

# dismantling

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CONTEMPORARY

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ART IN CHILE

the

edited by florencia san martín,

carla macchiavello cornejo

& paula solimano

nation

***DISMANTLING  
THE NATION***

**CONTEMPORARY ART IN CHILE**



# ***DISMANTLING THE NATION***

**CONTEMPORARY ART IN CHILE**

**EDITORS:**

**FLORENCIA SAN MARTÍN,  
CARLA MACCHIAVELLO CORNEJO,  
AND PAULA SOLIMANO**

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## INTRODUCTION

# Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile

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Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano

In December 2019, two editors of this volume, Florencia San Martín and Paula Solimano, met at a coffee shop in Brooklyn, New York, to prepare the open call for a panel at the 2020 annual conference of SECAC, the US Southeastern organization devoted to education and research in the visual arts. Our aim for what was titled “Art and Politics under Chile’s Estallido Social” was to put together a panel on artistic practices responding to the massive social uprising that erupted in Chile on October 18, 2019, the biggest revolt since the end of Augusto Pinochet’s military dictatorship (1973–1990). In what was known as Chile’s *estallido social* (social uprising), *la revuelta* (the revolt), *Crisis social* (Social crisis), or *Primavera de Chile* (Chilean Spring), millions were taking to the streets to demand both the end of the neoliberal model imported for the first time into Chile during Pinochet’s regime, under the advice of US economist Milton Friedman, and the end of centuries of coloniality from Western Europe, the United States, and local elites.<sup>1</sup> They were stating, as one of the protests’ main mottos read, that they would not stop “Until Dignity Becomes the Norm.” Living in New York City while researching contemporary art in the Americas, we were watching the formation of local assemblies to address the violations of human rights under the right-wing administration of President Sebastián Piñera and demand for structural changes, to which citizens from all backgrounds—from Chilean exiles to Nuyoricans and other communities, from children to the elderly—attended. Through social media, rumors, and hearsay, on the other hand, we heard of large parts of the population gathering not only in Chile but also abroad to create murals, performances, and collective actions.

We observed a massive and transnational epistemological turn in terms of what was commonly understood as Chile and contemporary art and culture. We therefore called for papers covering the ways in which artistic practices were participating in this unprecedented social movement in and beyond Chile, engaging with feminism and performance, digital technologies, Indigenous cosmovisions, appropriation and resignification of cultural symbols and mottos from Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular (1970–1973), and more. Taking place remotely due to the global pandemic crisis, the panel received many proposals from art historians, curators,



artists, and scholars who sought to think critically and fluidly about artistic practices taking place on the agitated streets of Chile, with multiple groups organizing abroad through solidarity endeavors engaging with politics and culture.<sup>2</sup> Aiming to turn some of these ideas into a special issue of a journal that could expand on these issues by paying attention to a broader understanding of contemporary art in Chile, Florencia and Paula invited Carla Macchiavello Cornejo to join the project and the original proposal continued to transform: We began discussing the possibility of an academic volume that would embody and enact thinking and living otherwise, and that could undo the logics of sovereignty of the nation-state by translating forms of writing and transmitting ideas into expanded modes of participation. How to attend to non-dominant epistemologies without force-fitting them into established intellectual models became a central matter of concern.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, questions of care (for all collaborators, styles, creative practices, and times) confronted us with the “publish or perish” question: How to de-accelerate in a neoliberal academic ambience that calls for the (over)production of new theories and discoveries within limited time frames.<sup>4</sup> This book is the result of the long-distance collaboration between all three co-editors alongside the contributors to this volume, who have helped us think through and face some of the challenges that decolonial feminist projects like this one entail.

Over the course of two and a half years, our book has taken on renewed meaning. Chile has undergone transformation through its social movement “Apruebo,” for instance, which led to democratic approval through a plebiscite for the writing of a new Constitution, and the election of a wide and diverse paritary constituent body that comprised professions from teachers, geographers, and agriculturists to lawyers and economists, and personal backgrounds such as the leaders of social movements, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, as well as left-wing and politically independent members of a young generation to take office as mayors and municipal councillors. Furthermore, in December of 2021, the majority-elected former student leader Gabriel Boric became its youngest president in the country’s history. Making visible the heated political, social, cultural, economic, and artistic discussions taking place not only during the social outbreak but also, and significantly, before and in relation to the contingent and agitated present, *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile* reflects on the air of optimism and the sense of uncertainty surrounding the future.

The constitutional process came to an uncertain halt after a plebiscite on September 4, 2022, in which a large majority of Chileans rejected the proposed draft. The draft envisioned a plurinational and multicultural state that would safeguard the autonomy of Indigenous peoples, and protect and care for women, minorities, children, carers, and so on, as the basis for Chilean society. A heavy media campaign of discredit, constant attacks on the constitutional process and its members that ran for months, increased acts of racism, hate speech, and physical violence fomented by supporters of the rejection, right-wing political parties, and the mainstream media, and fears of what a plurinational state might look like that reactivated nationalistic discourses and symbols were some of the forces at play in its rejection. As we write this editorial after the plebiscite, social movements keep

on organizing and looking into what kinds of actions need to be taken to move forward. We find strength in the raging energy, commitment to communities, and creative forms of critique and care explored by the contributors to this book and hope the transdisciplinary, intercultural, and cross-generational encounters it fosters can offer inspiration for generations to come.

As the first academic volume to theorize and historicize contemporary artistic practices and culture from Chile in the English-speaking language, *Dismantling the Nation* takes as its point of departure a radical criticism against the nation-state of Chile and its colonial, capitalist, heteronormative, and extractivist rule, proposing alternative forms of inhabiting, creating, and relating in a more fluid, contingent, eco-critical, feminist, caring, and decolonial world. While the practices discussed in this volume lie within the categories of art-making, curating, radical pedagogies, and museologies, thus contributing to current discussions within the sub-sectors of arts administration, art and politics, and artistic education, they also require being analyzed from the perspective of collective community practices, rituals and festivities, local crafts and trades, intervening in the field of art history and cultural studies in an attempt to both critique and actualize it. On the other hand, by covering media such as performance, sound, and film, the volume also contributes to dialogues on contemporary approaches to materiality and media.

*Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile* contributes to a broad scholarly discussion around decolonial methodologies, including the acknowledgment of broad geographical epistemic locations. Indeed, the authors attend to practices from distinct and distant locations in Chile—they decentralize their approach by discussing art and visual culture from the Atacama Desert to Wallmapu and Tierra del Fuego, from the Pacific coast to the Andes, as well as beyond the nation's modern borders. Analyzing how these practices refer to issues such as the environmental and cultural impact of extractivism, as well as memory, trauma, collectivity, and resistance towards neoliberal totality, this volume contributes to the fields of art history, as well as hemespheric, memory, ethnic, gender, and Indigenous studies, envisioning art history and visual culture from a transnational and transdisciplinary perspective.

## THE COLONIAL NATION

The nation-state we now know as Chile was formed in the early nineteenth century through a successful independence campaign led by European descendants, creoles, and mestizo patriots. Its emergence occurred within the larger context of bourgeois revolutions against traditional colonial rule across the region. This resulted in the creation of the cultural, political, and economic construct now known as Latin America. While Spain's cultural and political paradigms were replaced by the French Enlightenment's values of reason and "liberty," its economic logic was replaced by the British Empire's system of mining, railway, and maritime infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> With the exception of Haiti, whose revolution was led by African descendants aiming to create a sovereign

society based on a radical rejection of the colonial order, the new nation-states of Latin America, including Chile, were designed by white Creole or first-class citizens in the Americas under a set of values and regulations that kept former colonial epistemological, cultural, and religious paradigms almost intact. As the sociologists Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein wrote: “Independence did not undo coloniality; it merely transformed its outer form.”<sup>6</sup>

In the case of Chile, its nascent political and cultural institutions and values, and the emphasis on a metropolitan center in opposition to its peripheral geographies “mimicked,” to use the term coined by Homi K. Bhabha, the values of the European Enlightenment, imitating the colonizer by adopting its cultural habits.<sup>7</sup> In turn, driven by extractivists’ economic demands for natural resources and imperial ideological dreams to become a regional power, the Chilean elite pushed for territorial expansion, winning the War of the Pacific (1879–84) in the North, annexing the Pacific island of Rapa Nui to its Central region of Valparaíso, and colonizing the Mapuche in the South.<sup>8</sup> Applying tactics of internal colonialism, described by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang as “the biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the ‘domestic’ borders of the imperial nation,” Chile was born through the validation of modernity’s patterns, colonizing time, space, culture, and the ecosystem overall.<sup>9</sup>

In the realm of the fine arts, this sad colonial mimicry is shown, for instance, in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Founded in 1880 and relocated in 1910 for the occasion of the country’s centenary at the Parque Forestal in downtown Santiago, its building was designed by the French-Chilean architect Emile Jéquier after the Petit Palais in Paris, with its central hall proudly offering a permanent exhibition of the museum’s collection of classical replicas with mythological and religious content. The same can be said about museums of anthropology and their collections of ‘treasures,’ that is, everyday and ceremonial objects that were stolen and acquired through uneven practices from Indigenous peoples. This cultural dependency on Western metropolitan centers can also be seen in the “Four Great Masters” of Chilean painting—Juan Francisco González, Pedro Lira, Alberto Valenzuela Llanos, and Alfredo Valenzuela Puelma—who rendered Chile’s “nature” as a whole, i.e., its extravagant landscapes and Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, in a romanticist logic, the effect of which reproduced and internalized the binary opposition between civilized (European) and barbaric (Indigenous) in a nascent republic and society. Throughout the last century or so, artists and scholars alike have unpacked the way these works and the structures withholding them served hegemonic socioeconomic, cultural, and political agendas.

### **RESISTING THE CONTINUITY OF RACIAL NEOLIBERALISM**

Dominated by advanced forms of capitalism, extractivism, racism, linguistic discrimination, centralization, urban and metropolitan centers, and a politics of austerity, more than 200 years later, our present remains largely controlled by colonial and patriarchal values. Sexism and sexual abuse, the precarization of life, the racism and

marginalization manifested against Indigenous peoples and non-white immigrants, the dispossession of lands, militarization of so-called conflict zones, and sustained extractive practices, are constant reminders of the persistence of a colonial outlook in Chile. Within this context, and, following a student protest over a transit card fare hike of thirty Chilean pesos, the social uprising was joined overnight by an entire society whose ethics and values radically differ from the nation's authority. It included women, sexual dissidents, Indigenous peoples, the working- and middle class, *campesinxs*, and immigrants. As an effect, the uprising has articulated a massive social, political, and cultural space where important issues can be discussed and channeled into action. As mentioned above, this led to the creation of a paritary group of elected civilians to draft a new Constitution, and the election of an ecological and feminist administration that acknowledges a plurinational society and aims to create the conditions for a sovereign society based on dignity, care, and respect. And yet, as also mentioned above, in September 2022, the majority of Chileans overwhelmingly voted against the proposed new constitution, rejecting what would have been a decolonial, ecofeminist, and socially and culturally engaged charter.

Still, while this process, despite having lost, certainly addressed issues that have been historically ignored by the capitalist and colonial state in both theory and praxis, it is central to acknowledge a long history of radical actions and criticism that have preceded our current time of decolonial and collective hope, despite its failure. These actions and criticism commenced a long time ago, questioning the violence of the state toward human and non-human life. As proved throughout this volume, in the last six decades, artists, critics, curators, and other cultural practitioners have imagined, recovered, and/or adopted non-normative ways of sensing, making, and sharing to challenge the legitimacy and authority of institutions such as the Catholic Church, the national police force, the educational system, and the Constitution. Put shortly, their practices form a loose yet long history of critiquing the imposition of a ruthless capitalist mode of social interaction. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, the Yeguas del Apocalipsis (The Mares of the Apocalypse), a duo formed by Francisco Casas and Pedro Lemebel, created radical interventions in the public space, which exposed the violence that neoliberalism inflicts upon the sexually, racially, and economically oppressed and, in turn, critiqued the continuity of the dictatorship during the years of transition. Similarly, works created by artists living abroad due to forced or self-exile also attempted to show the constitutive relationship between the regime's interest in transnational capitalism and the human rights violations. In 1974, for example, Chilean-born, New York-based artist Juan Downey and a group of supporters gathered outside the International Telephone and Telegraph headquarters in New York wearing white T-shirts with the slogan "Chile sí, junta no." As Catherine Spencer argues in her essay, Downey's action *Chile sí, junta no* protested against the role that multinational companies held within the successful fabrication of the coup in Chile. Both of these actions resonate with one of the main slogans of the 2019 *estallido social*: "It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years," suggesting that the neoliberal model imported and implemented during the dictatorship has continued through the mask of a free market "inclusion" in "democratic" Chile.

More recently, a younger generation of artists have addressed this relationship between the colonial state and transnational corporations by critiquing extractivist projects that, supported by Chile's law, have been destroying Indigenous territories and forms of living and relating to the environment. As an effect, this has forced many members of their communities to migrate to the cities. Through the notion of *champurria*, the Mapuche concept to define a fluid identity, Mariairis Flores's essay discusses, among other practices, Mapuche poet Daniela Catrileo's book *Río herido*. In this work, Catrileo transforms the meaning of her last name, which means "cut river" in English, "into a wounded river" that allows her to "talk about her family history, characterized by the loss of language and forced migration."<sup>10</sup> In doing so, both Flores's essay and this book recall the words of Bolivian social theorist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, who, opposing coloniality of knowledge and internal colonialism wrote: "Ideas run, like rivers, from the south to the north and are transformed into tributaries in major waves of thought."<sup>11</sup> With the fight for water rights being at the center of Mapuche resistance (the current water legislation in Chile establishes that water rights are transferable and thus facilitates water rights to the markets), the Mapuche movement has been a long-standing force in the resistance to the nation-state of Chile and its colonial actions.<sup>12</sup> As argued by Flores Leiva, "despite variations in different territories, [the Mapuche movement] is consistent with its discourse for autonomy, demilitarization of *Ngüllumapu*, and the liberation of political prisoners."<sup>13</sup> The role played by Mapuche women defending their territories, worldviews, and sources of life, as made evident in the case of the resistance of Pehuenche leaders Nicolasa and Berta Quintremán to the construction of the hydroelectric dam, Ralco, in the Alto Bío-Bío area in the 1990s, has also been central to the mobilization of social movements and the questioning of the limitations, and possible challenges, of feminism.

Importantly, the first person that presided over the Constitutional Convention was Elisa Loncon, a Mapuche woman, scholar, and activist for Mapuche educational and linguistic rights. The election of Loncon is not surprising if we consider that, in Chile, intersectional feminist discourses have long informed decolonial and anti-hegemonic efforts and debates—in fact, they were doing so way before the *estallido*. As philosopher Kemy Oyarzún Vaccaro stated at the Latin American Studies Association Conference in 2022, responding to the question of: "What tensions led to the Chilean revolt and the constitutional process?": "Decolonial feminisms from the South have long paved the path towards non-binary and participatory democratization processes in popular revolts in Chile, including the unprecedented marches for free and non-sexist education and a non-homophobic society as exemplified at the 2018 Mayo Feminista."<sup>14</sup> May of 2018 saw the organization of massive feminist demonstrations, taking to the streets to protest against patriarchal education, health, and working conditions, and extending to LGBTQIA+ communities. The work of the Collective LASTESIS, moreover, mentioned by several authors in this volume, gathers momentum from this impulse and continues to build on the history of public protests and grassroots social movements led by women during the military-civic dictatorship and which have continued during the transition years.

While the role of Mapuche women and feminist collectives has been key for the development of decolonial social movements and flows that resist those hegemonic paradigms of the nation, so has been the case of women from other Indigenous groups. This is shown, for instance, in Aymara cultivator and cook Paly Carvajal Bórquez’s dialogue included in this volume, and in the Rapa Nui fight, often led by women, for repatriation of their moai and sacred belongings. “For me and my people this is of vital importance,” Rapa Nui representative Verónica Tuqui stated earlier this year, when the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in downtown Santiago returned, after 150 years of appropriation, the Tau moai to the island.<sup>15</sup>

Afro-descendant women have also embraced this decolonial impulse. For instance, the Colectiva Luanda in Arica, a port city in the North annexed to Chile in the War of the Pacific, has been working toward the revindication of the Afro-descendant peoples by empowering women in education, for they aim to intervene in the politics of a highly racialized country by dismantling social and racial bias. As Carolina Karl argues in her essay, more specifically, in the realm of art and culture, this can be seen in Tumbe, a cultural experience of Afro-descendant vindication that merges art and poetry by way of music, performance, dance, and crafts. On the other hand, influenced by their experiences of migration and racial bias in the nation-state of Chile, artists such as Afro-Colombian artist Astriz González have created works to expand on a broader and longer history of colonialism and racism in the Americas. In her 2021 video, *Pronunciar perejil en la masacre*, González, who at the time was living in Santiago, shows how the state tactics of systemic discrimination have been and continue to be used in order to “hygienize” colonial nations. The work recounts the Trujillo-led assassination of 5,000 civilians by the Dominican army in 1937, due to their inability to pronounce the trivial word *perejil* (parsley). This reinforced the installation of barbed wire and concrete blocks, which divided the Dominican territory from their Haitian neighbors.

These and other examples included in this volume show how intersectional decolonial creative practices and discourses propelled by feminist, eco-critical, and political approaches related to Chile have been formulated within and beyond the nation-state, with the prepositions “within” and “beyond” meaning, together, a collective criticism against the continuity in Chile of colonial, capitalist, sexist, and anthropogenic tropes. This book revolves around these efforts and their respective visual, performative, textual, and sonic representations, which we consider extended and urgent forms of conveying the political. It offers a series of notes in the form of essays, conversations, and artists’ reflections that do not aim to present a comprehensive and definitive state of the field in Chile, but rather a fluid and ongoing knot that, as a method, offers the potential to create and imagine a more inclusive, just, and loving world.

## **A KNOT ON METHOD**

This edited volume gathers original texts on Chilean contemporary art and visual culture that examine issues of race, gender, sexuality, capitalism, language, and the environment through a decolonial critique of the modern



idea of the nation. Offering a transdisciplinary and decolonial approach to the analysis of contemporary art and culture in Chile, this book emphasizes cross-references among the contributions and offers multiple frames of analysis and viewpoints, accepting the clashes and frictions that may take place among one another. While some authors, such as the members of colectiva somoslacélula, César Barros, Ángeles Donoso, and Amanda L. Chitar, advocate for the possibility of decolonizing Chilean art and history by intervening and editing seminal works of cinema, others, like the director of Arts and Projects at CAB Patagonia, María Luisa Murillo, acknowledge the importance of self-recognition within the many layers of colonial instances and structures. As she writes, “By coming to Puerto Yartou we are also re-colonizing. We know we are leaving a footprint and that the people who we work with here also leave their own footprints.”<sup>16</sup> By creating a contact zone between these often-contradicting perspectives, we aim to nurture a discussion on the limits of theories and methodologies and critically reflect upon the project’s own decolonial axis. The book aims to stay with the troubling complexities of Chilean history, recognizing that colonial legacies and their decolonial undoing are not only parallel threads that overlap, as in a textile’s interlace of warp and weft, but also become entangled in knots.

*Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile* includes essays by art historians, curators, artists, and scholars in Latin American studies, Indigenous studies, literature, and other related fields. It also includes short texts in the form of conversations between artists, curators, and the editors, as well as artist’s notes in which creators reflect upon their own practices and offer context for their appreciation and interpretation. Our aim with this format is to offer a glance at the multiple ways of writing, studying, and circulating epistemologies and creative practices in Chile—speaking in first, second, and third person, and even possibly in a multiplicity of persons, as the “fiction-fusion” practice of Camila Marambio and Ariel Bustamante suggest. Chile is a country in which the discipline of art history has long been articulated, mobilized, and understood in connection with literature, and more specifically poetry, building in the last few decades more explicit and deeper connections to theater, dance, and sound. In order to amplify and support this fluidity between disciplines, we must support the various forms in which writing and reading may take place. Thinking with Cecilia Vicuña’s poetic work on Andean *quipus* and Antonio Calibán Catrileo’s reflections on the Mapuche *witral*, we are reminded that textiles can be read and that weaving stores memories that are tactile and intangible.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the reader will find both essays that elaborate on artistic practices and methodologies through critical theories and refreshing genealogies, as well as voices from the artists themselves elaborating on their work, processes, imaginations, desires, and technologies—some of which, as mentioned above, are cross-referenced by other authors and create a series of echoes throughout the book. Several essays do away with linear narratives and sequential art histories, emerging from oral traditions, different forms of storytelling, and embodied memories. Drawing on Chicana examples like Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *This Bridge Called My Back*, and inspired by current editorial practices that uphold Indigenous knowledge and worldviews, we hope to continue to open up editorial spaces for imagining and practicing the multiplicity of worlds.<sup>18</sup>

## GEOGRAPHIES OF CARE

The book is organized into three sections following this introduction. The first, “Geographies of Care,” expands traditional notions of place and action to a plural intersectionality in which issues related to ecology, public space, and feminist epistemologies are at stake. Ranging from texts on artistic practices visualizing the horrors of the Nazi enclave of Colonia Dignidad to essays on current feminist movements developed in the context of the *estallido*, and the priority given to land and water defense, this section highlights how artistic practices, often driven through feminist programs, have challenged the authoritarian, gendered, and extractivist-driven nation-state of Chile. It also shows new relationships between feminism, politics, the environment, and public space, which go beyond and against traditional frameworks that relate womanhood to nature and domesticity. As the collective Las Tesis’s internationally acclaimed lyric reads, “It’s the cops, the judges, the state, the president; the oppressive state is a macho rapist.”<sup>19</sup>

The book opens with a challenge to how current discourses on ecological loss have been tied to gendered narratives concerning nature and victimhood. In her essay “Parched Narratives: Rethinking Lament and Ruins in Chile’s Central Valley,” Sophie Halart turns to the genre of tragedy, the practice of mourning, and the materiality of rubble in the works of Patricia Domínguez and Sofía de Grenade to explore ecosocial conflicts in Chile concerning water. Her focus is on the case of the Petorca municipality in Central Chile, which is now renowned for the impact that the avocado agrobusiness implanted in the 1990s has had. Drying up the water sources of the area, this industry has led “local inhabitants to rely on the sporadic visits of water tanks as their only source for drinking, washing and irrigation.”<sup>20</sup> In her exploration of lament as a performative ritual gesture and the potential afterlives of discarded matter, Halart argues that loss can be transformed into a platform of resistance and new narratives of survival, sustaining new collective choruses of voices. As Francisca Benítez’s notes “*Riego: A Language of Shared Water*” evince, the struggle over water rights should involve multiple bodies of knowledge, memories, and voices that have been managing irrigation systems for centuries, yet they have remained unseen and disregarded by hegemonic discourses on nature, resource management, and ecological sustainability. Benítez shifts our gaze from the parched fields created by monocultures and the agricultural sites abandoned by large-scale companies, to the everyday water usage of small-scale agricultural communities and the ancestral knowledge they continue to perform in the fields they work. Focusing on embodied memories manifested in the practice of “*riego botado*,” Benítez discusses other epistemologies and corporal knowledge that respond to communal understandings of water management, trying to show, through her own visual and pedagogical work, how this knowledge may be shared today beyond the confines of a male-dominated landscape.

Several essays and conversations in this section point toward how engaged relationships to the land can also bring us closer to hidden discourses of resistance, which unfold through corporal practices, everyday gestures, and orality. They suggest that embodied practices of care enable an approximation to discourses that can contest



normalized national collective imaginaries, and question who they seclude from, racialize, or incorporate into, the territory as valid citizens and political actors. In her artistic research-based practice, for instance, Astrid González has turned to orality as a form of transmission of ancestral knowledge in different Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities in Colombia, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. Moreover, her work shows how its multifarious incarnations, such as songs, rituals, and stories, form the basis of political movements. While González establishes bridges and relations of transnational solidarity, as in the case of her video-epistolary works connecting the ritual practices of women who bury their placentas and newborns' umbilical cords in Afro-Colombian communities from the Pacific coast and Mapuche communities from Temuco, she also delves into the racialized immigration policies that have affected Afro-communities and their intersections with continued forms of violence and racism against Indigenous peoples.

If the *estallido* demonstrated the radical potential of transformation that can occur through the cross-pollination of social movements, the presence of the Wenufoye, the Mapuche nation's flag, among LGBTQIA+ flags, spoke of the importance of addressing the intersections of coloniality, patriarchy, and the construct of the nation-state. On the one hand, the surge of street messages in mapuzungun evoked a vision of a plurinational state and manifested the current resurgence of marginalized languages and bodies in the public space. The experience of repression on the streets—including the systematic use of tear and pepper gas, the shots directed at the eyes of protestors resulting in hundreds of cases of ocular trauma, and criminalization of dissent—made patent for protestors the ongoing violence that the Mapuche and other Indigenous nations, as well as marginalized communities, have experienced throughout the nation's history. Moreover, the symbolic implications of the flag as an emblem for the nation and its autonomy points to the complexities of defining identities in the present, particularly in the case of the Mapuche diaspora. Mariairis Flores Leiva delves into the memories of violence and resistance of three Mapuche artists, performers, writers: Paula Baeza Pailamilla, Sebastián Calfuqueo, and Daniela Catrileo, all of whom live in Santiago, share family histories of displacement and migration, and form part of the Mapuche collective Rangĩntulewfũ (between rivers), which in their own words “revolves around the possibility of a Mapuche feminism.” Writing from a situated perspective as a curator, art historian, and friend of the artists, Flores Leiva takes on the image of the river that appears in their works to dwell on the complexities of the much-debated Mapuche concept of *champurria*. This concept defines a fluid identity and points to the self-determining construction of critical positions that contest hegemonic nationalistic imaginaries.

Similarly, María Luisa Murillo reminds us of the complexities of past and present colonial relations through her work at the Alberto Baeriswyl Museum-House (CAB Patagonia, for short), a house-museum residency located in the Isla Grande of Tierra del Fuego. Murillo recalls the colonial wounds inscribed in this southernmost archipelago as different processes of migration at the turn of the nineteenth century and beginning of the

twentieth, which, in an attempt to modernize and also “improve” the racial profile of the nation, brought a series of mostly European settlers to colonize the region. Colonization in the area was directly tied to the extraction of minerals and the development of a sheep and lumber industry (the latter still ongoing), as well as to the violent removal and extermination of Indigenous peoples. Reflecting on the complexities of colonial ancestries and heritage in contemporary Chile, and the trouble of romanticizing the Indigenous—particularly without attending to different forms of violence and displacement that has affected the region—CAB Patagonia complicates neat accounts of settler-colonial narratives, what constitutes archives in the region, and the fundamental role of the corporeal in rethinking the ways in which ecotourism, extractivist industries, and different forms of inhabiting are operating today in these territories.

Practices of care associated with feminist values of respect for others can also extend from land, water, and peoples to the unlikely subject of the contested archives of fascism. What could feminist, caring approaches to traumatic archives, involving sexual abuse and torture, look like? Carl Fischer, for instance, when examining the transdisciplinary work of writer and illustrator Lola Larra, performer and printmaker María Verónica San Martín, and filmmakers Cristóbal León y Joaquín Cociña, describes the turn from visual mapmaking to sense-based approaches, which are largely centered around hearing, as a shift from the faraway and disembodied aesthetics of fascism to those of closeness, attachment, and empathetic care. If the hegemony of eyesight goes hand-in-hand with surveillance, as exemplified by Colonia Dignidad, moving away from it may bring us closer to a sensuous proximity.

The political rebelliousness of non-hegemonic bodies is at the center of Bernardita Llanos and Milena Grass Kleiner’s essay, which delves into the continuity and transformation of feminist street practices and dissident sexual politics. Starting from the combative artistic legacy of collectives like the Yeguas del Apocalipsis, the authors focus on two case studies of current feminist performance collectives that confront sexual repression, women’s oppression, and the discrimination of non-normative bodies. These are Cheryl Linette’s project La Yeguada Latinoamericana and the performance of LASTESIS, “Un violador en tu camino.” As Llanos and Grass Kleiner argue, the two collectives offer a feminist critique of neoliberal patriarchy and its necropolitics, which affects all bodies, including the more-than-human. Through a trans-species hybrid figure that moves its buttocks, “La Yeguada Latinoamericana” denounces male violence, heteronormativity, and speciesism, the suppression of the body in a capitalist economy that is organized for reproduction and capitalist profit. In making their performances accessible and public, LASTESIS, on the other hand, dissolve the boundaries between popular and high art, theory and practice, experts and participants. They do so by using simple choreographic movements and lyrics that reveal, nevertheless, informed discourses: adopting a pop-style and recycling older protest imagery from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, they enable the creation of a larger, mobile, collective body that unfurls complex feminist rage in a transnational context and effectively disrupts the status quo.

If the vision of a different Chile is inherently diverse, protest can take on a multiplicity of forms and sounds, from the epic and spectacular to the near invisible. This section concludes with a note by curator Ignacio Szmulewicz, who looks at seemingly insignificant and quiet forms of protest and the new places of enunciation that they articulate. Szmulewicz explores cases that reformulate the relation between aesthetics and politics from a contemporary perspective. He analyzes actions inspired by student movements that reimagine contestatory artistic interventions during the military-civic dictatorship, somatic experiences of travel that verge on contemporary spectacle, and apparently minimal actions happening beyond the borders of institutions. Alluding to the fable of the tortoise and the hare, particularly thought of as a race between unequal partners, he reminds us of the mysterious potential of art, which can touch and transform at a non-extractive pace, and the planetary need to de-accelerate and change our forms of interaction.

### TREMBLING ARCHIVES

“Trembling Archives,” the second section, centers around sonic and archival forms in artistic practices, highlighting a transdisciplinarity that lies at the core of Chilean art and culture, and which has yet to be studied. These texts acknowledge, revisit, and imagine the historical and contingent ties between art and sonic forms as well as the significance of these relationships for the creation of critical discourses against the hegemonic and unidisciplinary nation-state. Sounds may be perceived and recorded on the streets, in museums, or in the Central Valley. In her artist’s note, “Sounding Manifesto,” for example, Nicole L’Huillier recalls the principal sounds of the *estallido social* as a single vibrant mass of bodies. The streets are flooded by the sound of banging pots and pans—*cacerolazo*, a form of social protest expressing hunger—as well as whistles, chants, and sirens. Accompanied by a digital illustration, her manifesto explores not visual imagery, but the primacy of sound in contemporary artistic and activist expressions. L’Huillier draws on the notion of transduction—the transformations of energy that enable something to sound—in order to explore the *estallido social* as a form of resonating together. What memories become aurally stored and continue to be transduced into the future? What resonances do we carry forth? Certainly, the sound of *cacerolazo*, which was typically used in protests against Pinochet and has now revived in protests critiquing the continuity of Pinochet’s neoliberal legacy.

Similarly, in “Monstrous Nodes of Echolocation,” Gregorio Fontén expands upon his work of the same title, which weaves together sonic materials: these include the sound of police violence in Valparaíso during the social uprising and the “roar” by the “monster” (the public) at the Festival de la Canción Viña del Mar. Within this section, those sounds coexist with the songs of birds, four-eyed frogs, and Violeta Parra, which are discussed by Cecilia Vicuña and José Pérez de Arce in a conversation with curator Carolina Castro Jorquera. Taking sound as a form of cultural resistance, Pérez de Arce comments to Vicuña about an exhibition that he organized at the

Museo de Arte Precolombino, in which “people said things like, ‘I spent an hour in the exhibit with my eyes closed.’ And closing your eyes in an exhibit is really strange, right?’”<sup>21</sup> The need for listening to non-human beings is also addressed in the dialogue with Colectivo Últimaesperanza, who, discussing their artistic residency programs, public interventions, and research interests based in the southern region of Magallanes, emphasize the need for, as Ecuadorian artist Paul Rosero put it, “thinking with the body.” And because “the body is our tool for communicating [and] generating agency,” we must “know how to listen to it,” as well as to those of others. Working with the deep temporalities of glaciers and the colonial histories that traverse the Strait of Magellan and surrounding territories, Colectivo Últimaesperanza use video, light, and sound technologies to connect geological archives with hopeful multi-species futures.

By acknowledging and interpreting the relevance of sound in contemporary artistic practices and debates in Chile, artists and scholars alike challenge ocularcentrism and the geopolitical gaze. In her essay “Camouflage and deviations of memory,” Fernanda Carvajal analyzes the silences and holes surrounding the archive of Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis’s participation at the 1997 Havana Biennial and their underground actions at mental facilities. Due to the lack of documentation, she recalls the carnivalesque actions of Las Yeguas’s members that critiqued the homophobia of the Cuban government through the very rumors and collective speech that have preserved the action. Leaving behind just a few images and multiple narratives, she suggests that “Las Yeguas seem to have affected their audience more through the ears than the eyes.” In her words, moreover, “listening is inclined to affect and not just concept.” In opposition to Carvajal, in his artist’s note, “Impulse to Capture: A Spoken Portrait,” Matías Celedón expands upon his artistic-literary project that clips together quotes from the retired major Carlos Herrera Jiménez—in his voice—to express his criminal record as he worked as an army intelligence agent for Pinochet’s dictatorship. Based on recordings made for Santiago’s Central Library of the Blind, his text challenges the supremacy of sight. Furthermore, it is accompanied by a single image: a QR code, to be scanned by a camera phone instead of the human eye, which takes the reader to the original audio file.

In his analysis of the work by video-artist and filmmaker Tatiana Gaviola, Sebastián Vidal also points to the effect that sonic forms have in creating fear and nurturing disorientation. His text, in fact, echoes Fischer’s interest in alternative forms of mapmaking. During the 1980s, and specifically in the context of the Festival Franco-chileno de Video Arte, Gaviola employs tactics like playing *Gallinita Ciega*, a popular children’s game that consists of blindfolding and disorienting a player, in order to reflect upon the multiple forms of harassment and non-physical hunting during Pinochet’s regime. Aiming to build a non-hegemonic archive for works in performance, on the other hand, Carolina Karl, as mentioned above, devotes her article to the study of Tumbe, an Afro-African cultural expression in which members rock their hips to the rhythms of drums and perform choreographies that evoke daily activities and agricultural tasks from the geographic region. In “Tumbe: Afrodiasporic Arts in the Andes,” she discusses how the historically invisibilized community in Chile,

the Afro-African diaspora, has articulated aesthetic experiences in Tumbe, reclaimed artisanal techniques for making instruments and costumes, and reimagined and promoted communal practices. As a gesture of resistance to chilenization, Arévalo Karl argues that Tumbe can be considered a decolonizing tool, for it mediates between past, present, and future.

### FUTURITY AND THE ANTISTATE

Finally, the third and last section, “Futurity and the Antistate,” gathers texts on artistic practices and discourses that have been imagining alternative modes of living, creating, and sharing in the antistate—a term that remembers the antipoet Nicanor Parra and used here to identify a non-hegemonic and decolonial state within a tradition of non-canonical culture in Chile. This section emphasizes decolonial practices of unlearning and delinking to imagine more inclusive and caring pasts, presents, and futures. It does so by examining racial and ethnic realities that have long been ignored in the cultural construction of the nation-state through the lens of *mestizaje*, as well as transnational genealogies that expand and reframe art histories in Chile through solidarity and exhibition endeavors. Analyzing the relationship between multinational capitalism, extractivism, racial invisibility, and land occupation in ancestral lands, this section highlights, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have argued, that “decolonization’s essential meaning regards the return of land and sovereignty to Indigenous peoples.” It also calls for transnational and plurinational approaches, which help mobilize memory and meaning and deepen our understanding of a non-progressive, that is, a non-colonial, time.<sup>22</sup> Contributions to this section analyze visual practices and methodologies that have the potential to imagine alternative futures by unearthing different presents and pasts. In other words, they elaborate on radical artistic practices that, as art historian T.J. Demos has noted, “create possibilities in both decolonizing time—reversing conventional documentary’s ties to pastness, projecting the that-which-has-been into the what’s-to-come, and generating forces of creation beyond the mimetic doubling of reified and colonial realities.”<sup>23</sup>

In their essay “*\$hileyem* (Chile se acabó, The End of Chile): Decolonial Aesthetics and Indigenous Futurities Beyond the Settler State,” Antonio Catrileo Araya, Manuel Carrión-Lira, and Marcelo Garzo Montalvo examine “*\$hileyem*,” which, as they write, is “a dream that has emerged from various agents, activists, artists, Mapuche collectives and other Indigenous peoples [and is also] a desire that has traveled across borders, until reaching us here in Kumeyaay-iipay-Tipay and Payómkawichum territories, from where we are now living and writing together.”<sup>24</sup> Using the colonial languages of English and Spanish as well as Indigenous terms as a means of communicating different Indigenous experiences across the hemisphere, they relate this dream and desire with the work of Indigenous media collectives. They aim to “trace the colonial violence embedded in Chilean society [and] the ways in which these works negotiate self-determination [and] the possibility of autonomous

connections with *cosmovisión*/worldview where relationality is enacted through audiovisual creation and reflection.” Also examining the Mapuche resistance through a decolonial lens, Cristian Vargas Paillahueque offers a comprehensive historical analysis of Mapuche contemporary art and culture in the last thirty years, but now from within the nation-state.

The subsequent two essays look at transnational political and aesthetic connections between dissident discourses in and beyond Chile. Catherine Spencer’s text elaborates on Juan Downey’s *Video Trans Americas* (1976), mapping the artist’s contribution to cybernetic thinking in relation to repression in Chile and Latin America more broadly. Spencer argues that Downey’s approach was informed by “the body’s experience of networked subjectivity, and their reference to the confrontational eroticism and power imbalances that continue to shape the dematerialized interactions facilitated through communications media.” Verónica Tello’s essay, on the other hand, examines the reception of *Margins and Institutions* in Australia and resignifies this cultural landmark through a refreshing understanding of transpacific experiences and migration that considers ethical, political, and economic bias. Tello destabilizes commonly held understandings of the much-discussed monograph *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile since 1973* (1986) by the French-born, Chile-based cultural critic, Nelly Richard, as she delves into the forgotten archives of a transnational exhibition project titled *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile: An Audiovisual Documentation*. Co-curated by Richard with Chile-born, Australia-based artist Juan Dávila, the exhibition toured across Australia in 1986, and responded, according to Tello, not only to the desire to inscribe a marginalized art scene in international circuits while contesting colonialist logics, but also to serve as a support structure for a migrant artist like Dávila. The artist, she argues, moved into a context of racialization, lack of visibility of Latin American artists, and the violent dispossession of migrant bodies in Australia. Engaging in an embodied history, Tello explores the complex geopolitics that the project formed part of, pitting peripheral emergencies with international art circuits, and the transpacific exhibition history between Chile and Australia initiated by Dávila.

In their artists’ notes, “Unlearning as a Collective Tactic: Our Place in the Struggle,” colectiva somoslacélula employs the video-essay as both an artistic format and a popular education tool “to activate insurgent memory.” Revising the archives of the historical process of the Agrarian Reform in Chile which started in the mid-1960s and culminated during Salvador Allende’s government, colectiva somoslacélula uses editing to complicate linear narratives on modernization in the context of the construction of a socialist state, attending to subaltern and Indigenous bodies, voices, and histories. In the conversation with one of the editors titled “Cooking, Knitting, and the Cultivation of the Whole,” Paula “Paly” Carvajal Bórquez proposes the idea of cultivation, rather than the categories “artist” and “artisan,” to discuss her diverse practices. Drawing on Diaguaita culture, territory and different denominations, Paly addresses how doll-making is passed on in contemporary Diaguaita communities through oral traditions, and is personalized with seeds and herbs, as well as individual and collective experiences. Her dolls go beyond the practices of fabric arts, as they articulate nutritional heritage, cooking traditions, and

hand-made objects. Demian Schopf also focuses on the northern landscapes of the Andean highlands where cultures have historically met and migrated. In his text “Ptoschí,” Schopf takes readers on a multi-temporal journey from the mining town of Potosí to the *diabladas* of Afro-Andean descendants in Oruro. He joins colonial paintings with a history of *apus*, sacred popular rituals, and prehispanic gods. As Eduardo Galeano famously described, a solid silver bridge could be constructed with the silver extracted from the Cerro Rico mines, joining the city with the Spanish empire overseas. This history of extractivism has marked the region: as Schopf reveals, it lies repressed in colonial paintings and current ritual practices.<sup>25</sup> The author’s kaleidoscopic exploration of the entwined and hybridized histories of colonialism in the Andes reminds us that the pre-Columbian world was a highly complex one of conquests, ethnicities, and nations. In spite of racist denials of their existence, so is the case of Afro-communities, which still inhabit and permeate the cultures of the highlands.

We would like to think-feel that this volume does not end, but, in its last notes, opens a portal into other forms of communication, transit, and relating. In their artists’ notes, “Supercritical Collasuyo,” Camila Marambio and Ariel Bustamante take the readers on a journey—this time, through the roads and tunnels carved out by the wind in the Collasuyo. To delve into the language of geoglyphs and earth-beings, they dissolve the frontiers of the modern nation-state and their own bodies, becoming many voices. In their “fiction-fusion practices,” they practice the arts of listening to the more-than-human. Perhaps these are only paths to be followed, and there are more to be attended to and drawn beyond colonial nations.

## Notes

1 Another term employed at the time to refer to social uprising was “despertar social” (social awakening). The phrase “Chile despertó” (Chile woke up) was one of several mottos that surged in the first few weeks of the *estallido*, alongside calls to “destituir” (make destitute) the current economic and political order.

2 The literature on the social uprising and its visual, aural, and sensorial expressions (from new forms of monuments to anti-monuments, street performances and interventions, graphic production, video, chants) quickly grew in response to the need to document the transformations that were happening and being effaced and supplanted by others. See, for instance, among the books, panels, archival projects, and exhibitions, Lucero de Vivanco and María Teresa Johansson, eds. *Instantáneas en la marcha* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2021); “Signos e imágenes del espacio público en el contexto de la crisis social,” Fundación CEa, 2020. For a critique of the artistic appropriation of images from the protests in commercial contexts, see Paula Solimano, “Feminismo, mercado, ética: los límites de la apropiación,” *Artishock*, March 3, 2020, <https://artishockrevista.com/2020/03/16/feminismo-mercado-etica-fernando-prats/>

3 This is part of a practice that extends to other volumes the editors have been working on, including the forthcoming compendium on ecofeminist, environmental, and poetic thought from Abya Yala, *Turba Tol Hol-Hol*, co-edited by Carla Macchiavello and Camila Marambio; “Decolonizing Contemporary Latin American Art,” Special Issue *Arts* (2019), co-edited by Florencia San Martín and Tatiana Flores; and *The Routledge Companion to Decolonizing Art History*, edited by Tatiana Flores, Florencia San Martín, and Charlene Villasenor Black (Routledge, 2023).



4 Alison Mountz, Anne Bonds, Becky Mansfield, Jenna M. Loyd, “For a Slow Scholarship, A Feminist Politics of Resistance Through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University,” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14(4) (2015): 1235–1259. The editors thank RaShelle Peck for organizing a panel on Slow Scholarship as part of the Re-envisioning Scholarship series at BMCC-CUNY, on February 18, 2022.

5 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005).

6 Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Americana as a Concept; or, The Americas in the Modern World-System,” *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 134 (1992): 550.

7 See Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, Vol. 28, Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring, 1984): 125–133.

8 The colonization and occupation of the Araucanía by the Chilean State started in 1861 and continues to this day as discourses concerning the “internal enemy” and “terrorism” are employed to repress Mapuche claims toward territorial sovereignty. See “Prólogo: Awükan ka kuxankan zugu kiñeke rakizuam,” in *Awükan ka kuxankan zugu kiñeke rakizuam. Violencias coloniales en Wajmapu*, Enrique Antileo Baeza, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, Margarita Calfio-Montalva, Herson Huinca-Puitrin, eds. (Temuco: Ediciones Comunidad de Historia Mapuche, 2015).

9 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol.1, No.1 (2012): 4.

10 Daniela Catrileo, *Río herido* (Santiago: Edicola, 2016).

11 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “*Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1 no. 111(1) (January, 2012): 104.

12 For more on the fight of water and Mapuche resistance in the visual arts, see Florencia San Martín, “Sebastián Calfuqueo’s Kowkülen: Inhabiting Nonbinary Waters,” post: notes on art in a global context, MoMA (July 14, 2021), <https://post.moma.org/sebastian-calfuqueos-kowkullen-inhabiting-nonbinary-waters/>

13 Mariairis Flores Leiva, “The Tides and Currents of *Champurria*,” in *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile*, eds. Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2024), 75.

14 Kemy Oyarzún Vaccaro, Presidential Session “Progressive Governments and the Resurgence of the Right in Latin America,” LASA 2022, Friday, May 6, 2022. Zoom. Translation by editors.

15 For more on the Rapa Nui fight for reparations in the context of the colonial museum, see Florencia San Martín, “Love, Time, and the Museum.” In *Companion to Contemporary Art in a Global Framework*, edited by Amelia Jones and Jane Chin Davidson. Wiley Blackwell, 2023.

16 “Inhabiting the Museum, Displaying Home: A Conversation Between Paula Solimano and María Luisa Murillo,” in *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile*, eds. Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2024), 99.

17 Antonio Calibán Catrileo Araya, “He devenido tejedora,” *Awkan Epupillan Mew. Dos espíritus en divergencia* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2019), 43.

18 Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1981); Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser, eds., *A World of Many Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

19 For more information on this collective, see <https://www.facebook.com/colectivo.lastesis/>.

20 Sophie Halart, “Parched Narratives: Rethinking Lament and Ruins in Chile’s Central Valley,” in *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile*, eds. Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2024), 22.

21 “Dialogue on Hearing: A Conversation Between Cecilia Vicuña and José Pérez de Arce, with an Introduction by Carolina Castro Jorquera,” in *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile*, eds. Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2024), 176.



- 22 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1, no. 1 (2012): 1, 10. <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/18630/15554>.
- 23 T. J. Demos, “Radical Futurisms: Documentary’s Chronopolitics,” *Trigger #2: Uncertainty*, FOMU: Photography Museum (2020), 58.
- 24 Antonio Catrileo Araya, Manuel Carrión Lira, and Marcelo Garzo Montalvo, “\$hileyem (Chile se acabó, The End of Chile): Indigenous Media and Decolonial Futurities beyond the Settler State,” in *Dismantling the Nation: Contemporary Art in Chile*, eds. Florencia San Martín, Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, and Paula Solimano (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2024), 205.
- 25 Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (México: Siglo XXI ediciones, [1971] 2006).

