qualities of this clothing to the survivors and mourners, is of special importance.

In his chapter “Caring for the Dead,” which takes up sections of Koff’s book, and discusses forensic anthropology for human rights as a field in general, Adam Rosenblatt argues for a more caring forensic anthropology, one more attuned to the needs and rights of the

families of the disappeared (167, 174). In his discussion, he pushes the relationship between object and individual personhood so far as to say that, when a person has disappeared and loved ones have no body to bury and to grieve, an object or clothing item becomes as precious as to be like a piece of that person. This we might call, as I have written above, “non-cadaverous human remains.” Along these lines, Rosenblatt writes, “having relatives view the clothing found on dead bodies can be a crucial aid to the scientific effort of identification. But there is no way to separate that purpose from the fact that washing and preparing the clothes for viewing is also an intimate act of care” (176). In this chapter, Rosenblatt identifies one of the acts of violation perpetrated against victims of atrocity--the placement of bodies by the perpetrators of violence beyond the reach and care of families and loved ones (170). One of the acts of redress which forensic anthropologists assist in undertaking is the repatriation of remains to the families (Rosenblatt 170-1), but Rosenblatt finds that bodily remains are not the only remains that families cherish, suggesting that “not all the objects of care must be *sentient*” (180, italics in original). Sometimes families even find bodily remains “woefully abstracted” from the person they knew and loved, and find they have a much more personal and intimate reaction to the personal *objects* of the dead, such as clothes, or in one case of one mother, a jar of Nivea cream that still had the finger marks of her son in it (Rosenblatt 186). Indeed, “the world of forensic investigations, especially of mass graves, is one of living mourners, lost objects, and dead bodies that exist somewhere in the hazy middle ground between objects and persons” (Rosenblatt 184).

While the writings of Soper, Wilson, and Entwistle, as well as the works of Monks, Koff, and Rosenblatt explore convincingly the affective, social, and intimate relationships between clothing and body, whether in the museum, on stage, or in the grave, a number of them also note that the relationship between body and clothing exists in the material world of smells, fluids, and DNA transfers. In the performance of *Antigonas Tribunal de Mujeres*, in the middle of her monologue, one of the women held her son’s shirt up to her face and inhaled deeply.

Holding the shirt tenderly, she explained to the audience in a bittersweet tone, “it still smells like him.” A look at theatrical costumes, as Monks argues, also suggests this intimate, material transfer between body and clothing. She writes

The work [of performance] may appear to disappear, but the imprint of that work, as if in a faulty wax mould, continues in the textures, smells and shapes of the fabric left behind. Costumes hanging in a wardrobe, or on a mannequin, bear the traces of a lost performance and a lost body, in their sweat marks, frayed edges, indentations of absent elbows or knees. (*The Actor in Costume*, 140)

The question of the real in performance rears its head here, and is a tricky one. As Aoife Monks points out, “by thinking about costuming we can imagine theatre as a contradictory place of illusion where audiences can look at real clothes” (*The Actor in Costume*, 3). As the mother’s utterance about the smell of her son’s shirt suggests, the audience is meant to understand the visceral reality of the loss of a loved one to government kidnapping and brutal violence. Does it matter that the shirt, the mother, and the grief she expresses are, as far as the audience knows, those of an actual disappeared son and grieving mother? Does it matter if the shirt and the actor have performed so many times that the smells once imbued in the shirt have dissipated? In other performances involving disembodied clothing to represent the disappeared, the provenance of the clothing is ambiguous and undefined. In Salcedo’s piece, the clean, pressed, and identical appearances of the shirts suggest that they were never actually worn by the men they represent. In Black’s hanging red dresses we find unresolved ambiguity because each dress was donated individually by members of the Winnipeg community (Black 2014), and the audience or viewer has no way of knowing exactly who wore the dress or where it comes from, or whether it “really” belonged to one of the missing women.

Carol Martin, author of *Theatre of the Real*, acknowledges the “emerging consensus that theatre of the real includes documentary theatre, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre-of-fact, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, restored village

performances, war and battle reenactments, and autobiographical theatre.” (5) This vast range of forms proposes, along with Martin’s further musings on the subject, that “theatre of the real” is a tenuous and difficult thing to define. Without pinning down one definition of the “real,” Martin focuses on what it *does* rather than what it *is*. Theatre of the real, she writes, seeks to “to represent reality, and to be part of the circulation of ideas about our personal, social, and political lives” (Martin 4), and she acknowledges that reality in the theatre never in effect means access to the original. Theatre of the real, however much it is invested in real “personal, social, and political lives,” is always a copy of a copy, repeated again and again, “even as it employs what [Walter] Benjamin calls the ‘aura’ of the original” (10). Following this--somewhat indefinite--definition, *Antigonas Tribunal de Mujeres* certainly appears to fall within the realm of “theatre of the real,” as a play which takes on the subject of contemporary Columbian politics, involves actors who are also immediately affected by the very real violence, and clothing and objects that the performers tell us were once owned, worn, and cherished by people who have since been forcibly disappeared. At the same time, the gesture of inhaling the scent of a son’s shirt is repeated, night after night in different theatre in different countries, might be the ‘real’ act without being the original. And for me, as a viewer and audience member of both Salcedo’s piece and the work of *TramaLuna*, the reality of the atrocities were conveyed just as easily both through the impersonal but fleshy white stacks of dress shirts as well as through the relationship on stage of the women to the clothing of their loved ones.