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# **Part I**

Geographies of Care



## CHAPTER 1

# Parched Narratives: Rethinking Lament and Ruins in Chile's Central Valley

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the philosopher and ecofeminist Vandana Shiva was invited to contribute to the book *La tragedia del bosque nativo chileno* [The Tragedy of Native Chilean Woodlands].<sup>1</sup> In her text, Shiva associates the monoculture model promoted by industrial forestry and agrobusiness in the country with not just biodiversity loss, but also significant cultural impoverishment and the disappearance of local knowledge and ancestral approaches to land use. Shiva describes “scientific” farming as a necro-economy that annihilates lives deemed unproductive and transforms native woodlands into depleted ecosystems where only a few selected species are allowed to survive.<sup>2</sup> As the book alternates texts and photographs, it provides a visual confirmation to Shiva’s lament, revealing aerial views of man-made landscapes in which the domestication of nature and its rational organization into neat parallel lines, goes hand in hand with its utter destruction by way of deforestation and desertification. To this grim spectacle, the book’s title and its reference to the genre of tragedy adds an extra layer of pessimism, if not fatalism.

If the predominance of an intensive monoculture model constitutes a global phenomenon, in Chile, the forestry and agrobusiness industries have benefited in the past decades from particularly advantageous conditions and legal guarantees. While the 1980 Constitution passed during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) introduced the right “to live in a pollution-free environment,” it offered few concrete guarantees to insure its upholding.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the 1981 Water Code, also passed under Pinochet, severed water, a crucial natural resource, from the land, transforming it into a private good that could be stored, monetized and traded by individual parties through the distribution of “water rights.”<sup>4</sup> In practice, the concentration of these water rights in a few, mostly corporate, hands, combined with the shaping of an agro-economy reared toward export has led to an exacerbation of water scarcity throughout the country and to the deepening of ecosocial conflicts between local

communities and large corporations.<sup>5</sup> While the social uprising or *Estallido Social* that exploded on the October 18, 2019 originally addressed the failings of the Chilean neoliberal experiment during and after the dictatorship, it also acquired from early on an environmental and territorialized awareness, identifying in the country's empty riverbeds, dry ponds and depleted ocean, an anthropogenic cause stemming, to a large extent, from political inequity.<sup>6</sup> During these tumultuous October days, the lapidary diagnostic “no es sequía, es saqueo” [it isn't drought, it's looting] turned into a recurring slogan, sprayed ubiquitously across the walls of Chilean cities.

The rural municipality of Petorca, located in Chile's Central Valley at an equidistant point between the cordillera and the coast, has been one of the hardest-hit by the water scarcity crisis of the past years. While the local economy historically consisted in small-scale farming sustained by a network of canals drawing water from the Petorca and La Ligua rivers, the contemporary implantation of an avocado agrobusiness in the 1990s in the region put the two waterways under severe stress.<sup>7</sup> In 1997, the Petorca river was declared dry, a fate subsequently met by La Ligua in 2004. Avocado plants are notoriously water-consuming and the agrobusiness boom that placed the Petorca province as the second-largest zone of avocado production in the country played a direct role in the exhaustion of both upper and underground water sources, leading local inhabitants to rely on the sporadic visits of water tanks as their only source for drinking, washing, and irrigation.<sup>8</sup> Cases of environmental violence usually tend to linger in invisibility, away from public attention: a case of depoliticization by way of disappearance.<sup>9</sup> In Petorca, however, despite the repeated efforts of agroindustrial lobbies to censor, discredit and even threaten local activists,<sup>10</sup> the tragic reality of water abuses has found a way to inscribe itself into the landscape, as the fields and hills exploited by agrobusiness companies provide chromatically-saturated squares of green and blue (avocado plants and irrigation basins) in the midst of an otherwise dominance of dusty ocher and gray.

In this text, I examine two works by two contemporary Chilean artists, Patricia Domínguez and Sofía de Grenade, that address the environmental and human consequences of the hydric crisis in the Petorca province.<sup>11</sup> While the works differ in terms of their aesthetic approaches, they both share an interest in activating affective reactions to a territorialized reality that I study through the critical prism offered by feminist and materialist theories. More specifically, I argue that Domínguez and de Grenade's works appeal to a poetics of lament and ruins that acknowledges loss and vulnerability as direct responses to the changing landscapes of the Anthropocene.<sup>12</sup> Far from revindicating a mere victim status for the lives—human and non-human—affected by extractivist activity and climate change though, these works seek to transform loss into a platform of resistance and into a fertile terrain for the crafting of new narratives of survival in and with depleted environments. Examining the element of water as an agonistic and, at times, moribund force, I understand their works as rituals of empowerment which, while acknowledging the vulnerability inherent to their condition, also pave the way for the articulation of a renewed collective voice.

## THE BALLAD OF DRY MERMAIDS

In 2020, Patricia Domínguez embarked upon a multipartite research project entitled *GaiaGuardianxs* [Guardians of Gaia], combining written text, installation, and video, to reflect on the ramifications of biopower in contemporary Latin American ecosocial conflicts. One of the project's installments examines the conflict over water access in the Petorca province. Lasting just over thirty minutes, *La balada de las sirenas secas* [The Ballad of Dry Mermaids] is an audiovisual fiction performed by and co-authored with *Mujeres del agua* [The Water Wives], a women's collective associated with the environmental protection association MODATIMA and that resorts to performance to draw attention to the hydric scarcity impacting the region (Fig. 1.1).<sup>13</sup>

Adopting a peculiar narrative strategy, the video is split into three screens and dominated by a soundtrack reminiscent of the noises one perceives underwater. While the two extremities of the screen show close-up views of currents, ripples and drops with chromatic hues ranging from pristine blue to turquoise; in the center, a story unfolds.<sup>14</sup> In the first sequence, a group of women and girls, dressed in technologically enhanced attires, perform what appears to be a series of rituals devoted to a hybrid figure, part avocado, part human. In these scenes that conjure a futuristic atmosphere, water flows as a dense entity, artificial in both its texture and milky coloration. The women's gestures alternate between carefully pouring the slithery liquid from one plastic container to another, and keeping the god-like avocado hydrated, dispensing drops of water upon its outsized tongue. The following sequence takes place in an arid landscape, filming the female protagonists in a dizzying, circular motion as they take turns narrating the history of water in modern Chile, from its privatization to the environmental and human harms caused by its legal dissociation from the land. This narrative is preceded by a sequence of the youngest two of the women dancing in slow motion in the landscape. A third section of the video provides drone views of the verdant avocado plantations and irrigation basins, both contrasting sharply with the adjacent fields. In these scenes, the avocado figure returns, hovering above the water basins. Staring blindly at the spectator with its protruding tongue, its presence acquires a monstrous quality made even more ominous by the introduction of lapping noises in the soundtrack. Driven by an unquenchable thirst, the avocado grows bigger and replicates itself until it finally retreats, fattened and content, leaving behind a desolate landscape of dusty rocks. The epilogue to this scene bears testament to this vampiric visit as Domínguez's drone captures dozens of animal skeletons scattered across the landscape. In the midst of this open-air cemetery, an intriguing figure appears with a guitar in its hands. As the dystopian music progressively retreats, the spectator hears the melancholic chant of a man. Well-known in the region as an important protagonist of Chile's popular tradition of oral poetry, Juan López becomes in Domínguez's work a bard of the drought, singing about the bountiful nature of yesteryear, disappearing rains, and uncertain futures.<sup>15</sup>



FIGURE 1.1 Patricia Domínguez and Mujeres del Agua. *La balada de las sirenas secas* (The Ballad of Dry Mermaids). 2020. Video still. HD, 31:39 min.

The initial impression triggered by the work is one of desolation in the face of a spectacle of lives—human and non-human—struggling to survive in an increasingly moribund environment. In the video, natural elements—water in particular—figure as either a ghostly presence (the dry fields, the animal corpses) or an artificially-enhanced substance. While certain aspects of Domínguez’s narrative tap into a futuristic repertoire (a point upon which I will return in the final section of this text), the portrayal of water as an abstract element also resonates with discussions on its current status in extractivist economies. Indeed, as Jamie Linton argues, water in modern societies has acquired a hegemonically scientific connotation (as mere “H<sub>2</sub>O”), a view that fails to incorporate the territorial, cultural, and spiritual dimensions it occupies for local communities.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, while the incipit to Domínguez’s work may hint at an undefined, potentially fictitious horizon, it is in the present that the women’s narrative grounds the disappearance of water in the Central Valley, thus turning their story into a collective lament mourning the loss of their community’s main form of sustenance.

#### **WATER TRAGEDY: PERFORMING LAMENT AND LOSS**

Examining emotional responses to the climate crisis, Amy Westervelt argues that “the story of climate change, both its history and its future, needs to be told by people who have already experienced injustice and disempowerment, people who are justifiably angry at the way the system works.”<sup>17</sup> Most members of the Water Wives collective come from Petorca and neighboring towns, thus speaking as both first-hand witnesses and victims of the water crisis. In Domínguez’s work, climate rage does not seem to be the dominant emotion however, and the women’s lament appears closer to a form of “ecological grief”: an affective response described by Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis as “the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change.”<sup>18</sup> An expression of grief, lament holds a long tradition in literary and artistic production, taking on a particularly performative dimension in tragedy. While tragedy’s emotional mechanisms have been primarily analyzed through the experience of emotional release—or catharsis—that the main protagonist’s misfortunes trigger in the audience,<sup>19</sup> lament also expresses itself through the voice of the choir, the anonymous collective standing for the community that witnesses and comments on the action’s unfolding.

In Domínguez’s work, the group of women protagonists partakes in this choral tradition, taking turns to recall the origins of the water tragedy in Chile, weaving together a narrative that the camera records in a circular motion reminiscent of the Greek dithyramb. As an anonymous conglomerate of bodies, the choir’s voice is inherently “polyphonic,” according to Simon Critchley, expressing the fate of the disenfranchised, the minorities, “the figures who are silenced in the public realm.”<sup>20</sup> In the case of the Petorca women, this polyphony functions on two levels. On the one hand, through their lament, the Water Wives speak on behalf of women upon whose shoulders falls the



heaviest brunt of the water crisis.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, they stand for water itself, haunting the arid landscape with their fluid, phantasmagoric dances. In this sense, their intervention in the video fulfills both a self-protective and protective function which could be read as the articulation of an “ethics of care,” a moral concern toward others often associated in the feminist literature with a feminine and even maternal disposition.<sup>22</sup> This is certainly not coincidental for, while Domínguez’s portrayal of the women as hybrid creatures rejects essentialist readings of gender, her interest in a group of transgenerational, female activists rising to speak on behalf of deprived communities and harmed natural resources, also taps into an affective repertoire closely associated with maternal kinship. For Galit Hasan-Rokem, “[l]aments are above all about the separation and the severing of ties between mothers and their children, or other relationships often configured as ties between mothers and their children.”<sup>23</sup>

While the association of women with lament may come loaded with a sense of gender essentialism, leading to the problematic replication of historical forms of self-abnegation, lament can also operate as a form of political resistance.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as Hasam-Roken continues, lament is not just a passive expression of grief over what is lost but a way of “challenging the divines forces.”<sup>25</sup> Bearing this in mind, is it possible to override the limitations imposed by tragic fatalism and social determinism and think about the lament of Domínguez’s women as more than the resigned grief over what is lost expressed by a minority, and instead as a form of resistance against the human actions that have led to the water crisis in Petorca? Questions of responsibility and agency hang heavily above current ecocritics’ approach to tragedy.<sup>26</sup> This is the case because, as Maya Lempert rightly argues, in tragedy, while human actions and ambitions—hubris—may be the catalyst of their own self-demise, they are never more than subsidiaries to a much higher, divine will. In this sense, tragic heroes are “from a psychological, a legal, and a moral perspective, blameless.”<sup>27</sup> By contrast, as the very term Anthropocene attests to, climate change and its local manifestations are undoubtedly anthropogenic. For Lempert, in order for tragedy to accurately address climate change, it is necessary to distance oneself from the Aristotelian focus on our cathartic response to the main protagonist and pay attention, instead, to the choral voice of the suffering minorities. As she writes, “tragedy *is* the art form of those who cannot look away, for whom suffering is, indisputably, a reality.”<sup>28</sup> Bearing this in mind, tragedy appears as the adequate genre for the Petorca women—the disenfranchised voices of the *polis*—turning lament into a platform of political criticism of the hydric crisis and its human and environmental consequences. Having said this, I would also argue that there is also another important—more local—precedent to understanding these tragic references and their articulation as practices of resistance.

### **MUJERES DEL AGUA, MUJERES POR LA VIDA**

In the decades of the 1970s–90s, many countries in Latin America were subjected to violent, authoritarian rule that employed repressive measures, including censorship, arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, and systemic disappearance of their citizens. In this context, various women’s associations and collectives rose to criticize and

call their governments to accountability. While these women's political awakening stemmed to a great extent from the feminist movements of emancipation of the 1960s, it also resulted—especially in the case of older generations—from personal experiences of grief over the loss of a relative. In Argentina, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo originally organized themselves as a group of grieving mothers, taking onto the street in order to ask for the return in life of their disappeared children. Similarly, in Chile, the actions carried out by the association Mujeres por la Vida [Women for Life] at a national level transformed kinship into political dissidence, and lament into the expression of a raging grief.

In both countries, these forms of resistance that fed from the intimate have led commentators to compare their rebellion to that of the tragic heroine Antigone.<sup>29</sup> While some of these commentators have noticed in this identification a potential trap to constrain women to a victim status—a conservative reiteration of gender roles distribution as Diana Taylor argues in the case of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo—here too, the acknowledgment of one's own subaltern status transforms lament into a corrosive force operating from inside political power.<sup>30</sup> As Judith Butler argues in *Antigone's Claim*, the female tragic figure helps us understand the ways in which kinship only seemingly accepts social hierarchies as a way to craft “a politics not of oppositional purity but of the scandalously impure.”<sup>31</sup> In this sense, returning to the women of Petorca, a similar claim may be made regarding their apparent embrace of their own subaltern status—and that of water—in the face of the conjoined effects of extractivism and climate change. By referring to the Chilean Code of Water, they acknowledge the existence of the law. Yet, despite—or perhaps as a result of—this legal litany, the persistence of their presence, embodied and embedded in the landscape, also lets the order of kinship seep in and reveal the ways in which, in Chile, it was the alliance of political inequity and corporate interests that gave birth to such law, to the detriment of life in all its forms. By acknowledging the territorial legacy of extractivist forces, by performing both their implementation and disastrous consequences, the women reveal the ways in which the privatization of natural elements like water appeal to mechanisms of short-term, individual profit that are profoundly recalcitrant to life itself. In this sense, the performance of lament deployed by Domínguez's characters turns vulnerability into a call for action. It adopts the definition that Butler, in *Precarious Life*, makes of grief as a “mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am.”<sup>32</sup> It also convokes new modes of relation to the environment, not as a gesture of good will but as a necessary form of survival. In the context of the climate crisis—both impending and unfolding—the claim made by Butler that “loss has made a tenuous ‘we’ of us all” renders the performance of the women of Petorca particularly prescient, revealing their tragic force as an acknowledgment of the collective and interdependent nature of our existences.<sup>33</sup>

In an article on tragedy and feminism, Kathleen M. Sand argues that “[t]ragedies are not pessimistic worldviews because they are not worldviews of any kind. On the contrary, they tell of worlds and times that are broken such that no coherent view of them can be had.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, various scholars have argued that the

difficulty of imagining the Anthropocene brings about a necessary renewal of the representational and narrative apparatuses of the Humanities.<sup>35</sup> In her work, Domínguez rises to this challenge, searching in tragedy a terrain to plow and reconfigure in order to give voice to the lament of the women of Petorca as a form of both caring for and resisting on behalf of human and non-human lives. In this sense, the artist's strategy consists in spinning canonical narrative modes on their heads as a way to reconsider the past through the spectrum of the present, or—as she herself puts it—as a way of “rethinking origin myths from a contemporary perspective.”<sup>36</sup> If feminine and maternal affects may initially appear as a limitation to this strategy, it is only true until intimate affects begin to be understood as valid forms of resistance.<sup>37</sup> I will return to the role of narrative forms in the articulation of different futures in the Anthropocene in the closing section of this chapter. For now, I turn to the work of Sofía de Grenade and her approach to ruins as a similarly ambivalent mode of expressing both desolation and resilience, adopting the vibrancy of material remains as a guide to account for environmental destruction.

#### **MATERIAL RUINS OR THE AFTERMATH OF EXTRACTIVISM**

In 2015, de Grenade inaugurated *La gran salina* [The Great Saline], a work consisting of a large installation of modified PVC pipes, varying in sizes (Fig. 1.2). While appealing to a precariousness of means that contrasts with the highly defined texture of Domínguez's video, de Grenade's work taps into a similarly bleak repertoire as stained, cut-out and reassembled parts of PVC ducts clutter the floor of the gallery, some standing, others lying horizontal, with tones ranging from light blue to gray and brown. The product of three years of research, the installation examines the life of discarded industrial materials once they no longer meet their use-value. The pipes featured in the installation were collected by the artist in an abandoned plot of land in the Petorca province. As mentioned in the introduction, the intensive agricultural practices adopted by the Chilean avocado agrobusiness in the past decades have gone hand in hand with soil impoverishment and the exhaustion of natural resources, a tendency which, combined with the scarce rain of the past years, has inflicted severe drought in the region. As a result, previously fertile avocado fields have been abandoned once the cost of irrigating them competes with the expected value of their harvests. The field explored by de Grenade had been left vacant for seven years, the only testimony to its productive past consisting in a semi-buried network of deteriorating pipes that used to bring water to irrigate the crops. These constitute the remnants that de Grenade excavates and salvages in her quasi-archaeological search for material traces of industrial extractivism in Chile's Central Valley. As Domínguez's video ended on the sorrowful view of an open-air cemetery of animal carcasses, similarly, in de Grenade's work, the spoiled appearance of the ducts speaks of a desolate aftermath, of what is left behind once



FIGURE 1.2 Sofia de Grenade. *La gran salina* [The Great Salina] 2016. Installation including self-healing polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipes.

humans are gone. As the artist herself puts it, the question haunting her work is “what happens when the end enters the present?”<sup>38</sup>

The title of the work, *La gran salina*, was inspired by a poem of that name by the Argentine author Rodrigo Zelarayán, reflecting on his memories of industrial landscapes in his country’s northern region and on the persistence of material traces marking human activity on the territory.<sup>39</sup> In his book *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*, the anthropologist Gastón Gordillo also examines the Argentine territory, exploring the Gran Chaco lowlands where industrial soy plants spread over large expanses of land, indiscriminately destroying

traces of both pre-Hispanic and colonial settlements. Questioning the hierarchy inherent to material remnants and our tendency to romanticize ruins to the detriment of other debris, Gordillo advocates for a requalification of rubble, not so much on behalf of their aesthetic value but, rather, as an invitation to consider the afterlife of these discarded materials as forms of resistance to linear and exponential history. As he explains, “[w]hat the ruin-as-abstraction highlights is the object’s *pastness*.”<sup>40</sup> Rising against this instrumentalization of history as a closed narrative, Gordillo articulates a defense of rubble, starting from the material potency inherent in its subaltern quality. Indeed, it is precisely the derelict, apparently worthless, nature of rubble that, according to Gordillo, allows it to eschew the fetishization of *pastness* and continue to vibrate (a term to which I will return) in the present. Rubble, the author argues, thus operates “as textured, affectively charged matter that is intrinsic to all living places.”<sup>41</sup> Examining de Grenade’s work through Gordillo’s category of rubble, I would argue that the pipes’ damaged materiality taps into a similar potency, conflating past activity and present obsolescence as a way to evidence the ongoing resonance of extractivist violence on the territory, even long after production ended. In this sense, the work not only contests the imposition of an expiry date that galloping consumerism and the restless pace of extractivism impose on both natural and industrial resources, it also reveals the ways in which the myth of industrial production as a self-contained, abstract process (often purposely) fails to consider the material afterlife of discarded waste and its environmental ramifications as inherent parts of production. As the artist explains, “the act of spending three years collecting PVC pipes that originally functioned as irrigation ducts in an agricultural field left abandoned due to the drought, has to do with this, with disarticulating functions, with disarticulating the idea of productivity once a resource becomes exhausted, and [rather], to bring it back into the present as an object deprived of its [original] use.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, by keeping the pipes in their state of material disarray, de Grenade seeks to maintain a distance between the object’s testimonial voice and her own creative intention, a gesture (or, rather, the suspension of a gesture) that testifies to her faith in the agency of these materials to speak for themselves as witnesses—and victims—of industrial extractivism. Even more to the point, while the pipes’ abandoned quality attests to their own expected obsolescence, they also materialize the disappearance of water itself, their light-blue painted surface emerging, in this sense, as a rather tragic irony. The discarded pipes, then, fulfill a role somewhat similar to Domínguez’s women, articulating through their precarious presence a narrative of critical resilience in the face of economic violence and environmental harm.

## VIBRANT EULOGIES

It is important to note that de Grenade’s material ruins do not partake in a nostalgic longing for a pre-industrial past, a posture which could have led her to antagonize the ducts as the evil products of extractivist capitalism.

In this regard, there is also a sense of a rejection of material hierarchies at play in her search for rubble. In collecting discarded pipes, the artist was particularly interested in examining the ways in which they continue to evolve after water stopped running through them—the paint peeling off, the plastic hardening in some parts, softening in others—thus identifying in the materials’ afterlives an entropic longing to return to their original states as petroleum derivatives. It is also worth noting that, in a secondary stage of the work’s production, the artist abandons the distance she had initially adopted out of respect for the materials’ agency and lightly brushes resin over parts of the pipes. Aesthetically, this intervention serves to reveal what the artist describes as “the patina of the drought’s ruins.”<sup>43</sup> Symbolically, it also operates as a balsamic, curative gesture performed upon the wounded surfaces.<sup>44</sup> The resin does not seek to conceal traces of degradation however and, rather, it underlines their damaged yet stubborn persistence in following the logic of their own material metamorphosis.

By underlying and even sublimating these ongoing mutations, de Grenade rejects the traditional nature/culture binary in a way reminiscent of the “vibrancy” of materials studied by Jane Bennett. As Bennett explains, vitality stands for “the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.”<sup>45</sup> In de Grenade’s work, the pipes occupy a similar position as quasi-agents, exercising a will of their own revealed by the ongoing metamorphosis of their materials long past the lifespan imposed by a specific economic order. In this sense, their exhibition in the context of an art gallery or an art fair may appear problematic at first, if not somewhat cynical. Indeed, art institutions are, by definition, agents of authority when it comes to the hierarchization of ruins criticized by Gordillo. Even more to the point, the influence guaranteed by their central position in the art world holds the potential of curtailing the work’s—and its material—agency, relegating them to a passive role as mere fetishes, a tendency exposed since the 1960s by the advocates of Institutional Critique.<sup>46</sup> While the capacity of de Grenade’s work to resist such tendency remains to be fully assessed, I would argue tentatively that the pipes—reconfigured as they may be by the gallery setting—also activate in their material vibrancy a resistance to the abstraction and decontextualization of production processes that define not only the industrial mindset but the art world’s too in its approach to works as finished objects. The ducts also acquire a metonymic dimension, speaking of and for hybrid territories in which the mingling of both natural and manufactured entities continuously reconfigure themselves and the world around them.

The Anthropocene has only just begun to teach us important lessons in humility and yet, as de Grenade’s abandoned pipes attest, we continue to ignore the material fluxes that make and unmake our worlds. In this sense, while Domínguez’s video explored the power of lament as both a bitter criticism of past actions and a call to more interconnected existences, in de Grenade’s work, it is the “force of things” that converts her material eulogies into roadmaps toward interdependency.<sup>47</sup>



## PARCHED NARRATIVES, SF, AND THE CONTOURS OF A HYDROCOMMONS

Patricia Domínguez and Sofía de Grenade appeal to the emotional power of lament and the vibrant potency of rubble to craft new modes of telling stories about the exhaustion of natural resources in the Anthropocene. Seen in this light, their works search for evocative ways to bring into the present the consequences of the past and its association with extractivist violence. In this chapter, I have argued that, as they do so, they also strive to turn grief and a sense of loss into platforms of resistance and survival, opening a door toward uncertain, yet persistent futures. Indeed, while Domínguez’s dystopian fable initially seems to point to a horizon of agonizing nature and technological proxies that, upon first consideration, appears void of life, the hybrid figures that inhabit her work blur the line separating human from non-human lives, individual from collective fates, articulating new forms of relationality beyond the here and now. In *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway turns the category of science-fiction into an invitation to conflate time in a similar manner. As she writes, “SF is storytelling and fact telling; it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come.”<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, in her poetic reflection on the ruins of industrial extractivism, de Grenade makes dents in material hierarchies, acknowledging the imperative that is interdependency for the articulation of other narratives of survival. In this sense, interdependency may also be thought through the image of the critters described by Haraway, the “tentacular ones [that] tangle [her] into SF.”<sup>49</sup> Tentacular beings include all sorts of material vibrancy (“nets and networks, IT critters, in and out of clouds”<sup>50</sup>). De Grenade’s network of discarded pipes partakes in these tentacularities, their persistent material mutations as rubble slowly eroding the distance between life and death, object and rubbish, as well as production cycles and end products. Deaf to human’s thirst for foreclosed histories, their vibrancies also “demonstrate and perform consequences” as Haraway has it.<sup>51</sup>

In these parched narratives—these tales of drought and dust—water initially stands for what is gone. And yet, its absence also lingers, a ghostly force that turns into a recurring motif in the artists’ calls for interconnected and territorialized modes of survival. In *Bodies of Water*, Astrida Neimanis invites her readers to “imagine embodiment from the perspective of our bodies’ wet constitution, as inseparable from [...] pressing ecological questions.”<sup>52</sup> The contemporary emergence of increasingly toxic and depleted environments has brought into visibility the interconnected nature of our existences. Starting from water as the symptom of our porosity, Neimanis summons a “planetary hydrocommons” as a collective and shared mode of inhabiting the future. As she writes, “[o]ur human projects—fossil fuel burning, plastic consumption, infusing all things in our homes with fire-retardant—may be dreamt up and executed by our human-subject bodies, but all of us as an embodied hydrocommons materially live these effects, one way or another.”<sup>53</sup> In my reading of Domínguez and de Grenade’s works, water as an absence-presence operates as a similarly material-semiotic *liant*, quenching parched narratives and challenging us to search for more porous forms to account for both human and non-human lives in futures made of drought.

## Notes

1. Two years previously, Shiva had participated in the International Forum on Globalization organized by the Red de Acción Ecológica in Santiago, an event that brought together a contingent of environmental activists and academics, including Manfred Max-Need (Alternative Nobel Prize Winner in Economy, 1983), Enrique Leff, Head of the United Nations Environmental Program, the US academics John Cavanagh, David Korten and James Petras, as well as the novelist Diamela Eltit and the Mapuche activist and scholar Raúl Rupailaf.

2. Vandana Shiva, “Monocultivos (Monoculturas) de la mente,” in *La Tragedia del bosque chileno*, ed. Defensores del bosque chileno (Santiago: Ocho Libros Editores, 1998), 301. I thank Carolina Castro for bringing this important publication to my attention.

3. See Jessica Budds, “Water, Power, and the Production of Neoliberalism in Chile, 1973–2005,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31(2) (2013): 301–318.

4. Título III “De la adquisición del derecho de aprovechamiento,” Código de Aguas, (1981). Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, accessed January 30, 2022. <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=5605&idParte=8628356&idVersion=>

5. Rodrigo Mundaca, current Governor of the Valparaíso region and Founder of the environmental association MODATIMA, describes the Chilean economic model as “primary-exporting,” that is “one that draws its wealth from the intensive exploitation of natural resources aimed at export.” Rodrigo Mundaca, *La privatización de las aguas en Chile* (Santiago: América en movimiento, 2014/2020), 14. My translation. In Chile, ecosocial tensions have emerged in the northern zones dominated by the mining industry, the southern territories contingent to the large pine and eucalyptus plantations, the industry-ridden coast of Puchuncaví in the Valparaíso region as well as the agrobusiness oriented Central Valley. For more on this, see Paola Bolados García, “Conflictos socio-ambientales/territoriales y el surgimiento de identidades post neoliberales (Valparaíso-Chile),” *Izquierdas (Santiago)* 31 (2016): 102–129.

6. For more on the interrelation between social discontent, extractivism and the ecological crisis in Chile, see Mauro Fernández, “Octubre chileno: el estallido de una idea insostenible,” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* (October 20, 2020), <https://cl.boell.org/es/2020/10/20/octubre-chileno-el-estallido-de-una-idea-insostenible>.

7. According to official figures published by FAO, the 1990s constituted a decade of exponential growth of avocado cultivation in Chile: while hectares of land dedicated to this activity remained more or less stable between 1980 and 1990 (increasing from 6,180 ha to 8,190 ha), it then more than doubled in the following decade (21,202 ha in 2000) to follow a slower yet consistently increasing curve after that (34,057 in 2010). In terms of volume, the production went from 21,700 tons in 1980 to 37,580 tons in 1990 to 98,000 in 2000 and 166,382 in 2010, revealing a similar increasing trend combined with the adoption of high-density models of exploitation to maximize production in the first decade of the twenty-first century. FAOSTAT, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/faostat/es/#data/QCL>.

8. Studies show that, in Petorca, the majority of water rights are held by just four families and that the atomization—and possible corruption—of state entities authorized to grant water rights have led to a 29% overdistribution of such rights. Paola Bolados García, “La naturaleza política de la sequía en Petorca,” *CIPER Chile*, April 27, 2018, <https://www.ciperchile.cl/2018/04/27/la-naturaleza-politica-de-la-sequia-en-petorca/>.

9. In *Slow Violence*, Rob Nixon refers to “the challenge of invisibility” of environmental harm that especially affects poorer communities from the global South. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 5. In a previous text on Chilean waterways and contemporary art, I also discuss the ways in which invisibility often functions as a strategy activated by industrialists and the State in order to make questions related to natural resources’ pollution and scarcity quite literally disappear. Sophie Halart, “A Water of a Hundred Eyes. Reconfiguring Liquidity in Recent Chilean Contemporary Art,” in *Liquid Ecologies in Latin American and Caribbean Art*, eds. Lisa Blackmore and Liliana Gómez (New York: Routledge, 2020), 205–221.

10. In Chile, members of MODATIMA are routinely subjected to various forms of intimidation, the latest case to date being the death threats received by the organization’s director Verónica Vilches in June 2021. “Dirigenta de Modatima Verónica Vilches tras amenazas de muerte: Siempre vamos a estar en la lucha por el agua,” *El Mostrador*, June 9, 2021: <https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2021/06/09/dirigenta-de-modatima-veronica-vilches-tras-amenazas-de-muerte-siempre-vamos-a-estar-en-la-lucha-por-el-agua/>. These practices



are sadly in line with the cases of harassment and violence against local communities and activists examined in a recent publication edited by Mary Menton and Philippe Le Billon. Mary Menton and Philippe Le Billon, eds., *Environmental Defenders. Deadly Struggles for Life and Territory* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

11. Patricia Domínguez's work, *La Balada de las sirenas secas* [The Ballad of Dry Mermaids], which I will discuss at length in this chapter was co-authored with the women activists group Las Mujeres del Agua [The Water's Wives] and commissioned by TBA21 in 2020.

12. I am using the term "Anthropocene" in this text, not for lack of a better word but, rather, despite a plethora of equally valid alternatives, as recently compiled by Steve Mentz. Steve Mentz, "The Neologismcene," *Break Up the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 2019), 57–64. I stick to the term Anthropocene in this instance because it incorporates questions relative to our human (and more-than-human) existences on the planet as well as our responsibility to adopt collective forms of address which, I will argue, constitute crucial aspects of both Domínguez and de Grenade's works.

13. Las Mujeres del Agua also used to be known as Las Viudas del Agua [Water Widows], a change of name that places resilience and survival as core values of their environmental struggle.

14. The version of Domínguez's work I describe and examine in this text corresponds to an adaptation that the artist made for screen display of a video-installation originally produced in 2020 by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary. In its original format, the video was played vertically to the audience. Personal email correspondence with the artist.

15. Juan López fulfills an important role in his community as one of the last few "cantores a lo divino y lo humano" [singers to the divine and the human], a popular tradition of oral poetry and musical improvisation especially important in Chile's rural and semi-rural areas. Local singers like Juan López dedicate their repertoire to devotional songs accompanying the Catholic calendar as well as to contemporary topics such as the drought and, more recently the COVID sanitary crisis. For more on the Chilean tradition of popular oral poetry, see Fidel Sepúlveda, *El canto a lo poeta. A lo divino y a lo humano. Análisis estético antropológico y antología fundamental* (Santiago: Ediciones Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Dirección de Biblioteca, Archivos y Museos de Chile, 2009).

16. Jamie Linton, *What is Water? The History of a Modern Abstraction* (Vancouver & Toronto: UBC Press, 2010), 2.

17. Amy Westervelt, "The Case of Climate Change Rage," *Popula*, August 19, 2019, <https://popula.com/2019/08/19/the-case-for-climate-rage/>.

18. Ashlee Cunsolo & Neville R. Ellis, "Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss," *Nature Climate Change* 8 (2018): 275. At the same time and as we will subsequently return to, rage and grief are not incompatible for, as Maya Lempert argues, "climate tragedy perhaps discloses climate rage born of ecogrief." Maya Lempert, "Climate Tragedy," *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 8(2) (2021): 213.

19. Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

20. Simon Critchley, *Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us* (London: Profile Books, 2019): 62.

21. In a podcast conversation with Domínguez and other participants, Lorena Donaire, spokeswoman of Mujeres MODATIMA talks of the dramatic consequences that the hydric crisis has meant for local women's emancipation from the domestic sphere. Lorena Donaire in Alex Vicente, "Patricia Domínguez, Llamando a la Tierra." Produced by TBA21 | Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, *St\_age Podcast*, Season 1 episode 3. October 21, 2020, Podcast, MP3 Audio, 50:50. <https://www.stage.tba21.org/detail/podcast-patricia-dominguez-llamando-a-la-tierra-calling-earth>. The experience shared by Donaire resonates with the criticism expounded by eco-feminists of the acute correlation between water crisis and gender disparity. Greta Gaard, "Women, Water, Energy," *Organization & Environment* 14(2) (2001): 157–72.

22. See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

23. Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Bodies Performing in Ruins: The Lamenting Mother in Ancient Hebrew Texts," in *Lament in Jewish Thought*, eds. Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 36.

24. This self-abnegating position of women runs deep in both the Ancient and the Judeo-Christian traditions. Suffice to think of Sophocles' Antigone or the Christian figure of the Mater Dolorosa for example, figures whose sacrificial dimension has also been rethought by the feminist tradition. See Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," *Poetics Today* 6(1/2) (1985): 133–152.

25. Hasan-Rokem, "Bodies Performing in Ruins," 48.

26. The re-articulation of the tragic genre in past and contemporary narratives about climate change has been addressed by various scholars active in the field of ecocriticism. See Bryan Deyo, “Tragedy, Ecophobia and Animality in the Anthropocene,” in *Affective Ecocriticism, Emotion, Embodiment and Environment*, eds. Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 195–212; Wai Chee Dimock, “After Troy: Homer, Euripides, Total War,” in *Rethinking Tragedy*, ed. Rita Felski (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 66–81; and Simon Estok, *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
27. Lempert, *Climate Tragedy*, 196.
28. *Ibid.*, 210.
29. Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s ‘Dirty War’* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Jean Elshtain, “Antigone’s Daughters,” *Democracy Journal* 2(2) (1986): 46–59; and Cynthia Shuffer, “Vivir en estado de búsqueda. Las Antígonas modernas del desierto y el Río de la Plata,” *Aisthesis* [online] 67 (2020): 193–205 [https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0718-71812020000100193](https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-71812020000100193).
30. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 224–269.
31. Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, 5.
32. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso Books, 2006), 28.
33. *Ibid.*, 20.
34. Kathleen M. Sands, “Tragedy, Theology, and Feminism in the Time After Time,” *New Literary History* 35(1) (2004): 43.
35. Nixon, *Slow Violence*; Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
36. Patricia Domínguez in “Patricia Domínguez, Llamando a la Tierra.”
37. As Sara Ruddick writes, “[m]aternal peacefulness is a way of fighting as well as of loving, as angry as it is gentle.” Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking. Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 30.
38. “¿Qué pasa cuando el fin ya es presente?” Sofía de Grenade in Sebastián Vidal Valenzuela and Valentina Gutiérrez, “Sofía de Grenade: Tóxicas.” Produced by CeDA, *CeDA Podcast*. October 15, 2021, Podcast, MP3 audio 49:16. <https://www.ceda.cl/t1-e4-sofia-de-grenade-toxicas/>. My translation.
39. Rodrigo Zelarayán, *La gran salina y otros poemas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mate, 1997).
40. Gastón Gordillo, *Rubble* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014): 8.
41. *Ibid.*, 5.
42. “El acto de recolectar durante más de tres años tuberías de PVC que fueron originalmente ductos de agua en un predio agrícola abandonado por la sequía tiene que ver con eso, con desarticular funciones, desarticular la idea de productividad en un lugar donde un recurso ya fue agotado, para traerlo al presente como un objeto despojado de su función.” Sofía de Grenade in Cesar Vargas, “New political perspectives of abstraction: On the exhaustion of resources in the work of Adolfo Bimer and Sofía de Grenade,” *Terremoto*, 24 April 2017. <https://terremoto.mx/revista/new-political-perspectives-of-abstraction-on-the-exhaustion-of-resources-in-adolfo-bimer-and-sofia-de-grenade/>. My translation.
43. Vidal, “Sofía de Grenade: Tóxicas.”
44. De Grenade, Vidal and Gutiérrez also discuss this possibly curative element in Vidal, “Sofía de Grenade: Tóxicas.”
45. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.
46. In a text addressing the hegemonic role played by art institutions and its protagonists in altering the signification of a work, land artist Robert Smithson referred to this phenomenon as one of “cultural confinement.” Robert Smithson, “Cultural Confinement,” *Artforum* 11(2) (October 1972): 32.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 31.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 32.
51. *Ibid.*, 40.
52. Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 1.
53. *Ibid.*, 64.

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## CHAPTER 2

# New Feminist Performance in the Chilean Revolt: La Yeguada Latinamericana and LASTESIS<sup>1</sup>

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Bernardita Llanos and Milena Grass Kleiner

To discuss contemporary performance in Chile inevitably takes us back to the Pinochet era when the gay collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis (The Mares of the Apocalypse) formed by Pedro Lemebel and Francisco Casas (1987–1997) first made its public appearance in the streets of a besieged capital during the 1980s. Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis were known for their contestatory sexual politics and their defense of human rights at a time when Chile was under the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990). Among their performances questioning patriarchal institutions, hegemonic masculinity and the civic-military regime, the 1988 performance *Refundación de la Universidad de Chile* (Refoundation of the University of Chile) stands out. Riding a mare and with their bodies naked, Lemebel and Casas entered the University of Chile's Art School with the slogan of refounding the university, as the title of the work reads. Their nude and homosexual bodies signaled the need to disobey and break away from authoritarian mandates while simultaneously redefining the relationship of art and politics, as noted by Argentine scholar Mario Federico Cabrera.<sup>2</sup> A similar political defiance and courage can be found in today's feminist performance collectives which also took to the streets en masse and reshaped this combative artistic legacy as well as the link between politics and art during the first two months of national protests that followed the 2019 social revolt (Estallido Social). The political, social, economic, and institutional crisis that unfolded in Chile during the revolt shook the social contract to its very foundation while feminist activists, students, citizens, and artists marched for a new Chile on the streets of major cities, gathering in plazas, and organizing town halls.

When tracing the genealogy of Cheril Linett's project La Yeguada Latinoamericana and LASTESIS' feminist performance, *Un Violador en tu Camino* (A Rapist in your Path), we are confronted with two different ways of working with Las Yeguas's legacy.<sup>3</sup> The body in the public sphere in both cases is a crucial element that is used as a political weapon to denounce patriarchy and its oppression not only of marginalized sexualities and women but of all Chileans. Female and queer bodies are crucial to the way both groups display a feminist critique of neo-liberal patriarchy and its multifarious and insidious ways of exploiting and abusing people while also bringing

death to all living beings. This necropolitical thrust is underscored as a key trait of the neoliberal political and economic system which in fact administers death, especially that of lower-class women and sexual dissidents.

The directness of their attack to traditional institutions such as the police force (Carabineros, as agents of terror and brutality), right-wing president, Sebastián Piñera, and his government, the judiciary, and the Church may be found in individual performance pieces where participants risk being insulted, beaten, imprisoned, and censored, as several testimonies and visual records attest.

### **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

In 2006, high-school protests mobilized youth across the country to denounce the precarization of education in Chile, following its privatization during the dictatorship.

In 2011, college students used performance in public spaces to struggle for free and better-quality public education with unusual political efficacy and great innovation; the *Thriller Masivo por la Educación chilena*, where 4,000 youngsters in full disguise, makeup, and props danced to the rhythm of Michael Jackson's song in front of La Moneda, Chile's Government Palace, is a case in point.<sup>4</sup>

In 2018, the Mayo Feminista (Feminist May) cut across Chilean universities with sit-ins, marches, and occupations of college facilities where students demanded the end of decades of faculty abuse and sexual discrimination. The feminist surge served to shift long-standing cultural norms about gender and women's rights.

A year later, in 2019, the Estallido Social challenged the entire social order and LASTESIS' viral feminist chant *Un Violador en tu Camino* was first performed by hundreds of women decrying male abuse and violence against women.

In 2021, with gender equity and reserved seats for the representation of Indigenous people for the first time in Chilean history, the Constitutional Convention<sup>5</sup> was inaugurated with the election of Mapuche feminist activist Elisa Loncón as its president. Following Chileans' demands during and after the Estallido Social, they voted for a new Magna Carta to be drafted by popularly elected representatives. The writing of a new constitution signals the birth of a new Chile that would finally leave behind not only a brutal dictatorship but also three and half decades of transitional and right-wing governments which continued the same economic policies installed by Pinochet.

### **LA YEGUADA LATINOAMERICANA: QUEERING PERFORMANCE**

The performance project La Yeguada Latinoamericana takes its name from the animal kingdom, referencing a group of mares as a symbol of collective revolt that gathers nonbinary and marginalized sexualities fighting against a neoliberal and heteronormative society. In colloquial Chilean Spanish, the expression *yegua*, as in



“No seas yegua” (Don’t be a bitch), is a sexist expression applied mostly to women to undermine their power. The expression serves not only to feminize but also to animalize behaviors, perspectives, and identities that are seen as beyond the bounds of the established norms.

Feminist activist and photographer Kena Lorenzini was among the first to celebrate the image and La Yeguada’s performances as a way of resignifying the concept of the mare without denigrating women but rather underscoring their rebellion. Moreover, she noted that women were called “yeguas every five minutes” in a pejorative and derogatory way.<sup>6</sup> Lorenzini, a long-time feminist activist and photographer who played a leading role in the opposition to the dictatorship, understands the way La Yeguada contests women’s subordination and discrimination in what is an extremely masculinist culture.

In January 2018, the sexist Miss Reef Chile contest was indefinitely canceled after fifteen years. According to the brand’s manager, the decision was due to a change of marketing strategy and a concern with gender violence. This was a popular beach event where women literally were shown competing for the best butt and wearing thongs while exposing the back of their bodies to the audience. They danced on stage moving their buttocks to the rhythm of music, holding a number so that the jurors could assess their behinds. Crass objectification and sexualization were salient features of the summer competition.<sup>7</sup> The fact that the contest set the cultural norm and a body standard makes La Yeguada’s irruption into the public sphere more politically significant by unveiling capitalist patriarchal abuse of the female body alongside other human and animal bodies subject to exploitation and subordination.

La Yeguada begins to perform in 2018, defiantly confronting women’s oppression and sexual repression as well as the discrimination of other non-hegemonic bodies, particularly the LGBTQ+ community. The naked ass is again central, although the meaning of the performance is the radical opposite of the commercial Miss Reef. In this case, it takes center stage while exhibiting a long tail coming out of it that is echoed in the performers’ long hair (Fig. 2.1). Ponytails and tails are two sites of defiance that single out the mares in their power to transgress. The synecdoche of the tail to reference women and mares, or what Linett calls “the lubric beast” is reiterated in every photographic image of the performances. The performers wear braided ponytails in different colors and styles as well as tails that hang from anal plugs. The prosthetic tail comes from BDSM (bondage, discipline, submission, and sadomasochism) fetishist aesthetic as a way of naming desire and extending it to all forms of lifestyle, creation, and love as well as the will to invent a new society, a different perception of the world and its value systems.<sup>8</sup> The tails are rhythmically and sensually moved throughout the performances, turning them into La Yeguada’s distinctive feminist and anti-speciesist revolt.

Cheril Linett, director and founder of the project, choreographs with the body at the center of the performance inquiry. The body becomes a site of resistance to power structures embodied in a range of patriarchal institutions including the Church (Catholic and Protestant), the Carabineros (the Chilean police force), the figure





FIGURE 2.1 Cheril Linett in collaboration with Fernanda Lizana, Daniela Parra Isidora Sanchez, and Fernanda Vargas. *Hermanadas en revuelta*. June 6, 2018. Performance. Santiago, Chile. Photograph by Valentin Flores.

and cult of the Virgin Mary, in the Virgen del Carmen national version, and women’s lack of reproductive rights. Furthermore, the Carabineros have a group of mares that they use as a policing and intimidatory tool against protesters, highlighting their instrumental abuse of the mares as well as brutal tactics against civil disobedience.

La Yeguada denounces male violence and speciesism as two sides of the same patriarchal and heteronormative paradigm. The group displays this hybrid and mythological mare/female body of sorts, a trans-species figure that mutates in a “spectacle of that which should not be shown, that which is monstrous and beastly but beautiful because it is sovereign,”<sup>9</sup> as artist Lucy Quezada Yañez argues.<sup>10</sup>

For every performance, Cheril Linett makes an open call and then organizes and trains the participants for long sessions before going out into the streets or public buildings. The goal is to disrupt and destabilize naturalized beliefs, patriarchal norms and commemorations, national days, the police and their “sacred” buildings, as well as Congress, among other institutions. For instance, their disruption of a Congress session in Valparaíso in

2018 calling for pro-choice was the goal in the performance *Abortistas* (Pro-choice). Extensively covered by the media, the performance consisted of a banner reading “Abortistas” that was hung from the balcony of Congress by La Yeguada. The performers had previously entered the building clandestinely while it was in session. In turn, the word/message “Abortistas” was displayed through different strategies, including uniformity (they were dressed in green, the color of feminism today, with naked buttocks showing the mares’ tails), collectivity (a group of six participants), and boldness and surprise by exposing the body, using choreographed movements and provocative written messages that unveil the legalization of women’s sexual and reproductive oppression. The body was exposed as a challenge to society and its biases on what is permissible for women to say and show, while denouncing the banning of women’s right to their own bodies.

The performers look at the audience and police agents straight in the eye, making them visibly uncomfortable, while their whacking tails move to the rhythm of their hybrid bodies. Shocking bourgeois morality by exposing the body, particularly the ass, is a key strategy. The norms to cover and reveal only specific body parts (female breasts and male torsos) underscore the suppression of the body and desire in a libidinal economy that is organized for reproduction and capitalist profit. La Yeguada, on the contrary, subverts the status quo, its mandates and sexual morality. This also happens, for instance, in the 2021 performance *Asesinxs* which denounced police brutality during the Estallido Social that extended to male and female police agents. The performers appeared dressed in bright pink dresses up to their waists while showing their buttocks as they hung a banner with the word “Asesinxs” on the police bus that was stationed in Plaza Dignidad, epicenter of the 2019 social revolt.<sup>11</sup> The police were standing around the plaza as if to protect what was left of the Baquedano monument to prevent protesters from getting near the site. The same outfit was worn during the performance *Estado de Rebelión III* (2019) in the middle of Alameda Av., one of the main traffic arteries of Santiago. La Yeguada occupied the street by lying on the ground and writing on the pavement: *Estado de Rebelión* (State of Rebellion), “pueblo digno” (“dignified people”), succinctly expressing the country’s desire in the revolt.

The series *Estado de Rebelión* is linked to the state of war that ex-President Sebastián Piñera used to describe the protests and social upheaval while criminalizing the right to protest. There have been multiple grievances denouncing sexual assaults, groping, and sexual violence by police officers since 2011 which the Estallido Social took to another level. Not only did the police and Special Forces use tear and pepper gas to dispel demonstrators but aimed the gas directly at the eyes, causing partial or total blindness in more than 460 cases, according to human rights reports. Ocular traumas and sexual abuse have been the human rights violations that the Carabineros and the military have been accused of. They have treated citizens like criminals and enemies of law and order with the support of the government. In fact, the president laid out the ideological basis for launching a war against demonstrators, calling them terrorists of the nation that needed to be destroyed. Today, Piñera has several civil suits along with an accusation of Crimes Against Humanity in the International Penal Court

by the Spanish Judge Baltazar Garzón,<sup>12</sup> the Chilean Commission of Human Rights (CHDH), the American Association of Jurists (AAJ) and the Centro di Ricerca ed Elaborazione per la Democrazia (CRED). In the document they request that the tribunal investigate, accuse, and initiate a trial against ex-President Sebastián Piñera and his civil collaborators, the military, and police for the crimes against humanity that have been systematically committed since October 2019. The existence of 3,050 cases of human rights violations that had to be investigated by the Public Ministry and that are associated with the demonstrations of October 2019 onwards is one of the main arguments for the accusation and the impunity Chile is still experiencing. The call for the Court to intervene is based on the fact that these cases have been treated as common crimes and their investigation has been intentionally slowed down to prepare the grounds for future amnesties, pardons, and a Full Stop Law.

The idea of war against protesters is explicitly articulated in the piece *Estado de Rebeldía II* (2019), where members of La Yeguada are dressed in black tops, showing their asses and tails while forming up in the middle of the street with raised fists in a half-forward fold. Several of them appear with lit Bengal lights whose white and black smoke covers the place, mimicking the barricades used by protesters to stop the police from advancing toward them. In this performance, police agents are armed and in military gear on the other side of the smoke screen, displaying a menacing and ominous presence. In this instance, La Yeguada is able to reenact how national protests and civil disobedience were treated by the Piñera government as public order violations and criminal infringements of the law instead of as the right of Chileans to disobey and exert freedom of expression. The authoritarianism and human rights violations that the government has been accused of, brought frightening and uncanny memories of the Pinochet era and the presentness of state terror and a traumatic past.

*Virgen del Carmen Bella* is a defiant 2019 performance where a statue of the Virgin Mary is queered—with the face of a trans woman, long turquoise and sparkling fingernails, long black hair, and red lips. This transfiguration of the Virgin was seen as an offense and a direct assault on the faithful. La Yeguada's queer virgin was the virgin of excess and artificiality, of nonbinary, trans, brown, and mestizo sexualities who contest and transgress the veneration and image of the hegemonic Virgen del Carmen, patroness of the country, the military, and blond worshippers, as mestiza critic, performer and curator, aliwen, notes.<sup>13</sup> The icon was transported by a group of members of La Yeguada assembled in a sorority of devotees, wearing white veils—as mantillas—lace gloves and turquoise dresses while others were dressed in white tunics, walking in front of the float and guiding the parodic march. The performance was a direct intervention in the religious procession during the annual celebration of the Virgen del Carmen in downtown Santiago. The testimonial text written by aliwen, a participant in La Yeguada's infiltration, reveals the scandal provoked in the official participants, many who were beside themselves in disgust and rage with the mares. Some were shocked and furious when seeing trans and gay performers transporting their own image of the Virgin. As shown in photographic documentation, the performers knelt on the ground with their asses and long ponytails exposed while bowing to their parodic effigy. Their camouflage

and participation in the traditional procession disrupted its normative vigilance and turned the ceremony into a camp spectacle of virgins, trans women, and transvestites.<sup>14</sup> La Yeguada was ridiculed and physically attacked by the devotees, underscoring what transgressing the “sacred space” of a religious procession on the day of the Virgin del Carmen may unleash. Having their own parallel procession within the larger and official one triggered violent and homophobic reactions against La Yeguada, who were insulted and aggressively pushed around as bystanders and devotees realized the gender disruption unfolding on the street. The effectiveness of the performance is evident in how it transformed not only the image of the Virgin but also the ways the cult is traditionally structured and perceived. The photograph showing Linett’s arrest as she is carried away in the arms of two policemen reveals the implementation of public order regulations as a way to assert Catholic morality along with heteronormative and colonial forms of religious devotion. This action by La Yeguada decolonized the cultural power of religion (untouchable until recently) and its imposition of motherhood and chastity on women for centuries as the only forms of acceptable gender identity.

The iconography and meaning of *Virgen del Carmen Bella* recall a previous performance by La Yeguada titled *Sacrilegio* (2018) which took place at the Catedral Metropolitana de Santiago de Chile (Santiago Metropolitan Cathedral). In addition, the performance *Arde* (2018) reiterated the unmasking of the Church’s double standards and the call to “burn it.”<sup>15</sup> Marching toward the altar, the performers placed a banner with the word: “ARDE” (Burn). As Jennifer Costa and Cheril Linett write, “In front of the sacred, disobedience. The mares look for the virgin,” referencing the performances involving the Church and their rejection of its sexist religious traditions and gender norms for women and motherhood.<sup>16</sup> Calling out the Church and its sexual and financial corruption is one of the key political tenets in Cheril Linett’s fearless stance and project.

Overall, the goal in these works is to make people feel uneasy and not to silence anything that makes La Yeguada uncomfortable, not to let sexist, homophobic, and derogatory jokes or slurs pass. The call is to misbehave, to disobey with the herd, to find themselves with other women, exploring other modes of existence and transforming closed relationships. Concha and Linett argue that falling in love with oneself and with other women, and breaking the rules that punish transgression of a heteropatriarchal regime, are among their expressive desires and the will to rebel.<sup>17</sup>

### **LASTESIS: MAKING PERFORMANCE ACCESSIBLE AND MASSIVE**

On November 25, 2019, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 2,000 women gathered in front of the Courts of Justice in Santiago and performed *A Rapist in your Path* by LASTESIS (Fig. 2.2). Within days, the intervention denouncing the structural oppression of neoliberal patriarchy became viral in unprecedented ways. In *TIME* magazine’s list of “100 Most Influential People 2020,” Danya





FIGURE 2.2 LASTESIS. *Un Violador en tu Camino* (A Rapist in your Path). November 29, 2019 Performance. Valparaiso, Chile. Photograph by Camila R. Hidalgo.

Tolokonnikova, a member of the Russian feminist performance collective Pussy Riot, stated: “LASTESIS, the Chilean feminist performance collective, shows today how popular art can be about changing the world, not entertaining.”<sup>18</sup>

LASTESIS<sup>19</sup> are, in fact, Dafne Valdés, Sibila Sotomayor, Paula Cometa, and Lea Cáceres. They were all born in 1988, the year of the referendum that brought an end to Pinochet’s dictatorship, initiating a transitional period that led to the return to democracy in 1990. Coming from diverse social and political backgrounds and personal experiences, they were trained in a range of disciplines, including theater studies, costume design, visual arts, history, social sciences, and anthropology. Strongly interdisciplinary, LASTESIS’s works are also multimodal

and resort to low-end materials, not only defying the current epistemological divide between high art and popular culture but also overturning the economic system where art is assessed according to its market value. Artists like LASTESIS are facilitators in a feminist artistic process in which they share tools and knowledge for the emancipation of all.

As Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw have highlighted, the project of this “interdisciplinary, intersectional and trans-inclusive feminist collective [...] deconstructs boundaries between theory and practice, academy and street, producing learning through collective, horizontal and non-hierarchical spaces and dynamics.”<sup>20</sup> LASTESIS’s music, dance, performance, and homemade videos transform everyday places, objects, and low-cost materials into locations, costumes, and props using collage, a compositional tool which establishes equal value to the elements combined.<sup>21</sup> Aesthetics and politics join and become inseparable in artistic production grounded on the everyday and everyone’s power to create. In so doing, they sum up various strategies: first, “interventions,” a word they prefer to “performance,” in public spaces; second, multimedia collaborations with other artists and activists across the world; third, workshops; and fourth, editorial work. In the Prologue to *Antología Feminista*, commissioned by Random House Mondadori, LASTESIS write:

We want to contribute to recognize the different moments of historical feminists, to construct and deconstruct from them. From here there is a need to attempt to be out of a Eurocentric paradigm. As a colonized country the majority of our formations have been guided by “big” white ideas, Western and heteronormative, by the hegemony of cisgender men that in many instances do not dialogue with our views and problematics as women, dissidents and sudacas.<sup>22</sup>

Readers, thus, are invited to browse the texts, poems, and images—that range from 1610 to 2020—without following any pre-established order or hierarchy creating their personal feminist constellation. Though the Prologue’s tone is enthusiastic and encouraging, it also discloses that influential authors like Angela Davis, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Julieta Kirkwood are absent due to copyright restrictions, highlighting the market value of knowledge production. Among the Chilean artists included in the anthology is a photograph of the performance *Refundación de la Universidad de Chile* by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis, the collective mentioned at the beginning of this essay. As also noted above, Las Yeguas is an inescapable referent for La Yeguada and LASTESIS, despite their different *poiesis* and aesthetics.

In 2021, LASTESIS published a book of their own: *Quemar el miedo. Un manifiesto* (Burning Fear. A Manifesto).<sup>23</sup> Moving back and forth from a testimonial affective mode to a feminist scholarly one, the book is also a graphic piece designed with stencil effects and typographies that are reminiscent of a pamphlet aesthetics. According to journalist Alejanda Matus, German-Chilean mogul Horst Paulmann forbade the selling of

LASTESIS's book in the department stores and supermarkets of his holding, due to the boldness of the language and the direct attack on neoliberal capitalism.<sup>24</sup> They write:

The experience of one is the experience of all

The isolation of feelings and experiences has allowed patriarchy to take us by surprise, alone and anguished. Through the real internationalization of empathy and sorority in relation to the collective, is how we can defend ourselves from patriarchal cages.

“It is not me.” “It wasn't my fault.” “It is not only against me.”

It is not depression; it is capitalism and patriarchy.<sup>25</sup>

As anticipated in the beginning, the only way out is sorority and collectivism:

Together we burn the criminal alliance of patriarchy and capitalism.

Together we burn work, sexual and reproductive exploitation.

Together we burn patriarchal institutions and structures.

Together we burn impunity. Together we burn sexism, machismo and misogyny.

Together we burn heteronorm.

Together we burn required maternity.

Together we burn guilt.

Together we burn symbolic, domestic and sexual violence.

Together we burn the violence inscribed in our bodies and the bodies.

Together we burn the pact of silence for so much abuse and oppression.

Together we burn fear.<sup>26</sup>

Either devised on their own or by a larger group of participants, LASTESIS's works display the shared experience of women and non-hegemonic minorities to create a sense of collectivity that goes beyond their artistic cluster. Unlike La Yeguada's aim to *épater les bourgeois*, LASTESIS bat for the many, a growing number of individuals voicing in the public sphere the “secrets” that have been relegated to the private realm to hide the ubiquity of gender violence. In order to achieve massiveness, and in contrast to La Yeguada, LASTESIS prioritize simple choreographies and songs in lieu of expert vocal ability, physical training, and domesticated bodies. The performative frame turns common apparel and household items into costumes and props, thus operating under the logic of iconic displacement already explored by artists in the 1960s and 1970s. The apparent naivete of LASTESIS's interventions, as well as the humor of the “retro” allure of their videos and graphic works, comes with blunt lyrics that exude feminist rage.

LASTESIS's publications magnify and deepen their activist project. Accessibility allows diverse individuals to participate in their performances, thus enhancing their political base. Their apparent simplicity is

counterbalanced by the complex, informed discursive identity they build into their publications and conferences. In this way, interventions, workshops and writings form a kaleidoscopic platform that constructs LASTESIS into pop icons of today's feminist struggle in the Global South who efface themselves in collective performances.

### UN VIOLADOR EN TU CAMINO (A.K.A.) EL VIOLADOR ERES TÚ

In May, 2021, LASTESIS member Sibila Sotomayor stated: “The body is the basis of performance and we have chosen performance as the base that brings everything together, with the understanding that our bodies are a territory under exploitation.”<sup>27</sup> Performance art is articulated in the relationship between the body and a specific place charged with symbolic density.<sup>28</sup> *Un Violador en tu Camino* was first performed on November 20, 2019, in the historic civic center of Valparaíso.<sup>29</sup> The performance was recorded and posted on social media. Six days later, the initial dozens of participants became thousands, gathered in front of the Supreme Court building of Santiago for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Within weeks the intervention had become a global phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> As Jessica Pabón-Colón explains: “LASTESIS didn't just choreograph a protest performance: they choreographed an opportunity for the public to participate in transnational feminist movement, for all of us to follow the lead of feminist thought and action from the Global South.”<sup>31</sup>

The key to massive participation lies in the mantra-like rhythm of the song, along with simple steps. On social media, participants learn the lyrics and movements on their own and then gather in the designated location, dressed in black. They are blindfolded to recall being snatched by the police and armed forces, and most of them also wear the pro-choice feminist green scarves, a legacy of the human rights struggle of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires. Inspired by Argentinian feminist Rita Segato, *Un Violador...* lifts the blame for gender violence from women and puts it on patriarchy. Two gestures break the verticality of the standing body: the squat, used by policemen to reduce protesters; and the pointing finger while singing “the rapist is you.” When thousands of voices roar together: “and the fault wasn't mine, nor where I was, not how I dressed,” the structural violence against women and the institutionalized impunity that has shielded the aggressors become blatant.<sup>32</sup> The power of *Un Violador...* resides in the embodied evidence that all women are victims of gender violence and, when gathered in thousands, vulnerability turns into sorority, empowerment, and agency. Because “it wasn't my fault” as the song goes; it's a structural condition of the alliance between patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism.

American sociologist Charles Tilly identifies protest as a form of contentious performance which “involves public expressions of dissent against prevailing systems,” and makes “a powerful assertion of popular sovereignty: we, the people, have the right to voice our initiative; worthy, united, numerous and committed, we have



the capacity to change things.”<sup>33</sup> Contentious performances are usually repressed by the police. Nevertheless, the visibility of LASTESIS made impossible on-site repression by explicitly identifying policemen as rapists in the lyrics, which reads: “the rapist is you / the policemen / the judges / the State.”

Despite the discursive accusation, *Un Violador...* has always been a pacific demonstration; hence no actual police action was ever taken. However, the retaliation took the form of a legal grievance against LASTESIS for “encouraging violent actions against the institution” after releasing the video “Manifiesto against Police Violence.”<sup>34</sup> The video was a collaboration between Pussy Riot and LASTESIS. In its first part, the Chilean performers show up wearing facemasks and hoods, reminiscent of feminist punk groups, strolling the streets to stand in front of a police station while a manifesto is read out. In the second part, Mexican actress Wendy Moira, the spokesperson for Pussy Riot for México and Latin America, takes over.<sup>35</sup>

It is no surprise that both LASTESIS and La Yeguada pointed their darts at the Chilean police and its brutality. The erosion of their public image resulted from two parallel events. In 2016, a corruption scandal and embezzlement, advertised by the media as Pacogate, destroyed public trust and their reputation. During the 2019 Estallido Social, special police forces were responsible for the violent repression which ended with around 1,000 casualties, 30 deaths and 460 cases of eye injuries, including total vision loss of protesters and bystanders.

Despite the rage expressed against the police, patriarchy, and the state, the main emotions reported by female participants in street manifestations in Chile from May 2018 are sorority and safety.<sup>36</sup> The tantalizing embodied experience that “I’m not the only one,” that this is “us” under the same structural oppression is also reported as joyful. Empathy becomes evident when bodies engage in actions in unison. Marching together enhances the sense of sharing a common cause, whereas body coordination by repeated choreographed movements and songs builds a feeling of strong collectivity. The fact that *Un Violador...* can be performed by diverse bodies defies the divide between fit and unfit bodies, as showed in “Lastesis Senior.” In December 2019, more than 10.000 women aged 40 and over came together in front of the former torture and detention center, Estadio Nacional de Chile.<sup>37</sup> To a range of diverse bodies, cultures, and places, LASTESIS have made available their work worldwide to those willing to fight for the feminist cause, through encouraging free re-performing and local appropriation of the performance.<sup>38</sup> Their goal is to destabilize the logic of copyright and licensing and providing open access to their work.

#### **A SHORT NOTE ON THE PANDEMIC**

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on humanity. What we once saw as a reoccupation of public space to express dissent and the need for social justice long after the Chilean Dictatorship has today been

chased off the streets by the pandemic. Nevertheless, LASTESIS's multidisciplinary approach meant they have been able to resort to digital media to bypass the restrictions imposed by Covid in the country. Inspired by Paul Preciado, "Feminazis" is an audiovisual pop collage with a soundtrack combining voice-over and techno music. The videos were provided by a group of collaborators that recorded themselves at home, namely in the bathroom—the most private site of private space—and then digitally post-produced reminiscent of Warhol's prints of iconic actresses. The topics were sexual exploitation and the reification of the female body. Here the corporalities featured exceed the usual imaginary of male pornography as parodically half-naked participants appear wearing Hitler mustaches. Thus they make the feminazi expression used against feminists even more absurd.

The artistic collective has explicitly highlighted the importance of collage in their work. As mentioned before, *Antología Feminista* was identified in the Prologue as a "book/collage."<sup>39</sup> In the hands of LASTESIS, collage is a multifunctional compositional tool which includes both collectiveness with various subjectivities and corporalities, different artistic disciplines and traditions, and diverse materialities. The visual imaginary of the ideal homemaker in newspapers and magazines in the 1950s–60s with the strategies of pop culture are their signature style. Cheril Linett keeps a distance between herself and the traditional artwork. In so doing, she exerts full control of the production process and aesthetic results. Interventions by bystanders or the police aim at stopping the performance from unfolding, thus reinforcing its disruptive nature. LASTESIS instead disavows this stance and devises performances where authorship is diluted in the collective. Once the performance is designed, their creators participate as any other in the crowd. Being much less provocative than La Yeguada, LASTESIS's interventions are rarely rejected by bystanders, and the multitude also acts as a protective shield against violent acts. Beyond a series of actions and gestures, and a slogan or song, there is a broad space for individual creativity.

Linett's discourse is visually striking and that allows her to fit into the Chilean art system where she is recognized as a radical artist and her work preserved through archival footage. The impact of the performances stills shows the artist's interest in the fixed image, its density and multi-referentiality are anchored in art (Las Yeguas) and Pop (reef, pornography). Linett uses few but distinct elements that invariably give her work the signature of the tail, the use of color in the logic of the synecdoche. Density and synthesis are captured in the image/photo she creates and the disruption accomplished—as in the mares confronting Carabineros while exposing their bare asses and vulnerability against state force and brutality. *Hermanadas en la Revuelta* (2018) poignantly shows this unequal confrontation of forces, foreshadowing the Estallido Social.

Cheril Linett sees herself as a dissident feminist artist whose goal is to deconstruct political patriarchal imaginaries that normalize slavery, submission, and subordination to heterosexual cisgender men. Irreverently defying and disrupting public places where power operates, La Yeguada uses the participants'

LGBTQ+ bodies, focusing especially on the anus, ass, and tail, to explore, enunciate, and confront.<sup>40</sup> Linett's artwork and performances confrontationally question heteronormativity and conventional notions of womanhood, motherhood, and gender head on and radically. The legacy of *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* may be seen throughout Linett's work particularly in the use of the body as both a tool and weapon in the public sphere to provoke and disarm. LASTESIS, for their part, are very effective at circulating feminist theoretical discourse and fleshing it out to make it accessible. Their interventions, much like protests in the *Estallido Social*, have a sense of fleeting actions at odds with the need to preserve, catalog, and archive for posterity. Nevertheless, the transience of LASTESIS's performances meets the quasi-stardom these artists have achieved thanks to media exposure and the narrative that surrounds their work. Deeply rooted in collective work, LASTESIS' work is more conventional in its aesthetic stance. In fact, their repertoire is made up of old images of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Perhaps this anachronism of sorts aims at a different strategy to destabilize the artistic field, whereas the elaborate aesthetics of *La Yeguada's* performances challenges the divide between art and everyday life, LASTESIS transforms the everyday in political action. *Un Violador...* touched a deep feeling of injustice shared by millions of women being raped and then chastised and blamed; its unexpected success and circulation prove the need to shout out loud "it wasn't my fault" while pointing at the perpetrators. As cultural critic Paula Serafini argues in the context of social mobilizations, performance actions matter and can have an effect beyond a protest context, as we have seen with *Un Violador en tu Camino* and its transnational impact.<sup>41</sup>

In turn, the use of technology is another area where we see differences between LASTESIS and *La Yeguada*. The former uses social media to call and convene its collectives and also to create, whereas Linett operates in face-to-face meetings to prepare the performances and rigorously train performers before going into the street. The difference in artistic expression reflects, in our view, the diversity in the ways feminist art and politics join for social transformation, whether through transnational feminism as in LASTESIS or Queer Feminism as in Cheril Linett's *La Yeguada Latinoamericana*.

## Notes

1. This article was supported by an ANID/Fondecyt 1201195 grant.
2. Mario Federico Cabrera, "Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis: aportes de la Historia de las ideas para una lectura de la Refundación de la Universidad de Chile (1988)", *Algarrobo-MEL* 4(4) (2015), <https://revistas.uncu.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/mel/article/view/646>.
3. Cheril Linett is a visual artist and performer who started doing performances in 2014. Since then her work has been characterized by boldness and defiance especially confronting issues of gender, class, and sexual discrimination by patriarchal institutions. LASTESIS is a feminist artistic collective formed by formed by Daffne Valdés, Sibila Sotomayor, Paula Cometa, and Lea Cáceres, whose interdisciplinary art seeks to denounce violence against women perpetrated by state institutions, especially the police.

4. In fact, current Chilean President Gabriel Boric along with ministers Camila Vallejos and Giorgio Jackson they were all activists in the 2011 student movement and soon after were elected representatives at the Chilean Congress. For the performance of “Thriller Masivo Por La Educación Chilena!!!” see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MG50RDjFiRU>.

5. The Constitutional Convention was voted and formed in 2021. The 255 members are charged to write a new constitution that will replace the 1980 constitution ratified during Pinochet. The Convention is the result of the fight of social forces that protested for two months for equity and dignity during the Estallido Social.

6. “Esta imagen es fuerte...”, Twitter @KenaLorenziniL, 21:09, June 7, 2018, accessed on March 25, 2022.

7. This is a kind of soft twerking dance that fetishizes and sexualizes the candidates’ buttocks while objectifying them to be consumed by the male gaze.

8. Cheril Linett, “Proyecto Yeguada Latinoamericana. Performance y feminismo disidente,” in *Yeguada Latinoamericana de Cheril Linett. Acciones, archivo y escrituras críticas (2017-2021)*, aliwen & Lucy Quezada, eds. (Santiago: Trío Editorial, 2021), 17.

9. Lucy Quezada Yañez, “Por un registro posible,” in *Yeguada Latinoamericana de Cheril Linett. Acciones, archivo y escrituras críticas (2017-2021)*, edited by aliwen & Lucy Quezada (Santiago: Trío Editorial, 2021), 95.

10. Quezada Yañez, “Por un registro posible,” 95.

11. Former Plaza Baquedano, today Plaza Dignidad, has been the epicenter of the Estallido Social, gathering hundreds of demonstrators.

12. Mauricio Weibel, “Garzón y Comisión Chilena de DDHH acusan al Presidente Piñera en la Corte Penal Internacional por crímenes de lesa humanidad,” Ciper, accessed on February 28, 2022, <https://www.ciperchile.cl/2021/04/29/garzon-y-comision-chilena-de-ddhh-acusan-al-presidente-pinera-en-la-corte-penal-internacional-por-crimenes-de-lesa-humanidad/>.

13. aliwen, “matria: apuntes descoloniales sobre vírgenes, travestis y lo camp-uria,” in *Yeguada Latinoamericana de Cheril Linett. Acciones, archivo y escrituras críticas (2017-2021)*, edited by aliwen & Lucy Quezada (Santiago: Trío Editorial, 2021), 111.

14. aliwen, “matria: apuntes descoloniales sobre vírgenes, travestis y lo camp-uria,” 109.

15. This time the action took place at the Templo Votivo de Maipú (Votive Temple of Maipú) which is devoted to the Virgen del Carmen, Patroness of Chile and of the Chilean Armed Forces.

16. “Ante lo sacro, desobediencia. Las yeguas en busca de la virgen.” All translations are by authors unless noted.

17. Jennifer Concha and Cheril Linett, “Ante lo sacro, desobediencia. Las Yeguas buscan a la virgen,” accessed on February 28, 2022, <https://lobosuelto.com/ante-lo-sacro-desobediencia-las-yeguas-en-busca-de-la-virgen-jennifer-concha-y-cheril-linett-desde-chile/>.

18. “LASTESIS,” Nadia Tolokonnikova, *TIME*, accessed on March 28, 2022, <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888485/lastesis/>.

19. LASTESIS means “the thesis”; Spanish being a gendered language, thesis is a “feminine” noun.

20. Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw, “Chilean and Transnational Performances of Disobedience: LasTesis and the Phenomenon of *Un violador en tu camino*,” *Bulletin on Latin American Research* 40 (2021): 2, 5, <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.13215>

21. For more on this, see LASTESIS, *Antología Feminista* (Santiago: Debate, 2021).

22. LASTESIS, *Antología Feminista* (Santiago: Debate, 2021), 5–6 (emphasis in the original).

23. LASTESIS Colectivo. *Quemar el miedo* (Santiago: Planeta, 2021).

24. In El Mostrador Braga, *El Mostrador*, March 23, 2021, “Denuncian a supermercado Jumbo por negarse a vender nuevo libro de LasTesis [sic] en sus locales,” accessed on March 25, 2022, <https://www.elmostrador.cl/braga/destacados-braga/2021/03/23/denuncian-a-supermercado-jumbo-por-negarse-a-vender-nuevo-libro-de-lastesis-en-sus-locales/>

25. “La experiencia de una es la experiencia de todas.

El aislamiento de los sentires y de las experiencias le ha permitido al patriarcado tomarnos por sorpresa, solas y angustiadas. A través de la internalización real de la empatía y sororidad, en vinculación con el colectivo, es que podemos defendernos de las jaulas patriarcales.

‘No soy yo.’ ‘No es mi culpa.’ ‘No es solo contra mí.’

No es depresión, es capitalismo y patriarcado.” LASTESIS Colectivo, “Nosotras,” *Quemar el miedo*, 9.

26. “Juntas quemamos la criminal alianza entre el patriarcado y el capitalismo.  
 Juntas quemamos la explotación laboral, sexual y reproductiva.  
 Juntas quemamos las instituciones y estructuras patriarcales.  
 Juntas quemamos la impunidad. Juntas quemamos el sexismo, el machismo y la misoginia.  
 Juntas quemamos la heteronorma.  
 Juntas quemamos la maternidad obligatoria. Juntas quemamos la culpa. Juntas quemamos la violencia simbólica, doméstica y sexual. Juntas quemamos las violencias inscritas en nuestros cuerpos y cuerpos. Juntas quemamos el pacto de silencio ante tanto abuso y opresión. Juntas quemamos el miedo.” LASTESIS Colectivo, “Juntas,” *Quemar el miedo*, 133-134.
27. “Performance feminista: procesos creativos interdisciplinarios,” NMAPA, accessed on March 25, 2022, <https://www.nmapa.cl/converatorios/conferencia-colectivo-las-tesis-2/>
28. Katya Mandoki, “Sites of Symbolic Density: A Relativistic Approach to Experienced Space,” in *Philosophies of Place III*, edited by Andrew Light, 73–95, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
29. For the performance by LASTESIS of *A Rapist in your Path*, see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_0ed59v2hQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0ed59v2hQE)
30. For a world map showing where *Un Violador...* has been performed, go to [http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/ca/map/un-violador-en-tu-camino-20192021-actualizado-al-2\\_394247#3/24.85/-26.02](http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/ca/map/un-violador-en-tu-camino-20192021-actualizado-al-2_394247#3/24.85/-26.02)
31. Jessica Pabón-Colón, “Pa’lante con LASTESIS,” in *Teatro y Feminismo*, by Kim Solga (Santiago: Osoliebre, 2021), 19.
32. Analisa Merelli, “Learn the lyrics and dance steps for the Chilean feminist anthem spreading around the world.”
33. Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 54.
34. “LASTESIS x PUSSY RIOT,” youtube.cl, accessed on March 25, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPfcb9aTcl0>
35. Simultaneously, Pussy Riot, which had already visited Chile in April 2019, released on social media the song *1312*, the numeric acronym for ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards).
36. Luis Campos Medina and Josefina Jaureguiberry Mondion, “The March as a Safe Space and Dynamics of Resocialization,” *Space and Culture*, August (2021): 1–13.
37. Andrés Aparicio, “Still bodies. A Disability-informed Approach to Stasis in Theatre” (PhD dissertation, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2022), 6.
38. For further detail, see Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw, “Chilean and Transnational Performances of Disobedience: LasTesis and the Phenomenon of *Un violador en tu camino*,” 712–729.
39. LASTESIS, *Antología Feminista*, 6.
40. Cheril Linett, “Proyecto Yeguada Latinoamericana. Performance y feminismo disidente,” 20.
41. Paula Serafini, “‘A Rapist in your Path.’ Transnational Feminist Protest and Why (and How) Performance Matters,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23(2) (April 2020): 290–291, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549420912748>.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Feminist Re-Mappings of Colonia Dignidad as Antifascist Praxis

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Carl Fischer

### INTRODUCTION: FASCISMS FROM AFAR

Willy Schürholz, whom Roberto Bolaño describes as part of a fictional pantheon of fascist artists in his *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, creates work that must be consumed from a distance, in an explicitly hierarchical form of spectatorship. Schürholz was born in Colonia Renacer, Bolaño's thinly veiled renaming of Colonia Dignidad, an insular, autarchic, fundamentalist, totalitarian compound in southern Chile. In the novel, Schürholz publishes a series of books that combine poetry and architectural layouts, and all "return to the same theme: maps of concentration camps superimposed on a map of Colonia Renacer, or a particular city ... or situated in an empty, rural space."<sup>1</sup> Later, he uses a bulldozer to dig "the map of an ideal concentration camp into the Atacama Desert: an intricate network which, from the ground, appeared to be an ominous series of straight lines, but viewed from a helicopter or an airplane resolved into a graceful set of curves."<sup>2</sup> Schürholz's sinister drawings evoke fascist concentration camps from Pisagua, Chile, to Bergen-Belsen, Germany, and either evoke distance from their objects or are only legible from a distance. Bolaño thus places the creation and consumption of fascist art seen from afar in the context of firmly hierarchical configurations of space, to emphasize the far-reaching, all-seeing nature of dictatorship-era Chile, under the governance of Augusto Pinochet from 1973 to 1990.

Schürholz's artworks also have implications for geopolitics and gender. Atacama is an area remote from the capital, claimed by the Chilean state in the context of imperialist—and racist—military authoritarianism and patriarchy.<sup>3</sup> Colonia Dignidad, though an enclave populated by Germans in a far-flung part of Chile near the southern town of Parral, was also integrated into the geopolitical designs of the dictatorship. Schürholz's work represents this integration—the Colonia's members aided in the torture of political dissidents there—even as the



distance it imagines between map and viewer reveals how insulated the Colonia was from Chilean state intervention. As James C. Scott shows, projects of governance and surveillance use maps and other forms of statecraft to attain a “high-modernist” vantage point that catalogs people and places from above.<sup>4</sup> Scott explicitly ties this form of seeing to authoritarianism and imperialist hegemony, pointing out how it “excludes the necessary role of local knowledge and know-how” that could only be visible from a much closer perspective.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, authoritarianism—and its cultural production—privileges what Laura Marks calls “ocularcentrism.”<sup>6</sup> This emphasizes “visual mastery” over more feminist methods of bringing “the image closer to the body and other senses.”<sup>7</sup> This distance imagines the surveillance of geographically recondite spaces, while glossing over the bodies, knowledge, and nuances that a closer vantage point would confer. It is also a cornerstone of fascist art, whose authoritarianism generally goes hand in hand, as Bolaño has shown, with misogyny.<sup>8</sup>

The implications of distance in fascist art, in both its creation and its spectatorship, are manifold. Here, though, I invoke this text by Bolaño to contrast it with the corpus of art I will examine presently: an archive of antifascist art about Colonia Dignidad, some of it with an explicitly feminist bent. The Colonia’s longtime leader—a former Nazi named Paul Schäfer—operated with impunity, establishing a culture of betrayal, surveillance, and child sexual abuse. A blank, mysterious spot on the national map, the Colonia operated as a state within a state: its members were more subject to the authority of Schäfer than to Chilean law, they rarely left the confines of the compound, and outsiders were rarely let in. Yet at the same time, its members participated—with the blessing of both Pinochet and Manuel Contreras<sup>9</sup>—in the torture and disappearance of political dissidents during the dictatorship. The Colonia was a place where, as Winfried Hempel writes, “se hizo una extraña asociación entre un cristianismo fundamentalista y un furibundo anticomunismo. [...] [C]ombatir dicho ‘peligro’ surgía de sus miedos más intensos y profundos que habían engendrado a finales de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Así, tanto Cristo como Pinochet eran para ellos salvadores” [“a strange association was created between fundamentalist Christianity and raging anti-communism. [...] Fighting this supposed ‘danger’ was motivated by their most intense, deepest fears, held since the end of World War II. In this way, both Christ and Pinochet were saviors for them”].<sup>10</sup> However, since Schäfer’s arrest and subsequent death in 2010, the Colonia’s archives have become available to the public, and more and more artworks have been created to tell the Colonia’s stories.<sup>11</sup> I will focus on three such works: Chilean-Venezuelan writer Lola Larra’s (b. 1968, Santiago) novel *Sprinters* (2016); Chilean born, New York-based artist María Verónica San Martín’s (b. 1981, Santiago) performance/installation *Dignidad* (2018); and Chilean artists Cristóbal León (b. 1980 Santiago) and Joaquín Cociña’s (b. 1980, Santiago) film *La casa lobo / The Wolf House* (2018). Narrated in the first person by a writer-filmmaker who once aspired to make a film about the Colonia, *Sprinters* tells the story of Lutgarda, a member of the Colonia whom the narrator helps piece together hidden pieces of her past. *Dignidad*, meanwhile, is a performance piece that exposes the hidden, fascistic aspects of Colonia Dignidad through the physical manipulation of symbolic objects, as well as

an exhibit of artifacts and other archival materials found there. Finally, *La casa lobo* is a stop-motion film that denounces the child abuse that occurred at the Colonia, even as it appears to be a cautionary tale created to warn the Colonia's children against escaping.

Through literary, performative, and cinematic forms, all three works bring Colonia Dignidad out of the darkness and secrecy in which it was formerly cloaked, and affectively emphasize closeness and attachment to critique the abuses that took place there. They break with the distance-oriented, hierarchical forms of fascist art that Bolaño denounces, and they rework figurative and literal maps of the Colonia to expose fascist horror. In what follows, then, I establish a contrast between the detached, impersonal aesthetics of fascism, on one hand, and the feminist values of difference and respect for others practiced in the texts of Larra, León and Cociña, and San Martín, on the other. These latter texts map the Colonia in a tactile, close-up way, counteracting authoritarian geopolitical approaches aimed at “manipulating” populations—both from a distance and through the “control [of] sentient experience [with ...] the use of sophisticated and often medicalized technologies to inflict pain” through torture, to quote Mara Polgovsky—that were so often employed by the Colonia and the dictatorship.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, they question and condemn how surveillance functioned in Colonia Dignidad, while also tracing haptic, care-oriented forms of working through the traumas caused by the fascistic aspects of the compound.

### ANTIFASCISM, FEMINISM, AND PROXIMITY

Bolaño's literary renderings of fascist art dialogue with the principles of conventional geopolitics, which was created as a disciplinary field in Europe in the late nineteenth century. A way of seeing the world from afar and above, geopolitics was conceived to systematically manage territorial space, particularly that of Europe's colonies. According to Gearóid Ó Tuathail, it sought to render the world visible from the Cartesian perspective of a “neutral and disembodied gaze,”<sup>13</sup> insisting upon “a visual and aesthetic organization of the space of the world and [...] the dream of a ‘total view’ of global space”<sup>14</sup> as a way of understanding the world from a fixed nationalist and imperialist perspective. The racist underpinnings of European geopolitics, which set out to justify “the superiority of the white European races and the naturalness of imperialism,”<sup>15</sup> were present in Latin America as well, where leaders designated Indigenous land as a *terra nullius*, ripe for state-sponsored settler colonialism and resource extraction. Examining the world from above, without regard for Indigenous, anti-authoritarian, or anti-imperial concepts of space, was a way of prioritizing the nationalistic goals of the state over the people living in the territories it controlled. Indeed, as María Angélica Franken points out, German settlers in southern Chile from the nineteenth century to 1960—when Colonia Dignidad was established there—saw its forests “como idea-imagen [que] permite a los colonos la conexión con el nuevo territorio conquistado y con la alteridad, pero al mismo tiempo permite su exclusión del resto del territorio nacional y de la sociedad en general” [“as an

idea-image [that] let the settlers make connections with the newly conquered territory and with their alterity, while at the same time allowing for their exclusion from the rest of the national territory and from society in general”].<sup>16</sup> The Indigenous inhabitants of those forests, meanwhile, were deemed little more than “barbarians” that the German settlers would supposedly help civilize.<sup>17</sup>

European geopolitics from the fin de siècle, particularly in Germany, inspired South American military strongmen and Nazis alike. It revolved around a belief in *Lebensraum*, or “living space,” which thought of countries in metaphorical terms, as living organisms that constantly needed to expand their territory, gaining more power and resources in order to survive.<sup>18</sup> This idea, according to Eric Kurlander, “justified virtually any German intervention into central and eastern Europe” in the lead-up to World War II.<sup>19</sup> Multiple South American military figures also wrote treatises about geopolitics, including Augusto Pinochet, who authored (indeed, plagiarized) the 1968 textbook *Geopolítica de Chile* [*The Geopolitics of Chile*].<sup>20</sup> To quote Leslie Hepple, “a direct line can be traced from the original geopolitical metaphor to the ideology of the Chilean junta and the Argentine ‘dirty war’.”<sup>21</sup> This means that the violence that the dictatorships committed was motivated by a desire to protect “the internal health of the state” from “the threat of subversive, cancerous cells within the body of the organism.”<sup>22</sup> The fascist art that Bolaño describes in the context of Chile’s dictatorship can thus hardly be understood without invoking the imperialist perspective of geopolitical thought.

More recent feminist critiques of geopolitics, however, have opened up ways of critiquing the authoritarian, masculinist foundations of geographic thought from the perspective of aesthetics. For Jennifer Hyndman, for example, a focus on the body—in an echo of French feminist theory that emphasized writing from the body as a mode of challenging the “phallogentric” letter—“may have the potential to subvert dominant geographical narratives.”<sup>23</sup> This favors a multiscale approach, and looks more closely at the bodies living in a country than at the imaginary lines and borders aimed at containing them.<sup>24</sup> The ways in which feminist geopolitics takes a closer look at any given terrain offer an “embodied view from which to analyze visceral conceptions of violence, security, and mobility.”<sup>25</sup> In general, then, feminist geopolitics allows for a critique of what Donna Haraway calls the “conquering gaze from nowhere” that the geopolitical gaze attributes to itself, in favor of “the embodied nature of all vision.”<sup>26</sup> Haraway’s critique of geopolitics, which sums up the work of a number of feminist thinkers on standpoint theory, takes a specific stance against the maps that prop up authoritarian gazes (and regimes).<sup>27</sup> As she explains:

All these pictures of the world should not be allegories of infinite mobility and interchangeability, but of elaborate specificity and difference and the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another’s point of view [...]. Many currents in feminism attempt to theorize grounds for trusting especially the vantage points of the subjugated; there is good reason to believe vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful.<sup>28</sup>

Feminist approaches to geopolitics move from the faraway to the close-up, from disembodiment to the sensuous, and from distant surveillance to empathetic care. In this way, they open up ways of understanding Larra's novel, León and Cociña's film, and San Martín's performance as alternative forms of mapping which question the underlying authoritarianism of geopolitical concepts of space.

Feminist geopoliticians were hardly the first thinkers to understand the power of closeness and the senses to resist authoritarianism. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Friedrich Schiller invoked the idea of play to elevate people's consciousness of beauty. For Schiller, tactility leads to a cultivation of beauty, and he uses the metaphor of a sculptor to explain:

A block of marble, although it remains lifeless, can all the same assume living form in the hands of an architect or sculptor; while a man, although he lives and has form, is far from being living form by virtue of this. For that, his form has to be life, and his life form. So long as we merely think of his form it is lifeless, a mere abstraction; so long as we merely feel his life, it lacks form, is a mere impression. Only by his form living in our senses [...] is he a living form, and that will always be the case whenever we judge him to be beautiful.<sup>29</sup>

The senses bring about an experiential understanding of the places and objects that otherwise have only been apprehended “rationally”<sup>30</sup>—with a distance that could be spatial or affective—as mere forms. Play is thus a pedagogical device for Schiller, allowing for the cultivation of the senses and educating man into “completion,”<sup>31</sup> that is, understanding beauty in both an abstract and in a physical, tactile way. This close-up, sense-based understanding of beauty can thus be interpreted as a rebuke to the all-knowing, distant approaches to seeing, and to geopolitics, that Scott and others equate with authoritarianism. Still, Schillerian play can also be used toward authoritarian ends. Paul de Man writes about how Josef Goebbels used Schiller's aesthetic ideals in the service of the Nazi regime: the films of Leni Riefenstahl and the architecture of Albert Speer are evidence enough of how the use of beauty to supposedly elevate the masses could take a sinister turn.<sup>32</sup> And, indeed, Schillerian aesthetic pedagogy's aspiration to “completion” risks being equated with the all-seeing geopolitical vision that Haraway critiques as a “god-trick.”<sup>33</sup>

This is possibly why Jacques Rancière instead writes about aesthetic cultivation in terms of the “distribution of the sensible,” which emphasizes the partiality of our senses: we cannot all sense the same thing, in the same way, at the same time.<sup>34</sup> We must use our senses, but we must also interpret what we sense, particularly because of how highly coded both fascist and antifascist art is; this process of interpretation, like all epistemic processes, can and should never be “complete.” The process of learning to decode what we sense taking place is thus crucial. In this way, one can learn to elicit fascist meanings from the spectacular, bucolic landscapes of Colonia Dignidad, when taught about how the Colonia's wholesome appearance—its orderly fields of wheat, its hospital staffed

with rosy-cheeked and friendly nurses, and its tidily geometric architecture—masks hateful, racist, and abusive ideologies. The link between pedagogy and fascism is key, not only because the former helps us identify the latter, but also because young people, who tend to spend larger amounts of time studying and learning, are often most vulnerable to fascist indoctrination. In Chile, one of the distinctive characteristics of fascism—whether in Colonia Dignidad or at the 1977 ceremony in which seventy-seven young people were designated to be future leaders of the new institutional apparatus of Pinochet’s dictatorship on Santiago’s Chacarillas Hill—was what Yanko González calls fascism’s “exaltación e identificación absoluta con la juventud” [“exaltation of, and absolute identification with, youth”].<sup>35</sup> The fact that child sexual abuse was systematic in Colonia Dignidad makes the cultivation of antifascist pedagogy in the texts I discuss here all the more urgent. The perversity of figuring young people as the political “future” of ideological movements, resoundingly critiqued by Lee Edelman and others,<sup>36</sup> indicates how crucial it is to account for, and combat, the ways fascism tends to make instruments of young people.

Indeed, pedagogy—the cultivation of the senses, the use of education to lead young people (and readers and viewers)<sup>37</sup> to make judgments about what they see—is a central focus in the work of Larra, San Martín, and León and Cociña. By representing embodied, close-up approaches to maps, they teach about how the masculinist, patriarchal, and abusive aspects of fascism in Colonia Dignidad can be resisted through play. This play would involve hands-on learning, an appreciation of beauty outside the context of authoritarianism, and the pursuit of truth. By eschewing hierarchy and distance, these works represent ways of learning about the fascism of Colonia Dignidad that empower and educate spectators. In the following sections, I will discuss how each work I examine here focuses on sense-based approaches to mapping, as a form of teaching about anti-authoritarian modes of artistic appreciation.