The intimate, dialectical relationship and fuzzy boundaries between clothing and bodies, dress and identity, are well explored and documented at the intersections of the disciplines of fashion and dress studies, costume history, and forensics, providing a sound theoretical platform from which to ask the question: how do these clothes perform in theatre and art? Are they symbol, object, prop, subject, character, ghost, or relic? Or all at once? While these fields agree that disembodied clothing unequivocally gestures toward a human body, the way in which this disembodied clothing is read and is performed in theatre and visual arts is worth exploring.

If we begin with the premise that clothing and personhood or identity are so intimately related, and if, more specifically, we understand the clothing of the disappeared as a form of non-cadaverous human remains, then we might read clothing in performance as subject itself. Monks, in her article “Human Remains: Acting, Objects, and Belief in Performance,” recalls two performances which involved bringing physical human onstage. The first was a performance of Hamlet by the Royal Shakespeare Company which planned to use the real skull of one Andre Tchaikowsky in the run of the show, before news of the “real” skull was leaked to the press and caused an uproar and anxiety about the use of real human remains in performance (356). The second was a performance by queer performer Ron Vawter about Roy Cohn and Jack Smith, in which Vawter used the ashes of Smith mixed with his makeup in order to enhance his embodiment of him. In this second performance, the audience and public had no knowledge of the presence of the ashes (Monks, “Human Remains,” 370). Monks’ analysis of these two performances, and of the anxiety caused by the real skull, compares these remains in performance to relics, taking on a certain subject-hood in performance that threatens the hegemony of the live human actor on stage (Monks, Human Remains, 358). In *Antigonas Tribunal de Mujeres*, the clothing and objects, if we take them seriously as non-cadaverous remains, also take on a certain status as relic, imbued with the individuality of the disappeared men and performatively and ritualistically cherished onstage by the actors. As subjects, the men we never see remain at the centre of the play, their names and stories ever at the front of our, and the performers’, thoughts. In some ways, returning briefly to the question of the “real,” it matters less whether or not the clothing truly is the clothing of the dead, but rather that the audience has been told that it is, elevating it to the status of relic.

An alternative way to approach the question of their performance is to turn to the idea of ghosts, an image that is recalled often in descriptions of disembodied clothing, as we saw earlier in Wilson and Entwistle’s uses of descriptors such as “ghostly” and “haunting” when describing clothing on racks and in museums. Monks’ last chapter in her book *The Actor in*



*Costume*, is concerned with dressing and presenting ghosts on stage. “The problem for modern ghosts” she writes, is the sheer materiality of the body and the costume which seemed to break the illusion for audiences who find such ghosts ridiculous” (120). Monks begins by discussing ghosts as characters in performance that are played by actors, such as the ghost of Hamlet’s father, who up to the 19th century, at least on English stages, were embodied by actors and dressed in costumes (*The Actor in Costume*, 124). TramaLuna Teatro’s performance of *Antigonas*, however, performed a rather different kind of ghost on stage, by presenting clothing on stage that was in fact ghosted *by* a body. The absence of a body in clothing in art, performance, and exhibition, Entwistle (36) and Soper (22) agree, gives to that clothing a ghostly, alien, melancholic quality, suggestive of bodies that have gone before. In *Antigonas*, the materiality of the clothing is *not* doubled by the materiality of a body, which might disrupt the “illusion” and make them “ridiculous.” Instead, the materiality of the shirts in *TramaLuna*’s performance do the inverse of what Monk identifies as the problem for modern ghosts--they conjure rather than disrupt--precisely because their materiality is haunted by the missing materiality of a body, rather than doubled by one.

Later in stage history, ghosts became less frequently “acted” by a performer onstage, and more often staged through the psychological and emotional reactions of the live characters to the ghost (Monks, *The Actor in Costume*, 124). The repression of the actor-ghost also resulted in “the preference for objects over actors” (Monks, *The Actor in Costume*, 129) for conveying haunting and ghostliness. In their objecthood, then, and in their disembodied state, the clothes in *Antigonas*, and perhaps also in *The ReDRESS Project*, might be the most haunting ghosts of all.