### **SPRINTERS: SENSING AND RECLAIMING THE PAST**

The novel *Sprinters* offers an intermedial approach to the story of Colonia Dignidad, combining multiple narratives: that of the narrator, who grew up in Venezuela and Spain as the daughter of Chilean exiles in the ’70s and ’80s but returned to Chile in the early 2000s to develop a film script based on the Colonia; and that of one former member of the Colonia, Lutgarda. The multiple narratives include flashbacks to the narrator’s work developing it, transcripts of first-person accounts detailing the experiences of Colonia members, inventories of weapons stockpiled at the Colonia, and an account of the narrator’s return to the compound to resolve some of her unfinished dealings with its inhabitants. We also see storyboards from the unmade film (Fig. 3.1). On image 96, for instance, we see an aerial view of sporting competitions organized for the youth of the Colonia, reminiscent of the fascist film *Olympia* (1938) by the Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. These competitions commemorate the



Interior. Colonia / Pasillos / Habitaciones – Día



93 WOLFGANG, otro de los jefes, está encargado de conducir a los chilenos a sus habitaciones. Se nota que no tiene ninguna gana y, al ver a Tobias en un rincón, le ordena que lo haga él.

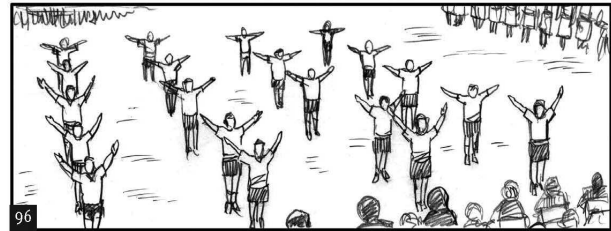


94 En contraste con los alemanes, los recién llegados hablan en voz alta, ríen, se empujan, juegan. No hablan ni una palabra de alemán. Tobias, en su mal castellano, les dice que traigan sus cosas a la habitación.



95 Al frente de la comitiva van Tobias y el Chico. En el camino, los chilenos continúan asombrados con las cosas de la colonia: la cocina, los inmensos refrigeradores, las habitaciones. “Aquí hay comida para un regimiento”, comentan. “Y habitaciones para un pueblo entero”. Se nota que el Chico está incómodo con los comentarios.

Exterior. Campo colonia – Día



96 Por la tarde han organizado una serie de competencias deportivas para celebrar la llegada de los chilenos. El acto se abre con una demostración gimnástica de los colonos, una representación que recuerda los videos deportivos nazis.



97 Luego comienzan las carreras, en las que solo participan los varones. Mientras los alemanes tienen una especie de uniforme de deporte (pantalones cortos ajustados y camisetas blancas) y buenas zapatillas, los chilenos corren con zapatos y la misma ropa de antes.



98 El Chico demuestra correr tan bien como los alemanes, ser tan buen atleta como ellos. Queda segundo en la carrera. El ganador, KUHN, un joven muy rubio, casi albino, le estrecha la mano, felicitándolo.

FIGURE 3.1 Storyboards from an unmade film about Colonia Dignidad included in Lola Larra’s novel *Sprinters* (2016). Illustrations by Rodrigo Elgueta.

arrival of a group of Chileans to live on the compound and serve as a way for the Germans to measure the newcomers’ strength while also educating the Chileans in the Colonia’s emphasis on vigor, discipline, and health. Only men participate: an early example of how the Colonia was strictly organized according to gender roles.

Working in collaboration with Chilean illustrator Rodrigo Elgueta, the inclusion of these storyboards in the novel connects the story of the Colonia to other narratives of fascism, while also illustrating how the Colonia incorporated young boys into its regimen of power and abuse. Using these multiple narratives, the novel details the process through which the narrator comes to terms with her return to Chile, finishes her project, and helps Lutgarda solve a mysterious murder from the past.

The novel's attempt to map out this fascist past—a “labor of memory” in the way Elizabeth Jelin<sup>38</sup> envisions—is a pedagogical process in the way Schiller envisioned: the senses have a key role in educating a character in the novel in how to distinguish the sinister elements around her. Lutgarda, who grew up in Colonia Dignidad, is in her forties when the novel takes place. She has chosen to remain in the Colonia even as many others have been free to go, but she has taken advantage of her newfound freedom to gain access to the sect's archives. She is searching for information about a child she gave birth to at the age of 14, after being raped by one of the Colonia's leaders. The child was then raised by others, and she never knew who he was. Another unsolved mystery in the novel has to do with the death of Hartmut, who was one of Paul Schäfer's “niños favoritos,”<sup>39</sup> or *sprinters*—a group of boys he always had around him to run errands and abuse sexually. On a hunting expedition, a visiting military dignitary (left unnamed) shot and killed Hartmut, and the crime was covered up. Lutgarda has always suspected that Hartmut was her son, and hopes these archival documents can offer her insight: “Las fichas, que son unas 20 o 30, las va colocando sobre la cama [...]. Corrían tantas leyendas. Los archivos de la DINA, supuestamente escondidos en la colonia. Lutgarda [sabe] que estas fichas son una moneda de cambio [...]. Es el as que guardaba bajo la manga” [“She puts the documents, about 20 or 30 of them, on the bed [...]. There were so many rumors. The DINA archives, supposedly hidden in the Colonia. Lutgarda [knows] that these documents give her an advantage [...]. They're the ace she has up her sleeve”].<sup>40</sup>

Curiously, another part of her archive is a series of architectural plans: maps that she first saw when she was 12 years old of some of the buildings in the compound: “las líneas de diversos grosores, los rectángulos, los pequeños signos al pie. Y de pronto todo encajó. ‘Es la casa de los jerarcas’, exclamó. ‘Pero como si la viéramos desde la copa de un árbol’” [“the lines of varying thickness, the rectangles, the small symbols at the bottom. And suddenly everything came together: ‘it's the house of the leaders,’ she exclaimed. ‘But it's as if we're seeing it from the top of a tree’”].<sup>41</sup> Both the files and the plans are described in haptic, sense-based terms: the architect who first shows Lutgarda the plans has her come close to him, to the point where she can smell “el olor a sudor y a tabaco, un aroma ... ácido tal vez, como las hojas del limonero, pero más profundo, salado como las truchas” [“the smell of sweat and tobacco, a somewhat sour aroma, like the leaves of a lemon tree, but stronger, and salty like trout”],<sup>42</sup> and the narrator describes the files in haptic terms as “amarillentas, un poco rotas en los bordes ... como si pudieran deshacerse entre mis manos” [“yellowing, a bit worn on the edges ... like they could disintegrate in my hands”].<sup>43</sup> Archival materials meant to aid in the process of control and surveillance—Lutgarda's fear



that the architect will hit or abuse her, like other men who “llevaban a las niñas tras los arbustos y las tocaban” [“took the girls behind the bushes and touched them”],<sup>44</sup> is relevant here—are thus reworked to aid in reparation and restitution for the victims of that same control.

The narrative arc of the novel is one of empowerment through learning: Lutgarda, despite having been denied an education growing up, pieces together the archival evidence to confirm that Hartmut was indeed her son. In the process, readers find a series of documents that constitute a narrative of their own, revealing sinister information aimed at teaching readers about the terrible history of the Colonia. For Lutgarda, meanwhile, this archival evidence is a sense-based path to the truth. At the end of the novel, she hands the files over to the narrator and challenges her to a race: “el pañuelo blanco, el que ha llevado todos estos días amarrado a la cabeza, sale volando, y veo por primera vez su melena gris ... suelta al viento mientras corre, ágil como una niña” [“the white handkerchief, which she has worn tied around her head every day, flies off, and I see her grey hair for the first time ... blowing in the wind as she runs, as agile as a girl”].<sup>45</sup> This game stands in stark contrast to the severely regimented games that the young boys were subjected to in previous years, as seen in the storyboard. Through a Schillerian idea of play as a way of gaining access to truth, Lutgarda reclaims the Colonia’s fascist archives in the service of justice, while also learning about the dangers, and the promises, of her apparently beautiful surroundings.

### **DIGNIDAD: EMBODYING THE MAP**

María Verónica San Martín’s 2018 multimedia project *Dignidad* consists of multiple components: recordings of Schäfer’s phone conversations with Nazi agents; photos and maps that show Colonia Dignidad’s international spying networks and the architecture of its repression (very much in the vein of what Bolaño described in *Nazi Literature in the Americas*); and a performance in which San Martín, accompanied by up to four other performers but occasionally by herself, assembles and disassembles a metal container by hand that starts out as a cube and transforms—depending on the performance—into a swastika or into a representation of the multiple bunkers and tunnels that were hidden below Colonia Dignidad (Fig. 3.2).<sup>46</sup> For approximately 30 minutes, San Martín and her fellow performers wrestle with these metal containers, alternately folding and unfolding them, carrying them and bending under their cumbersome weight, kicking the swastikas out of formation, crawling through them, and sitting within them, physicalizing the act of working through the Colonia’s troubling past.

Each panel that opens out from there evokes the hidden passageways and illegal acts invisible from the sky, and eventually the sculpture morphs into a swastika. This performance is an opening, a gesture of collective declassification, and a lesson in postmemory.<sup>47</sup> As the writer Matías Celedón states: “No hace falta experimentar

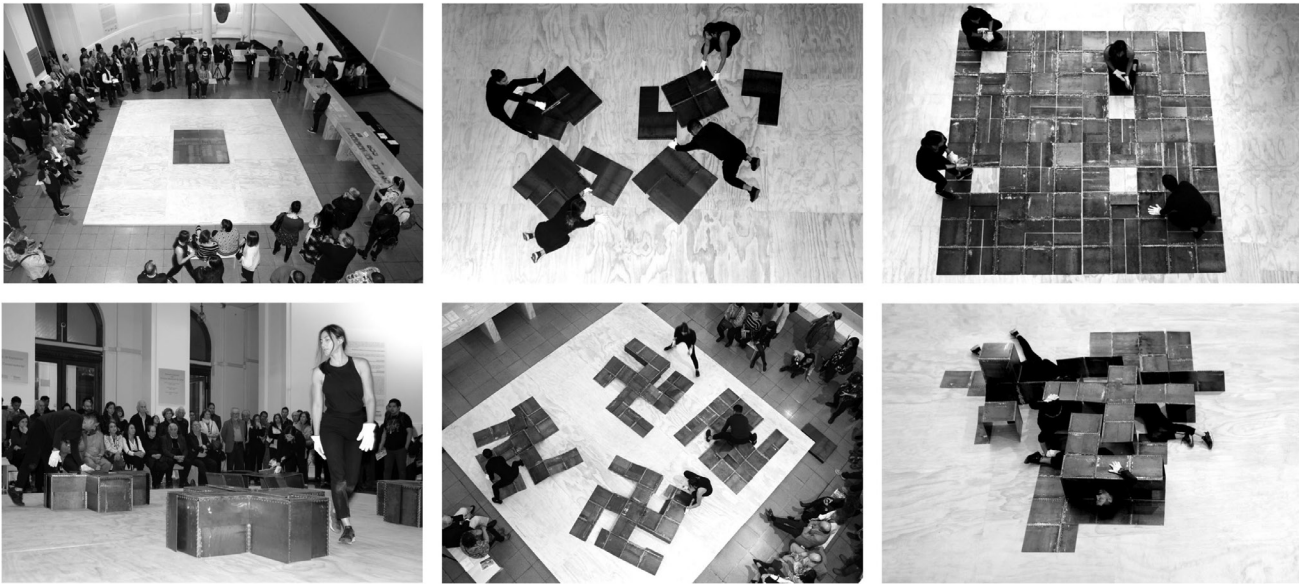


FIGURE 3.2 María Verónica San Martín. *Dignidad*. 2018. Performance. Chile's National Archive, Santiago. Photographs by Catalina Riutort.

en primera persona el horror para que los recuerdos pervivan marcando a la generación que sigue. Esos ecos permiten sondear nuevos espacios de la memoria” [“It’s not necessary to have first-person experience of horror for the memories to continue impacting the next generation. Those echoes allow for the creation of new spaces for memory”].<sup>48</sup>

By performing and exhibiting *Dignidad*—a title which has taken on added significance following Chile’s *estallido social* (social upheaval) in 2019, where the term was invoked by protesters to assert the dignity of their demands in the face of fascistic state violence—San Martín’s public exercise of assembly and disassembly offers a touch-based pedagogical tool to intervene in the archives. For Eve Sedgwick, touch and texture are key to ensuring that performances with a pedagogical aim duly affect onlookers: “to perceive texture is always [...] to be immersed in a field of active narrative hypothesizing, testing, and re-understanding of how physical properties act and are acted upon over time.”<sup>49</sup> Even if her audiences don’t literally participate in her performances, San Martín serves as an “exemplary bod[y],”<sup>50</sup> using both verbal and physical language to enact new connections for them, “wrench[ing] the boundaries of discourse”<sup>51</sup> between the past and present, between Chile and Germany, and between past and current fascisms.

The lawyer Hempel writes about San Martín's work in explicitly Schillerian terms. Given that the destructiveness of the Colonia “a ratos se torna casi lúdico, quizás atractivo, y en esto radica el peligro” [“at times became almost playful, maybe even attractive, and this was where the danger lay”], for Hempel the kinetic movement and variety of materials that make up *Dignidad* allegorize how “el mal se transformaba constantemente ... se quiebra y reconstruye, todo como una realidad dura como el acero” [“evil was constantly transformed ... it was broken and reconstructed, like a reality as hard as steel”].<sup>52</sup> Here, Hempel captures the double-edged nature of play, in the Schillerian sense: the tactile nature of the performance leads to a greater understanding of the evil of the Colonia, while showing how the Colonia's configurations of beauty and order masked the ugliness of abuse there. The key to understanding *Dignidad*, then, is in this interplay between maps as authoritarian, geopolitical artifacts of distant surveillance, on one hand, and as sites where a body can intervene and re-signify them, on the other. For Polgovsky, the body lies at the confluence of feminist performance art dating back to the 1970s and '80s—a tradition that San Martín's work can be understood to be continuing—and the rise of authoritarianism in Latin America and around the world: “the art of the late 1970s and 1980s left behind the idea of the grand political project, concentrating instead on the embodied experience of power,” just as the “global feminist movement [...] brought to public discussion the fact that politics are [...] intrinsic to the domain of the sexed body.”<sup>53</sup> When San Martín begins the performance component of *Dignidad* with a square object, it evokes the map of Colonia Dignidad from above. Yet once she begins to manipulate it, revealing the underground arsenals, tunnels, and torture chambers that remain invisible from the supposedly neutral aerial view, she exposes the compound for what it is: a white supremacist, secretive, and violent place. San Martín's close-up, tactile approach to the map is thus a pedagogical intervention that cultivates and educates onlookers' senses, offering them the tools to gain a greater understanding of the evils of fascism.

### **LA CASA LOBO: SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES FROM ABUSE TO CARE**

Is León and Cociña's *La casa lobo* telling a cautionary tale aimed at children who might escape from Colonia Dignidad? Or is it denouncing the abuse suffered by those unable to escape? It isn't quite clear at first. The prologue of the film, supposedly narrated by a member of the Colonia, introduces the story of María, a girl there who was “disobedient,” playing and daydreaming rather than working. This led to three pigs escaping from one of the corrals. As punishment, she was given a sentence of 100 days of silent treatment to “reflect” on what happened, but instead she escaped to a house in the woods. The ensuing story is filmed as one single sequence shot through the house in stop motion, with the characters—María and two pigs under her care, whom she names Pedro and Ana—molded in papier mâché. The film follows María, Pedro, and Ana through the labyrinthine

house, whose impossible-to-map floorplan—its rooms incessantly turn in upon one another, (re)constructing themselves before our eyes as we move through one architecturally unfeasible door after another—allegorizes both the instability of the characters’ situation and their inability to outwit the surveillance, personified by an unseen wolf, under which they find themselves. This uncertainty informs the entire film: if read literally, as an artifact from the Colonia created to discourage children from escaping, it seems to advocate for a form of child abuse thinly disguised as care. If read more critically, however, the film is a representation of how close, affective care (practiced by María) is antithetical to abusive surveillance practiced from afar (by the wolf).

Surveillance and unpredictability are two of many characteristics of life under authoritarianism, and in *La casa lobo*, the characters’ and the viewer’s perspectives are shifting and volatile. The characters’ movements are circumscribed by the house, the wolf, and the Colonia itself. Just as the house transforms, so do Pedro and Ana: they turn from pigs into innocent children, then into ashes after they are incinerated in a fire, then back into children, then into predators who abuse María, and then into trees. María, too, is figured as a young girl, and then as a bird in a cage. The wolf is both patriarch and predator, much like Schäfer himself: both outside the house and seemingly watching from within the house (Fig. 3.3), his eyes are sometimes even embedded in the walls. Moreover, the viewer’s perspective alternates between that of María and that of omniscience—seeing all the characters, including María, and hearing things they don’t hear.

Still, there is a logic to these shifts, which are figured overall as forms of pedagogical (and sometimes physical) development: María figures out how to care for the pigs, cultivating them so that they turn into two small children, stating that “les voy a enseñar todo lo que sé. Serán muy buenos niños” [“I’m going to teach them everything I know. They’ll be very good children”];<sup>54</sup> Pedro and Ana learn to talk and sing; after the setback of the fire, they drink honey from the Colonia—one of the products sold to tourists in its store—and grow blond hair;<sup>55</sup> María seemingly learns how to protect the children from the influences of the Colonia; the wolf, plying the children with jam, teaches them to tie María up and sexually abuse her; and finally María realizes that she cannot control the children on her own and calls out to the wolf to rescue her and take her back to the Colonia. In this sense, we see exactly what De Man warned us about: the misuse of Schiller’s ideas about play can cultivate the power of authoritarianism and surveillance.

Meanwhile, the film shapeshifts as the characters do: although León and Cociña conceived it as a denunciation of authoritarianism and child abuse in Colonia Dignidad,<sup>56</sup> its opening prologue figures it as a propaganda film backed by the Colonia’s leadership, to dispel “lies” and “legends” about it and restore its reputation. The voice-over at the beginning even says that the film has been restored “thanks to support from the government of Chile”: a sly wink at the political and material support given by the government to the Colonia since it was established.<sup>57</sup> The viewer’s perspective is thus “incomplete” in the way Rancière theorizes: viewers are plunged into the eponymous house’s unmappable labyrinth, the characters they would sympathize with suddenly turn into





FIGURE 3.3 The walls have eyes in Cristóbal León and Joaquín Cociña's film *La casa lobo* (2018). Used with directors' permission.

monsters, they are unable to discern the place of the house in relation to Colonia Dignidad (which is evidently nearby but remains unseen), and they are led to believe that an antifascist film is fascist. Viewers must therefore cultivate their own perspectives in the same way that Pedro, Ana, and María develop over time: we must learn alongside the characters to discern between good and evil.

The process through which viewers come to discern their interpretation of the film, then, takes on geopolitical implications. Even if viewers' perception of the "wolf house" is sometimes distorted and disorienting, they are given space and time within the film to discern the horrors of Colonia Dignidad as they played out on a quotidian, private scale. By refiguring Colonia Dignidad—so often represented in documentary or coldly journalistic

terms—in a more domestic, intimate light, viewers can understand what Haraway calls “the vantage points of the subjugated” more clearly than they might with maps of the Colonia, even as they muddle their way through the unmappable house. With its handmade characters painstakingly shot frame-by-frame on handmade sets, the film’s overall mise-en-scène is a metaphor for the manipulation to which the characters are subjected, but also for the double-edged sword of Schillerian “play,” as the cultivation of an ethic of touch and care, but also as a pedagogy of horror.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

What happened in Colonia Dignidad is important because it was a microcosm of what was happening throughout Chile during the dictatorship. *Sprinters* makes this comparison explicitly: at the end of the novel, Lutgarda tells the narrator about Rainer, a young member of the Colonia who witnessed the torture of *detenidos-desaparecidos* that was practiced there: “Rainer era el que sabía, porque siempre andaba husmeando por todas partes. Pero ... nadie le creía. Me dijo que los trajeron en camiones por la noche [...]. Siempre con los ojos vendados. Era muy raro lo que contaba” [“Rainer was the one who knew about it, because he was always sniffing around everywhere. But ... no one believed him. He told me that they brought them in trucks during the night [...]. Always blindfolded. What he told us was very strange”]. Then, the narrator responds to her: “Lo que hicieron con todo un país, también se lo hicieron a ustedes en la colonia” [“What they did to you in the Colonia, they did to the whole country”].<sup>59</sup> The process of making connections like these is key to reckoning with the fascisms of the past, finding ways to re-signify them through embodied pedagogies of proximity and empathetic care, and recognizing fascisms in the present and future. Engagement at a tactile level is thus a feminist method for cultivating aesthetic and ethical judgment so we can distinguish the evils of fascism behind apparently benign facades.<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

1. Roberto Bolaño, *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, trans. Chris Andrews (New York: New Directions, 2008), 96.
2. *Ibid.*, 96.
3. See Ericka Beckman, “The Creolization of Imperial Reason: Chilean State Racism in the War of the Pacific,” in *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 18(1) (2009): 73–90. Beckman argues that the War of the Pacific was an early instance in which the expansion of the Chilean state (into what was then Bolivia and Peru) was figured as a campaign to whiten its neighbors, particularly by Nicolás Palacios, whose white supremacist writings were foundational for later fascist thought in Chile.
4. James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.
5. *Ibid.*, 6.

6. Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 133.
7. *Ibid.*, 152.
8. See, for example, Roberto Bolaño, *Distant Star*, trans. Chris Andrews (New York: New Directions, 2004). In this novel, Bolaño tells the story of Carlos Wieder, who puts on an exhibition of his own photographs of the bodies of women killed (by him and others) during the dictatorship.
9. Contreras was the head of the DINA, an acronym for the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional, or National Intelligence Directorate: the secret police during the first years of the dictatorship.
10. Winfried Hempel, Untitled article, in *María Verónica San Martín, Dignidad, Archivo Nacional de Chile, 5 oct.-27 nov. 2018*. Brochure/catalog. Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes, y el Patrimonio; Archivo Nacional de Chile; Asociación por la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos Colonia Dignidad. Hempel was a former member of Colonia Dignidad who has since served as a lawyer for the German victims of the Colonia. Here and elsewhere, all translations from Spanish into English are my own, unless otherwise specified.
11. See, among others, the film *Colonia* (2015) by Florian Gallenberger; the fictional television series *Dignidad* (2019), directed by Julio Jorquera Arriagada; the documentary *Cantos de represión / Songs of Repression* (2020), directed by Estephan Wagner and Marianne Hougen-Moraga; and the documentary television series *A Sinister Sect: Colonia Dignidad* (2021), directed by Annette Baumeister and Wilfried Huismann.
12. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, *Touched Bodies: The Performative Turn in Latin American Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 92.
13. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University Press of Minnesota, 1996), 22.
14. *Ibid.*, 34.
15. *Ibid.*, 23.
16. María Angélica Franken, “Bosques afectivos y cuerpos migrantes: la colonización alemana del sur de Chile en literatura chilena y mapuche reciente,” in *Altre Modernità* 25(1) (2021): 336.
17. *Ibid.*, 334.
18. Leslie Hepple, “Metaphor, Geopolitical Discourse and the Military in South America,” in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text, and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, ed. James Duncan and Trevor Barnes (New York: Routledge, 1992), 141.
19. Eric Kurlander, *Hitler’s Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 199.
20. See Juan Cristóbal Peña, *La secreta vida literaria de Augusto Pinochet* (Santiago de Chile: Random House Mondadori, 2013), 82–83. Peña describes how Pinochet copied entire paragraphs of the book from a 1949 presentation by Gregorio Rodríguez Tascón, a professor at Chile’s War Academy.
21. Hepple, 137.
22. *Ibid.*, 146.
23. Jennifer Hyndman, “Mind the Gap: Bridging Feminist and Political Geography through Geopolitics,” in *Political Geography* 23(3): 309.
24. See Verónica Gago, *Neoliberalism from Below*, trans. Liz Mason-Deese (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2017). Gago shows how the concept of “neoliberalism from below,” in which a less macroeconomically centered approach to Latin American neoliberalism—with a focus on women, who often have prominent roles in the informal, on-the-ground economy (7)—can offer a powerful counterpoint to examinations of such phenomena “from above,” wherein one “loses information, a sense of opportunity, and even possible directions” (4).
25. Hyndman, 315.
26. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 188.
27. For more information on standpoint theory see, among others, Sandra Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Strong Objectivity?” in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993). Feminist



standpoint theory claims that it is more possible for marginalized groups to be more aware of the dynamics of social situations than it is for the non-marginalized.

28. Haraway, 190–191.
29. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Keith Tribe (1795; repr., New York: Penguin, 2016), 53.
30. *Ibid.*, 42.
31. *Ibid.*, 57.
32. Paul De Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University Press of Minnesota, 1996), 154–155.
33. Haraway, 193.
34. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 7.
35. Yanko González, *Los más ordenaditos: Fascismo y juventud en la dictadura de Pinochet* (Santiago: Hueders, 2020), 129.
36. See, among others, Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005).
37. The term *pedagogy* comes from the Greek word *paidagōgos*, meaning “a teacher or trainer of boys,” from *pais* (“child”) and *agōgos* (“leader,” coming from *agein*, “to lead”).
38. Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, trans. Marcial Godoy-Anatívia and Judy Rein (Minneapolis: University Press of Minnesota, 2003).
39. Lola Larra, *Sprinters: Los niños de Colonia Dignidad* (Santiago: Hueders, 2016), 95.
40. *Ibid.*, 222–223.
41. *Ibid.*, 73.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, 222.
44. *Ibid.*, 73.
45. *Ibid.*, 267.
46. Created in collaboration with the Asociación por la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos Colonia Dignidad [Colonia Dignidad Association for Memory and Human Rights], *Dignidad* was first exhibited at Chile’s National Archive in 2018, and since then has traveled to both the Center for Book Arts in New York City (2019) and the Museum Meermanno in The Hague (2019).
47. For more information about postmemory—a term that describes how traumatic memories continue to mark the lives of those who did not directly experience them—see Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). San Martín has a long trajectory of creating tangible objects that function as forms of commemoration of the horrors of Chile’s past: as a book artist, she focused on traditional, “slow” techniques like woodcut and aquatint for her 2013 book *Memory and Landscape: Unveiling the Historical Truths of Chile*. This and other books served as what she calls moving memorials: mobile artifacts that can be experienced in person, and whose techniques reflect what Florencia San Martín calls “the brutal experience of the regime on the collective body, acknowledging [...] its ghosts: translucent layers embedded in engravings.” For more information, see Florencia San Martín, “Memorial and Mobility,” in *Moving Memorials: María Verónica San Martín*, brochure/catalog (New York: Booklyn, Inc., 2016).
48. Matías Celedón, Untitled article, in *María Verónica San Martín, Dignidad, Archivo Nacional de Chile, 5 oct.27–nov. 2018*. Brochure/catalog. Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes, y el Patrimonio; Archivo Nacional de Chile; Asociación por la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos Colonia Dignidad, 2018.
49. Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 13.
50. *Ibid.*, 31.
51. *Ibid.*, 34.
52. Hempel, n.p.
53. Polgovsky, 5.
54. Joaquín Cociña and Cristóbal León, *La casa lobo*. Film. 2018. 73 minutes.

55. Honey is a recurring motif throughout the film: it is one of the products shown during the prologue, supposedly to show the Colonia's benevolence and industriousness. The film also links it to white supremacy: according to María, dark-skinned children begged for honey in the Colonia, but they didn't get any because they were considered "stupid" and "lazy."

56. In an interview with the website Culturizarte, the filmmakers state that they were interested in representing "estas bases del mal vinculadas a las Germanofilia, en Chile, que era lo que nos interesa hace un tiempo, que Bolaño usa mucho" ["these roots of evil, linked to Chile's Germanophilia—something that Bolaño uses often—has interested us for a while"]. For more information, see "Entrevista a los directores de película 'La Casa Lobo' León & Cociña" (2018). <https://culturizarte.cl/entrevista-a-los-directores-de-pelicula-la-casa-lobo-leon-cocina-cristobal-leon-se-hizo-evidente-que-teniamos-una-pata-en-el-mundo-del-cine-y-otra-pata-puesta-en-el-mundo-de-a/>

57. This support included a donation of the land on which the Colonia was established, visas given to its members, and defenses of Paul Schäfer by government functionaries, both during the dictatorship and afterward, including Chile's current justice minister, Hernán Larraín. Larraín has since stated in press interviews that he defended Paul Schäfer because he was "misled" by what he saw at the Colonia. See Sebastián Dote, "Ministro Larraín por Colonia Dignidad: 'Yo fui también engañado'" (*El Dinamo*, October 5, 2021). <https://www.eldinamo.cl/pais/2021/10/05/ministro-larrain-por-colonia-dignidad-yo-fui-tambien-enganado/>

58. Polgovsky, quoting the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, links ethics and touch by pointing out that "a history that refuses 'touch' not only negates the possibility of deciphering the past from the materiality of its ruins, but also negates the significance of the embodied, lived present in the construction of a yet uncertain, nongiven future" (100).

59. Larra, 260.

60. The author wishes to thank Corey McEleney and Cynthia Vich, the editors of this volume, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on this manuscript.

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## CHAPTER 4

# The Tides and Currents of *Champurria*

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Mariairis Flores Leiva

tañi piwke  
piwke piwke  
after twenty years  
I understood that my heart  
beats with another name

Daniela Catrileo

The uprising of October 18, 2019 changed our country's history. The massive social demonstrations unleashed several unprecedented procedures which, driven from the grassroots level, have influenced social and political imaginaries. The upheaval managed to initiate the process of drafting a new constitution that will put an end to the Pinochet-era constitution currently in force.<sup>1</sup> However, the October 2019 protests were not only a response to a public transportation fare hike. This unrest was preceded by different social movements that emerged in the political context known as the Transition to Democracy, which began after a referendum voted to end the civic-military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990).<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars and intellectuals have identified the feminist movement as a precedent of the country's current situation. Cultural critic and theorist Nelly Richard for instance has argued that “May of 2018 was an energetic detonator of a cultural revolution that moved us from the feminist recess of the transitional years to the recent victories of young feminists who, amidst social upheaval, were elected into the Constitutional Convention, mayor positions, and municipal councils.”<sup>3</sup> While I agree with this observation, I would like to highlight the importance of a second precedent: the Mapuche movement, which, despite variations in different territories, is consistent with its discourse for autonomy, demilitarization of *Ngüllumapu*, and the liberation of political prisoners.<sup>4</sup> Mapuche historian Sergio Cunequeo suggests that another precedent is the widespread rejection of the Indigenous Consultation System proposed by the government of billionaire businessman Sebastián Piñera

in 2019. This initiative's failure can be explained not only by a generalized mistrust in the Chilean State, but also through Piñera's political responsibility in the murder of Mapuche farmer Camilo Catrillanca, shot dead in 2018 by the special police unit known as *Commando Jungle*. In turn, Mapuche historian Claudio Alvarado Lincopi has suggested that "Mapuche existence in Fütura Waria, or the Kingdom's Capital,<sup>5</sup> as Enrique Antileo and I have called the city elsewhere, is yet another social movement included in contemporary constitutional/depositional debates."<sup>6</sup> These sources show how the Mapuche political movement has been gravitational in constructing our present, recently embodied in Elisa Loncon, Mapuche activist and linguist who presided over the Constitutional Convention during its first term.

Our current situation is rooted in a complex social phenomenon that has developed over the last several years and that have helped to expand two fundamental critical theories throughout Chilean society: anticolonialism and feminism. Art combines critical theory and practice, interrupting the dominant fiction (a form of reality itself), by creating other fictions (political-aesthetical) capable of questioning the consensus on "reality," as Rancière would say.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, art allows us to critically reflect at the intersection between patriarchy, colonialism, and the nation.

This issue is central in this essay, since it allows us to establish connections between three young diasporic Mapuche artists who live and work in Santiago: Daniela Catrileo (b. 1987), Paula Baeza Pailamilla (b. 1988), and Sebastián Calfuqueo (b. 1991). In this essay I argue that these artists have constructed a persistent body of work around Mapuche identity from a double positioning. First, as a recognition of a nationality that moves and rejects Chilean identity in order to build autonomy. And, second, as a place of enunciation that, from their lived experiences and memories of violence and resistance, allows them to develop critical work to expose and share different realities that the Mapuche currently experience in Santiago. At the same time, this paper highlights and theorizes on the fact that Catrileo, Baeza Pailamilla, and Calfuqueo are all friends. Meeting each other in Santiago after beginning their careers as artists, their works are not only in dialogue through political and aesthetic concerns; they also share a common place, culture, and friendship. And finally, this paper centers on a theme that unites their poetics: the river. In this essay I elaborate on the ways in which their work, both individually and collectively, make visible a critique to our colonial and sexist society through the river's currents that, filled with social concerns, allows them to combine anticolonial and feminist waters in an ensemble of collaboration and reflection.

## THE RIVER'S ORIGINS

Migration from rural areas to Santiago's periphery is a reality that thousands of families of Mapuche origin experienced as the result of colonial policies implemented by the Chilean state, specifically through the dispossession

of land and military deployment in Mapuche territories. This intervention forced Mapuche people to modify their work habits, since livestock, agriculture, and commerce—sectors in which they traditionally worked—were insufficient to guarantee subsistence. Alvarado Lincopi points out that,

Indeed, the displacement from reservations to Santiago is perhaps one of the most significant Mapuche phenomenon of the 20th century. Because the modification of living spaces is, without a doubt, one of the decisive effects of colonial occupation and installation, especially if we consider that today 70% of the Mapuche population lives in cities and 30% is in Santiago.<sup>8</sup>

The Mapuche have recognized this phenomenon as a diaspora, as it is characterized by the scattering of peoples from *Ngülumapu* to other territories. Its causes are found in a series of adverse situations, such as precarious work, violence, and colonialism, the political system that drives and validates the aforementioned situations. The Mapuche located in new territories share a series of experiences, generating dynamics of building a collective identity and self-identification.<sup>9</sup> Among the different forms of Mapuche migration, since the 1960s, there has been a clear organization of Mapuche in Santiago. Diasporic life is fundamental to comprehending the artistic production of Calfuqueo, Baeza Pailamilla, and Catrileo. All three artists identify as children of this diaspora: they were born in Santiago, belong to a third generation, and have a university education. At the same time, the three began their artistic exploration by posing questions about their indigenous identity and the memories transmitted through their family's oral stories of migration. Their work emerged in parallel to one another's—that is, they did not know each other before entering the field of art.

Paula Baeza Pailamilla was educated in dance and later attended performance workshops that allowed her to move her bodywork from interpretation to producing installations, interventions in public space, and video-performances. Sebastián Calfuqueo studied visual arts and alternately organizes installations, performances, video-performances, and ceramics.<sup>10</sup> Daniela Catrileo, on the other hand, is a poet who has also explored the genres of performance and video-performance. For the purposes of this text, I will concentrate on one piece by each artist and, by doing so, propose a genealogy that exposes their thematic intersections. In 2013, Daniela Catrileo launched her book of poems *Río Herido* (Wounded River) with the independent label Libros del Perro Negro, reissued three years later in a revised edition by Edícola; in 2014, Paula Baeza Pailamilla staged the performance *Espalda de oro* (Back of Gold) in El Cubo Gallery for the I AUT (Temporary Autonomous Action) Performance Conference; and, in 2015, Calfuqueo presented the video-performance *You will never be a weye* as part of a curatorship which I organized in the Galería Metropolitana under the title *Donde no habito* (Where I Don't Inhabit). In this essay, I will analyze these works in order to visualize their collaborative work, which produced collective reflections and, I believe, currently positions them as anticolonial and feminist Mapuche artists whose hearts are at the confluence of gushing rivers.

### SPREADING ART THROUGHOUT THE CITY

The works of these artists that pose questions about their place in the current sociocultural matrix, prior to their collective collaborations, generated critical flows of Mapuche and gender identity to expand imaginaries of Mapuche artists in the diaspora. These works function as interlinking events from 2013 to 2015, but which come from a wider reflection. To some extent, they are the result of a vital experience that was translated into visual and textual forms. In her book, *Río herido*, Catrileo explores the meaning of her last name: cut river. Based on a poetic approximation, Catrileo transforms this “cut river” into a “wounded river” in order to talk about her family history, characterized by the loss of language and forced migration. In her writing, we see overlapping images of southern Chile, the city of Nueva Imperial, her father’s childhood, and Santiago’s peripheral neighborhoods. One of the book’s early poems begins like this:

T  
H  
E  
R  
E  
I  
S  
N  
O  
S  
T  
R  
U  
C  
T  
U  
R  
E  
O  
R  
O



R  
I  
G  
I  
N<sup>11</sup>

Here we observe several foundations that have guided these artists: they dismiss both structure as the basis of a genealogical inflexibility and the idea of origin as an unmovable essence. The vertical aesthetic points to a graphic deconstruction in which we see just one word, a column that we can read only by searching for its structural logic. Another stanza which suggests this becoming urban identity is as follows:

We are a mane  
the family scattered  
among wires  
that travel avenues  
like rivers before.<sup>12</sup>

Here, the diaspora comes to the front. The mane is also a synonym for an entanglement of hair that refers to a collective origin and present, both variegated and scattered. We read of a present caught between avenues that replace the river, which corresponds to the ancestral territory and a changing identity. Catrileo also writes, “we are the margins we are,”<sup>13</sup> and, from this collective voice, like another strand in the mane, we can associate these verses to Baeza Pailamilla’s *Espalda de oro* (Fig. 4.1).

In her 2017 performance, Baeza Pailamilla staged a series of movements that last 4 minutes and 21 seconds. She washes her hair in a pot with coins, while in the background spectators can hear her grandfather’s voice talking about his wedding day and about his own grandfather. Then the artist says: “I am Pailamilla.” The recording stops and the artist, on her knees, begins to read the meaning of her last name from a dictionary. On her T-shirt, there is an embroidered label from her uncle’s military uniform. She stops and hands the spectators a paper with the lyrics to North American singer Kesha’s “Die young.” The song is translated into Mapudungun and has several words in Spanish between parentheses. The song plays in the background while Baeza Pailamilla sings in Mapudungun, waving a small Mapuche flag. When the music stops, she says: “I’ll show you the savage side.” This sentence in Spanish reminds us of the classic division between culture and barbarism so engrained in colonial ventures. As a final act, the artist returns to the pot and washes her hair. Then she takes out the coins and places them on her back, rendering the translation of her last name a literal interpretation.<sup>14</sup>



FIGURE 4.1 Paula Baeza Pailamilla. Espalda de oro. 2017. Performance. Photograph by Jazmín Ramírez.

Several elements overlap in this performance: the oral story represents the artist's family history, while she searches to understand her last name as a cultural identification that also represents a border within Chilean society, where dominant surnames tend to be Spanish or from western Europe. Another element is the translation of a pop song written in English alluding to an adolescence in a city full of cultural references to the globalized world. But multiculturalism is taken to an absurd level when the artist sings in the Indigenous language

as she waves a miniature Mapuche flag, distancing the images from the pompous narratives that national flags convey. Baeza Pailamilla sings in the language denied to her from migration and processes of adaptation in a profoundly colonial society. In this art action, her back is covered with coins, which are the modern-day version of gold, synonymous with wealth and economic power. Her back carries the weight of history, the ambition which sustained the slaughter and which, over the last several decades, has incited migrations. She carries the weight on her brown female body after staging a masculine memory: her grandfather's voice and the military symbol through the history of her uncle. Although the Mapuche last name Pailamilla was inherited from her mother, the artist uses the performance to create a counterpoint between her paternal family history and agency, offering her body as both a foundation and an exhibit.

The reflection on denied language and the significance of last names is a shared topic between Baeza Pailamilla's performance, Catrileo's writing, and Calfuqueo's video-performance *You will never be a weye*.<sup>15</sup> The loss of language was a result of assimilating into Chilean culture, a strategy that sought to avoid discrimination. However, last names transcend, and they are a characteristic that shapes alterity within Chilean society. These issues are the first critical flows through which these artists elaborate their works. Baeza Pailamilla and Calfuqueo both introduce English into their works as a new element in the processes of acculturation in a globalized and multicultural present that their mothers, fathers, and grandparents did not experience. This is also a shared point with Chilean culture; just as Spanish enjoys a hierarchy over Mapudungun, English is more valued than Spanish, given its dominant character in a new kind of colonization.

In *You will never be a weye*, which runs for 4 minutes and 46 seconds, a still camera focuses on Calfuqueo in underwear against a black background. He slowly begins to dress himself in clothes and jewelry characteristic of the *machi* and, finally, he puts on a wig.<sup>16</sup> The clothes and jewelry are from a store-bought costume, creating the image of stereotyped Mapuche garb. While the artist dresses, we hear a voice-over of Calfuqueo speaking about his own life. He recalls when his grandmother, prohibiting him from meeting his transvestite cousin, says: "Mapuche culture doesn't accept fags." We also hear insulting phrases, reminiscent of school-yard bullying, that refer to Calfuqueo as a "faggot and Mapuche." In this narrative, we see how multiple layers of colonization intersect, such as the rejection of homosexuality in contemporary Mapuche culture, the last name subject to violence from the dominant Chilean society, and a childhood stripped of the possibility of identifying as Mapuche. This story also narrates the chronicles of Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascañán, collected in his book *Cautiverio Feliz* (Fortunate Captivity, 1673), where he describes the *machis weyes* as demonic and abominable. Through these words, Calfuqueo exposes how colonialism and its morals erased the history of the *machis weyes*, given they did not adapt to heteropatriarchy's sex-gender binary. However, as Calfuqueo tells us in his video, the *machis weyes* fulfilled healing tasks and participated in homosexual relations, and it was this very nonbinary identity that led Núñez de Pineda to describe them so contemptuously. The video-performance ends with the



FIGURE 4.2 Sebastián Calfuqueo. *You Will Never Be a Weye*. 2015. Video performance, 1920×1080, HD, 4:46 min.

artist fully dressed and looking at the camera as we hear: “I will never be a *weye*, but I wish I could have been.” The last minute of the video shows the artist standing in the same position with the drum beat of a *kultrun* in the background.<sup>17</sup> Calfuqueo introduces a new dimension into his criticism by revealing the imposition of feminine and masculine genders. While Baeza Pailamilla body is distinctly feminine, allowing her to modulate the Other within a masculine family history and interrogate her present as a Mapuche woman in Santiago, Calfuqueo unearths the problem of the Other facing masculine hegemony: by staging a hidden past in which sexual practices did not depend on gender or moral categories, he questions the conducts that determine sex-gender relationships. In both performances, the artists’ bodies are fundamental in order to elaborate the works; while personal experiences and family memory are elements that constitute all three of these inaugural works created over the span of two years from 2013 to 2015.

In early 2016, the three artists helped found the collective *Rangiñtulewfü*, which, in their own words, “is integrated by immigrants of the Mapuche diaspora.”<sup>18</sup> The group does not define itself as artistic, rather a political



project motivated by “a shared memory” that revolves “around the possibility of Mapuche feminism.”<sup>19</sup> The other members have varied over time and are not necessarily artists or writers, rather educators, sociologists, or psychologists, among other professions. This has generated changes within the very definition of the collective, an issue that reflects its critical capacity and constant reflection on their collaborative projects. In a 2020 interview, Daniela Catrileo said:

The group in which I collaborate, *Rangiñtulewfü*, which means between rivers, no longer considers itself feminist. Rather, some of us are feminists who maybe feel more aligned with decolonial feminism, but there are many sisters and brothers (*pu lamngen*) in the collective who don't feel the same way. In the end, we also realized that there is a critical position in regard to certain kinds of feminism that, to some extent, transgress ways of life of people who have their own territorial epistemologies, collective memories, and histories of resistance. Not all women's movements of first nations are feminist movements. There is an overabundance, an over-understanding in the production of a feminist homogenization, a universalization of what it means to be a woman, and we don't need to keep on spreading that message, especially for those of us with more potent territorial memories. There are anticolonial memories that people here have carried with them for so many years, we have such important rebellions that weren't carried out within the framework of feminism. For this reason and others, the collective doesn't currently identify as feminist.<sup>20</sup>

It's fundamental to highlight that Catrileo, in addition to Calfuqueo and Baeza Pailamilla, establishes an intentional link with feminism. At the same time, and within this very intersection, the confluence of their work can be reflected in the meaning of *Rangiñtulewfü*, or “between rivers.” From my perspective, this conveys a constant flow of questions and positions regarding politics and identity developed through text and visual arts. These artistic flows converge in one large current: *champurria*, the Mapuche concept to define a fluid identity which I will further analyze below. For now, it's important to mention that *champurria* generates a new dimension in this text for two reasons: one, because it is currently being debated and is not yet fully defined; and two, because in this debate, along with the concept of *mapurbe*, it has been used to reflect on the work of Mapuche artists in the city.

### THE RISING CURRENTS OF *CHAMPURRIA*

*Mapurbe* comes from the book of poems of that name published in 2004 by David Añiñir. This volume, which captures the experience of being Mapuche in the capital of Santiago, established a precedent in the Mapuche cultural movement, installing the concept of *mapurbe* in order to construct a sense of identity among those who

were born in the diaspora. Through a direct and effective amalgam, the word combines the idea of Mapuche with *urbe*, the Spanish word for major city or metropolis. Analyzing the book along with urban Mapuche poetry in general, Chilean literary critic Lucía Guerra points out that,

“Mapurbe” is elaborated through the voice of a subaltern who assumes a position of subject in order to address other inhabitants of the population or to be a spokesperson of a collective “us.” Contradicting the colonial supposition that the subaltern cannot speak in a categorical dichotomy between center and periphery, the speaker, from the multicultural margins of digital and mass media, articulates his protest.<sup>21</sup>

Añiñir’s poetics introduces an unexpected voice that groups together an unknown reality from the colonial perspective, a reality that is built from the shared memories of usurped lands and colonial experiences. For Claudio Alvarado Lincopi, although the *mapurbe* concept emerges from creative literature, it can be used to name an entire generation born in Santiago and their shared experiences, since it helps to create “the discursive synthesis of the Mapuche experience in the city,”<sup>22</sup> making it crucial in order to define the *mapuchada*<sup>23</sup> in the country’s capital.

In “Mapuche Ad küdaw fantepu mew (Arte visual mapuche contemporáneo): nuevos imaginarios sociales sobre la identidad,” sociologist and member of *Rangiñtulewfü* Victoria Maliqueo analyzes Mapuche artwork from 1990 to 2018. Her investigation proposes three imaginaries that shape identity in the works: “Mapuche self-determination/self-identification (1990–2000);” “Complex Mapuche-*Warriache* identity construction (2000–2010);” and “Complex Mapuche-*Champurria* identity construction (2010–2018).”<sup>24</sup> Following her readings, the first period is based on the recognition of an ethnic identity; the second on the understanding of a complex Mapuche identity, given the new conditions in which these are developed (Mapuche people far from ancestral territories, having lost the language, traditions, and worldview); while the final period takes the notion of identity as intersectional, a concept defined as a methodology to understand multiple and fluid identities.<sup>25</sup> Maliqueo seeks to install the concept of *champurria* in the recent production of Catrileo, Calfuqueo, and Baeza Pailamilla. It’s worth mentioning that Maliqueo opts to define the period in which Añiñir’s *Mapurbe* was published as Mapuche-*Warriache*, without relying on the concept of *mapurbe*. *Warriache* translates as “people of the city” (*warria* means city and *che* people), but it is not necessarily linked to the experience of living in the city, according to Alvarado Lincopi, which displays a certain discrepancy between these two researchers.

At the beginning of his book, Alvarado Lincopi, who is also part of the diaspora, mentions a series of cultural and artistic activities carried out between 2015 and 2016, but he fails to explore the significance of these events, regardless of their relevance for his revisionist proposal of Mapuche urban history. However, there is a profound

consonance between Alvarado Lincopi's research and the work of the artists that we are analyzing—the main difference is that the latter choose to define themselves as *champurria*. This concept does not have a major role in Alvarado Lincopi's book, although he defines it in a glossary at the end. According to his definition, *champurria*, along with *awinkao*,<sup>26</sup> are concepts that denote racial classifications, the *mixing* between a Chilean and a Mapuche, although the particularity with *champurria* is that its origin refers to cooked food. Thus, the racialized meaning of the word responds to the process of colonization, for which he proposes using the term as an equivalent to Gloria Anzaldúa's *New Mestiza* or Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's *Chi'xi*.<sup>27</sup> For Baeza Pailamilla, Calfuqueo, and Catrileo, defining themselves as *champurria* is a way to recover a concept that enables them to talk about complex identities heavily influenced by different experiences than the original Mapuche culture. Opting for *champurria* also advocates for recovering their language and constructing critical perspectives of the dominant imaginaries that define “being Mapuche” in Chile.

#### FROM MAPURBE TO CHAMPURRIA

The importance of a name and defining a discursive scaffolding based on the concept of *champurria* came about as a political gesture once the artists formed a group and collectively reflected on their *mapuchidad*,<sup>28</sup> strengthening their later individual works. In my 2015 curatorial text, “Donde no habito. Identidades negadas en el Chile actual” (Where I don't inhabit. Rejected identities in present-day Chile), I wrote that,

We have been taught that the disappearance of some peoples was brought on by *mestizaje* (ethnic mixing), not from imposition or the “conquest.” The latter term has been used to whitewash the history of invasion, whose direct consequences were death and whose practical effects are the implementation of religion, an economic system, and a patriarchal society, considering the intricacies and amplitude of each of those terms.<sup>29</sup>

Since then, artists have looked upon the concept of *mestizaje* and its effects with unease. In a conversation between Calfuqueo and Baeza Pailamilla published in *Revista Marginal*, the latter points out that the collective has explored *champurria* identities, since this concept is crucial for thinking about contemporary Mapuche art. In response, Calfuqueo says: “I don't like the word *mestizaje* because it implies that there are two equal forces or that they mix on the same playing field, but we know that there was a process of violence, plunder, and extermination, especially at the hands of the Chilean state. So, *champurria* is not *mestizo*.”<sup>30</sup> Baeza Pailamilla then emphasizes that *champurria* means looking at things from a Mapuche perspective.<sup>31</sup> This position is central, given that, aside from their works, the group as a whole emits political definitions in which feminism and



anticolonial perspectives converge. Catrileo offers several reflections on the collective experience that frames her artistic production:

The poetics of the river enables the collaborative intervention of art, a politics of affect, and friendship. That which involves a collective dwelling in the landless territories where we walk. Resignifying the *dungun*<sup>32</sup> is also identifying as Mapuche, *warriache*, and *champurria* in the imagination of a future support system. I like to think that, in a very visceral way, we began to find our bodies, writing, and on that path we discovered other corporalities, linked to an intricate web of work. As women, we were always beastly, savage, contaminated bodies, left out of everything. We were never important. Since we neither belonged here nor there. This gave rise to projects like the Publishing House or the Mapuche Feminist Collective [Rangiñtulewfü] and permanent collaborations in this process of re-thinking ourselves.<sup>33</sup>

The river as a natural entity, fluid and constantly moving, complemented by the idea of *champurria* to the extent that it refers to a non-static identity, rather one that depends on the reflexive flows that each member contributes and materializes in their works. The friendship, affection, and feminism on which these three artists insist are key for collective projects that enable them to understand the present in a profoundly racist and patriarchal society. From this proposal and also attending to the works and their aim to criticize the prevailing colonial common sense, I suggest that the idea of *champurria* incorporates a feminist dimension that transcends and problematizes a *mapurbe* identity, since its criticism does not only involve the body marked as “Indian” and “poor” in the city, but also incorporates the critical dimension of “being woman” and/or “being nonbinary” in Calfuqueo’s case. Both conditions are minority becomings that enable the artists to attend to what philosopher Yuderky Espinosa called the *racist modern/colonial gender matrix*.<sup>34</sup> In this matrix, an intersectional perspective is founded on a shared base that, instead of organizing problematics such as race, class, or gender into hierarchies, understands them as constitutive of a whole.

## THE CONFLUENCE OF RIVERS

Since 2016, the artistic production of Calfuqueo, Catrileo, Baeza Pailamilla has expanded in different stems that go from the spiritual to the political, movements for which the encounter between the three has been extremely relevant. That same year, Calfuqueo staged an 18-minute video called *Domo/Mujer (Domo/Woman)*, which includes testimonies by psychologist and *Rangiñtulewfü* member Doris Quiñimil, singer Daniela Millaleo, visual artist Marcela Cayuqueo, and Daniela Catrileo. Here, Calfuqueo knits a tapestry of experiences that share the condition of being a woman and Mapuche in the diaspora, as well as in a patriarchal society, although each story

is personal and unique. With this work, Calfuqueo manifests an interest in finding a *mapuchada* of women who exist and resist, as he does, recorded in this audiovisual testimony.

Also in 2016, in the presentation of the second edition of *Río Herido*, Catrileo invited Baeza Pailamilla to perform an art action, signifying a new collaboration that defined their first encounters. The performance, titled *La marca del indio* (The Indian's Mark), consisted in reproducing the child's game of that name, so popular in the context of Chilean grade schools: the game, primarily played by boys, consists of rubbing an eraser on the back of one's hand until it forms an open wound. The game has never had a clear objective, aside from tolerating pain and ending up with a visible mark. The only records of Baeza Pailamilla's performance are several pictures.

The word *indio* (indian) is commonly used as a derogatory term to refer to Mapuche people, and branding the skin with a gaping wound functions as a metaphor of the current reality that many Mapuche experience. This is heightened within the context of the presentation of *Río herido*, a book in which Catrileo defines her poetics by exploring her family history. Based on this game and the performance, I am reminded that the idea of Indians in the national imaginary is associated with pain and the ability to resist. It is also linked to the ways in which official history emphasizes the Mapuche presence during the colonial period—as a people subject to brutal violence. Lest we forget Caupolican and his ability to lift an enormous tree trunk and become a *toque*,<sup>35</sup> or Galvarino, the Mapuche warrior whose hands were cut off in a public act of punishment for opposing Spanish domination. Such stories, constructed under colonial parameters, associate these historical figures with a form of bestiality based on those characteristics that exceed human nature, whether by forced disfigurements or “uncivilized” behavior. These stories shape an imaginary of this community in Chilean society, where the Mapuche would be considered a life that doesn't deserve to be lived, as Judith Butler would say.<sup>36</sup>

Returning to the relationship between the artists, it is important to highlight these first moments when Catrileo, Calfuqueo, and Baeza Pailamilla collaborated to show the recognition, alliances, and strategies through which they began uniting their practices to question the dominant imaginaries rooted in Chilean society. We can consider this a feminist alliance between women and sexual dissidents. However, the proposed idea of the river could also be identified even without this biographical alliance, since the works of these artists, as we have analyzed in the first sections of this essay, are part of the same current, which they have called *champurria*.

In order to further explore this idea and demonstrate how they have themselves theorized the concept in the context of an evolving dispute on identity, we should take a look at the words of journalist Ange Valderrama Cayuman, also a member of the collective, whose text “Call me: *champurria*!” is included in the catalog for Calfuqueo's exhibit *Champurria* (2018), shown at the Ficwallmapu film festival. There, she explains how she first encountered references to the concept by reading Mapuche poets, and she quotes a 2014 open letter written by *machi* poet Adriana Pinda to the Mapuche world:

I must speak, because that is my mandate, beyond the role I inherited from my lost *machi* grandmothers, beaten and insulted time and again for the symptomatic contemporary “Mapuchometer,” because my last name “Pinda” (hummingbird, tongue) is not recorded in the chronicles of war or in the memories of great caciques, so I cannot brag or justify my celestial lineage, perhaps in poetry; and because I’m a *champurria machi*, humiliated, only Mapuche by my mother, which makes me “ambiguous,” and on top of that, poet and teacher, “learned *machi*” as the older women say, an anomaly, something strange and undefined.<sup>37</sup>

Valderrama Cayuman also quotes Añiñir, but chooses to establish her genealogy in the poetic work of a woman. This is no coincidence, given that, although Añiñir’s contribution is undeniable, her point is to value Mapuche women who have reflected on their identity. Ange argues that *champurria* is not strictly an identity: “*Champurria* tells us that from the most essential place we can move around and still belong to a people who, like all peoples, through their history transform within a struggle, which, as *werkén* Ingrid Conejeros says, is to survive.”<sup>38</sup>

By reading these artists’ individual works and the collective proposal of Rangiñtulewfü, we can trace their visual-aesthetic criticism and comprehend that their perspective of identity does not fall under certain classifications; rather it provides a complex articulation to define being woman, lesbian, nonbinary, or Mapuche, always from a multifaceted approach. The idea of *champurria*, then, is the river that allows them to move freely, without getting stuck in these changing times when events like the militarization of *Ngülumapu* force them to be strategic. The river metaphor, which Catrileo develops in an intense and comprehensive poetics, speaks of the constant flow that helps understand *champurria* as a force to denaturalize everything and question their own certainties in an ambivalent Chile that is undergoing profound changes. *Champurria* evolves according to past, present, future, and imagined experiences. We could define it, then, as a contemporary identity, a possibility that, in 2015, Calfuqueo and I thought of as “denied in the Chile of today.” However, this identity, with the help of the works I have discussed and their confluence with others, has now overcome that negation and, in the public eye, has hoisted Mapuche flags<sup>39</sup> as fundamental elements of these current depositional times.<sup>40</sup>

## Notes

1. The Constitutional Convention is an assembly whose purpose is to arrive at a new constitution for Chile. It has 155 democratically elected members, organized under a system of gender parity which also considers Indigenous peoples through the representation of 17 reserved seats. Once the Convention drafts a constitution, this document must be approved in a referendum.

2. Formally, the “Democratic Transition”—which began in 1990 when Patricio Aylwin was sworn into office—ended when the end of his presidential term in 1994. However, due to military tutelage and the constitutional mandate, the end date is a subject of debate, the most relevant being October 2020, when a plebiscite voted to change the constitution.

3. Nelly Richard, “‘Históricas’: Las elecciones de mayo de 2021 y la expansión del feminismo,” *Artículos, Palabra pública*, July 13, 2021, <https://palabrapublica.uchile.cl/2021/07/13/historicas-las-elecciones-de-mayo-de-2021-y-la-expansion-del-feminismo/>.

4. In order to define this concept, we rely on the glossary provided by Alvarado Lincopi: “Historical Mapuche territory to the west of the Andes Mountains and the south of the Biobío River, in which today is southern central Chile. The current conceptual use of this term implies a political will for autonomy, built around the existence of a material subaltern territory and the possibility of self-determination in the flesh and bone.” Claudio Alvarado Lincopi, *Mapurbekistán* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2021), 192.

5. Both concepts refer to Santiago, the capital city of Chile.

6. Alvarado Lincopi, 28.

7. Jacques Rancière, *El espectador emancipado* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2010), 77.

8. Alvarado Lincopi, 89.

9. *Ibid.*, 111.

10. My research on the work of Sebastián Calfuqueo and Paula Baeza Pailamilla began with previous curatorial projects. I have collaborated with both artists in different ways: with Calfuqueo we worked together on his exhibit *Donde no habito. Identidades negadas en el Chile actual* (2015) the artist’s first individual show, exhibited at the Galería Metropolitana in a working-class neighborhood of southern Santiago; and with Baeza Pailamilla in her *Etnoturismo* (2017), an intervention staged at the Galería Callejera, a small truck with a display window which is parked in different streets of Santiago. The latter performance consisted of the artist knitting behind the display window, dressed in traditional female Mapuche clothes; the glass had a logo of the National Tourism Service and information about Baeza Pailamilla, such as the meaning of her name, weight, and height. Around the gallery, I distributed flyers promoting tourism of the Mapuche culture. In this essay, I rely somewhat on the idea of “situated knowledge,” as Donna Haraway has used it within feminist thought, given that we have established links from creative and affective spaces in order to circulate biographical proposals and activate problematics that exceed the personal realm.

11. Daniela Catrileo, *Río Herido* (Santiago: Edícola, 2016), 12.

12. *Ibid.*, 49.

13. *Ibid.*, 40.

14. Months later, she staged a new version of the performance with several variations. For more information, see: <https://paulabaezapailamilla.com/2020/07/26/espalda-de-oro-ii/>

15. This video-performance was the beginning of our work in order to continue exploring the complexities of identity and how operates within the framework of colonialism from an anticolonial and feminist criticism.

16. The *machi* is a person who fulfills a fundamental role in Mapuche culture, participating in community organization by establishing links between spiritual and political spheres. This role is often associated with that of a shaman because of his/her healing work in relation to spiritual aspects. Primarily women work as *machis*, but it is not exclusive to them.

17. The *kultrun* is a Mapuche percussion instrument.

18. Colectivo Rangĩntulewfũ, *Rangĩntulewfũ* (Santiago: autoedición, 2019).

19. *Ibid.*

20. Javiera Sepúlveda, “Daniela Catrileo y La Pulsión De La Memoria,” *Galio*, September 23, 2020. <https://galio.cl/2020/09/23/daniela-catrileo-y-la-pulsion-de-la-memoria/>

21. Lucía Guerra, *La ciudad ajena: subjetividades de origen mapuche en el espacio urbano* (Santiago: Ceibo Ediciones, 2014), 119.

22. Alvarado Lincopi, 179.

23. The term *Mapuchada* is a way of naming Mapuches who live in the diaspora.

24. Victoria Maliqueo, “Mapuche Ad kũdaw fantepu mew (Arte visual mapuche contemporáneo): nuevos imaginarios sociales sobre la identidad,” Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad de Chile, 2019, 76.

25. *Ibid.*, 78.

26. “Derived from *winka* (outsider, foreigner). Also used to refer to a Mapuche who has adopted the behavior from the colonial alterity.” See Alvarado Lincopi, 189.

27. Alvarado Lincopi, 190.

28. A way of referring to Mapuche identity.

29. See Mariairis Flores Leiva, *Donde no habito* (Santiago: self-published, 2018).

30. Paula Baeza Pailamilla and Sebastián Calfuqueo, “Potencia champurria,” *Marginal*, no. 1 (2020): 12.
31. Baeza Pailamilla and Calfuqueo, 12.
32. The word “*Dungun*” means language.
33. Daniela Catrileo, “El nacimiento del río o poética del río: Iñche Daniela Catrileo Pingén,” *Heterotopías*, no. 4 (2019): 287.
34. Yuderlys Espinosa, “De por qué es necesario un feminismo descolonial: diferenciación, dominación co-constitutiva de la modernidad occidental y el fin de la política de identidad,” *Solar* 12(1) (2016): 154.
35. Sebastián Calfuqueo explores this story in the video-performance “Alka domo” (2017, 17 min). Available at: <https://vimeo.com/266471234>
36. Judith Butler, *Vida precaria, el poder del duelo* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2016), 16–17.
37. Adriana Pinda in Ange Valderrama Cayuman, “¡Dime champurria!,” *Champurria* (Wallmapu, pumkem: self-published, 2018).
38. Valderrama Cayuman, “¡Dime champurria!,” *Champurria*, (Wallmapu, pumkem: self-published, 2018).
39. In regard to this point, Paula Baeza Pailamilla writes: “During Chile’s social upheaval, along with tearing down monuments and sculptures of patriotic heroes, many Chemamüll (statues similar to totem poles) were erected in different territories, public squares, or civic epicenters of every city or town in Chile. This phenomenon of re-emergence and (re)activation of ancestral practices not only came from the Mapuche, but also from the wider Chilean population. At every protest, thousands of Wenufoye were hoisted into the air as a symbol of resistance, struggle, and dignity. There was a waking up in the Chilean’s identification with the indigenous element, a history that has never been separated, but that is precisely what the official narrative have wanted us to believe.” Paula Baeza Pailamilla, “ANÜMN / Plantar.” *Yene revista*, January 30, 2021, <https://yener revista.com/2021/01/30/anumn-plantar/>.
40. This “momento destituyente” (depositional time) has been defined as the political process which Chile is currently experiencing, in which, since the social protests of 2019, the people have sought to change the prevailing political system.

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## CHAPTER 5

# Epistolary Encounters, Resisting Linguistic Coloniality: A Conversation Between Florencia San Martín, Paula Solimano, and Astrid González

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**Florencia San Martín:** In her book *The Black Shoals*, Tiffany Lethabo King develops the metaphor of the shoal, a geological formation that is neither land nor sea, as a way to theorize the encounter between Afro-descendant and Indigenous cultures.<sup>1</sup> For King, these cultures intersect in the allegoric image of the shoal to question discourses and practices of conquest and humanism shaped by the West and white supremacy. Elaborating on these encounters from different case studies, King identifies the potential of producing new epistemologies and creative practices to reformulate our understanding of the human and non-human. Astrid González, an Afro-Colombian artist and writer who lived in Chile for four years, has visibilized and expanded upon this encounter in the allegory seen through King's shoal metaphor. Her work has brought attention to aesthetic, political, and narrative circumstances generated from an eco-critical feminist perspective between Afro-descendants in Colombia and Indigenous women in Chile. This is especially present in your work *Saberes diaspóricos* (Diasporic Knowledge), a multi-stage project that includes a video installation and an open-access artist book. In both formats, you collect texts by Black women in Chocó, a northeastern department in Colombia, and Mapuche women in Wallmapu, the ancestral territory of the Mapuche people in the south of the modern nation-states of Chile and Argentina. These texts elaborate different knowledge and experiences regarding the placenta, pregnancy, time, and the oral tradition, generating exchanges and distances through an epistolary project. Astrid, how did you come to develop this project? And, following King's metaphor, is it possible to detect common experiences in regard to critically thinking of patriarchal, racial, and extractivist coloniality?

**Astrid González:** *Saberes diaspóricos* was born in Temuco, a city in southern Chile, during an artist residency that I was completing in the Challupen sector. There, on a daily basis I spoke with women leaders who were working on revitalizing their language or defending their territory. These conversations helped me understand their biographies in the context of their belonging—politically and epistemologically—to the land where they were born. In their oral stories, which emerged in informal interviews, these women told me about their relationship to their houses, their plots of land, and their communities. Several of them had their placentas buried in their families' houses, a practice understood in their

communities as a ritual to strengthen a sense of belonging to the territory, a defense of their land rights. For the burial of the placenta, the women perform a *yeyipun* (a Mapuche rogation), and the Puñeñelcheffe Guillatufe (the rogation orator/midwife) indicates where and how this should be performed. In our conversations, I remembered that this practice is also common on the Colombian Pacific coast, where the newborn's navel is also buried. This is called an *ombligada*. My mother told me that the placenta and navel of her first-born son were buried in her backyard along with symbolic elements that, for *naveled* boys and girls, were thought to grant them intellectual capacities, healing powers, among other effects. The dialogue between these practices in Chocó and Temuco motivated me to build discursive bridges that could bring together the women from both territories in their ritual experiences of giving birth. I created digital letters where I transcribed their stories of planting the placenta and navel, and then I sent these letters to the Afro-descendant women in Colombia and the Mapuche women in Chile. The video registers the Mapuche women reading the collective letters aloud and, through a long-distance coordination, I asked the Afro-descendant women to read aloud the testimonies of the Mapuche women. This epistolary story could certainly be framed within the metaphor of the shoal.

**Paula Solimano:** And the women were filmed reading the letters for the first time, or did you rehearse beforehand? And what kind of reception did you observe while they read the letters?

**A.G.:** When I printed the books with the testimonies of all the interviewed women, I shared it with them so they could read it first and review the common practices and differences of plants and their uses. Then each participant rehearsed their testimony with me before I recorded them reading. I was interested in registering their pronunciation and words that belong to the territory and established a sense of security and confidence in their reading. As for directing the Chocó women from Temuco, we held conversations by videocalls. Together with Felipe Cona, the individual producer who helped me with the videos, we spoke to the women about framing the shot, how to tilt and aim their cell phones, about the height of the table on which they placed their hands and the book from which they would read. After recording, we had a series of spaces for conversation in which their daughters commented on their experiences of giving birth, obstetrical violence, and the chants that often accompany the rituals of planting the placenta and navel, among other topics. In both territories, the figure of the midwife presents a central role, given that her participation in assisting births and postnatal care saves lives in rural territories, where modern medical facilities are practically inexistent. The figure of the midwife is also important for her participation in the ritual of life and consecration of these boys' and girls' future through ceremonies to activate the symbolic objects which are buried with the body parts.

**P.S.:** What drove you to establish these exchanges as epistolary relations? And did this kind of relationship last or has it lasted since then?

**A.G.:** Since college, I've been working on the layout of artists' texts and books. The epistolary element in *Saberes diaspóricos* aims to construct long-distance conversations between two territories. Writing testimony emerges as a means to preserve memory, in which the oral story is accompanied by the text. These artist books, compiled of letters with stories on a ritual, are put forth as objects of memory that connect the experiences of six women: four Mapuche



and two Afro-descendants. The option of sending the documents by email and indicating how to bind them is also one of the reasons—I was interested in creating the similar experience of reading the letters in both territories. Currently, several Mapuche women continue to keep in touch through social networks.

**F.S.M.:** In one of our conversations, you told me that you wanted to leave Colombia for a while and go to Chile because you were interested in the political process, the culture of marches, and the social organization that was happening at that time. At the same time, arriving in Chile made you think about and work critically on the racial imaginary of white supremacy that you had already been elaborating since your early work in Colombia, through the bridge of what you call the “Colonial Pacific.” Can you describe that process of migration and how it affected your work and the idea of the “Colonial Pacific?”

**A.G.:** During the four years that I lived in Santiago I was able to develop a wider interpretation of the African diaspora. Living in rental homes with Afro-descendants from Haiti, Dominican Republic, Peru, and Venezuela helped me appreciate the agency of presence of Afro-descendants in the southern hemisphere, specifically from the southern Caribbean. In 2018, Chile was receiving a significant number of Caribbean immigrants, which caused such an impact in the national imaginary that the Immigration Department began to request all Haitians obtain a consular visa. I was able to comprehend the nationalist and racial perspective which has been used to determine who belongs to the national territory and who doesn't, by reviewing how the notion of whiteness was historically constructed since the process of chilenization (the campaign unleashed by the Chilean elite at the end of the nineteenth century that sought to eliminate all traces of Peruvian identity along the country's northern border zones). This social reality that I experienced, not only in the capital, but also in the northern city of Arica and in southern Temuco, allowed me to reformulate the reflections that, since Colombia, I had been developing on historic representations of Afro-descendant people. These reflections were limited to understanding interregional migrations between Chocó and Medellín, and the racialization of regions, that is, associating stereotyped characteristics or cultural markings with the Colombian Pacific and Caribbean regions. That also helped me understand the experiences of Afro-descendant immigrants from other countries.

**F.S.M.:** In 2021, while you were still in Chile, you created the video *Pronunciar perejil en la masacre* (Pronouncing Parsley in the Massacre) (Fig.5.1). There, you explore the issue of borders and racial homicide in what colonialism called Hispaniola, through the massacre committed by General Rafael Trujillo in 1937. This homicide was perpetuated through the pronunciation of the word *parsley*: whoever could not pronounce the word correctly in Spanish was killed, for it revealed their Haitian nationality through the colonial imposition of French. Can you tell us more about this project and its relationship, if any, with its place of creation in Chile?

**A.G.:** *Pronunciar perejil en la masacre* is a video that forms part of a larger research project with other videos, objects, and digital drawings. In 2020, I began this investigation by looking into the genesis of anti-Haitian racism, so impregnated in the Dominican Republic to this day. When Chile began requesting that all Haitian foreigners enter the country with a mandatory consular visa, the Dominican Republic was leaving millions of Dominicans stateless because of their



FIGURE 5.1 Astrid González. *Pronunciar perejil en la masacre* (Video still). 2021. Video.

Haitian ancestors. That's how I began researching the so-called Parsley Massacre, perpetrated by the dictator Rafael Trujillo in October 1937, in which he ordered the destruction of the cultural richness living along the border of both countries. This border zone is a bilingual territory where children would cross the river to go study in the neighboring country and return midday for lunch. I was intrigued by the fact that when the massacre occurred, the territorial division that previous Dominican governments had initiated became consolidated; the massacre established a symbolic and physical division of “we Dominicans” vs. the “other Haitians.” This historic reality made me think about how Chilean immigration policies used mechanisms of segregation to determine nationals and non-nationals, interrupting the flow of Haitians to Chile and reinforcing the national collective imaginary to see racialized foreigners as a threat for development, asepsis, and national order.

This project is made up of four videos, a series of digital drawings, and a series of installation objects in which the silhouette of a parsley plant appears as a question. I considered it appropriate and necessary, as an exercise of memory and to visibilize these violent acts along the Dominican border, to work with Haitian friends in filming the videos. In the video *Pronunciar perejil en la masacre*, a Haitian man appears pronouncing the word parsley in Haitian creole and in Spanish. In a second video, with a Dominican friend, we created a scene in which he, dressed as a soldier, digs a hole in the ground while the Dominican national anthem plays in the background, emphasizing the excavation's rhythm when the national anthem expresses anti-Haitian sentiment. So, I elaborated this body of works to be reviewed as a video archive that questions persistence of institutionalized racist anti-Haitian practices which become more sophisticated depending on the particularities of each territory.

**P.S.:** In both works, “sanitization” appears in different ways. For example, in *Saberes diaspóricos*, it appears as a bodily process where Afro-descendant and Mapuche knowledge is counterposed with approximations of modern Western medicine in regard to giving birth. In their first-person stories, the women describe trades that establish direct contact with nature, in which they bury the placenta in the earth so as to not contaminate the river, in contrast to sterilized clinical and pharmaceutical procedures, which are often seen as more sanitary. We identify a similar relationship in the quality of intestinal cleaning and detoxification associated with parsley plants. On the other hand, enunciating fragments of stories, like the Dominican Republic's national anthem in *Honor y Machete* (Honor and Machete), and Christian liturgies and evolutionist texts in the diptych *Citas cantadas y Doxología* (Singing Quotations and Doxology), the process of sanitization is revealed as a political, social, and religious process. This reminds me of a series of media images from late 2021 that displayed Haitian and Venezuelan immigrants as threats that provoke an immune reaction. Then came the incident of Chileans burning the belongings of immigrants in Arica or the deportation of Venezuelans during the right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera, led by Minister of the Interior Rodrigo Delgado; Minister of Foreign Relations Andrés Allamand; and Minister of National Defense and Mining Baldo Prokurika. In those images, we can observe a line of Investigations Police officers escorting people with transparent face masks and white hazmat suits, as if they were walking viruses. How do you think the context of the pandemic affected your work? This situation unleashed the totalitarian and authoritarian wave driven by anti-immigrant policies and a discourse of “cleaning up the house,” on both national and, in the most immediate realm, domestic levels. The pandemic, furthermore, drew attention to care work and the predominance of women who undertake it.

**A.G.:** The global health crisis since 2020 has collectively visibilized what spaces of pedagogy and Afro social activism had been denouncing for a long time. The confinement brought on by the pandemic allowed me to slow down my work rhythm and concentrate more on writing instead of video and other visual languages. It was important for me to review how institutional and structural racism became present in pointing to Black bodies as pathogen agents, not only in Chile with immigrants, but also in many other places around the globe. In the world, there was a moral panic that, during that time and today for other reasons, foreshadowed the collapse and destruction of the system of life as we know it. It's an evil thing that threatens the wellbeing of society, that exposes the bodies of immigrants as pathogen agents that

attack the health of sanitized nations. All of this is reminiscent of nineteenth-century eugenics. We can also see this in the high number of deaths of Afro-descendants in the United States at the beginning of the wave of infections, an issue that responds to that country's historical inequality gap and is the consequence of the intricate system of segregation that limits the possibilities of accessing a dignified health plan in cases of emergency. However, in the eyes of colorblind racism, they are only a mass of infected Black bodies. We witnessed how the international press exposed China harassing and humiliating African citizens. On top of this, we heard a French doctor who, in a press conference, suggested conducting vaccine tests on Africans. At the same time, Chile was publishing photographs of Afro-descendant women with masks under large headlines announcing quarantines and the virus. Then police raided, with news cameras, the homes of Haitian immigrants after suspecting infection outbreaks.

**P.S.:** In your work—the videos, photography, and sculpture—there is a contrast between the body's warmth or tenderness through slow close-ups of your collaborators and the sound of breathing (in the aforementioned diptych) and a cold system that organizes or administers relationships with other bodies. On the one hand, for example, we have your photography series *Cultura Negra* (Black Culture), in which you pose with seeds wrapped in bedsheets balanced on your head, and which you staged in such a way that the braids emerging from each bag are visually united with those in the other images, evoking the idea of a uterus, placenta, or umbilical cord. In other cases, you expose that body—which has a certain temperature, emanates a smell and sound—through rough, cold materials, as in the concrete sculptures in *Nuevas africanías* (New Africanias), based on the *joto* (Afro-Colombian package made of cloth), in which this object acquires an urban and industrial connotation. Translated into rock and disassociated to the woman who carries it on her head, this work also invokes a vulnerable body. Do you believe that this duality between warmth and coldness, affective and administrative, is something that you have to navigate in the first person, given your identity as woman and migrant?

**A.G.:** Born and raised in a city like Medellín, where everyone is weighed down by the image of hired killers and colonial development, I have always been influenced by dualities or branching roads, both in my life decisions and in my artistic decisions. Growing up in an Afro-descendant family in Medellín has elaborated in my psyche two ways of reading contexts that are predominantly hybrid. I critically review the historiography of Afro-descendants in the continent from a part of my body that looks for answers, to understand the genesis of violence and the urgency of the processes of dignification and ancestral pride. On the other hand, I have my sense of visual observation, which aims to translate these explorations into images and sound. I want to expose how the institution of colonialism has operated just as much as I want to talk about light, texture, and color in my videos, sculptures, and photographs.

## Note

1. Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2019).

## CHAPTER 6

# Inhabiting the Museum, Displaying Home: A Conversation Between Paula Solimano and María Luisa Murillo

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**Paula Solimano:** The Alberto Baeriswyl Museum-House (CAB by its Spanish acronym) is a project aimed at recovering cultural heritage, innovating museology, and diversifying eco-cultural tourism. Co-founded by educator María Teresa Bohm and her daughter, visual artist María Luisa Murillo, it is located on the banks of the Strait of Magellan's Whiteside Canal, which separates Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego from Dawson Island. The building is the main house of one of the largest logging settlements in the Magallanes Region, the Puerto Yartou lumber factory, which operated from 1908 to 1941. CAB provides a meeting platform for disciplines such as art, archaeology, history, and anthropology, and a means to strengthen ties between the Chilean and Fribourgian populations. Restoring the relationship between human and non-human beings, CAB exhibits and criticizes geological movements like those made by glaciers and humans or the arrival of different groups or individuals who, in different ways, have colonized and exploited this southern territory.

As a house, CAB can lodge up to twelve people and regularly organizes excursions to fjords, canals, and reservoirs of the world's biosphere. It offers a residency program in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, and an annual exchange for students from the Canton of Fribourg and the Magallanes Region. On the other hand, as a museum, CAB holds a collection of old photographs that reconstruct the history of Puerto Yartou in the early twentieth century and a virtual exhibit created in 2015, which allows spectators to travel the territory through illustrations, videos, texts, and Virtual Reality, among other technological tools. Critically and creatively conceived as a hybrid between both functions, CAB rejects the notion that we can represent the history and culture of a place through only one metric of time, device, and/or language. Instead, this project aims to take on such endeavors from a perspective of plurality and simultaneity.

María Luisa, I'd like to begin by asking you about the notion of museum-house put forth by the Alberto Baeriswyl Museum-House (CAB) of Patagonia. How did you arrive at this institutional model?

**María Luisa Murillo:** After addressing the most urgent issue, which was to recover the main house of the old Puerto Yartou lumber factory in 2009–2010, we asked ourselves: How could we live in this house once it was restored, considering the inherent difficulties of reaching this coastal area in the southern end of Tierra del Fuego? Our museum is not

located in the center of a metropolitan city, rather in a distant, extreme territory, which, in order to reach, you must embark on an eight-hour journey from the southern city of Punta Arenas. How people would even get to CAB became a huge topic to resolve. If someone wants to visit the house and its small story, they have to live there too, that is, eat and sleep there, etc. The terrible part is that, when someone says museum-house, people immediately imagine the exact opposite: they think of dead museums where you can't move anything because all the objects are stuck to the tables, for example. I wasn't interested in that fiction; I wanted to build a real house that coexisted with a museum. That's why, more than a museum-house, it's a habitable museum.

**PS:** And how do both dimensions—domestic and museum—coexist in the same space?

**MLM:** There is a permanent dialogue between the house and the museum, but the domestic reign unquestionably manifests itself in all its strength. Routine is fundamental in rural areas, especially in southern parts of the country: it depends on lumber, on fire; you have to permanently attend to the kitchen, firewood and fires for heat, etc., aside from all the other domestic tasks that imply eating, sleeping, living. In fact, I think the museum's experience begins long before arriving at CAB: it's the entire trip from Punta Arenas, which implies, for example, traveling the territory, crossing the Strait of Magellan and taking the southbound road, and wading across a river whose currents fluctuate according to the weather. Then comes the guided visit with a story on the history of Puerto Yartou, which also contributes to everything that happens in the kitchen and builds the story that each traveler shares about arriving here. For example, if they got stranded in the river or who or what they encountered on their journey. This is interesting: I always mention on the guided visits, or when I talk about the experience of the museum, that the first important exercise visitors have to do is give into the territory. Some people want to travel and cross the Strait of Magellan, for example, but they can't because there's too much wind or sometimes the tide doesn't coincide with the day of travel, which delays their trip. For me, that's marvelous because it makes the on-the-ground experience not only cultural but also human and physical. The pressure of the wind on your skin, for example, produces something physical; the wind in your ears generates an imbalance in your system and drives you kind of crazy. It's not insignificant. That sensation of being on the edge or at an extreme is really amazing; and there are dolphins jumping in front of you, condors flying above the house. These moments are so powerful and emotional that they make you understand that you're part of the ecosystem.

**PS:** It's interesting that both your residency program and the museum in which it operates reproduce the logic behind traditionally colonialist and imperialist projects. The cross between science, art, and humanities, for example, leads to thinking of well-known expeditions by figures like Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century, who in order to collect data and translate it, required the collaboration of scientists, artists, and humanists. The cultural institution of museums, on the other hand, also emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century to build a linear narrative on the nation-state and exhibit exotic materials from the "peripheries." How do you deal with this disciplinary burden and how do you attempt to create something different?



**MLM:** I think it's important to recognize that CAB is inserted into a colonial project; the piece of history that covers the industrial formation and activity of Puerto Yartou is colonial and extractivist. I cannot erase or deny that. Actually, the richest and most challenging part, I think, is recognizing that and cultivating a perspective based on it in order to understand our present and future. And by coming to Puerto Yartou we are also re-colonizing. We know we are leaving a footprint and that the people who we work with here also leave their own footprints, since they have sheep, for example. This spawns interesting conversations on ecology and resource management, since our responsibility is not only limited to valuing history, the territory, and the beings that inhabit it, but also thinking about how we intervene in this environment, how we coexist with it. We are constantly asking ourselves: How can we manage the waste? Where can we get energy from? How can we optimize our resources? I agree with decolonial theories, but I think that we must understand that, as a species, we don't exist if we don't inhabit a territory.

For the last 500 years, there have been a lot of expeditions from the West and the multidisciplinary perspective of those expeditions that you mention must have implied a great advance in the way of seeing, registering, and later communicating the collected information, whether for kings and queens or whoever financed the trips. I doubt that the acquired knowledge reached the people. I believe the methodology of generating knowledge can always be improved: even now, I think it's important to critically review "how we create." On the other hand, travel is the human paradigm. If you think about it historically, human beings have always been expeditionaries, wanderers. That's just who we are: we're territorial and, as such, we attack those who are weaker. In her book *Selk'nam*, French anthropologist Anne Chapman speaks about how the Selk'nam colonized the Haush, an older community that was eventually forced into one end of the island. The human beings who we think have been created now don't seem that strange to me; I'm quite empathetic with our own history.

I also think about the patriarchal figure of this man, my great-grandfather, Alberto Baeriswyl, who arrived and worked in the lumber industry with all his workers: the majority were men working in the country, women carrying out domestic tasks. Both jobs are extremely harsh and the epic of this is a reality that, for me, lies in the past, but for many people, remains in the present. When we carried out the historical research in 2015, we interviewed several descendants of the inhabitants of Puerto Yartou, people who were born here and were alive when the lumber factory was still operating. We knew that gathering these testimonies was an honor, since we were able to construct a larger story from the personal history of a child born to Swiss immigrants who arrived in Punta Arenas in 1876. It's interesting to think about how you start to create and end up being an archive like this. In our case, through an iPad application and our permanent exhibit of photographs, we tell part of the story of human settlements in this territory from the first inhabitants to the early 1900s, when the Puerto Yartou lumber factory was built. We end with our own museum project and residency program, offering a brief description of what we have done in CAB Patagonia since 2009 (Fig. 6.1).





FIGURE 6.1 CAB Patagonia, *Puerto Yartou*, 2021. Photograph of the main house of the lumber factory, turned into CAB Patagonia.

**PS:** On the CAB virtual platform, there is a Family Tree section in which you invite visitors to create and share their own family histories. What has your personal experience been like exposing your family’s story, turning your house into a museum?

**MLM:** The project was born with my mom’s proposal to use the slogan, “illuminate your past to see your present.” From telling a small story, our family’s history, we have created a larger story that urges the spectator to question who and where they are, while building their own origin story. In the end, this proposal appeals to an introspective

trip toward personal and collective identity. It's complicated because, as you say, it's a family story, which for me is a bit distant: I was born in Punta Arenas and I know the stories as if they were pirate tales: I heard them in the kitchen from family members. My mother cut off the biographical investigation at the second generation: with her mother, that is, with my grandmother. I haven't looked deeper to expand it. Of course, I'm uneasy with everything my great-grandfather, Alberto, represents, his lifestyle, what he did and didn't do. You tend to judge these kinds of actions, like the exploitation of natural resources, his sexist behavior toward women. You can judge him for all those things, but I try not to. My intention has always been to know and try to understand what happened, visibilize the circumstances in order to prevent them from repeating in similar situations, especially in regard to ecological and patriarchal issues. I wonder how we can inhabit Puerto Yartou in other ways than that which was inherited from my great-grandfather, in which the paradigm was *surviving* nature instead of *coexisting* with it. Now it is completely different.

**PS:** Tell me about the experience of recovering the intersections that this territory generates. How do you address the transnational junction between Chile and Switzerland, with their respective cultures, languages, and geographies, or the cross between the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Arctic, which adjoin in the archipelago of Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego? How do you address these issues from the perspective of art and the CAB project?

**MLM:** The territory has a potent colonizer phenomenon from the north: in general, the Patagonia is full of colonies. We have English, German, Swiss, Yugoslavians—all are organized in neighborhoods. We also have Chilotes and the descendants of Indigenous peoples (Selk'nam, Yámanas, Aonikenk, and Kawesqar). We are a small population with a diverse people. It's all very palpable: you travel the island's territory and you find an enormous diversity of people, and you can unquestionably see all these historic layers of vestiges. The economic factor is also present: everyone has arrived looking to make a fortune, to conquer the unknown, from pirates, whale hunters and gold prospectors to loggers and coal miners. There is gold here, there are natural resources. In this sense, it's a machine that has made a lot of money. Many fortunes in Magallanes today have been questioned over the abuses and genocide of Indigenous peoples; abuses of human rights that happened only one hundred years ago here in Tierra del Fuego. There is also the geology of the territory: the geological layers are visible. What distinguishes Magallanes from the Alps, for example, where erratic blocks are very old, is that here the glacial movements are very recent. This is really interesting for the scientific world. In this sense, it's no surprise that CAB attempts to intersect many disciplines and visions, because that's what the territory is like; it's not my idea, rather it comes from the place in which this project emerges. The implementation of this methodology of transdisciplinary work has presented difficult challenges, but it has also enabled us to enter a diverse and complete ecosystem. For me, that, in the end, is synonymous to fortune.

**PS:** I'd like to go back to the transition you mentioned before, about surviving and coexisting. I'm thinking about the names that have been given to this territory, such as Puerto del Hambre (Port of Hunger), Cabo de la Expectación (Expedition Cape), Cabo Deseado (Cape Desire), Isla Desolación (Desolation Isle), Bahía Inútil (Useless Bay). These

names express the frustration, depletion, exhaustion of someone who attempts but falls short of inhabiting the territory. How do you attempt to foster coexistence and encounters in CAB Patagonia instead of clashes and survival?

**MLM:** The territory's severity and inclemency are endless: the experience of encounter between humans and Patagonian nature has been improved by technology. Before, it was traumatic: you could hardly live or survive. With progress in areas like electricity and internet, we can live more comfortably in such a distant zone as the extreme south of Tierra del Fuego. On the other hand, the multidisciplinary characteristic of our projects began with the restoration: we quickly noticed the phenomenon of layers of information—the territory is like a palimpsest. We always wanted to study it from an archaeological and anthropological perspective, on top of the cultural perspective. For example, our participation in the "Essays" project, an interdisciplinary and experimental project to foster ecological research on Tierra del Fuego, organized by Chilean-American curator Camila Marambio, was also important. It enabled us to understand the relevance of reunion, conversation, and exchange. It's fundamental that people contribute to the territory from their own disciplines and personal experiences. That provides a space to share stories and talk, which, if done within a house, can shine light on other things. That multiplicity of visions always thrusts us forward. Even though we invite people to reflect from a critical perspective, we look not to judge the person who was born in Punta Arenas in the late 1800s. Our goal as a museum-house and our idea on art in general is to expand perspectives, recover, analyze, systematize, and move toward the future with a different vision.

## CHAPTER 7

# *Riego: A Language of Shared Water*

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Francisca Benítez

Spilled irrigation. The constant human dance to guide the water through the territory. To organize the water fairly. Don't block waters, guide them, says the *celador*. Sharing the water has its geometry and its time, its infinite patience. With a few stones, a sack, and some sticks a *taco* is assembled and disassembled. A field is irrigated or not. Too much water, flood. Too little, drought.

*Riego*, my most recent body of work comprising video, sound, photographs, wall map drawings, and objects, is deeply connected to Pichingal, a small rural village in the Lontué River basin in Central Chile, where my family lives and where I grew up (Fig. 7.1). It is a fertile region where agricultural production is the main activity and where the irrigation system developed during the colonial period is still in use. The word “riego” in Spanish means the act or process of irrigating. In Pichingal, it is a way of life. During the last two years I've been spending time there learning the craft, trying to trace the history of the Canal Los Pobres de Pichingal that irrigates this place, and getting acquainted with the practice of *riego botado*, a form of irrigation that is common in this vicinity. In *riego botado*, farmers and irrigators flood the land in pieces, following the slope and the direction of the current, diverting water from the river through canals and guiding it with the creation of small ephemeral dams, known locally as *tacos* and *rastras*. Built from found objects, these improvised forms are examples of vernacular engineering to alter the course and share the flow of a canal among multiple irrigators. I have been researching this practice, its layouts, tools, materials, typologies, ways of doing things, traditions, and dedicated people.

While growing up, I saw my father do it. The physical, social, and bureaucratic aspects of this form of *riego*, all of it. He would go out with the shovel and flood the garden and the apple field, coordinate with other *comune-ros* the times and turns for irrigating. He would keep maps and paperwork in a drawer that we, the children, were instructed not to mess with. Now that he is no longer alive it is our generation's responsibility to keep a practice of irrigation and the land alive, his maps and notes have come in handy for us to decipher how.





FIGURE 7.1 Francisca Benítez. *Riego*. 2021. Exhibition view at The Kitchen, New York. Photograph by Kyle Knodell.

The most complete public survey of this canal system dates back to 1985. It is called *Register of Users of the Lontué and Mataquito Rivers, VII Region*, and was made by the Chilean Ministry of Public Works, the General Directorate of Waters, the Department of Studies and Rationalization, and Solano Vega and Associates Consulting Engineers.<sup>1</sup> This document is incredibly thick with information and rich in detail, and it is the official map used and referred to by local water user organizations. However, many changes have happened to the canal networks since this survey was conducted and the map has not been updated. I have been

tracing and retracing this map as a way to study it and discuss it, a practice that has become an evolving part of the work.