Monk tells us that “costumes [...] have a peculiar half-life: they are not quite objects and not quite actors” (*The Actor in Costume*, 121). In *Antigonas*, the clothes on stage also inhabit a peculiar threshold. They are almost subject/relic in Monks’ sense of these words, in that they are imbued with the subjecthood of the absent men and act as more-than-props in performance.

However, we might also look to Andrew Sofer's definition of props on stage to understand how the actors use the objects of their loved ones on stage, and to make clear exactly how these items might transcend the role of prop in performances after atrocity. Sofer's definition of props relies in part upon actor manipulation. Objects become props, he suggests, through an actor-object relationality (31). In *Antigonas*, the shirts and shoes of the disappeared, as well as the teddy bears and other objects once owned by the boys and men, *are* manipulated by the actors, but one wonders if they benefit or gain a kind of life from this manipulation any more than they might if they stood somehow on their own, as clothing in other artwork about disappeared persons does. Further, if they do not absolutely *require* the manipulation of the actors, then perhaps they are less prop and more relic or subject/character, retaining vitality and a tenuous subjecthood on their own.

We might look, as a counter-example, to Salcedo's installation art in which involves stacked white men's shirts impaled by iron rebar, and which takes as its subject the same phenomenon of disappeared Columbian men as does *Antigonas*. In Salcedo's installation, no loved one or actor is in the scene manipulating the clothing, but the materiality and brutality of the iron rebar piercing stacked dozens of soft (fleshy?), pressed white shirts is haunting and disturbing all the same (Salcedo 2015). If we follow Entwistle's assertion about "our 'normal' experience of dress and its relationship to the body; namely that it becomes an extension of the body which is like a second skin" (45), the pierced shirts push the boundaries of their clothing-ness even further as they suggest in fact pierced skin, or more accurately in the case of the disappeared men, skin pierced by the metal bullets of the military.

Alternatively, we could look to Jaime Black's *ReDRESS Project*, another use of clothing in performance that does not rely on performer manipulation. In *The ReDRESS Project*, Black collected 600 red dresses from people in Winnipeg and hung them in trees and public places around the University of Winnipeg campus as a memorial to and reminder of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada (Black 2014). Since this first exhibit, the

dresses have popped up across the country, sometimes under Black's direction, but often spontaneously by other individuals as well (Reiger 2015). The execution of the work is simple, but the effect is intense. Hung out of doors, the red dresses stand out against a stark background, and the wind seems to animate them and imbue them with extra ghostliness, drawing all the more attention to the painful absence of the bodies of these women. Hung last year in February in Bowness Park, Calgary, Alberta, the dresses stood out blood red against a white and brown winter background and bare trees, impossible to ignore and eerie in their silent, windy dance.<sup>7</sup> Despite the lack of human presence or immediate human manipulation (clearly someone had to hang them there), they contained a ghostly energy and vitality. In the end, just as Monks' remarks upon "the shifting status of human remains as body, theatrical property, conduit for acting [...], memento mori for audience and Hamlet alike, debased object-as-prize, and, finally, evidence of a lost performance" (359), so too do the shirts and shoes in *Antigonas* maintain a "shifting status" as alternatively non-cadaverous human remains, body, ghost, prop, costume, and relic.

Ultimately for me, sitting in the theatre watching the performance of *Antigonas* this fall, I found the objects fell a little flat on stage when performing with the living, breathing, dancing, grieving women. The grief of the women, the pain-in-limbo they conveyed, was much more tangible and vibrant to me as an audience member than the ghostliness of the white collared shirts and shoes they presented to us as evidence in the tribunal. If we subscribe to Monk's assertion that remains on stage struggle with the performer for subjecthood, sometimes overtaking the actor, we might say that in the struggle for subjecthood, the performing women won over the performing objects. In fact, unlike *The ReDress Project* and Salcedo's white stacked shirts impaled by iron rebar, the objects in *Antigonas* failed to speak for themselves. Instead, they appeared onstage more as props in conveying the women's pain than anything

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<sup>7</sup> These impressions are from a personal conversation with a friend who had just seen them in Calgary last February when we met for coffee. She shared the photos with me and described the effects of coming across the dresses unexpectedly without knowing what they were about.

else, or relics in the power they hold *for the women*, which we the audience (or perhaps more accurately me the audience since I cannot speak for others) only perceive through the actors. In this sense, they might even be more akin to the modern ghost, which Monk outlines in her book. This modern form of ghost, most notably noted by Monks in Jonathan Pryce's performance of Hamlet (*The Actor in Costume*, 124-129), is perceptible through the internalized psychology and emotional reactions of the actor/character seeing and experiencing the ghost's presence, rather than through another actor as ghost. In *Antigonas*, the ghosts become "real" to us through the women's interpretations of, rather than directly from, the clothing. All the same, I wonder what the shirts and shoes might have said had they been left to stand on their own and speak for themselves.

*The ReDRESS Project © Jamie Black*

*Image © Zainub Rahman, 2015, Calgary, AB*

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