In *Riego*, I follow the flow of water from the Río Lontué to the Canal Los Pobres de Pichingal and further into plots of farmland. The video sets the river as the source around which the different irrigators revolve, tracing the knowledge about the water flows that is embodied in each person. As singular portraits, they underscore the manual labor's typically solitary nature required for this form of irrigation. However, when considered together, this is indicative of the collective infrastructures, practices, and communities that keep agriculture alive in this region.

Video is the medium I chose to document the body in the landscape guiding water, to show how the body affects the land and how the land and the water determines the movement of the body. Photography is the medium to document the ephemeral *tacos* that are always appearing and disappearing. Always the same principle but never the same configuration. And the *rastras*, which are devices crafted with sewn together sacks, a transversal stick, a perpendicular attachable little wood stick, and a handle. This device is a re-usable *taco*, basically a movable or displaceable dam; as the name suggests, “rastra” derives from the Spanish word “arrastrar” (to drag).

The first exhibition of this body of work took place at The Kitchen, a gallery in New York, as part of the group exhibition *In Support*, which opened from November 2021 to March 2022. The siting of the wall drawing, photographs, videos, and sound comprising *Riego* within this space transposes the interconnected series of waterways in Pichingal onto the architectural infrastructure of a building in Manhattan. I embed the pieces into areas of the building that facilitate movement patterns or where varied types of maintenance work take place, such as offices, storage and archive rooms, hallways, staircases, elevators, greenroom. In this way, I draw a parallel between the forms of communal organizing and labor required to operate a particular system of irrigation and those that are essential to the functioning of many types of collective endeavors, including one as distinct as an institution like The Kitchen.<sup>2</sup> The arrangement of the pieces throughout the building also echoes the logic of water spillage, following the force of gravity, placing the source—the river—at the top, projected on the ceiling of the third floor, and the channels through the path on the lower floors. In this way, the work also relates to the original use of the building as an ice deposit, long before it was used as an art space.<sup>3</sup> My choice to show *Riego* at The Kitchen additionally recognizes the institution's potential as related to its reputation and reach. The institution is a loudspeaker, and I harness its capacity to amplify awareness. This amplification carries dual resonance here, as it both calls attention to a specific regional infrastructure and points up to the global significance of the associated concerns: climate change and its impact of water systems.<sup>4</sup>

The second showing of the work happened at La Vieja Escuela in Pichingal, in early 2022, during two days of Open Doors in this nascent space.<sup>5</sup> This is where the work originated. The people portrayed in the work got

to see themselves in it as they visited the exhibition and we got to collectively reflect on these issues during a severe drought. La Vieja Escuela, artes y cultivos (The Old School, Arts and Crops) is a space that supports and disseminates artistic creation and local rural knowledges, encouraging in turn respect for nature. My mother, a retired teacher, started it in the old building that housed Pichingal's first public school since its creation in 1906 until 1965, when it moved to its current building a block away. I have been involved in the process of conceptualization of the project, design, and architecture, and I plan to continue collaborating closely with my mother and the local community. We hope to grow slowly and steadily, like the more than two centuries old *Jubaea chilensis* palm tree in the yard.

In each iteration of the project, I have used a different material to trace the canal map drawing on the walls, reflecting on my own process and responding to conditions of the site. In The Kitchen, I used graphite in a ghostly, tentative, and understated expression. In La Vieja Escuela the map became the protagonist, clearly drawn in white chalk on the bare cement-covered adobe walls, connecting with the educational legacy of the site.

The third exhibition of the work took place in Santiago from March to May 2022 at Die ecke Arte Contemporáneo, the art gallery that represents me in Chile. For this third occasion, I drew the map using charcoal collected from leftover campfires on the banks of the Lontué River in Pichingal. The choice of drawing material emphasizes the nature of the river as a vital public space. Here, in the framework of a solo show in an established independent art space in the country's capital, the work is positioned to enter into the current national debate.

At this time of constitutional discussion in Chile, where water rights are being debated in the face of climate change and a history of privatization, *Riego* seeks to give visibility to these vital practices and infrastructures that somehow remain unknown and hidden in plain sight. The work seeks to connect these ancestral knowledges with the new generations and invite us to imagine their future. How do we access water? How can we share it? Care for it? How can we distribute the water fairly? Can we learn from and integrate existing knowledges, practices, infrastructures, and communities? The political conversation around canal associations and water using communities in Chile is dominated by the right-wing political parties, landowners, and powerful industrial agricultural farmers. They traditionally have had the loudest voice. Their interests are embedded in the existing Constitution and water code.<sup>6</sup> In Central Chile canalization developed with colonization, with all its injustices. But now in this process of writing the new Constitution, we have an opening, an important moment of possibility to rethink these systems, and to do it we need to dig deep and understand their complexity. With this work, I am trying to open ways to some of that complexity.



## Notes

1. See *Catastro de usuarios de los ríos Lontué y Mataquito, VII región*, 1985, Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Dirección General de Aguas, Departamento de Estudios y Racionalización, Solano Vega y Asociados Ingenieros Consultores. <https://snia.mop.gob.cl/repositorioldga/handle/20.500.13000/2023>

2. The Kitchen is a non-profit, multidisciplinary performance art space in NYC. It was founded in 1971 by artists Steina and Woody Vasulka as a space where to showcase experimental video artworks, and was located at a disused kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center. In a few years, it began to incorporate other disciplines and became known as an important independent venue for avant-garde performances and exhibitions, relocating first to Soho and in 1984 to its current space in Chelsea.

3. The Kitchen is currently located at West 19th Street, in a brick structure that operated in the early twentieth century as an ice storage facility.

4. For more on this see <https://thekitchen.org/event/in-support>

5. For more on this see <https://viejaescuela.info/>

6. *El negocio del agua: Cómo Chile se convirtió en tierra seca*, Tania Tamayo Grez, Alejandra Carmona López (Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2019, third edition 2020).



## CHAPTER 8

# The Tortoise, Ice, and the Cargo Ship: A Curator's Note

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Ignacio Szmulewicz

### THE TORTOISE FABLE

The morning of October 1, 2005, a studio art student began walking south from Santiago (Fig. 8.1). He set out from in front of the National Museum of Fine Arts, by noon he was outside the radius of the Metropolitan Region, and spent his first night of rest in the town of San Bernardo. The sky was clear and the stars lit up the road with all the calm of a spring evening. It seemed his epic journey would have a happy ending. The young artist did not travel alone. On his back he carried Sancho, a Galapagos tortoise, who he accommodated in a padded box ideal for his twelve-centimeter-long body. The quadruped was 12 years old when he took part in this adventure and his guardian brought all the implements so this chelonian could endure the unusual voyage: food, vitamins, water heater, and an aquaterrarium. On the seventh day, the student was arrested at a checkpoint in Itahue, 50 kilometers from Talca, the destination goal. News had blown through the wind that the young traveler was torturing his faithful companion and an animal rights group filed a complaint against him. Sancho was escorted by police forces and taken directly to the final destination. The student ended his journey two days later, overwhelmed by solitude. Born in Talca in 1984, Diego Lorenzini is the young artist who embarked on this peculiar adventure, and he turned it into his final graduation project, which he titled *Érase otra vez* (Once Upon Another Time), sparking little to no interest among his professors.

Around the same time Lorenzini and Sancho were traveling the country, I began my path into art history. Lorenzini's work had a profound impact on those who recognized it as something more than a simple curiosities article in local newspapers. His magical and useless project resembled the antics in *Quebrantahuesos*, a 1952 series of poetic interventions led by the poets and promoters of popular visual culture Nicanor Parra, Enrique Lihn, and Alejandro Jodorowsky. In line with their allure to necromancy and prestidigitation, Lorenzini's journey and the creators of *Quebrantahuesos* freely alternated between their alter egos and the public space.



FIGURE 8.1 Diego Lorenzini. *Érase otra vez*. 2005. Performance and series of drawings.

In the new millennium in Chile, contemporary art began shifting toward insignificant and unclassifiable actions. What happened to the question of politics that had captivated artistic practices since the 1970s and '80s? What inspired the young Lorenzini to undertake this action? Did he want to enter the genealogy of humor, satire, and parody that, for example, the poet Rodrigo Lira elaborated in reciting *Othello* on the '80s game show *¿Cuánto vale el show?* Was it a reference to European post-war art that is “naturally” taught at Latin American universities or a reference to the encounter between spectacle, culture, and humor in the context of dictatorship? Or, instead, was it a reference to the imagination, proposing the fable as a place of enunciation?

That same year, 500 kilometers from the capital in southern Chile, a group of art students performed one of the most significant interventions of the burgeoning student movement that demanded tuition-free, quality education. The night of May 18, this group covered with a colossal sheet made of plastic bag the famous José Clemente Orozco Art House, which holds the Art Gallery of the city of Concepción and the School of Art of the that city's university. The next morning, this action was publicly announced as *Proyecto O-mito* (O-mit or O-myth Project). The modern architectural body in the form of a diamond was transfigured by the filthy film and contaminated with messages of mass consumption. This plastic coating symbolically rejected the implementation of the state-sponsored credit program (CAE by its Spanish acronym) as a model for financing higher education. In other words, this layer of plastic revealed how the administration of Socialist President Ricardo

Lagos (2000–2006) was a continuation of the free-market policies implemented by force during the civic-military dictatorship (1973–1990).

The act of concealing in order to show is an old technique in contemporary Chilean art. In October of 1979, for example, as part of the action *Inversión de escena* (Scene Inversion), the Collective of Art Actions (CADA) blocked the entrance of the National Museum of Fine Arts with a large white canvas, criticizing the censorship of cultural expression. Years later, artist Patrick Hamilton began covering the architecture of advanced capitalism with photographic interventions, once again recalling that the facade of progress conceals massacres. However, *Proyecto O-mito* proposed a new place of enunciation in the spirit of the student movement, reformulating the relationship between aesthetics and politics. Aesthetics now incorporated a wide range of visual, acoustic, and performative experiences that were placing social problems in the public arena, not only as a response to the social impact of state decisions and power structures, but also as a means to anticipate them. The pure, minimal, and anti-epic characteristics of Lorenzini's journey and the direct, radical, and extravagant action of the *Proyecto O-mito* show that art happens outside and what is in dispute is its encapsulation in institutions and traditional formats. This phenomenon that defines a state of things fostered by artwork fluctuating between action and poetics is what I call the tortoise fable.

## THE SOUND OF ICE

Early in October of 2013, several wary visitors climbed the six steps up to a gigantic 18-meter-wide cylinder that artist Ariel Bustamante (Santiago, 1980) and architect Alfredo Thiermann (Santiago, 1987) had installed outside the National Museum of Fine Arts in downtown Santiago. Whoever entered did so blindly. They only knew that this work of art was not appropriate for the claustrophobic. Upon entering, visitors lined up in a narrow hall and were told that they would enter absolute darkness while inside. The wait was dismal. Except for a couple of individual heartbeats, silence governed the atmosphere. Then, from a distance, footsteps could be heard. A faint image of a person's appearance at the end of the tunnel. It was difficult to adjust the eyesight after struggling to survive in that black hole. The image was spherical and a whitish tone could be distinguished. After a while, the footsteps came closer, next to you, above you, below you, moving from one place to the other. They were heavy boots trudging through thick surfaces. Sticks banging on a surface. The disturbing sound of a blizzard. The scene began to come into focus.

Not only had the six steps transported the public out of the bustling capital. That fantasy of beaming into a new world had momentarily taken them to the Antarctic. The cylinder was a genuine resonance chamber and with each sound the crew of this artifact was transported to the surface of the white continent. At the end, the heavy door behind them opened and they returned to the streets of Santiago. Art had never been so close to

spectacle, but what was the point of all of this? With this experience, the visitor accessed remote areas of the earth's surface, the past, and even the darkness of the unconscious. Bustamante and Thiermann's installation, titled *Dinámicas del vacío* (Empty Dynamics), can be interpreted as a shift in today's art. By embracing the rhetoric of spectacle, this work is listlessly positioned alongside the gadgetry found at scientific fairs and hands-on education museums. Participating in this tubular experience, the audience entered one of the most inhospitable corners of the earth. At the same time, one could assimilate the tedious exploits of adventurers. A first idea is clear: what is distant can also be familiar, becoming one more daily attraction.

At first glance, the object was similar to a dark room, a NASA test room, or a science lab. It even had the aesthetics of an Antarctica exploration base. However, the enormous structure was co-designed by the artists and a company that manufactures products for large-scale mining. Its structure was made of high-density polyethylene and could be used for exploiting the earth, the antithesis of the Antarctic Treaty which regulates environmental care. But this material was manipulated: within the internal layers of the tube structure, an elaborate acoustic system was installed to reproduce sounds that one of the artists recorded on a trip to the Antarctic. Similarly, the 12-ton structure floated on a latticework of tensors and suspenders that emerged like an urban skeleton from the sidewalk. It was a totem and a monolith.

Art brings us these distant corners. It makes them part of an aesthetic experience. With them, one can deduce the connection between art and the scientific world in order to become one with the desire to discover the mysterious and amazing. Therefore, art is also a form of living in the world. Each creator's journey in this world only has meaning as long as it can translate real-life adventures to its audience. Cabinets of curiosity, travel books, documents—all these forms lack what Bustamante and Thiermann propose. At the edge of teletransportation's futurism, the whole body is modeled on a scale of 1 to 1 to perceive that distance.

The object abandoned the logos to share with the world that experience in a southern territory. Its qualities were absolutely absorbing. The body fibers of each visitor were activated to be surprised by the intensity of emotions. Here, the device of art played a special role. The sensation of atmosphere, stress, fear, alert, and tension that are part of the rhetoric of images since the pre-Colombian temples of Chavín de Huántar to Latin American baroque. Where does this work stand in a decade stuck on venerating the extremes? Why this imposition on the heart of the country, of the city, of the world of art?

## **BURNING SHIPS**

In October of 2013, the audience at the National Museum of Fine Arts had the chance to be shipped from Valparaíso to Dunkerque, in northeastern France. The visitor's body was dressed in the strenuous temporality that separated the maritime journey between the southern Pacific and the northern Atlantic. Twenty-three



slow, grueling days between latitudes 33° South and 52° North. A monumental video by Chilean artist Enrique Ramírez (Santiago, 1979) was projected in the southern wing of the museum's first floor. It was part of an ambitious piece called *Océan*, 33°02'47"S 51°04'00"N. From a bird's eye view, the image was a plane sequence ad infinitum of goods traveling in a cargo ship. As the minutes passed, the visitor to *Océan* suffered the first convulsions brought on by the constant swaying of the horizontal plane. For some, just what they needed to enter a dream-like trance. For others, enough to make them seasick. When the minutes turned into hours, the light became the main focus of the work. What you could see was irrelevant in its content. The shot transmitted the fluctuating light of an entire day, with the intensity of a romantic painting, although a bit more tedious.

Like merchandise, the audience of *Océan* suffered the onslaught of storms at high sea, the waiting at inter-oceanic connection points, and the exploits of technicians at the service large corporations. A genuine voyeur of tertiary capitalism. I tirelessly sat there to be absorbed by the sublime and paradoxical presence offered by this work. I often imagined the adversities aboard a cargo ship suffering the onslaught of waves and the indifference of city life toward peace and serenity under the law of gravity. One way or another, my body was drained from contemplating Enrique Ramírez's work of art.

*Océan* can be accessed at any time and from anywhere in the world.<sup>2</sup> Its route concocted an articulation with the global virtual network. In order to do so, the artist created a website where one can watch the twenty-three documentaries that correspond to each day of the trip between start and finish. On the website, one can access a satellite map of the dark Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, over which a dotted line traces the boat's itinerary. A colossal scale and a planetary perspective.<sup>3</sup> This project by Enrique Ramírez comes from a brutal skepticism toward art as a form of pursuing a different deal with nature. Art is that parasite that survives within the system's laws. It even exalts them, turning them into devices of an unnegotiable beauty.

The works and routes that I have presented in this text are part of a personal scrapbook based on first-hand explorations, on paths from north to south, with young and dedicated artists. My perception is that there is still a profound ambiguity in regard to the divisions, contacts, or contaminations between the absurd and the direct, the local and the global, the human and the non-human, the political and the aesthetic, a defining paradox to understand Chilean art today.

## Notes

1. For more information on this see Nelly Richard, *Márgenes e instituciones: arte en Chile desde 1973* (Santiago: Ediciones/Metales Pesados, 2014.)

2. For more on this video see <http://www.projetocéan.com/>.

3. For more on this see *Seeing from above. The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, edited by Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).



## **Part II**

Trembling Archives



## CHAPTER 9

# Camouflage and Deviations of Memory: Yeguas del Apocalipsis at the Havana Biennial<sup>1</sup>

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Fernanda Carvajal

In May, 1997, Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis (The Mares of the Apocalypse), a duo formed by Francisco Casas and Pedro Lemebel in Santiago in 1987, performed their last action at the VI Havana Biennial in Cuba (Fig. 9.1).<sup>2</sup> Titled *Memory Exercise*, the action consisted of a lecture in which they overviewed their collective work of almost a decade together. Due to the small amount of documentation of their work, its reconstruction relied mostly on orality to recapitulate their past, and engaged with storytelling as a deviation and eroticization device for memory making. In addition to this official presentation, Las Yeguas created a second, non-official action a few days later. Bypassing the artistic circuit circumscribed by the Biennial, this action was a blind and undocumented event that has remained in the shadows. On different levels, both actions lack documentary traces. And yet, they significantly show the role of orality in their work as a memory record not only permeable to rumor, but also, as a more that recreates itself as it moves through word of mouth. At the same time, they show that orality constitutes the only access point we have to events, which, due to the lack of verifiable documentary evidence, have remained in the shadows of memory.

In this chapter I argue that, in Las Yeguas's strategies to activate their past in *Memory Exercise*, official and unofficial actions reveal the central role of orality and hearsay as unsteady memory traces, and that this aspect can help us to better understand Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis Archive, a project I began in 2015 in collaboration with Chilean art researcher Alejandro de la Fuente.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, I aim to show the role of historicization and documentation in researching rather fuzzy traces and deviated narratives, a trail that, just as the work of Las Yeguas, disorients straight spatialities and distributions of memory. This chapter is thus about Las Yeguas's forgotten, non-documented last performance in Cuba and about the possibilities to register, in the form of an archive, alternative modes to read and understand their larger collective project. Put differently, my aim is to think about the role of orality in Las Yeguas's last performance vis-à-vis the lack of documentation, and about



FIGURE 9.1 Yeguas del Apocalipsis. *Ejercicio de Memoria*. 1997. Performance. Havana, Cuba. 2018. Performance. Santiago, Chile. Photograph by Macarena Oñate.

the ways in which this has served as a metaphor for my own work as an archivist. In so doing, this chapter will also elaborate on the notion of listening, to think about practices of reception vis-à-vis Las Yeguas's final work; as well as the notions of rumor and collective speech as possible practices to activate storytelling and memory.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first explores the archive; the second the first official performance; and the third the hidden action. Together, they propose a methodology of archiving and researching Las Yeguas's work in particular and other similar artistic practices in general through a memory politics that is fluid, unverifiable, and multiple, and that celebrates verbal remembering and listening.



## THE ARCHIVE

To reconstruct Las Yeguas's work at the Havana Biennial in 1997 implies assembling heterogeneous materials and allowing ourselves to be guided by what Lucía Egaña calls "erotic criterion," that is, "visual attractiveness, surprise, resonance with personal history or curiosity."<sup>4</sup> In addition to verifiable documents on Casas and Lemebel's participation at the Biennial, there are multiple oral and contradicting accounts. My aim here is not to favor one version over another; rather, I intend to offer new possibilities that have so far remained unperceived in the fixed documentation on this work, making room for what Belgian philosopher of science Vinciane Despret calls those "unexpected accesses" that authorize the hazy memories that seep forth through orality.<sup>5</sup>

This assortment of materials both expands and reshapes the available resources of Las Yeguas Archive. Casas and Lemebel resisted the symbolic and material economies of foresight and accumulation.<sup>6</sup> As I have written elsewhere, Casas and Lemebel kept only a few prints, negatives, and other documents of the period that could be counted with both hands.<sup>7</sup> A considerable part of the documents that currently form part of the archive were originally scattered among photographers, artists, and intellectuals with close ties to Las Yeguas. Still, despite these low numbers, Casas and Lemebel took special care to leave trustworthy records of the actions they considered more important, even when these were carried out under far more precarious production conditions than those created by other artists in Chile at the time, who enjoyed the support of professional photographers dedicated to advertising.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, Las Yeguas invited the independent press to their performances so there could be some record; in other cases, their actions were documented by mere chance by someone with a camera in the venue. A considerable number of performances were simply not documented. In addition, Las Yeguas often changed the titles of their actions, and in some cases their performances have more than one name. Furthermore, some of their actions are not dated; as they were not associated with any public event recorded by the press, and neither Las Yeguas nor those who collaborated with them or witnessed the actions as audience accurately remembered when they took place. Casas and Lemebel drew elusive traces that eroded the "documentary unity" and generated multiple narratives.<sup>9</sup> This detachment of naming, providing a date, and recording—all operations that are at the core of traditional archival organization—allows us to promote a policy capable of admitting opacity, silences, and holes in the archive.<sup>10</sup> This creates the possibility of proliferating memory in line with Las Yeguas's own inclinations.<sup>11</sup>

The archive gathers various types of documentary records and interviews conducted by Alejandro and myself with more than forty artists, scholars, and other cultural practitioners that were associated with Las Yeguas between the late 1980s and the 1990s. This means that testimony and rumor overlap. Testimony is more authoritative than rumor because it is given by someone with a direct experience of an action or an event. Rumor, on the other hand, parasitically permeates testimonial speech, leaking into the indirect experience of that which

wasn't witnessed directly, but only heard. Situated in what Mario Rufer describes as "the anxious domain of the likely," neither absolutely true nor entirely false, rumor, as Rufer continues, "gives us an idea of that which a 'true' story could never reveal."<sup>12</sup> Following this perspective, in Las Yeguas Archive many actions that are neither documented photographically nor textually by the press are still mentioned as rumors, that incubate—like a virus—in the attempts to reconstruct their work. Given their malleability, these rumors override the ambition of ever attaining a unitary narrative. Cvetkovic argues that archives of sexual and gender disobedience can be understood as archives of emotions and trauma that "must enable the acknowledgment of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget, or resistant to consciousness."<sup>13</sup> I contend that, as a result of Las Yeguas's resistance to documentation, the intensity, affective dissonance, and disruption in their actions were kept alive in impure forms of oral memory which preserve the past in the iteration and deformation of rumor and urban myth.

Las Yeguas were invited to the Biennial because of the way in which they had imagined alternative ways to construct memory of the resistance in relation to the Chilean dictatorship (1973–1990) by assimilating the homosexual body to that of the political disappeared. And yet, in their presentation Casas and Lemebel eroticized and deviated from that original script that prompted the invitation. In what follows, I revisit Las Yeguas's actions in Cuba from fugitive materials that refuse to comply with the logic of asepsis and verification and, therefore, oblige us to leave the narrative incomplete, thus challenging the need for a definitive story. Furthermore, the faint traces they left of that action mislead and disarrange the straight memories coded by heterosexuality to organizing space, time, and history.<sup>14</sup> As Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie explains in a 2009 public talk about the relationship between power and storytelling: "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person."<sup>15</sup>

### MEMORY EXERCISE

By 1993, Las Yeguas, which as mentioned above formed their collective in Santiago de Chile in 1987, had finished a cycle of actions that blurred the limits between art and politics. In the second half of the 1990s, they reunited with the sole purpose of participating in two cultural events, in New York and Havana respectively.<sup>16</sup> By that time, Casas had been living for some years in Mexico, where he experimented with video making, while Lemebel, based in Santiago, had published his first two volumes of chronicles.<sup>17</sup> In May of 1997, under the blazing Caribbean landscape of post-Soviet Cuba, they both traveled to the Sixth Havana Biennial, where they carried out their last work together, *Memory Exercise*. Between sweat and decay, in the midst of the economic devastation of the island, they arrived in Havana to plunge into the erotic sugarcane fields of the Cuban evening, as Lemebel would put it, where it was possible to get into direct contact with unknown furs and feathers.<sup>18</sup> In those days,

the still lethal AIDS virus had re-actualized the old story of persecution and punishment of *pájaros* (birds)—as homosexuals were called in the local jargon—, perpetrated by the revolutionary authorities. As a way of negotiating that landscape of stigma and exclusion, the animalized homosexual community, banished from human life, used textures and skin surfaces as a recognition code and survival language.

In the early 1980s, the Havana Biennial was the first international art event to create an alternative space of articulation for Latin American, African, and Asian Art. With all the odds against the Biennial, it had managed to move the pieces of the political chessboard, both inside and outside Cuba, in such a way that, for a time, it had become a decentralizing axis of the Euro-American model of artistic internalization. This model that, under the notion of a global art world, was then beginning to spread all over the world was no other than a global art market. In its heyday, the Havana Biennial had succeeded in generating a geopolitical and geo-aesthetic shift toward Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, which disorganized the hierarchy between the West and the Rest of the World.<sup>19</sup> The sixth edition of the Biennial, entitled *El Individuo y su Memoria* (*The Individual and his/her Memory*), was the last event directed by Llanes and consequently marked a change in the policy of the Biennial. One of the founders of the Centro Wifredo Lam, Llanes had organized the event in its five previous editions, prioritizing non-Eurocentric narratives.<sup>20</sup> While for this sixth edition the non-aligned differential character was already beginning to wane, its anti-colonial aura still continued to exert a certain magnetism.<sup>21</sup>

According to the Biennial's work methodology, different art specialists traveled to various countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and then took their proposals of works and artists to the discussions of the organization, where curatorial decisions were taken collectively. It was during her trip to Santiago in 1996 that Cuban researcher and curator Margarita Sánchez, one of these specialists, who has worked at the Havana Biennial from its beginnings to the present day, met Francisco Casas (who just happened to be in Chile for a short visit) and Pedro Lemebel, both of whom showed her the scarce records of their actions.<sup>22</sup> As Sánchez recollects, “in the case of Las Yeguas, what decides that they should come is not the question of *travestismo*, it is memory. Because they fabricated the memory of the dictatorship and worked from the body, from the body of the homosexual, the body of the tortured, the body of the disappeared.”<sup>23</sup> But the provocative queerness encoded in their name exceeded all conceptual frameworks and managed to break through even from under the dull, drab bureaucratic writing of official exchanges. Llanes relates an incident that probably never reached the duo's ears—when the invitations for the Chilean artists that would participate in the Biennial were sent to the Cuban embassy in Chile:

the Cuban ambassador sent a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that we were inviting figures who were very complicated [...] the issue was brought to me, but I argued and defended what I understood was the right thing. The invitation for Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis was maintained [...] The name itself was already a provocation. That's why the thing came into the ambassador's mind [...] because I imagine that he didn't even know who they were.<sup>24</sup>

The name *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* didn't appear in the program of activities that circulated as part of the brochure during the Biennial. As Lemebel recalls, "in Havana they treated us very well, even though we suffered censorship when the catalog of the show did not allow the name of our collective to appear."<sup>25</sup> Margarita Sánchez, for her part, recalls that "There was some casual discussion about what kind of work they were going to present. I think they wanted to make a burning of books, but we, the curators, did not agree, and, finally, they decided to make a lecture-performance."<sup>26</sup> According to the Biennial program, *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* would make their presentation on May 7, 1997, at the Centro Wifredo Lam.<sup>27</sup> In the only record of this action, the amateur photographs by Chilean artist Macarena Oñate, we see a series of handwritten notices and placards plastered on the main door of the Centro Wifredo Lam. One of these announced that the place would remain closed for cleaning and sanitation, while another indicated that, due to this, Casas and Lemebel's lecture would take place at 6:00 p.m. in the external courtyard of the Wifredo Lam Center, instead of in one of the rooms, as originally scheduled.<sup>28</sup>

Francisco Casas and Pedro Lemebel entered the courtyard dressed in black suits. Over the strict dark color of their clothing stood out the only ornament they had decided to wear: a ring with a white life-size fancy sparrow on it. The extant photographs show Casas and Lemebel first sitting and then standing, behind a table on top of which were two TV sets and two glasses of water. According to oral testimonies, the lecture started with the screening of the videographic record of *Homenaje a Sebastián Acevedo*, an action carried out by the duo on December 1, 1991, for world AIDS DAY in the city of Concepción in Southern Chile. As a counterpoint, the image of the photo performance *Las dos Fridas* (1989)<sup>29</sup> remained stuck to the right-hand corner of the table throughout the lecture. In this image, Casas and Lemebel cross-dress as Frida Kahlo, creating a *tableau vivant* of the Mexican painter's homonymous self-portrait. The inclusion of this image in the Havana conference worked as a reminder of the identifications and disidentifications of *Las Yeguas's* travesti pose.<sup>30</sup> Also, brown wrapping paper was hung as a backdrop (with a pink feather scarf dangling from its left corner), where one could read: "Hablo por mi lengua, mi sexo, mi social popular."<sup>31</sup>

The phrase, penned on the papergraph with the artisanal caress of handwriting—including its irregularities and pulse, its twists and turns—defined the duo's locus of speech. But something in that locus was dislocated. When they wrote "mi social popular," *Las Yeguas* seemed to have elided something. Was the word "class" what they had avoided writing and pronouncing? In Cuba, class had overcoded and monopolized political intelligibility, thus canceling the possibility of politicizing other differences, such as those of race, sex, and gender. Although *Las Yeguas* had always defended a working-class position, their situated strategy on that day may have used that omission to give audibility to other forms of the political struggle. In fact, as Lemebel recalls, "We were not *travestis* who came from Manhattan to see the gay holocaust in Cuba. We are working-class people; Pancha comes from his little village in Pudahuel, and I come from the Zanjón de la Aguada. There was a class complicity."<sup>32</sup>

Like the calligraphy of the phrase, memory reclaimed in this statement does not follow a straight, progressive line, as the stray queer memory of those who suffered a long systematic violence both overlaps and exceeds the chronologies which see in the dictatorship only a brief parenthesis in Chile's republican life.<sup>33</sup>

We do not know what Casas and Lemebel said that early evening in the courtyard of the Centro Wifredo Lam. We only have the accounts of those who witnessed the action or some sketches of the press of the period, where it is said that Las Yeguas remembered “scandalous, carnivalesque, *travesti*, provocative actions” that took place between the “roguish [times] of the Chilean dictatorship and of that archetypal spangle we've called neoliberalism.”<sup>34</sup> When revisiting the painful memory of the dictatorship, Las Yeguas shared a series of anecdotes, turning speech, but also the tongue itself, into a muscle stimulated through the humorous exercise of their right to remember in their own terms.

As Jean-Luc Nancy points out, “visual presence is already there, available before I see it, whereas sonorous presence *arrives*—it entails an *attack*.”<sup>35</sup> “Listening”—the author reminds us—“is inclined to affect and not just to concept.”<sup>36</sup> Born in the predigital era, detached from any ambition of perpetuating themselves, fully committed to the risks of spontaneity, Las Yeguas did not possess a comprehensive catalog of images that might have served to illustrate their talk that day about the course of their actions. That evening, Casas and Lemebel sat before an audience to tell hilarious stories, privileging the performativity of speech. They resorted to that blind set of anecdotes, which travels in the vibration of the voice, “that penetrates through the ear [and] propagates throughout the entire body something of its effects.”<sup>37</sup> Thus Las Yeguas seems to have affected their audience more through the ears than through the eyes. Maybe that explains why the most trustful record of what took place that evening was preserved by the most fragile trace; the affect, or more precisely the *queer affect*<sup>38</sup> passed on in the immediacy of conversation, through the seduction of provocation and the register of the camp humor with which the homosexual culture navigates and talks down tragedy.<sup>39</sup>

But what kind of memory were Las Yeguas really exercising not only in their account, but also through their pose, by the wearing of those birds—that seemed grafted into their own bodies—as an extension of their gestures? What latent spatialities were being interconnected in their evocation exercise? What spatial and temporal boundaries was their interspecies alliance blurring, without even saying it? A press release pointed out that, toward the end of their lecture, Casas and Lemebel stood up in silence, with the hand wearing the bird-ring on their chest, while the recording of an ideologically “committed text” read against the backdrop of the Internationale was being played. Maybe, what the audience heard that day was Lemebel's famous manifesto from 1986, *Hablo por midiferencia* (*I speak for my difference*), an exorcism of the Left's homophobia through the fag eroticization of militant masculinity.<sup>40</sup> Rather than making a direct denunciation of the homophobia of Castro's regime, Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis chose to homosexualize the martial-militant ritualism of the masculine ideal. While standing to attention with the palms of their hands fully extended on their chest, they were citing the act

of singing the militant anthem, and in so doing, they were altering that martial pose and introducing into it the animal dimension by displaying their bird-rings next to their hearts. The bird-rings on Lemebel and Casas's fingers, code anal sex—the sphincter ring—and a parody of the wedding ring, are important aspects of their lecture-performance. They are that *punctum*—that point Barthes defined as the sensory, intensely subjective effect of a photograph which “pierces the viewer”<sup>41</sup>—where Lemebel and Casas look back into the past and toward Cuba.

### THE BIRDS' TURN

As mentioned before, the word *pájaro* in Cuba refers to homosexuals and is one more insult in the list of dehumanizing names in the historical alliance between animality and sexual queerness. Lemebel and Casas crossbred the internationalism of the left with that other border community, the birdlike, wandering, stray gay community. In Reinaldo Arenas's words, those “clandestine armies of pleasure made of faggots who were not ready to renounce life, that is, to stop pleasuring others.”<sup>42</sup> The community of “birds” also recalls Cuban writer Severo Sarduy's posthumous novel, *Los Pájaros de la Playa* (1993). In Sarduy's literary trajectory, the colonial manor can be read as the transmogrification of the brothel of his first novels into a sanatorium.<sup>43</sup> This is described by Sarduy as a confinement space for *old youths*, visited by illness and at the same time eroticized. A place that houses the terminal metamorphoses of desire in the “final anchoring of the birds before taking their final flight.”<sup>44</sup>

The bird-rings on Lemebel and Casas's fingers anticipated their second action at the Biennial, which has remained as a hidden echo of their official presentation, a somewhat enigmatic vestige, of which no images have been preserved, just fragmentary and conflicting accounts: their visit to the controversial Sanatorio de Villa Los Cocos created by the Cuban government in 1986 for the confinement of persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This was an extreme policy that, in the words of scholar Oscar A. Pérez, was justified “to control the illness and the possible collapse of the health system.”<sup>45</sup> Confinement, isolation, and segregation were thus imposed, reactivating different ramifications of the revolution's homophobic history.<sup>46</sup> There are different versions of how Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis managed to get around the numerous restrictions on mobility and access in order to arrive at the AIDSarium, located in the outskirts of Havana. According to Casas, a *travesti* sent him a slip of paper inviting him to meet for a chat, and then told him of this so-called social rehabilitation camp for HIV/AIDS “sick” people. According to Casas, they were refused official authorization to visit the AIDSarium and went there by themselves, renting a bus at their own expense. In Lillian Llanes's account, Casas and Lemebel showed up in her office and asked her to visit the sanatorium. In her words, they “come up and tell me that, as members of Amnesty International, they were interested in knowing what is taking place in



the Hospital de Los Cocos, because they have been told that the homosexuals with AIDS are kept imprisoned there.<sup>47</sup> For Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis, neither truthfulness nor political correctness was a limit; fictionalizing themselves as militants of Amnesty International, therefore, was another way of turning parody into an access road to the inaccessible. Llanes had a previous link with the director of the sanatorium, Dr. Jorge Pérez, as she had collaborated with him in an international activity for AIDS day in Havana.<sup>48</sup> According to her, it was through this previous contact that their visit to the Sanatorio de Villa Los Cocos, together with some other artists, could be arranged.

In this unscheduled visit, Lemebel and Casas changed the solemn and monochromatic sobriety of the male suit and appeared in drag. For Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis, the *travesti* pose was an ambulatory and transitory refuge linked to transmigration and itinerancy, to traveling and drifting. Lemebel and Casas began to change clothes and put on makeup while riding on the bus to the AIDSarium. The heat made their mascara run, and they allowed their bodies to adopt other movements and gestures with the feel of the lace dresses against their skin. Dresses that could both preserve and casually expose their secret: the wearing of no underwear. Lemebel recalls: “Then at a certain moment I said to Pancho ‘I don’t have my panties, chica,’ ‘And where are they?’ ‘Oh, I don’t know,’ ‘But, you always ...’ and I put on the dress without panties. A long, black, lace dress, very pretty. We looked like Dolores del Río and María Félix on a visit to the AIDSarium.”<sup>49</sup> Lemebel’s humorous and casual remark constructs the intimate disobedience of the diva or the “unbridled mare” that enters the AIDSarium provocatively with no protection. An intimate spell to revert the diseroticization to which those bodies assailed by the illness were thus condemned.

What did Lemebel and Casas see in the AIDSarium? Whom did they meet? The forced confinement in the sanatorium affected not only homosexuals but also other communities stigmatized by the Cuban regime, such as that of the *frikis* (*freaks*), youngsters who adopted ways of life linked to punk culture and to whom the official discourses attributed a fondness for *heavy metal* and drugs, disaffection, and licentiousness. By the late 1980s, stories about youngsters who inoculated themselves with the virus in order to enter the AIDSarium were public. These cases reached the national and international press and were used with various political intentions. The intentional contagion was a reality played down by the regime. As Pérez points out, instead of confronting the problem, it “brand[ed] their tastes [those youngsters’ tastes for rock and drugs], their look and behavior as dysfunctional, irresponsible and xenophilic.”<sup>50</sup>

In his 2005 book *Adiós Mariquita linda*, Lemebel published a chronicle of his trip to the Havana Biennial. The story fictionalized a love encounter with a young painter who attends the Biennial as part of the audience and who, some years earlier, had escaped from the AIDSarium. The chronicle presents a subtle allusion to the relationship between birds and *frikis*, a topic scarcely mentioned in Cuban literature and other cultural practices

such as cinema.<sup>51</sup> The chronicle reproduces the voice of the young painter remembering his escape from the AIDSarium:

An Italian tourist woman infected me when I was seventeen, and at that time I didn't know what that place was, that's why I went there of my own free will. And when the fence gate closed behind me, I knew I had entered a prison, where I spent two years without seeing the outside world. Everything is beautiful there, the birds in their cages, the flowers, the landscape, the food, the service, the gays who never left me in peace, the medicine [...] that's why one moonless night I jumped over the railing fence and didn't stop running and falling and running, and after three days walking hidden from the roads and the police, I arrived in Havana and remained shut away for several years until things changed.<sup>52</sup>

In turn, Casas has remarked that the Cuban government decided to create the sanatorium in order to have a free and handy experimental space profitable for research development of a vaccine to combat the virus. In an interview, Casas mentions that during their visit:

Those who were in a less serious condition had been brought to chat with us. They told us the story that everything was OK, but the slips of paper kept on arriving. So we started to move around inside the place and all of a sudden we come across someone who was dying, something dreadful, with his mother that stares at us with a hateful look, an extreme image.<sup>53</sup>

Casas and Lemebel diverge in their recollection of their experience at the AIDSarium. I think, however, that there is at least one point in which they agree: the segregating violence of prophylactic barriers—with its toughest contours in the forced confinement of the AIDSarium—imposed separation and isolation. This considered, we can think that Las Yeguas created a contact zone with those affected by the virus. Lemebel and Casas made their presentation in the place's amphitheater. Here, the audibility conditions were different from those at Centro Wifredo Lam. They walked all around the place, talked to inmates, and had dinner with them. Lemebel recalls: “The chauffeur of the *guagua*, of the bus, refused to eat, because it made him sick. The AIDS, chica, the AIDSarium.” At the end of their visit, when the director<sup>54</sup> approached them, Francisco Casas exclaimed, “Well, doctor, even if the cage is made out of gold, it's still a prison.”<sup>55</sup>

Las Yeguas's actions in Cuba embraced a twofold memory exercise. What took place in Havana was not only a recollection practice, but also a flashing re-actualization of their modes of action. Their exercise coexisted with the sudden emergence of another temporality, that of the lightning action, of the interruption. This modality went beyond the symbolic, social boundaries outlined by the Biennial, generating an intersection between an artistic event and a biomedical confinement precinct. In so doing, their actions intersected HIV policies. Considering both actions as a series of one single project allows us to trace one of the axes that transversally run across the collective's work: the interrogation of differential modes of distributing grief and pain within memory policies of

the disappeared and victims of homophobic violence and the HIV virus. But it should be added that their project also encompassed modes of traversing pain and desire through camp humor. Although the Biennial's curators invited them to perform a work on memory, resistance, and the Chilean dictatorship, Lemebel and Casas—as shown in their second action—trespassed across national boundaries. They resorted to the camouflage of a deviant, wandering, animal community, the nation's rejected queerness, to disfigure the reassuring spatial temporal coordinates expressly set out to hold back their deviation potency.

Casas and Lemebel were reunited in a space of artistic legitimization in Havana years after their split. Nevertheless, rather than a moment of celebrity and stardom, their participation at the Biennial marked their farewell and disbanding. Their *Memory Exercise* demands to be read as a multilayered action. Casas and Lemebel adopted the solemnity format of the lecture and the political anthem to homosexualize the martial-militant ritualism. They also put into practice the exercise of retracing their own history, appealing to the collection of anecdotes about their actions in dictatorship and post-dictatorship Chile. Probably as a result of a combination of mere chance and material circumstances, no sound record from that evening remains. That “loss” tells us of a more general pattern: the way in which Las Yeguas's work used to leave behind a type of trail or vestige that, in its elusiveness, remains forever exposed and open to a constant recreation. At the same time, Casas and Lemebel exercised their memory through a clandestine—non-official—action, restituting the untamed vibration of their modes of doing, and disorganizing the national, sexual, political, and disciplinary boundaries of their participation at the Biennial. The undocumented story of their visit to the AIDSarium drew a crossed-out, deviated path of memory that remained camouflaged for years: Casas and Lemebel's incisive questioning of the situation of the HIV-infected people in the island.

As the reconstruction of these two actions that Casas and Lemebel carried out in Havana demonstrate, Las Yeguas Archive is made up of different kinds of register. While some actions are recorded in more or less verifiable documents, others are blind episodes, the memories of which have only been preserved through oral accounts and rumors, murky memories traversed by affections and emotions, which are often multiple, contradictory, unverifiable. But no matter how discordant these conflicting versions may be, they still retain the duo's performative intensity, allowing us to focus, rather than on their semantics, on the affects mobilized by their actions. Although Yeguas had been invited to the Havana Biennial for the way in which some of their actions showed solidarity with the political disappeared of the dictatorship and not for their *travesti* parody, the two interventions they made in Cuba mobilized a series of intensities and emotions that did not conform to the affective repertoire of dictatorial trauma. By combining solemnity with camp humor in their Performative Conference and by intersecting their concern for the social condition of HIV patients with their transvestite parody and the erotization of the sanatorium, Casas and Lemebel acted out what Liu calls *queer affects*.

In this chapter, I have focused on the importance of listening in the politics of memory about Las Yeguas's actions, and therefore on the relevance of working with oral narratives and the way in which these problematically

permeate the archive. If, as Jean-Luc Nancy put it, “listening is inclined to affect and not just to concept,” an attentive listening can thus become an access to the affects and concepts mobilized by Las Yeguas’s actions. But in doing so, rather than sanctioning the ultimate truth about Las Yeguas’s work, the attention paid to storytelling allows, as Vinciane Despret points out, “a prolongation act, which is another aspect of memory in action.”<sup>56</sup> Throughout this chapter, I have tried to develop a narrative permeable to impure materials, alert to the holes and silences of the archive, to incompleteness and to the mournful loss this implies, as a possible antidote against the danger, already perceived by Adichie, of a single definitive story. The political potency of archives and of their effective activation must surely lie between the powers of emotion and trauma, of grief and desire.

## Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of interviews and bibliography in Spanish are by Jorge Salvetti.
2. Throughout this text I will refer to Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis’s work in terms of art actions or simply actions—and not as performance art, nor as Viennese Actionism—and more specifically in the sense that art actions in Chile acquired from the work of the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA), which, while drawing on Joseph Beuys’s work, also endowed the conception of art actions carried out under the dictatorship with their distinctive local features, see: Fernanda Carvajal, Paulina Varas, y Jaime Vindel, “Reinterpretations of the CADA documentary Archive: decentering, entries, genealogies and common notions,” in *Archivo CADA. Astucia práctica y poéticas de lo común*. (Santiago de Chile: Ocho libros, 2019), 364–378. Bilingual Edition.
3. The Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis (AYA) was created within the framework of the Fondart project “Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis. Registros, voces y relatos” (2015–2018) coordinated by the researchers Fernanda Carvajal and Alejandro de la Fuente, and was carried out with the support of Francisco Casas and Pedro Lemebel and of D21 Proyectos de Arte. Three copies of the complete archive—both physical and digital—are available for consultation at different institutions: the Mujeres y Géneros collection of the National Archive of Chile, the Municipal Library of Concepción, and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago. A digital copy is also stored and accessible to the public at the Museo de Arte de Lima. A digital version of the archive is available on an open access website. See: <https://www.yeguasdelapocalipsis.cl/>
4. Lucía Egaña et al., “ARXIU DESENCAIXAT: una experiencia situada para des-heterosexualizar el archivo,” *Re-visiones* 8 (2018): 7.
5. I take this term from Vinciane Despret’s reflection about the function of stories about revenants in the accounts of those who suffered some bereavement and go through a grief process. See Vinciane Despret, *A la salud de los muertos. Relatos de quienes se quedan* (Buenos Aires: Cactus, 2021): 97.
6. Nelly Richard, “Bordar de pájaros las banderas de la patria libre,” *Catálogo Arder de Pedro Lemebel*, ed. Parra, Sergio and Pedro Montes (Santiago: D21 Ediciones, 2017), 13–20.
7. Fernanda Carvajal, “El archivo como engaño y promesa,” in *Pedro Lemebel, belleza indómita*, ed. Luciano Martínez (Pittsburgh, PA: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2022), 201–215.
8. I am referring, for example, to the performative work of artist Carlos Leppe, which was recorded by professional photographers dedicated to advertising, such as Mario Fonseca.
9. The documentary unit is the unit of analysis in the processes of identification and characterization of documents. See: José Ramón Cruz Mundet, *Manual de Archivística* (Madrid: Pirámide, 1994).
10. Carvajal, 2022.
11. An example of this is the novel *Yo yegua* by Francisco Casas (2004).
12. Mario Rufer, “Huellas errantes. Rumor, verdad e historia desde una crítica poscolonial de la razón,” *Revista versión* 23 (2009): 33.
13. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 241.

14. Sara Ahmed, *Fenomenología queer. Orientaciones, objetos, otros*. (Barcelona: Edicions bellaterra, 2019).
15. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The danger of a single story”, [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story).
16. Between October 3 and 5, 1996, Las Yeguas participated in *Crossing National & Sexual Borders: Queer Sexualities in Latin/o America*, a conference organized by the The Center for LGBTQ Studies (CLAGS), located at the City University of New York, Graduate Center.
17. Pedro Lemebel published in Chile his first book *La esquina es mi corazón* (1995) in the feminist publishing house Cuarto Propio, and *Loco Afán, crónicas de sidario* (1996) in LOM.
18. Pedro Lemebel, “El fugado de la Habana (o un colibrí que no quería morir a la sombra del sidario),” in *Adiós Mariquita Linda* (Santiago: Editorial Sudamericana, 2005).
19. For more on this see Joaquín Barriendos, “La idea del arte latinoamericano. Estudios globales del arte, geografías subalternas, regionalismos críticos” (Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona. Programa de Doctorado Historia, Teoría y Crítica de les Arts, 2013).
20. For more on this see Lillian Llanes, *Memorias. Bienales de la Habana 1984–1999* (La Habana: Arte Cubano Ediciones del Consejo Nacional de las Artes Plásticas, 2012).
21. As Rachel Weiss points out, for its sixth edition, the Biennial had “grown in geographical covering and professional background,” and then adds: “Havana is no longer just a curiosity of the Third World; it has become a magnet for influential curators, dealers and collectors, a place where significant business transactions are carried out.” Rachel Weiss, “Sexta Bienal de La Habana,” *ArtNexus*, December 1997.
22. Margarita Sánchez seems to recall it was through Nelly Richard and Francisco Brugnoli that she got in contact with Yeguas.
23. In this essay, I use the Spanish terms *travesti* and *travestismo* instead of their English cognates “transvestite,” “transvestism,” or “transgender” to ground my analysis on local experiences and traditions of sexual dissidence in Chile. For more details on the use of the term in Chile see: Felipe Rivas, “Travestismos,” en *Perder la Forma Humana. Una imagen sismica de los años ochenta en América Latina* (Madrid: Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012), 247–253. Original quote by Sánchez reads: “En el caso de las Yeguas lo que decide que ellas vengan, no es el problema de travestismo, es la memoria. Porque ellos tramaban la memoria de la dictadura y trabajaban desde el cuerpo, desde el cuerpo del homosexual, el cuerpo del torturado, el cuerpo del desaparecido.” Interview by author with Margarita Sánchez, March 5, 2020. Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.
24. “El embajador cubano mandó una nota al Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, diciendo que estábamos invitando a figuras que eran muy complicadas (...) me plantearon el problema, pero yo discutí y defendí lo que entendía que era correcto. Se mantuvo la invitación a las Yeguas del Apocalipsis (...) El solo nombre ya era una provocación. Por eso al embajador le entró como la cosa, por el título, porque yo me imagino que él ni debe haber sabido quiénes eran.” Interview by author with Lillian Llanes, March 7, 2020. Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.
25. “En la Habana nos trataron muy bien, a pesar de que sufrimos la censura cuando en el catálogo del espectáculo no se permitió poner el nombre de nuestro colectivo.” Lemebel in: Gonzalo León, ed., *Lemebel Oral. 20 años de entrevistas 1994–2014* (Buenos Aires: Mansalva, 2018), 65.
26. “Hubo una cierta discusión, que fue más bien verbal, en torno a qué tipo de obra iban a presentar (...) Creo que querían hacer una quema de libros, pero los curadores no estuvimos de acuerdo, y al final ellos deciden hacer una conferencia performance.” Sánchez, Interview with Margarita Sánchez.
27. Sexta Bienal de la Habana, “Programa de Actividades” (Centro Wifredo Lam, May 2, 1997), Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.
28. The closure of the center occurred because the artwork *Transit* of the Chilean artist Arturo Duclos—who did not travel to Havana but sent an assistant to overview the assembling of his work—required the installation of an IV line circuit filled with blood. The blood—a difficult requirement for the Biennial organization due to Cuba’s economic conditions during the Special Period—was finally obtained in the slaughterhouse. But, as Llanes recollects, “the heat made all that burst” and the liquid spilled over several rooms of the center. So Casas and Lemebel’s action took place while the rooms inside the Centro Wifredo Lam, still splashed with animal blood, were being cleaned.
29. *Yeguas del Apocalipsis*’s entry in the Biennial catalog was accompanied by the image of *Las dos Fridas* (Llanes, 1997, p.65).

30. For more about the concept of disidentification, see: José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

31. Literally: “I speak for my tongue, my sex, my social popular.” Much more so than in English, the word *tongue* in Spanish has also the meaning of *language*. On the other hand, the expression “social popular,” used by Pedro Lemebel in some interviews, was probably a colloquial phrase of popular origin later transposed by him into writing.

32. “Nosotras no éramos travestis que venían de Manhattan a ver el holocausto gay en Cuba, nosotros veníamos del pueblo, la Pancha de su población en Pudahuel y yo desde el Zanjón de la Aguada. Había una complicidad de clase.” Interview with Pedro Lemebel, interviewed by Fernanda Carvajal, December 10, 2010, Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.

33. In Chile, homosexuality was criminalized by article 365 of the penal code, which forbade sexual relationships between men. Simultaneously, the application of article 373 of the penal code was used to regulate, before, during, and after the dictatorship, the relationship between sexuality and public space. During the Chilean civic-military dictatorship, the intensification of these repressive measures coexisted with the emergence of a nightly gay market. On the other hand, the first organic groups of LGBTQI militancy only appeared in 1991 during the post-dictatorship period. This relative delay prolonged the social and cultural condemnation of alternative sexualities and postponed the debates about LGBTQI rights. Victor Hugo Robles, *Bandera Hueca. Historia del Movimiento Homosexual de Chile* (Santiago: Arcis-Cuarto Propio, 2009); Fernanda Carvajal, “Pasados suspendidos. Estrategias represivas y tecnologías biopolíticas sobre las disidencias sexo-genéricas durante la dictadura de Augusto Pinochet en Chil,” *Revista Páginas*, December 2019, <http://revistapaginas.unr.edu.ar/index.php/RevPaginas/article/view/366/478>.

34. Luis Fernando Valencia, “Sexta Bienal de la Habana: ‘El Individuo y su Memoria,’” *El Mundo*, May 24, 1997, 9.

35. Jean-Luc Nancy, *A la escucha* (Buenos Aires and Madrid: Amorrortu, 2007), 34. Translation by Jorge Salvetti.

36. *Ibid.*, 54.

37. *Ibid.*, 35.

38. I refer to the notion of “queer affect” proposed by Wen Liu, who notes of the dialogue between queer theory and the affective turn that “queer affect departs from the initially deconstructive, linguistically oriented projects of antiessentialism and turns toward a more explicit engagement with the somatic and the biological.” More specifically, Liu associates queer affect with queer negativity, queer temporality, and the queer as machinic body. See: Wen Liu, “Feeling Down, Backward, and Machinic: Queer Theory and the Affective Turn,” *Athenea Digital. Revista de pensamiento e investigación social* 20 (July 10, 2020): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenea.2321>.

39. David Halperin, “¿Porqué se ríen las drag queen?” in *Cómo ser gay* (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2016), 155–257.

40. This Manifesto shows the emergence of a homosexual voice that reaffirms its popular origin, its class position, but, at the same time, criticizes the Left’s homophobia; and this, however, not through denunciation, but by eroticizing and intercepting the figure of the militant with homosexual desire as a way of showing what that closed, impenetrable masculine ideal of political commitment needs to deny in order to affirm itself.

41. Roland Barthes, *La cámara lúcida. Nota sobre la fotografía* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003).

42. Arenas en Lina Meruane, *Viajes Virales* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012), 150, Translation by Jorge Salvetti.

43. This idea has been developed in various texts by Lina Meruane, who has followed the trail left by the AIDS virus in Sarduy’s writing, especially in the novels *Cobra*, *Colibrí*, *Cocuyo*, *El cristo de la Rue Jacob* and particularly in his posthumous novel, *Pájaros de la Playa*.

44. Meruane, *Viajes Virales*, 205.

45. Oscar A. Pérez, “Ficciones de contagio voluntario: VIH/sida en el período especial,” *Letras Hispánicas* (2018), 8.

46. As many scholars have suggested, the “AIDSarium” was an echo of the military units to aid production (UMAP), forced labor and isolation camps destined for the “reeducation” of those who did not adjust to the revolutionary doctrine. Although the UMAP were soon dismantled and Fidel Castro publicly apologized, the official-institutional homophobia persisted in the 1970s through marginalization and censorship of artists and writers who had supported the revolution in its initial stage. The imprisonment of Virgilio Piñera and Reynaldo Arenas, and the marginalization of Lezama Lima were just the most visible cases of a generalized persecution, whose legal expression was the declaration of homosexuality as a pathological deviation during the Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura in



1971 and the proclamation of the homosexual ostentation Law in 1972. The ever more vehement institutionalization of a homogenizing and totalitarian national imagery brought along with it the sovietization of the island in the 1970s, and translated into a cultural policy that subsumed a multiplicity of differences under the axis of class. Thus, the official repressive policies toward sexual gender dissents coexisted with other kinds of suppression, such as that of the racial debate or hostility and prejudice vis-à-vis Afro-Cuban religious practices. The relative relaxation of policies brought about by the 1980s, of which the Biennial is a sign, also reached the prohibition of alternative sexualities, which seemed to start waning, although neither in a definitive nor linear way. In 1988 the homosexual ostentation Law was abolished, nightclubs and other manifestations of homosexual culture began to appear, and in 1989 the Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX) was created. But the situation became problematic again with the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS crisis and the beginning of the special Period in 1990, which plunged Cuba into a devastating economic crisis that introduced a new cycle of repression and restriction of political and cultural expression. See Magdalena López, “Cultura e intelectualidad en Cuba: De la utopía al desengaño revolucionario,” *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales* 13(2) (August 2007): 125–143; Carlos Tejo Veloso, “Nadando contra corriente: práctica artística y homosexualidad en la Cuba contemporánea,” *Athena Digital. Revista de pensamiento e investigación social* 18(1) (March 6, 2018): 223–254, <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenea.1543>.

47. “Vienen las Yeguas y me plantean que, como miembros de Amnistía Internacional, estaban interesados en conocer lo que ocurre con el Hospital de Los Cocos porque les dijeron que ahí tenían presos a los homosexuales que tenían sida” Llilian Llanes, Interview with Llilian Llanes, interviewed by Fernanda Carvajal, March 7, 2020, Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.

48. Llilian Llanes had collaborated in a UNESCO project, inviting various artists to make posters for an international campaign to raise funds for AIDS. In recognition of this collaboration, the whole poster collection was sent to the Centro Wifredo Lam. Llanes had wanted to organize an exhibition with the posters and offered Jorge Pérez to carry it out within the context of the AIDS international event held in Havana.

49. “Entonces en un momento le dije a Pancho ‘no tengo mis calzones chica’, ‘¿Y dónde están?’, ‘Ay, no sé’, ‘Pero Pedro, tú siempre...’ y me puse el vestido sin calzones. Un vestido largo de encaje negro, bien bonito. Parecíamos la Dolores del Río y la María Félix de visita en el sidario.” Interview with Pedro Lemebel, interviewed by Fernanda Carvajal, December 10, 2010, Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis.

50. Pérez, “Ficciones de contagio voluntario: VIH/sida en el período especial,” 20.

51. Both Cuban literature and cinema have recorded fictions about the intentional contagion of HIV/AIDS during the special period. Among these, we can mention the short stories anthology *No debes escapar la ira* (Letras Cubanas, 2001) by Miguel Angel Fraga, who spent some time in Los Cocos, *Toda esa gente solitaria: 18 cuentos cubanos sobre el sida* (Ediciones La Palma, 1997), compiled by Lourdes Zoyón Jomolca and José Ramón Fajardo Atanes, or the movies *Azúcar Amarga*, by León Ichaso, of 1996, and *Boleto al paraíso*, by Gerardo Chijona, released in 2010.

52. “Me contagió una turista italiana a los diecisiete años y entonces yo no sabía lo que era ese lugar, por eso me presenté voluntariamente. Y cuando se cerró la reja a mis espaldas, supe que había entrado en una cárcel donde pasé dos años sin ver el afuera. Allá todo es hermoso, los prados, los pájaros en sus jaulas, las flores, el paisaje, la comida, la atención, los gays que no me dejaban en paz, la medicina (...) por, eso una noche sin luna salté las rejas y no paré de correr y caer y correr, y después de tres días caminando oculto de los caminos y la policía, llegué a La Habana y permanecí encerrado varios años hasta que cambiaron las cosas.” Lemebel, “El fugado de la Habana (o un colibrí que no quería morir a la sombra del sidario) *Loco Afán*.”

53. “Habían puesto a los menos graves a conversar con nosotros. Nos contaron el cuento de que estaba todo bien, pero seguían llegando papelitos. Así que empezamos a movernos ahí dentro y de pronto nos encontramos con un tipo que se estaba muriendo, un horror, con la madre que nos mira con cara de odio, una imagen extrema.” Francisco Casas, “Francisco Casas,” in *Filtraciones II. Conversaciones sobre arte en Chile (de los 80s a los 90s)*, by Federico Galende (Santiago: Arcis-Cuarto Propio, 2009), 167–186.

54. Llilian Llanes recalls that a few days after their visit she received a call from the hospital director: “he was very furious because, according to him, the transvestites that visited the hospital had inflamed his patients, who now asked to be allowed to put on their own shows in the hospital” Interview with Llilian Llanes.

55. “Bueno doctor, aunque la jaula sea de oro, no deja de ser prisión.” Interview with Pedro Lemebel.

56. Despret, *A la salud de los muertos. Relatos de quienes quedan*, 77.

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## CHAPTER 10

# Tumbe: Afrodiasporic Arts in the Andes

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Carolina Arévalo Karl

This essay addresses Tumbe as a community art experience of the Afro-descendant vindication movement in Arica, a territory that has been part of Chile since the twentieth century. In this text, I explore Tumbe as a cultural expression where, on the one hand, different artistic forms merge, such as music, performance, dance, and crafts; and, on the other, where the separation between aesthetics and poetry dissolves in pursuit of an integral and synesthetic experience. Tumbe operates as a collective of sensitive forms that creates an amplification of signifiers. It exists in the carnival, a spatial and temporal framework where the sense of belonging is renewed, and Afro-Arican identities are reconstructed and celebrated in the public space. To elaborate on Tumbe, a brief historical note on the African diaspora in Chile is first necessary.

### ARICA: AFRICA WITHOUT “F” IN THE NORTH OF CHILE

As a result of the most extensive migration in modern history, over more than 400 years, 15 million African people were forcibly transferred to the so-called New World.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this forced migration, Afro-descendants were separated from their communities of origin and divided again when they reached the other side of the Atlantic, to avoid uprisings, promote the process of mixing, and then the formation of nation-states. Originally coming from the Senegambia region, between the Senegal and Niger rivers, from 1570 onwards the largest contingents of Africans who arrived in Arica were transferred from Congo and Angola.<sup>2</sup> Some designations found in colonial records distinguish them as Bantu, Yolofofos, Mandingas, Araràs, Congos, Angolas, and Malembas, among many other ethnicities we do not know. Despite the catastrophic experience of slavery, many Afro-descendant communities in the hemisphere share cultural expressions, although they are not always aware of these similarities.<sup>3</sup>

The first traces of Africans' arrival in the territory we know today as Chile date back to the colony, when the first governor Pedro de Valdivia asked the king of Spain to send 2,000 African slaves to meet the needs of

the governorate.<sup>4</sup> They arrived at the port of Arica, which was founded in 1570 by the Viceroyalty of Peru. This port was the main outlet for silver, a mineral that came from the city of Potosí, the richest in the Viceroyalty of Peru during the colonial period. Paradoxically, today it is one of the poorest cities in Bolivia and the region. The Potosí hill, which was discovered in 1545 by a Quechua shepherd named Diego Huallpa, had the most important silver veins in the world; 80 percent of the silver that circulates globally today was extracted from them, but in the beginning, most of it was taken to Europe.<sup>5</sup> On account of the proximity of the mining city to the port of Arica, the port received the largest groups of African enslaved people to cover the labor needs of mining during the sixteenth century. At the time, Arica provided food to Potosí: Spanish plantations and haciendas developed, with African slaves serving as production units. Fruits, vegetables, and fodder were produced, and then sugar cane and cotton plantations were created. During the colony, many Indigenous communities retreated into the mountains, while Afro populations settled mainly on the coasts and its valleys.

In 1645, due to the overexploitation of the Potosí mine and successive malaria epidemics, the white population fled from Arica, leaving the city and its surroundings in the hands of a mostly Afro-descendant farming community. In the first half of the seventeenth century, this community formed 73 percent of Arica's population.<sup>6</sup> Until 1883, Arica was part of Peru; that year, the Pacific War ended, an armed conflict between the nations of Chile, Peru, and Bolivia over the resources of the territory. As Chilean anthropologist Mariana León proposes, although "mining was one of the engines for the traffic [of Black people] in the Pacific and their use in agricultural production, the greed for saltpeter—and the intervention of global powers, such as England—motivated the Pacific War (1879–1883)," which had an impact on the history of Afro-descendants in the region.<sup>7</sup> The Ancón Treaty, the "peace" agreement between Chile and Peru, yielded the Tarapacá desert to the nation-state of Chile. It also established the Chilean occupation for ten years in the provinces of Tacna and Arica, leaving its sovereignty pending until a plebiscite was carried out; however, the latter was delayed and did not happen. After sharp tensions, in 1929 Tacna became part of Peru and Arica of Chile. It was then that *Chilenización* began, a process of violence and harassment that prohibited all demonstrations that Chileans regarded as Peruvian, in order to ensure so-called national hegemony.

Since Afro-Aricans and their culture were considered Peruvian, these communities suffered psychological, symbolic, and physical violence, including kidnapping, homicide, and exile of members of the population. Among other discriminatory measures, the patriotic leagues marked the doors of their houses with a black tar cross. The process of whitening and racial persecution generated a range of effects on the Afro-Arican population, from hushing their history even after freeing themselves from slavery to promoting the escape of their members to the territory that is now Peru, disintegrating families and communities. As Chilean anthropologist Nicole Chávez proposes, "in their speeches, the strategy of whitening their skin and changing features to 'improve the race' by 'mixing' with white people is revealed, while their traditions were encapsulated in the



memory of the oldest and they remained in the intimate family nucleus.”<sup>8</sup> In the end, the chilenization process was successful as it effectively silenced Afro-Arican culture for more than seventy years.

### **AWAKENING: POLITICAL MOVEMENT, CULTURAL MOVEMENT**

In 2000 ECLAC (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) organized the Regional Preparatory Conference of the Americas. This event preceded the III World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, organized by the United Nations in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. Sonia Salgado Henríquez, at that time mayor of the town of Camarones, a commune of Arica, was invited to participate in the first conference and remembers the turning point of Afro-descendants’ invisibilization in Chile: “[W]e went there; President Ricardo Lagos was there and was asked if there were afrodescendant people in Chile, and he said no; then we stood up and told him that we did exist and that was the public birth [of the Afro-Chilean social movement].”<sup>9</sup> This turning point jeopardized the official nationalism of a country that proclaimed itself as racially inclusive.

The government of Chile denied the existence of Black people in the country but the *retomada* (reclaim)<sup>10</sup> marks a milestone in a process of Afro vindication and self-recognition in Chile. As Brazilian anthropologist and ethnographer Marcio Goldman argues, to *reclaim* means taking back what we were separated from, but not in the sense that we can just have it back. *Reclaim* means recovering from the separation as such, to do justice to the movements with which we want to dialogue. *Reclaims* of the land, of cultures, of life.”<sup>11</sup> From there, the first Afro-Chilean collective was created, the NGO Oro Negro (Black Gold) (2001), dedicated to the legal recognition of African descendants in Chile and the fight against racism. As León points out, “that milestone will (re)move memories, uniting other family trunks that later will originate new collectivities.”<sup>12</sup> Afro-descendant families came together to rebuild traditions and position their identity in the present as Afro-Chileans. The relationship between politics and art emerged organically during these meetings and the need for an aesthetic expression that would amplify the movement became imminent.<sup>13</sup> Tumbe was one of them.

### **TUMBE’S AESTHETIC ARTICULATION**

In Tumbe, the drums mark the cadenced rhythm of the moving bodies, which are displayed in public space wearing costumes of saturated colors (Fig. 10.1). Individualities are diluted in a large and colorful body that takes on its own pulse, resonating in the territory and celebrating the community’s shared history. The dance collects the agricultural and daily tasks of the territory. The Azapa and Lluta valleys, located on the northern border of Chile, were mainly dedicated to cultivating sugar cane, cotton, and later olive trees. Moving their arms



FIGURE 10.1 Comparsa Tumba Carnaval. Arica. 2019. Photograph by Diego Araya.

and hands, their choreographies evoke these tasks, recreating the *raima*—or careful harvesting of olives from the top of the trees—or the *machazo*—when cutting the sugar canes with an ax—or the washing of clothes on the banks of the river. Past and present coexist in Tumbe, reversing the obstruction of memory produced by coloniality between generations of Afro-Aricans. The colonial time of modernity is then denied in a non-linear decolonial temporality, where past, present, and future are not progressively annulled. As León explains, “due to its sensitive, creative and thoughtful capacity, [Tumbe] enables the transmission of knowledge and memories of the ‘black grandparents’ as a historical awareness of their presence in the territory.”<sup>14</sup> It is then a feeling-thinking experience that merges elements of music, dance, colors, and shapes, and where sensory and synesthetic learning manifests the continuity of Afro-Chilean culture.

In order to form a *troupe*—a company of artists who perform on the street—and reclaim the practice of the Tumbe that was carried out in Arica, a memory recovery began in 2001, based on oral accounts of the oldest members of the Afro-descendant community. In the interviews with older people, it was revealed that carnivals were held until the beginning of the twentieth century, among which was Tumbe, with its respective troupes, couplets, palms, and hems. The narratives of the last carnivals revealed that Afro families performed with *quijadas* (donkey jawbones), drums, and maracas. Though, instead of giving specific details about the music or the sound pattern, their stories recalled the gesture of *tumbar* (tumble) the hips, which gives the name to Tumbe. “The grandfathers and grandmothers remembered some rhythms, some steps, but not complete [...] Tumbe is a reconstruction of what is believed [to have existed]. Today it is what we Afro-descendants are, regardless of whether or not our grandparents danced it, but they vibrate with us,”<sup>15</sup> says Paula Gallardo, artisan and dancer of Tumba Carnaval, the oldest troupe of the Afro-descendant movement. Tumbe, hence, is a cultural expression in constant transformation that strengthens community ties, since it combines aesthetic forms of different generations that follow each other over time.

It was also in 2001 that the researcher Gustavo del Canto and the Afro-descendant activist Carolina Letelier contacted the Afro-Uruguayan drum luthier, Yoni Olis, to create a troupe. Olis had recently settled in Azapa Valley and when he saw the olive barrels he imagined the shape of the drum. According to his account:

As soon as I saw it, I said, you put a leather on top of it and it’s a drum. And so it was [...] We disassembled barrels and reassembled in the same way [...] So it was a recreation, we have to be clear about that [...] First we gave it an intention, we wanted to do something, but then Tumbe shaped us, that was amazing. What is essential, which was the root of everything, was the hip motion that occurs in Tumbe. We tried to make a rhythm that would fit that body movement.<sup>16</sup>

The recurrent presence of the Azapa’s olive barrel positions it as a key material component in the configuration of the Arican identity. Since the colonial period, olive trees have been the basis of agriculture in the territory. At that time, the olive tree adapted fruitfully after its migration from Seville to the fertile valley of Azapa, adopting a remarkable flavor and size in the Andean lands, and was used mainly to prepare olive oil. To process the olives, raulí, oak, and cedar barrels were used, built in different sizes.<sup>17</sup> “There are many important and complicated techniques used to make a barrel. That craft was lost along with the people who practiced it and their tools,” Olis explains.<sup>18</sup>

Tumbe’s drum is the size of a *quarterola*—a quarter of a barrel—and its body is symmetrical. The upper and lower mouths are identical, which determines a specific sonority. Kiko Anaconda, percussion luthier and craftsman from Arica recognized for his tumbadoras, bongos, güiros, batá drums, box drums, *batajones*, and shekeres, mentored Olis and Francisco Piñones, who today are Tumbe percussionists and luthiers. Anaconda passed on to Olis y Piñones his knowledge of wood and leather treatment techniques, and the geometry applied to the construction of drums.

In the past, the barrels were disassembled to later be lightened and polished. Each piece of wood is called a stave and was reassembled to the others with water, fire, and a resistance system of metallic straps. The transformation of the wood with heat and humidity enabled the tightening of the straps to the barrel until a concentric and hermetic body was created. But *Tumbe* quickly transformed, accelerating its dance, its musical pattern, and the way of fabricating drums. Nowadays, the luthier cuts the pieces with a sophisticated system of angles on the edges. Then he moistens them, assembles the drum, ties the straps which are tightened slowly over the fire until the curvature adjusts to the perfect fit. The artist shapes the drum that he plays.

According to Paraguayan academic and cultural minister Ticio Escobar, the contemporary [also] designates in art “the attempt to confront the questions raised by each present with forms, images and discourses.”<sup>19</sup> This concern for diversity opens significance to many ways of understanding—or being in—the world, and suggests that art is contemporary insofar as it maintains its validity or ability to formulate and articulate sensitive forms that increase the significance of the experience of the world.

*Tumbe* has a living character and is in constant transformation. It takes different forms and in this creative process, some musical instruments have arrived and others have left. The old donkey jawbone that marked the clash of hips between the dancers was not heard any more in contemporary carnivals, slowly disappearing. Then came the *shekere*, a hollowed-out pumpkin that functions as a sounding board. Dressed in a knotted textile with beads, when the *shekere* begins to move, it transforms into a percussion instrument. The movement of the arms extends to rattle rhythms in the music, which emerges from the beads shaking and hitting, giving a unique texture to the percussion. Paula Gallardo, a *Tumbe* dancer and *shekere* artisan, describes it as an accessory instrument:

Besides being an instrument that fills, that gives shine—visually in the public space—it greatly enhances the identity of people. You can change the mesh, the clothes—it’s like an instrument that uses clothes, it’s beautiful [...] The design came from the color; colorful seeds that could match. The important thing is how color is seen, imagined in a large scale, collectively, more than in a person, in how everything is going to be seen [...] for our recognition we have to spread our culture.<sup>20</sup>

There is a similarity between the meshes of the *shekeres* and the jewelry—necklaces, earrings, and crowns—worn by the dancers. The entire clothing, including that of the instruments, is a system of signs whose articulation constitutes meaning.

The extension of the corporeal self through clothing increases the apparent size of the collective body. The continuous color also extends the space inhabited by the bodies. The bright garments and the double hem of the dress emphasize the movement of the body. The reiteration of white dresses is a historical reference to the visual

records of servitude and derives from the cotton sacks used to transport agricultural produce. The turban is a cotton cut that is twisted at its ends to form a knot that supports the head. These elements of clothing are a legacy of the colonial period and reveal Afro-Peruvian influences.

It is important to note that the invisibilization of art forms that do not fit into hegemonic discourses is intersected by race, gender, and class, and by the distinctions in Western canons between art and function, aesthetics and poetics, form and content. The marginalization of these practices is also related to their affiliation with ceremonies and/or usability, and therefore, their lack of autonomy. But this ontological division of things is diluted in Afro-diasporic and Amerindian ontologies. In this sense, it seems that decoloniality works more as a praxis than as a category. I propose, then, to get rid of the notion of the autonomy of art, to jeopardize the division of artistic fields, and among nature and culture, allowing for non-linear temporalities. Decoloniality is situated in these other temporalities, challenging the ways in which the relationship between art and autonomy is institutionalized and its place in the public sphere.

Hence, we can think that Tumbe's clothing, its materials and the hybrid spaces they occupy, are close to the notion of "popular art" that Ticio Escobar has elaborated. For him, popular art opens space for the inclusion of hybrid epistemologies from different disciplines that relativize the relationship between art, crafts, and artifact. Non-Western art is not divided into form and content—aesthetics and poetics—and for this reason it admits other functions and temporalities: many pasts, many presents, many futures, multiple aesthetics.<sup>21</sup>

Artifacts and their diverse materialities are capable of activating invisible narratives and stories. In Tumbe, the different artifacts that are presented together create new cultural meanings and overlap temporalities. An example of this is the *tatora* hat worn by musicians. It is possible to consider the praxis of this craft as an old structure of relations that happens in Arica. It dates back to 8,000 BCE in the Chinchorro culture and can be seen in skirts and basketry, among other textile artifacts that have been found along with mummified bodies in pre-Hispanic grave goods on the coast of Arica. The vegetable fiber of which they are composed is the same as that of wetlands, and has the same resistance. This reed is resistant to changes in the ecosystem and has existed on that land since the first human settlements in the territory. When the first enslaved Africans arrived to this territory, they twined themselves to its materials and used the same twisting technique to weave their sleeping mats. Let us remember that basketry has an ancient tradition in Africa, and possibly the first Afro-Aricans knew these arts. They found *tatora*, a specific reed from the local wetland, and began to weave. In this regard, the artisan and cultist in *tatora* María Velásquez says:

Tatora should be recognized as material heritage of the region. Because it is there, it is the same material that we find mummified in Chinchorro culture. All the cultures of this territory have used it as a material. It is now recognized as



one of the three main crafts of the Arica and Parinacota region, and is a rescue of an Afro-descendant tradition [...] When a white man sold a Black man, the only material asset he carried was a mat under his arm. Therefore, mats were most likely inherited. When a kid was sold and taken out of their family environment, their parents gave a mat to take with them. During the day they used it for shade and at night to sleep.<sup>22</sup>

The mat was one of the only items of property owned by enslaved Africans. In the National Afro-Peruvian Museum in Lima, Peru, there are mats dated back to 300 years ago. Considering its durability, many lives could have passed on the same mat. Despite its simplicity, it contains a material memory from the first cultures of South America, reclaimed by Afro-diasporic communities, and has continuity in contemporary crafts. This material was also extensively used for the roofs of the houses built since the colony until the beginning of the twenty-first century in Arica, and for the *quinchas*—cabins where young Afro-married couples live—in Sama Valley, in Peru.

In *Mille Plateaux*, Gilles Deleuze proposed that if identity is constructed through differences, then identity does not exist before difference.<sup>23</sup> This concept criticizes the privilege of the same—from Plato to Hegel—and is developed by Deleuze into an ontology of *Difference and Repetition*.<sup>24</sup> Here, repetition is related to time and to the production of the new. The reproduction of series—or copies of identities—contain in themselves the structure of previous reproductions; multiplicity replaces the metaphysical concept of substance.

María Velásquez learned the craft of totora weaving from Rosa Güisa, an Afro-Arican activist and publicly recognized artisan. When she was six years old—along with her father, she discovered her cutting reeds in her ditch:

She told my dad that she made reed baskets and that she could make mats for him, roofs for the *quinchas*, for the corrals. My dad told her to come home. She put the reeds on the ground, put a stone, and began to teach me how to weave mats. And there I began to watch how she wove. [...] Before starting, you have to *recochar*, I learned that from Mrs. Rosa.<sup>25</sup>

María collects totora, cuts it, and does the *recochado*, a process that softens the fiber by soaking it in hot water for a week. Then, she separates the thicker fibers for mounting the warp in the loom, and the soft ones to be woven as wefts. Take and fold a plain weft, intertwining it with the first warp, or vertical thread, to start weaving. She twists the fiber a little and begins to weave it horizontally in twining technique. A twist of the threads; one weft goes up marking the direction, and the other diagonally down to ensure tension. A thick fiber is added, and the interlacing is repeated. Twist and up.

The stories around totora crafts also go back to the *comerciantas*, a group of Afro women who traded fruits and vegetables that they transported by donkey from Azapa to San Marcos's Market in Arica until the beginning of the twentieth century. In the city of Arica, part of the Afro-descendant community lived in a neighborhood



called Lumbanga, a word of African origin that means farmhouse: “In this neighborhood, the blacks owned small businesses [...] they spread mats on the sidewalk in front of their houses, where they settled with a pitcher of wine and a guitar in hand.”<sup>26</sup> This craft was also practiced in *La Chimba*, another Afro-descendant neighborhood near the sea, where some families lived from growing vegetables and fishing.

In all Arica’s old constructions, the ceilings were made of totora. This fiber regulates temperature, working as a thermal insulator that also allows ventilation. The walls were a mixture of mud, paper sacks, and *cartapesta*, the same material that Ana María Nieto, an Afro-descendant artisan, uses to create the *cabezudos* of Tumbe today.

*Cabezudos*, or big heads, are large masks that represent Afro archetypes with a striking visual presence among the unified body of musicians and dancers. A *cabezudo* is three times the height of a person and has a large head made of *cartapesta*, imposing itself with laughter and irony. The performer is wrapped in the exuberant plastic form of the mask, creating a counterpoint to the formal qualities—color, texture, rhythm, and choreography—of the rest of the troupe, and establishes a playful interaction with the spectators. Ana María Nieto, an artisan who creates *cabezudos*, narrates this experience of encountering the audience: “With one movement, you see adults smile and a child appears [...] As a kid, I had the chance to see carnivals that had allegorical cars, with moving structures inside, like an oyster shell that opened and a queen was inside, over a giant truck.”<sup>27</sup>

The same technique that was used to build the house spaces is reclaimed by artisans like Ana María to give life to archetypal characters who perform at the carnival and tension the status quo with satires made in verse or sung behind a face with an immovable gesture. The artisan creates and teaches the trade of *cartapesta*, which consists of overlapping paper layers with glue and a homemade paste made from a cooked mixture of water and flour. With five to eight layers, she reproduces the colonial wooden masks. Ana María also remembers that in 1967 a ballet troupe from Guinea performed at the Arica stadium, which included dancing on stilts.<sup>28</sup> Through graphic archives she began to research visual clues about carnivals and the outfits with which Afro-descendants participated. For example, Francisco “Pancho” Fierro, an eighteenth-century artist from Lima, documented colonial *cabezudos* in his watercolors (Fig. 10.2). Nieto has noticed in them the presence of elements that are associated with the contemporary Tumbe:

In a troupe show, devils with giant heads appear, the kids playing drums, little Afro-Peruvian drum-boxes, the donkey jawbone. There is one watercolor in particular, where the giants appear, as well as an indigenous, a Spaniard, a Black person, and a Creole. You see his face through the viewfinder, which is on his stomach, or in some cases, you see his mouth.<sup>29</sup>

The masks indicate that artifacts created in the past are historical events that continue to exist in the present.<sup>30</sup> They provide an opportunity to encounter the past through direct sensory experience. Tumbe happens as an aesthetic and a symbolic metaphor of Afro-Arican identity. More than a performance, is a mediation between past, present, and future, anchoring itself in a sensitive and imaginary quality that is capable of recovering meanings



FIGURE 10.2 Francisco “Pancho” Fierro. *Función de los negros Chalas, en el día de corpus*. Watercolor on paper, 23.3 x 18.2 cm. Pinacoteca Municipal Ignacio Merino, Lima.

from history and memory. In Tumbé’s multi-temporal quality lies one of the dimensions of its decolonizing character. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui proposes, past and future are contained in the present: “a spiral whose movement is a continuum that feeds back from the past to the future [...] a ‘hope principle’ or ‘anticipated awareness’ that envisions decolonization.”<sup>31</sup> The territory, then, is a temporary portal of confluence that allows us to access its aesthetic heritage, dismantling the linearity of time. The musical rhythm—which is transferred to the

body through the dance, and then to the space with her white clothes moving in unison—is the formal element that facilitates the transfer from one time to another.

In his work on difference and repetition, Deleuze distinguished three temporal syntheses: habit (present), memory (past), and the new (future).<sup>32</sup> The first one is a passive synthesis. The habit is the presence of the past in the present through a contraction, creating meaning in the present experience. The second synthesis is active and related to memory, and the third synthesis breaks the two previous ones. This empty-time new synthesis is grounded in repetition, in this case, the repetition of *tumbe* in the carnival, breaking with habit. But at the same time, the third synthesis is reconstructed through memory, rebuilding the self and forcing the subject to resignify itself. Tumbe's aesthetic experience transforms and makes more complex the different experiences of afrodescendants in Chile. Tumbe is an act of resistance to the process of *Chilenización* that began after the Pacific War and made the Afro population invisible. In this sense, Tumbe contributes to the decolonization of aesthetic experience. As Goldman proposes, thinking expansively about Afro-diasporic reterritorialization allows us to recreate existential territories as a form of resistance and (re)existence.<sup>33</sup>

### CARNIVAL AS RESISTANCE

Today, historically invisibilized Afro-Arican communities celebrate their stories and decolonize public space with Tumbe. The identity of the community is reformulated, cyclically and collectively in urban carnivals—Con la Fuerza de Sol—and rural—Carnaval Afro, the (un)burial of Ño Carnavalón, the Cruces de Mayo,<sup>34</sup> and the night of San Juan, among others. The community celebrates the history it shares by inhabiting public space, and each person participates corporally to become one with the rest. They are community and public practices that allow us to rethink the nation-state; collective expression implies collective reflection.

Tumbe enables Afro-Arican communities to encounter themselves in the street with its presence. The street, as an emptiness formed by the delimiting architecture of the private interior and conforming the public exterior, becomes a stage for the inhabitants, where they meet each other, become, and relate. The streets are a place of communication where culture occurs. The street situates people in a local context revealing a collective culture. People and their actions are constituents of the urban landscape; their manifestations demonstrate a state of transitory dominance over public space. The re-union of people in an urban action constitutes an ephemeral presence that only remains during the action but is preserved in memory. They are exclusive and fundamental actions in the city space, facilitating the co-creation of an identity in the community and a sense of belonging in the territory, for its use and not for its purchase.

Tumbe has embodied in the public space an Afro memory in Chile. Today, its practice extends to other cities in the central valley and southern regions, as in the cities of Santiago, Valparaíso, and Concepción. Moreover, the

appearance of Afro-descendant authors in the intellectual regional field, as well as the culturally inclusive policies implemented at the national level, since the 1990s—post-dictatorship—apparently have not been enough to have a political impact on the constitutional framework, although they are important to pluralize the stories about blackness in Chile. The importance and relevance of decolonial actions, both in the academy and public space, lies in generating new historical narratives from within the Latin American Afro-descendant movement. Afro-South American identities recognize aesthetic and poetic convergences and divergences in the Afro-American diaspora.

On March 7, 2019, the Law for the Recognition of Afro-descendant Tribal People was approved, an instance that was conceived by the Afro-African community with the support of deputies and senators from the region. This law establishes the state's obligation to value Afro-Chilean culture and recognizes it as part of Chile's intangible cultural heritage. A year later, in the context of writing the new constitution and a supposed transversal spirit of historical reparation, the seats reserved for the Afro-descendant people were not approved. This definition gives continuity to a dialectical invisibility of Afro-Chilean communities, their legacies, and their historical recognition, despite the fact that they have inhabited this territory since before it was Chile.

## Notes

1. United Nations, "Slave-Trade," United Nations, December 17, 2007. <https://www.un.org/es/observances/decade-people-african-descent/slave-trade>.
2. Herbert Klein, *La esclavitud africana en América Latina y en el Caribe* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2008), 511.
3. Some examples are the musical rhythms—festejo, candombe, tumbe, samba, ijexá, milonga, among others—gastronomic, performance, religious, among other practices of resistance and black re-existence in the Americas.
4. Rolando Mellafe, "La Introducción De La Esclavitud En Chile. Tráfico Y Rutas," *Boletín De La Academia Chilena De La Historia* 26 (1959): 57.
5. Paula C. Zagalsky, "La Mita De Potosí: Una Imposición Colonial Invariable En Un Contexto De Múltiples Transformaciones (Siglos XVI-XVII; Charcas, Virreinato Del Perú)," *Chungará (Arica)* 46(3) (2014): 375–395, <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0717-73562014000300005>
6. For historiography, this explains how black slaves achieved their freedom and became owners of these lands. Mariana León, "Movements in the 'movement.' Reflexivity and Performance of an Afrodescendant presence in Arica (Chile)," *Boletín del Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino* 25(2) (2020): 69.
7. León, 70.
8. Nicole Chávez, "Intellectuality, Race and Gender: Women in Afro-Resistance from the Azapa and Arica Valley, Chile," *Meridional. Revista Chilena De Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 16 (April 2021): 213–237, <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-4862.2021.61358>.
9. Sonia Salgado, "Reconstrucción identitaria de los afrochilenos de Arica y el valle de Azapa." Interview by María Espinosa, thesis diss., Santiago: Universidad Academia Humanismo Cristiano, 2013, <http://bibliotecadigital.academia.cl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1161/tant%20140.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>.
10. I used the term "*retomada*" proposed by Marcio Goldman, who refers in turn to the term "*reclaim*" proposed by Stengers (2005:185). Marcio Goldman, "'Nada es igual': anti-sincretismos y contramestizajes en los saberes afroindígenas," in María Martínez y Johannes Neurath, *Cosmopolítica y cosmohistoria: Una Anti-síntesis* (Buenos Aires: Editorial SB, 2021), 82.



11. Ibid.
12. León, 70.
13. The distinction of the term “Movement” refers to cultural political movement for Afro-descendant recognition. The emergence of the Afro-descendant community in Arica (Chile) has been treated as an ethnopolitical and identity process (Mora 2011, Espinosa 2013, Ducongé 2015) from diverse theoretical positions, focusing on textual and discursive aspects and placing the relationship with the State at the center of the discussion. León, 68.
14. Ibid.
15. Paula Gallardo. Interview by author. Arica, September 2021.
16. Yoni Olis. Interview by author. Arica, September 2021.
17. The barrels’ designations have a correspondence with their capacity in volume. For example, a barrel can hold a ton of olives, while a *quarterola* can hold a quarter of a ton.
18. Olis. Interview by author.
19. “The forms of erudite art of avant-garde affiliation developed in Latin America share parallel scenarios with those of the traditional popular; these seem to contribute to more propitious sites from which to resist the concerted aestheticism of the global hegemonic culture. [...] Although there is a privileged model of the contemporary, the existence of contemporaneity is untenable in the sense that a modern model could be imagined.” Ticio Escobar, *El mito del arte y el mito del pueblo: Cuestiones sobre arte popular* (Santiago: Metales Pesados, 2008), 17. Translation by author.
20. Paula Gallardo. Interview by author. Arica, September 2021.
21. Escobar, 19.
22. María Velázquez. Interview by author. Arica, October 2021.
23. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1980).
24. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
25. María Velázquez. Interview by author. Arica, October 2021.
26. Alfredo Wormald, “El mestizo en el departamento de Arica,” *Anales de la Universidad del Norte* 5 (1966 [1903]): 171.
27. Ana María Nieto. Interview by author. Arica, October 2021.
28. Guinea’s Ballet was created in 1958, after October 2, when the country became independent from France, being the first country in French West Africa (AOF) that did not vote in the referendum for the federal union of the eight nations.
29. Ana María Nieto. Interview by author. Arica, October 2021.
30. Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17(1) (1982): 1–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180761>.
31. Continues, “The experience of contemporaneity commits us to the present—*aka pacha*—and at the same time contains in itself seeds of the future that sprout from the depths of the past—*qhip nayr uñtasis sarnaqapxañani*. The present is the scene of modernizing and at the same time archaizing impulses. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa: una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos decolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta y Limón, 2010), 55.
32. Gilles Deleuze and Paul Patton, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2001), 9.
33. Marcio Goldman, “‘Nada es igual’: anti-sincretismos y contramestizajes en los saberes afroindígenas,” in María Martínez and Johannes Neurath, eds., *Cosmopolítica y cosmohistoria: Una Anti-síntesis* (Buenos Aires: Editorial SB, 2021), 67–101.
34. “In Cruz de Mayo’ celebration—a religious festival brought by the Spaniards and which they began to celebrate with particular details—Afro-descendant women have dedicated themselves to arranging and dressing the cross the day it comes down from the hill, along with to adorn the altar. The day the cross is raised, a big party is held and they are the ones who prepare the details of the food—tripe or spicy *guatita*—as for the festival itself. The female figures are of such relevance that most of the crosses of Afro families receive the name of an ancestor. The cult of the cross and the tutelary hills is in turn associated with a tribute to the *Pachamama*, a female figure who gives fertility and abundance.” Chávez, 225.

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## CHAPTER 11

# Monstrous Nodes of Echolocation

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Gregorio Fontén

The following text is about the sound installation *The Awakening of the Monster of Echolocation* (hereafter *AME*), which I created in July 2021. The installation was built through what I call “monstrous nodes of echolocation.”

Nodes produce ambiguity, contradiction, and reversibility between the diverse sonic actions at play. They can be formed by a microphone-amplification setup that, while listening to sounds coming toward it, ends up silencing them via a feedback loop, or by emphasizing the acoustics of the room instead of the singer’s expression in a song. Thus, a text about a work that consists of them must be equally labyrinthic and even charlatanic at times. Because the description of a work based on contradiction and ambiguity would fail to be about it if produced by a traditional scientific discourse that tries to resolve ambiguity and contradiction, certain paragraphs might be hard to follow or difficult to place in relation to the whole. Monstrous nodes dislocate the possibility of scientific discourse to make sense of reality and, in its place, call for a sensitivity to reality that can be traced through what I refer to as the *Monster*: a relation to stories, poetics, and myths of Chilean colonialism, and the narration of personal and sonic experiences that take place at the Festival de la Canción de Viña del Mar, a music festival held yearly in the city of Viña del Mar in the region of Valparaíso in central Chile that is notorious for its “Monster”—a being that wakes up between artist and audience and that plays a central role in popular culture as it accepts or rejects musical acts, having a meaningful impact in an artist’s career throughout Latin America. Monstrous nodes both create and interrupt nets of interconnectivity. Sometimes they create meaningful connections and other times they might be arbitrary. Through what I call “echolocation” they move ambiguously between emitting and receiving sounds, articulating a movement that sometimes reinforces and sometimes disorients the limits between emotional engagement and rational judgment—or, in general, boundaries between opposites, such as human and non-human, culture and nature, and so on.

To produce a writing that behaves like monstrous nodes of echolocation, this text is built following two parameters. First, with the aid of custom software, the discussion is arranged in four topics [A, B, C, D], each

of these assigned to a particular frequency oscillation. Whenever one of these signals makes a zero-crossing between negative and positive values of its oscillation, the software commands an output of a paragraph from its corresponding topic. The different signals create together an acoustic beating or micro-rhythm between the ratios of their frequencies and, guided by a simple zero-crossing analysis, the software can visually translate this behavior producing patterns such as A, A, B, C, D, C, A, C ...

The topics are: [A, at 520Hz] A conceptual relation to speculative realism related to French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux's critique of correlationism;<sup>1</sup> [B, at 707Hz] Relations between *AME* to listening practices and theories which are grouped as listening to listening; [C, at 760 Hz] Description of materials and technics of *AME*; and [D, at 403Hz] Informed by my personal experience with the Chilean social uprising that began in October 2019, I elaborate on political, social, and emotional implications of being from South America<sup>2</sup> and how they impact the creation of *AME*.

Second, I elaborate on each of these topics (A, B, C, D) through different engagements. For example, whereas I engage rationally with [A], I approach [D] through fiction and emotion, and [C] technically. [B], on the other hand, is a collection of different engagements.

As mentioned before, the text is not the result of a clear sequence of thought or rational structure that a traditional scientific paper would possess: instead there is a web of different topics, emotions, and ideas that obscure the possibility of a clear and unifying purpose. Therefore, because the text does not have a unique temporal sequence, it must be approached spatially. It can be read from top to bottom, skipping by topic or in any other configuration that the reader decides. Additional comments have been added as footnotes to help situate some of the paragraphs and navigate the text.

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[C] The sound action-installation *AME* was exhibited in the main exhibition hall of Valparaíso's Parque Cultural, during June and July of 2021.

[A] "Correlationism consists of disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently from one another."<sup>3</sup>

[D] It is the evening of October 21, 2019, and I am walking through the heated streets of Santiago.<sup>4</sup> Cars are honking, people raise their fists, vuvuzelas and trutucas resonate in the sky. The night falls.

[C] *AME* was activated in 2021 through a series of actions that were performed<sup>5</sup> on Wednesdays and Fridays.

[B] For sound studies and sound arts in general, there is an agreement that listening practices by themselves—or what I will call here "listening to listening"—fullfill our sonic experiences.<sup>6</sup> However, listening can only access certain sonic experiences and is always accompanied by sonic activities that are unaccountable by it.

[A] Quentin Meillasoux’s critique of correlationism, Arturo Romero Contreras argues in *Metafísica y Persona*,<sup>7</sup> is targeted against a tradition that develops from Kant’s notion of truth as the correlation between a subject’s way of knowing and the material-in-itself.

[D] I feel screaming inside my throat. I join the pot-banging.<sup>8</sup>

[C] *AME* is part of a series of sound-system designs that I have labeled “spirals of transduction,” that is, systems through which electroacoustic energy travels and is transformed in a feedback loop, spiraling and disorienting the boundaries between sonic actions involved. These include: musical and body performances in the gallery; the materiality of speakers and microphones; the acoustic properties of the space and adjacent sounds; noises from the audience and the properties of their bodies for filtering and/or reflecting sound.

[C] *AME* proposes a net through which, it is important to reiterate, electroacoustic energy travels and is transformed. This is created by combining 1) the acoustics of the exhibition hall, 2) musical and performance propositions delivered by keyboards, guitar, percussion, voices by me and a series of collaborators;<sup>9</sup> and 3) the sound qualities of materials such as an acma mesh, transducers, an amplifier, a swinging speaker, a transducer, as well as contact and dynamic microphones, and a no-input mixer.

[B] Listening to listening is the cornerstone of sound arts. As examples of this, *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*, the first major international survey of sound art exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 2013, defined the field as “modes of active listening.”<sup>10</sup> SoundFjord, on the other hand, a London space that was among the first art galleries devoted entirely to sound art, describes its agenda as one that fosters “research and critical listening practices.”<sup>11</sup> In 2018–2019, Mexico City’s ex-Teresa Arte Actual exhibited *Modos de Oír* as an exhibition of some of the major works in sound art developed in Mexico. As a label that could encompass all sound art practices, the title of the show can be translated into modes of listening.<sup>12</sup> A year before, The Rubin Museum in New York organized *The World is Sound*. This exhibition encouraged visitors to “learn to listen with your whole body” so as to understand how “sound and our sense of hearing shape our daily lives, our traditions, our history, and all of existence.”<sup>13</sup>

[A] Meillasoux’s argument about the necessity of contingency creates a fissure in the finitude between subject and materiality, opening up infinite possibilities.<sup>14</sup>

[D] After witnessing the national police both chasing and beating up peaceful protesters (during and after the uprising of October 19, 2019), as well as the indifference of politicians of different political colors—who did not want to listen to what was being expressed and experienced on the streets—I began to believe that protests against human rights violations require a different sonic engagement than merely listening.

[C] In *AME*’s net, sound may enter and exit from different points and travel spiraling throughout the system.

[C] An area of *AME* consists of an acma mesh hanging from the ceiling. At the top of the mesh, a large paper is tensed to act as a membrane. A transducer is attached to the mesh. Two contact mics capture the acoustic energy that travels as vibrations through the structure.

[B] The same emphasis on listening that is given in sound art flourishes throughout the field of sound studies.<sup>15</sup> Sound studies scholar Brian Kane argues that listening is “devoted to tracing the ways in which modes of listening have been culturally, historically, and institutionally developed.”<sup>16</sup> For example, in the field of sound ecology the sound-quality of an environment is measured by what can be listened to within it. In fact, the simplest way to identify what sound ecology calls a hi-fi soundscape is given by the ability to listen to your footsteps in that environment.<sup>17</sup> Artist and researcher Annie Goh defines sound studies by asking the question: “How do sound and listening produce knowledge?”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the UK-based research group Listening Across Disciplines declares that listening regards creating “new knowledge and innovative mechanisms of knowledge production [...] through listening.”<sup>19</sup> In addition, the Sound Studies and Sonic Arts MA program at the Berlin University of the Arts invites its students, as its website reads, to “make listening your culture.”<sup>20</sup>

[A] Succinctly put, correlationism starts with Kant’s philosophy, who established it as a mediation between Hume’s empiricism and Descartes’s idealism. Whereas for Hume reality is that of a material contingency—of which we make sense by habit and repetition—for Descartes reality is that of the mind, as in the last account, our own thoughts would be the only certain thing about reality. Kant’s correlationism builds from both Hume and Descartes to establish certain transcendentals—such as necessity—as ideal constructions that, while not arising from the material world, can only be validated by the material in-itself, which, in turn, is autonomous from the ideal.

[D] The sonic experience of the Chilean social uprising is not reducible to listening but requires screaming, thumping your feet, banging pan pots, singing in collectively.

[C] Another area of *AME* consists of an electric keyboard, a mixer that receives no-input feedback loops, an electric guitar (or other sound sources depending on the collaborators), and a dynamic microphone that captures some of the action in the adjacent area. The output from this area’s mixer travels to the mesh area. A second mixer receives 1) vibrations from the contact mics located at the top of the acma mesh described before; and 2) the sound from a clean dynamic microphone used for vocal performances. The output of this mixer goes through a parametric EQ from an old National Panasonic Radio and travels to the third area.

[B] The listening practices previously described are based on different strategies of what, as stated above, I call listening to listening. By labeling them that way I wish to emphasize that listening is never self-sustained: it requires other elements that cannot act or be perceived through listening. These elements allow listening to take place as an orientation toward or from sonic experience. They are an imposition on sonic experience by simply taking a stance as a listener. If this imposition is not recognized then listening is developed as listening to listening.

[A] For correlationism the material in-itself is ungraspable and ideal constructions that do not have a material counterpart are unverifiable and therefore untrue.

[D] After attending a talk by sound artist Janek Schaefer at Goldsmiths College in London, where I completed my postgraduate degree, a group of friends and faculty members walked to grab a beer at a nearby pub. There, a professor asked me, since I am from South America, whether my PhD was funded by a drug cartel.<sup>21</sup>

[A] Kant's transcendental idealism inaugurates the tradition of correlation that has been further developed in Heidegger's *Dasein* or Derrida's *Différance*.<sup>22</sup>

[C] A third area of *AME* consists of a bag hanging from the ceiling with National Panasonic Radio speakers inside of it. This pendulum can be thrown around, generating different types of movements. A dynamic microphone in one corner of the hall captures the sound from the speaker as it travels through the space. One of the mixers in the previous area receives the signal from the microphone and amplifies it to the first area with a transducer.

[B] Listening to listening proposes that the whole of sonic experience is approachable via listening. No inner experience, or social relations, or material interactions could be considered sonic outside listening. Yet, as is clear with echolocation, listening is not self-sufficient but intertwined with expressing.

[D] In the sixteenth century, the Spanish conquistadores led by Pedro de Valdivia captured the young Mapuche toqui Leftraru and raised him as one of their own. Leftraru escaped in 1551 and re-joined his indigenous community. Thanks to his knowledge of Spanish culture, he was then able to successfully lead the Mapuche resistance against the Spanish conquest, a collective form of resistance that is still alive today in Wallmapu and its diaspora through an ongoing struggle against the nation-states of Chile and Argentina.<sup>23</sup>

[C] The *Monster of Echolocation* awakens by actions, performance, and musical input.

[A] In his 2008 book *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, Meillasoux proposes an alternative path to the tradition of correlationism.

[B] Listening is always sustained by other sonic activities that are not listened to but expressed. The inevitable relationship between listening and expressing is what I call "echolocation." If, on the contrary, listening is believed to access sonic experience by itself, then listening is a way of reinforcing the Kantian paradigm of correlationism.<sup>24</sup> Listening would thus provide a universal measure through which all sonic experiences are objectified and analyzed. The belief that listening is not held by expression informs my approach to and use of the term "listening to listening."

[C] In *AME*, sonic energy is transduced through a sound system with feedbacks and oscillations between the resonating frequencies of the space and the sounds of human expression. The swinging speaker moves at different speeds and in different patterns following the actions of performers and dancers, producing a modulation between sounds that come out of it—those bouncing off different walls and the resonance of different frequencies in the space. This modulation is also fed back to the net—that will again bring it forward to the speaker, now converted into a new form.

[A] Meillasoux incites radical idealism by the radicalization of Hume's concept of contingency. As he writes: "So long as you maintain that your skepticism towards all knowledge of the absolute is based upon an argument, rather than upon mere belief or opinion, then you have to grant that the core of any such argument must be *thinkable*. [...] to say that one can think this is to say that one *can* think the absoluteness of the possibility of every thing."<sup>25 26</sup>

[D] Leftraru was listening to the teachings of Pedro de Valdivia, but wasn't doing so in his heart—he was waiting. He decided to shut up and listen, only because he knew he would soon raise his voice again.

[C] The sound system is a net of interconnectedness. As in the “butterfly effect” that occurs when a change in a small element creates drastic changes in other areas of the system, every action involved in it is a node, a transducer, through which the net is connected and transformed.

[B] An agreement over the self-sustainability of listening is what unifies different approaches to sound arts and studies.<sup>27</sup>

[C] Nodes are also knots. A node is a point to which the net is threaded. It is also an impulse, an action of appropriation that, by imposing an orientation to sonic experience, aims to break itself from the thread. A node knots the net to pacify or control it; it interrupts the flow of energy to make itself present.<sup>28</sup>

[A] Meillasoux’s understanding of the “absoluteness of the possibility of every thing”<sup>29</sup> both destroys the absolute as a fixed and unmovable essence, and at the same time diagnoses reality as open-ended and multiple. This creates a multiverse that is not about *objective* materialism but about a multiverse of the mind-matter relation. In *AME* something similar to this is called echolocation.

[B] Listening to listening’s starting point is precisely not to listen but to quiet down the urges not to listen. Listening to listening takes place by shushing other sonic engagements that could distract us from listening. These other sonic actions are about making us heard and are held by engagements other than listening. I call these engagements expressing or “dancing.”<sup>30</sup>

[D] El Monstruo of Viña del Mar—or *the monster*—is a key element in the festival. The monster awakens when the crowd is either totally moved or against the artist onstage.

[C] The net holds different nodes together as they fail to emancipate, creating a link to, perhaps, what Chilean visual artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña calls *fracaso iluminado* or enlightened failure.<sup>31</sup>

[A] For Kant the transcendental argument of necessity is precisely what allows us to make sense of contingency as developed by Hume. Even though we cannot know from materiality itself that the sun will rise the next morning, we can assume it will because we have developed the idea of necessity by the correlation of contingency and our transcendental idea of necessity. Instead of closing contingency, Meillasoux argues that correlationism’s finitude can be broken by recognizing that it rests in the implicit admission of “the absoluteness of the contingency of the given in general.”<sup>32</sup> In so doing, it discards both dogmatic idealism and dogmatic realism.<sup>33</sup>

[C] Echolocation appears at the crossroads of emitting and receiving sounds. Echolocation embraces listening but only threaded with making yourself heard.

[D] *The monster* of Viña del Mar has been pivotal in catapulting the career of artists—it either destroys or delivers success to them. Artists have traditionally feared the *monster*, as it reverses the artist-audience relationship—the artist becomes the audience of the monster.

[B] Listening to listening is both what allows listening to develop its potential and what situates listening as a paradox. To develop it, we must set aside (and not listen to) the urges not to listen. If listening to listening would listen to those urges, listening could not listen at all.



[C] I believe that listening to listening is an ethically desirable practice. For example, geographer and sound artist AM Kanngieser states that sound mapping, sound walking, and deep listening “show how different people’s listening actually [...] show that people do not experience the world in the same way.”<sup>34</sup> So listening would allow multicultural fairness. The challenge is to keep up with this ethical awareness while simultaneously acknowledging that we have a sonic presence that inevitably does not listen but dances, and by so doing, does not listen to but disturbs others.

[A] Correlationism would sustain a certain equilibrium between matter and the ideal by discarding both concepts and ideas that cannot be proven in the material world, and the material-in-itself that cannot be known through the mind. Meillasoux’s speculative realism reassigns a mathematical status to the material-in-itself, a logical shift that can only be achieved through radicalizing Hume’s notion of contingency. In such intricate process, Meillasoux’s speculative realism proposes a reversibility between the material in-itself and the realm of the ideal. This is a spiraling disorientation of directionality, a feedback loop in which the certitude of actions is reinforced and lost. It is an ambiguity that escapes logic through logic just as it happens with monstrous nodes of echolocation.

[C] Listening practices—like any sonic experience—provide a certain shape or orientation of what the sonic is. This shows the superfluous agenda of our listening practices’ intentions as socially or ecologically fair. Inevitably, other sonic orientations are being shushed by our ways of listening.<sup>35</sup>

[B] Listening to listening is sustained by making your listening heard by yourself. This process requires taking a stance toward/from sonic experience. It therefore orients mind and materiality according to a specific correlationism. This correlationism domesticates other sonic impulses that would destroy, manipulate, capture, or otherwise alter the stance of the proposed listening experience.

[D] *AME* proposes a *monster*: a form of sensitivity to the sonic experience that is impossible to grasp by only listening. To wake *the monster* up, you must make yourself heard.

[C] Echolocation resonates sympathetically with listening to listening’s goal of justice and empathy. However, echolocation is also certain that this particular goal is just a utopia. Listening to listening might help us navigate reality in a responsible way, yet we are always—like bats or sonars—making our way by echolocation: by both listening and making ourselves heard.

[A] Following the footsteps of his mentor, the French philosopher Alain Badiou, who famously claimed that “mathematics is ontology,”<sup>36</sup> Meillasoux grants the mathematician a significant role in grasping reality. Additionally, he links this mathematical ontology to a numerical understanding of the famous poem *Coup de Hazard* by the nineteenth-century French poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé.<sup>37</sup> Another poem by Mallarmé titled *Igitur* (which in Latin means something like “therefore”) seems to critique logic, as the poet screams: “you, mathematicians, have expired!”<sup>38</sup> Meillasoux’s numerical reading of Mallarmé’s poetry is not proven wrong by the poet’s exclamation; it rather strengthens the numerical interpretation. It is through the number that the number is overturned. I would also argue for the

importance of music and sonic thought to provoke this overturning as it dislocates the distance between ideal thinking and sensory experience.

[B] Listening is always waiting for not-listening to resume, to restart. Each listening experience is only possible by allowing a listening practice to take place. That attitude must be reinforced by disciplining body and mind, orienting them toward a state of openness. It requires shushing all actions that contradict the desired listening experience.

[C] Regardless of our ecocritical consciousness, we are disturbing our environment. No matter how responsible we are or want to be.

[D] *The monster* in *AME* appears in echolocation; it makes itself heard as it navigates external agendas and influences.

[A] I take Meillasoux's crackling of finitude as an opening to reversibility that shares similarities with what I refer to as echolocation.

[C] Every node proposes a distinctive passage of energy that transforms, conjugates, and modifies it according to its own materiality and action.

[B] We must quiet down to listen. We achieve this by employing physical and/or conceptual techniques and/or constraints.

[A] What can be extracted as data has become synonymous with reality. For UK writer, artist, and technologist James Bridle, this means that our reality is ontologically narrower than it used to be.<sup>39</sup> The riches of a wide and varied ontology of multiple possibilities have thus been relinquished.<sup>40</sup>

[D] The monster awakens as it creates reality and distinguishes between its own body and all that is surrounding it.

[B] All sonic experiences propose sonic directionalities. They are practices of both listening and dancing or what we call echolocation.

[A] German philosopher Markus Gabriel has argued that we now live in an era of ontological wars: ontologies of free-market pragmatism against Marxist ontologies.<sup>41</sup>

[D] *The monster* is a performativity that oscillates between listening and dancing—or making itself heard.

[C] Every node interrupts the flow of energy.

[B] The idea of absolute music was developed in the West as a way to safeguard a classical repertory from everything else, attributing a purity, profoundness, and universality to it<sup>42</sup> that every other form of making music would lack. The failure of such an agenda has been extensively documented. Feminist musicologists Rose Rosengard Subotnick and Susan McClary make compelling cases in this regard. The former, for instance, reveals the non-universal scope of the musical structure of the Adorno-Schoenberg aesthetics—as it privileges white men from Vienna.<sup>43</sup> The latter relates Beethoven's harmonic progressions to male ejaculation and rape.<sup>44</sup> The trope of listening to listening in sound arts and sound studies occupies the same place in relation to sonic experience that the idea of absolute music does in relation to all other music: it arbitrarily imposes itself as the correct practice. However, listening-to-listening practices neglect the

fact that they require sonic engagements that cannot be encompassed by listening—as listening is always compromised in echolocation.

[A] Amiskwaciwâskahikan anthropologist Zoe Todd has elaborated on the links between ontology and colonialism.<sup>45</sup>

[C] Monstrous nodes attempt to break the net. And yet, by doing so, they reinforce it.

[B] Sonic experience has been conceptualized through listening to listening, and by effect has been reduced to what can be grasped through the optimism of the Western Global North. Listening is a fundamental aspect of sonic experience but listening also comes with its counterpart: to make yourself heard.

[D] As defined in performativity, *the Monster* of Viña del Mar is somehow queer, as it disorients the directionality that was taken for granted. It bends fixed directionalities, as the audience becomes the artist and the artist becomes the audience.

[C] A node enables the construction of the net and, at the same time, interrupts that very process. For example, in *AME* the swinging speaker brings forward the electroacoustic energy that is being fed to it from other areas of the installation, and passes it along to the next area. Simultaneously it interrupts and transforms the energy according to both the materiality of its cone, the movement and shifts of sound's directionality, the different resonances, the body of the performer, and other presences in the room.

[A] For the Afro-descendant cultural theorist Fred Moten, Blackness is paraontological, for it remains outside the ontological project of Western white supremacy.<sup>46</sup>

[C] Every node proposes a finitude that directs energies in certain orientations and knots them together. The node *makes sense* of the net by its own action, its echolocation.

[B] That listening can only exist in conjunction with making yourself heard is not recognized by listening practices. That is because these practices want listening to be a plenitude; they want listening to be wise and empathic and provide a safe space for social, ecological, racial, sexual, and global justice. They want to encourage listening, as they believe this engagement will pave the way for tolerance and acceptance of difference and otherness. But we, in the South, have never known justice and know that justice is never going to happen. Listening is not enough for us. In fact, sometimes we do not want to listen anymore.<sup>47</sup>

[D] *The monster* is a paradigm of what I have elsewhere identified as the “sonic criollo.”<sup>48</sup> An identity created not by the dilemma between being and not-being but between being and not knowing if being or not-being (“ser o no sé”). This is an identity that both reinforces and denies itself, therefore it is also a non-identity.

[A] English philosopher Nick Land proposes a reading of philosophy *against* philosophy. Whereas Kant's tradition of philosophy consists of *sitting down* at your desk to try and put an end to uncertainty, according to Land, philosophy should be a practice of *standing up* and confronting the unknown. Philosophy thus becomes an exploration that, rather than trying to solve its questions, further deepens unknowledge as it looks into the abyss.<sup>49</sup>

[C] In *AME*, every node reveals itself and it is only through that action that allows the node to know of its interconnectedness to the outside. This could be compared to the decentering of human experience in the relationship between subject and the thing-in-itself as explored by US philosopher Graham Harman. It is not only that we humans don't have access to the thing-in-itself, but that every object establishes a relation to other objects in the same manner. The thing-in-itself is further removed and replaced by the idea of interconnectedness as a hyper-object.<sup>50</sup>

[C] A monstrous node makes itself heard as its only possible way of listening. It proposes interconnectedness at the same time as a singularity. A monstrous node is limited to its own finitude as the only way to access any idea of infinitude.

[B] The myth for the Anglo-Western Global North has been that it can achieve a better future within a humanist progression that celebrates universal peace and therefore justifies its "past" imperialism. As a myth, it has taken different shapes throughout the centuries and listening to listening is only one more transformation of it.

[D] *The monster* is not an absolute or sustained by definitive boundaries and yet it is.<sup>51</sup>

[A] Artist, programmer, and researcher Eugenio Tisselli proposes that we understand sound as magic: sound subverts meaning, unearthing a reality that escapes the inescrutable logic of transparent epistemic models.<sup>52</sup>

[C] A monstrous node listens in doubt and openness to an outside of itself. Simultaneously, it dances as it continues knotting and reinforcing itself.

## Notes

1. Quentin Meillasoux, *After Finitude* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).
2. It is worth noting that "being from South America" differs from a "South American identity" whereas the first proposes a starting point it does not, like the former, propose a fixed essence.
3. Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, 5. Meillasoux's critique of correlationism will be used throughout the text as it helps the notion of echolocation I introduce here to be better understood.
4. October 19, 2019, marked the beginning of the social uprising in Chile. After months of protests and struggle it has resulted in a political process that through the writing of a new constitution seeks to erase the political heritage of the dictator Pinochet's regime.
5. More on this performance element and list of participants in another node.
6. This statement will become clearer when analyzed in conjunction with other [B] paragraphs.
7. Arturo Romero Contreras, "Metafísica y Persona," *Filosofía, conocimiento y vida* 12(23) (2020): 11–46.
8. In the early days of the social uprising, at different times of day, people bang kitchen pots from their windows and in the streets. This practice is a common form of protest in Chile and in Latin America.
9. Alexandra Mabes, Rodrigo Arteaga, Cristian Velasco, Martin Gubbins, Lukax Santana, Miguel Hernandez, Elisa Assler, Sebastián Díaz, and Felix Pino-Kovalenko.
10. MoMA. *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*. August 10–November 3 2013. <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1351> (accessed July 1, 2020).
11. SoundFjord. *SoundFjord*. <https://www.soundfjord.org/> (accessed July 2, 2020).
12. INBAL. *Modos de Oír*. <https://modosdeoir.inba.gob.mx/> (accessed July 2, 2020).
13. Rubin Museum. *The World is Sound*. <https://rubinmuseum.org/events/exhibitions/the-world-is-sound> (accessed July 2, 2020).

14. This opening of infinite possibilities is comparable to what echolocation produces in *AME*.
15. See previous [B].
16. Brian Kane, "Sound Studies Without Auditory Culture: A Critique of the Ontological Turn" *Sound Studies* 1(1) (2015): 2–21.
17. Kendall Wrightson, "An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology," *Journal of Acoustic Ecology* 1(1) (2000): 10–13.
18. Annie Goh, "Sounding Situated Knowledges: Echo in Archaeoacoustics," *Parallax* 23(3) (2017): 283.
19. LxDii, *About Listening Across Disciplines*. <https://www.listeningacrossdisciplines.net/about/> (accessed July 2, 2020).
20. Berlin University of the Arts, *Sound Studies and Sonic Arts (Master of Arts)*. <https://www.udk-berlin.de/en/courses/sound-studies-and-sonic-arts-master-of-arts/> (accessed July 2, 2020).
21. This is a personal anecdote that illustrates the impotence of only listening. It is not intended as a denunciation of a particular person.
22. Arturo Romero Contreras, "Metafísica y Persona," *Filosofía, conocimiento y vida*: cf. 15.
23. The story of Leftraru (or Lautaro) told here and in the next [D] paragraph is not proposed as historical analysis but as a fiction of resistance that helps me emotionally illustrate that listening is not enough.
24. See [A].
25. This contingency via idealism creates an ambiguity, a disorientation that is precisely at play in *AME*.
26. Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, 58.
27. See previous [B].
28. Importantly, this description of nodes contradicts the one given in the previous [C].
29. Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, 58.
30. This statement can be read as a conclusion to the description of listening to listening carried out in previous [B] paragraphs. The introduction of "dancing" will create a connection between the critique of listening to listening with the idea of echolocation that will arise in [C].
31. Although "fracaso iluminado" is not a concept related to a work by Vicuña, *Veroír el Fracaso Iluminado* is the title of a 2021 monograph that gathers over 100 of her poems and other written works.
32. Meillasoux (2008), 54.
33. This finitude is comparable to the universal value that listening is awarded for listening-to-listening practices. Breaking this finitude in sonic terms is what echolocation describes in next [C] paragraphs.
34. AM Kanngieser, AM Kanngieser Interview. In *Sound Arts Now*, ed. Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle (eds.) Sound Arts Now. Devon: Uniform Books, 2020), 30.
35. See previous [C].
36. Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London & New York: Continuum, 2005), 13.
37. Quentin Meillasoux *The Number and the Siren* (London: MIT Press, 2012).
38. Translation by the author.
39. See James Bridle, *New Dark Age* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2018).
40. This and all the f [A] paragraphs that follow provide a wider context of approaches that share similarities to *AME*'s echolocation and Meillasoux's critique of correlationism as ways of stepping outside the certitude of a finite ontology. A detailed analysis of the arguments these authors present is beyond the scope of this text.
41. Markus Gabriel, *El ser humano y los límites del transhumanismo* (Conferencia magistral presentada en el Segundo encuentro de Filosofía Intercultura. October 23–24, 2017. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. 2017). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGounbcvmFo&t=10s>.
42. Mark Evans Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
43. Rose Rosengard Subotnick *Deconstructive Variations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
44. Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
45. For more on this see Zoe Todd, "An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn: 'Ontology' is just another word for colonialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29 (2016): 4–22.

46. Fred Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112(4) (2013): 737–780.
47. This stance makes a link between [B] and [D].
48. Gregorio Fontaine, "The Menace of the Earthquake: Listening to the Chilean criollo." (Paper presented at Sonologia Conference, Sao Paulo, November 22–25, 2016).
49. Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987–2007* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011).
50. Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican Books, 2018).
51. The unclear logic of this node is intentional.
52. Eugenio Tisselli, *Sonido y Magia* (Presented at the radio show Islas Resonantes. March 17 in Mexico City, 2020). [https://www.radio.unam.mx/wp-content/uploads/loads/islas/islas\\_2020.html](https://www.radio.unam.mx/wp-content/uploads/loads/islas/islas_2020.html).

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## CHAPTER 12

# Dismantling Fear: Tatiana Gaviola and the French Chilean Video Art Festival<sup>1</sup>

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Sebastián Vidal Valenzuela

In the late 1970s in Chile, artists began to experiment with video in unprecedented ways, challenging the limits of traditional media such as drawing, painting, engraving, and even installation. During the 1980s, with many art spaces banned by the military dictatorship (1973–1990) and little support from national cultural institutions, an important group of video-art workers started questioning the authoritarian violence that was systematically exerted by the regime, pushing the limits of the moving image beyond commercial television. Both aspects—a critical approach to the political situation and a desire to challenge the aesthetics of commercial television—were difficult to achieve, as the dictatorship was not only blocking institutional art spaces but limiting access to technologies such as cameras and editing machines. At the same time, due to the “cultural blackout”<sup>2</sup> in Chile, artists didn’t have much access to written sources about international video art, which started flourishing in the international context in the 1960s and 1970s. Importantly, however, this two-fold isolation (political and aesthetic) was contested by the Franco-Chilean Video Art Festival, an important yet understudied event organized by the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Chile, which took place throughout twelve years.<sup>3</sup>

Inaugurated in 1981, the Franco-Chilean Video Art Festival (hereafter the Festival), considered the most important video initiative in Santiago, exhibited works by Chilean and French artists.<sup>4</sup> Many works exhibited there were previously shown in independent art spaces such as galleries Sur and Bucci. Others were made specifically for the Festival in both Chile and France. Initially, the Festival<sup>5</sup> showcased videos about theater, documentaries, and fiction-feature-films, as well as more traditional works. Promoting the autonomy of video art in relation to other audiovisual expressions, the Festival supported critical approaches to the political and social realms of the dictatorship, as well as explorations of the relationship between video and television, cinema, and documentary.<sup>6</sup> It also supported examinations of video and performance, art action, testimony, and poetry.

While video art from Chile is perhaps most widely known through the work of male artists living abroad, such as Juan Downey (Santiago, 1940–1993), who lived in New York, and Gonzalo Mezza (Santiago, 1949–), who lived in Barcelona, women artists experimenting with video such as Lotty Rosenfeld (Santiago, 1943–2020), Diamela Eltit (Santiago, 1949–), and Gloria Camiruaga (Chimbarongo 1940–Santiago 2006) are also well known in Chilean and Latin American contemporary art. They have also received museum attention: the work of Rosenfeld, Eltit, and Camiruaga, for instance, has been exhibited at important national and international museums, creating a well-known genealogy of Chilean video art under the dictatorship.<sup>7</sup> Like their male colleagues, these artists, including Magali Meneses (Santiago, 1950–), experimented with both fictional and documentary video, directly denouncing the atrocities of the regime. In fact, at the festival, the presence of women was decisive for its critical reception. However, there is still a considerable number of women artists whose works have not received the attention they deserve. One example is that of pioneering video artist Tatiana Gaviola (Santiago, 1956–), whose work, from the 1980s onward, has only been considered in relation to the field of filmmaking, leaving a void in the analysis of her experimental video practice.

This essay focuses on Gaviola's early video practice. It examines various discursive and metaphorical connections between her subject matters and the sociopolitical context in Chile, which was characterized by human rights abuses and violence against women. In addition, this text also analyzes Gaviola's work vis-à-vis the dissemination of video undertaken by the Festival, highlighting the significance of this event in Gaviola's work, specifically, and experimental art, in general.

As briefly mentioned above, the lack of interest in Gaviola's video may perhaps be due to her successful exploration of cinema: however, one can also attribute it to the larger and more problematic gendered and conservative society in which the Festival and Gaviola's early video practice developed. In effect, the programming of the event reveals an uneven number between men and women participating at the Festival. Cultural theorist Nelly Richard approached this problem of gender bias as early as 1986. In her essay "Contra El Pensamiento Teorema" (Against Theorem-Thought), which was included in the catalog of the Sixth Franco-Chilean Festival, Richard wrote:

Another field of questions that can be delimited to video art in Chile is related to the insertion of the "feminine" problem into the cultural field. Video art or experimental video is proportionally marked by a large and, in some cases, outstanding participation by women: Lotty Rosenfeld, Diamela Eltit, Magali Meneses, Soledad Fariña, Sybil Bintrup, Jimena Prieto, Tatiana Gaviola, Gloria Camiruaga, Sandra Quilaqueo, etc. The fact that video has made way into Chile in a relatively informal manner has perhaps facilitated its appropriation by women. In Fine Arts or Literature, history or tradition exert the weight of the strongly institutionalizing canonical discourse on women's practices, which are subjected to the "master" authority, or must follow the academic transfer of influences. Video technology offers, in contrast, an operational availability for new "margins" of experimentation, which is less codified than the previous

ones. In addition, the fact that video art is made in completely alternative circuits to both commercial distribution and networks of institutional order also influences the fact that it represents a looser space for proposals and deconstructions for women; a more autonomous space from which to also reverse competition marks, which connote technology as a domain of male superiority.<sup>8</sup>

The paradigm shift proposed by Richard can be understood as a new way of constructing historiography and art criticism. This shift acknowledges that the production of video art carried out by women during the dictatorship promoted not only a conceptual rebellion against authorities, but involved a radical analysis of art and its capacity for reflection.

As argued by Richard, the possibility of using video allowed women artists to explore a field that wasn't anchored in historical patriarchal patterns of traditional media, such as painting, sculpture, or engraving. In so doing, this nascent media created an opportunity to install a discourse beyond the legacy of canonized formulas. Likewise, it provided the space to challenge video's immediate precedent: television. Video art offered the possibility of creating an uncomfortable image, which was different to the restricted commercial discourse of television. In this sense, the work of these women artists operated within a twofold condition of production. On the one hand, it opened a new field for the visual arts, implicitly questioning tradition in Chile. On the other hand, it subverted the very commercial language of television, intervening in the logic of the regime's propaganda.

Nelly Richard also argues that video art provided a somewhat democratic access into art-making in Chile: this can be seen, first, in video's informal appearance, and as a medium that circulates outside traditional academic frameworks that were then controlled by the military. Finally, as stated above, works in this media could also be disseminated through alternative spaces across the city. However, these so-called democratic features did not necessarily highlight women video artists such as Gaviola. As an effect, there is a substantial lack of examination of their concrete contributions to the field in terms of data. In fact, in two versions of the Festival in Chile, in 1981 and 1992, the number of women participating in the event through individual or collective pieces barely exceeded the 13.5 percent of the total. This means that 76<sup>9</sup> out of the 561 works exhibited at the event in these instances were made by women. Likewise, in line with this gender gap, only two women, Magali Meneses and Claudia Aravena, have won the art residency exchange prize in France called "Diario de viaje" ("Travel journal"), which was launched at the festival fifth edition in 1985 and has, until now, operated in twelve occasions. In the French case, no women have been granted with the prize in the Festival's fourteen editions.

These data leads us to think that, although the Festival effectively managed to grant visibility to the work of women video artists, the exhibition of video artworks during that period was mostly associated to men, a condition linked to the gendered and masculine-centric society of the time. In addition, though many scholars have

acknowledged the role of women in the defense of human rights, they have not proven how they did so through video. In effect, if acknowledged at all, it has been through women filmmakers rather than video artists.<sup>10</sup> The problem of understanding experimental video art as cinema can be explained through the absence of a strong historiographical media discourse in the visual arts in Chile. The experimentation matrix of audiovisual works by Gaviola, Rosenfeld, and Camiruaga, for instance, includes the creation of documentary pieces, and, in the case of Gaviola, the building of a solid filmmaker career which eventually led her to win important international awards. And yet, as mentioned at the beginning, her video practice has been overseen, regardless of its historical, aesthetic, and political importance.

After graduating from the School of Communication Arts at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in 1980, Gaviola worked as a producer at the Imagen Drama Company.<sup>11</sup> She later worked as a video editor and then as video maker at Filmocentro Production Company, an audiovisual agency that played a key role in the emblematic anti-Pinochet “NO” campaign, in the 1988 plebiscite.<sup>12</sup> At Filmocentro, Gaviola edited videos by Lotty Rosenfeld, the Colectivo Acciones de Arte (CADA, Art Actions Collective),<sup>13</sup> Alfredo Jaar, Eugenio Dittborn, and Mario Fonseca, among others. She also participated at the 1983, 1984, and 1986 editions of the Festival, with her work consisting of both experimental videos and documentaries of the ICTUS Drama Company, as well as recordings of their plays.<sup>14</sup>

In 1984, at the fourth Franco-Chilean encounter, Gaviola presented a provocative piece titled *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada* (“I’m not afraid of anything”) (Fig. 12.1).<sup>15</sup> In this work, we hear a voice-over in several sequences, including shots of open and closed locations, as well as recycled video footage. We hear Gaviola describing her relationship to the dictatorship through storytelling, as well as her relationship to fear.<sup>16</sup> The work starts with a sequence that shows a closed window with the following text: “I’m not afraid of anything.” Before it finishes, we hear in the background the voice of a kid saying: “Daddy, I’m afraid of being with the moon.” According to Gaviola, this opening scene reproduces a recorded tape of her 3-year-old son talking to his father, who was then a prisoner of dictatorship. As Gaviola recalls:

It was my son’s fear, which was also my own. Those are the fears that I work with. My house was raided, they kicked in my door, through a whole night long. They took away everything, including my husband. I was very scared, because of the boldness, my job, what it means to work in this. But I was actually scared, panicked due to the dictatorship. It was very tough. I felt it in my skin, everywhere.<sup>17</sup>

The video continues with her reflection on the window of what seems to be a street shop. We can also see her face through the protective fencing. She then talks to the camera: “I’m not afraid of anything, neither the dogs, nor the gypsies.” Subsequently, we hear the sound of Hawker Hunter planes bombing the governmental palace



FIGURE 12.1 Tatiana Gaviola. *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada*, 1984. Video, color, 5:57 min.

of La Moneda on September 11, 1973. The artist's reflection keeps appearing; then, the framing of the scene changes. We now see the same window without bars while hearing the loud noise of a metallic blow, as well as someone's footsteps. Changing the picture frame again, we see the face of another woman, who is not Gaviola. She looks scared, and repeatedly says: "I'm not afraid of anything." We are now back at the beginning of the sequences. These images, according to Gaviola, are footage of interviews with a woman for the final cut of the documentary *Tantas vidas, una historia* (*So many lives, one story*), a work I will analyze below. Later in the video, Gaviola adds a series of shadows of people walking down the street, contrasting with the sunlight. The silhouettes, most likely Gaviola's, repeat on different planes while in the background we hear footsteps. Gaviola recalls:

The shadows represented myself, trampled, stomped on. There was the noise of a heavy elevator machine, which seemed industrial. That's why my face looks fragmented. There're bars, fragmentation, breaks [...] I wanted to work with my image and that fragmentation, and with the subjection of Others.<sup>18</sup>

That scene recalls of another video work by Gaviola from 1988, which is entitled *No me olvides* (*Don't forget me*). This piece plays on the activist dimension of video-making, as it consists of the recording of an action performed by Mujeres por la vida (Women for life), a group of women human rights activists. In the video, we watch dozens of women carrying black silhouettes in human scale, which are made out of cardboard and expanded polystyrene.<sup>19</sup> Each silhouette has the name of a missing person and the question: "Did you forget me? Yes— No—." It is important to note that the date of this performance anticipated the plebiscite, which happened on October 5, 1988, and ended with the victory of the option "No," overthrowing, through a democratic election, Pinochet's military regime. At the beginning of *No me olvides*, we see images of people walking through the emblematic Paseo Ahumada in downtown Santiago. We also see shop counters and storefronts. We hear the street sounds while a large number of women march together carrying the black silhouettes and placing fragments of them in different places across the city. While they march, we also observe a series of arguments taking place between these women and the national police or Carabineros, who, responding to the protest, stomp on the silhouettes and then destroy them with a water cannon. While this is happening, two women are arrested and thrown into the police van. While some women are being beaten and arrested, others continue their march and add fragments of the black silhouettes onto the city walls.

Formally, this action recalls *El Siluetazo* (*The Silhouette act*), a famous public intervention made in Buenos Aires in 1983 by Argentinian artists Rodolfo Aguereberry, Julio Flores, and Guillermo Kexel. Supported by social organizations like Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, *El Siluetazo*, just as *No me olvides*, was conceived as a collective action, the subject matter of which was the anonymous female/male body. Together, this act and collective body represent a symbol of justice. Unlike *No me olvides*, however, *El Siluetazo* included workshops of stencil and mural painting in public space, which led to the creation of silhouettes by a large and diverse group of people. In Chile, on the other hand, the organized women created the silhouettes they later used as props in private, alongside which they marched as a provocative gesture against power, and as a symbol of immateriality and murder. As in *El Siluetazo*, the subjects represented by the silhouette, that is, the proper names of victims, represented one and of all at the same time. Moreover, those carrying the silhouettes, that is, the memory portrayed in them, are precisely the women from Chile who experienced instances of struggles and loss. As Argentinian art historian José Emilio Burucúa writes,

The silhouettes, often empty and black, but also colored or transparent, sometimes with the names of the disappeared written on them, aim to represent the magnitude of state-led terror, and are based on the memory of the most



horrendous crime, which involved the personal and physical destruction of prisoners and the absence of their respective bodies, carried out by way of a clandestine apparatus, which was designed and devoted entirely for that purpose.<sup>20</sup>

*No me olvides* alternates shots of Gaviola's silhouette, being trampled by the passers-by taken from *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada* and her reflection on the window that, like in the initial sequence of her son's voice, refuses to give us a clear view of her face. This compositional effect breaks three minutes later, after which, in the foreground, it displays video footage of a male protester in the middle of a riot or march. We see a man taking a microphone and saying, loud and clear: "My name is Juan Díaz, I'm a citizen of Pudahuel, speak up you miserable! I'm not afraid of the CNI, I'm not afraid of any ..."<sup>21</sup> While this fragment is being repeated visually, the sound changes; the man's voice is replaced by the sound of planes, and the sequence shows the crowd at the protest where he is speaking raising their arms. Suddenly, on the image of the window's reflection, we hear Gaviola declaring:

Yo no le tengo miedo a nada, no le tengo miedo a los perros, ni a las gitanas, ni a ponerme vieja, loca y sola. Yo no le tengo miedo ni a los temblores, ni a los pacos, no le tengo miedo a que pateen mi puerta, que invadan mi casa, mis cosas, no le tengo miedo a que se me caigan los dientes, ni al CNI. Yo no le tengo miedo a los signos de locura y a que no me quieras, yo no le tengo miedo al dolor, yo, yo no me tengo miedo, tampoco (I'm not afraid of anything, I'm not afraid of dogs, Roma women, nor of growing old, crazy, and alone. I'm not afraid of earthquakes or the cops, I'm not afraid of my door being kicked, my house and belongings being invaded, I'm not afraid of losing my teeth, nor the CNI. I'm not afraid of madness and that you don't love me, I'm not afraid of pain, I, I'm not afraid, either).

By "I'm not afraid," the artist means that she is not afraid of the everyday, that is, the ways in which institutions and the military state were acting as agents of the violation of human rights. In this sense, she equates these everyday experiences with other random encounters on the street, as with stray dogs or Roma women. It is important to mention that, during the '80s, the number of stray dogs was considerable in Chile. This provoked some fear due to packs of aggressive dogs. On the other hand, at that same time, it was common to see Roma women on the street approaching passers-by to read their palms. This situation was mainly seen with apprehensiveness by the people. Finally, "pacos" (cops), is a pejorative denomination for policemen in Chile, or CNI, the dictatorship's infamous intelligence service.

Gaviola alludes to the biographical aspect of the violence she experienced with her family, connecting it to feelings such as madness, love, and pain. The words Gaviola uses are identical to the anonymous, collective popular woman as well as the activist and protester Juan Díaz; however, she pronounces them with a different tone and in a different context. The artist speaks slowly and calmly, for example, contrasting with Díaz's agitation. Reinforcing this sense of calm, on the windows or vitrines, we see her face being illuminated peacefully by

the sunlight. In so doing, this image creates an emotional effect, suggesting tranquility as well as empowerment and control.

The passivity and self-confidence that we perceive in Gaviola's story is altered by the final sequence of the video. Suddenly appearing in a vacant lot shouting in a long and anguished way, the artist abandons her peaceful and temperate attitude. This contrast presents a dual effect: at the same time we watch a passive narration of the encounter, we witness the anger and anguish she is experiencing. Later, she violently closes the window and we are taken back to the beginning of the video, where we read her name, the year in which the work was made, and acknowledgments to artists such as Lotty Rosenfeld. Gaviola remembers her collaboration with Rosenfeld as follows:

Originally, I asked Lotty to do something around fear, the situation, the panic. To work with the dictatorship, but also with the personal fear of daring to make this (video) ... I recall this work with much love and strength, a great encouragement. I managed a team (camera man, sound engineer), and Lotty was with me, went to this abandoned site and with pieces of material (left from other works), I was able to make something. That work left a mark.<sup>22</sup>

It is striking to note that this work wasn't censored at the Festival by the Film Qualification Council.<sup>23</sup> Gaviola had previously been censored with works such as *Tiempo para un líder* (Time for a Leader), a documentary about former president Eduardo Frei Montalva, which she made along ICTUS/Filmocentro, and for which she was forced to testify in front of a commission.<sup>24</sup> As she recalls:

It was early 1983; I went with Patricia Verdugo, and the ICTUS people, and was pregnant. We appealed, made some speeches. Inside the room were [Santiago] Sinclair [General Secretary of the Presidency of Augusto Pinochet Regime], [Mónica] Madariaga [Justice Minister, 1977–1983], [José María] Eyzaguirre [member of the Constitutional Court and former president of the Supreme Court of Justice]. It was unusual, because it wasn't a film jury; it was a very fierce court. With DINA characters behind. In that appeal, I think they realized that there was no point in forbidding things that would not have massive distribution.<sup>25</sup>

This work on the visibility of human rights motivated Gaviola to produce another video and present it at the sixth version of the Festival. Titled *Yo me comprometo* (*I commit myself*), the work records an act of commemoration carried out in memory of the photographer, university student, and MAPU activist, Juan Maino Canales.<sup>26</sup> In 1976, at the age of 27, Maino was arrested by the National Intelligence Direction (DINA)<sup>27</sup> alongside fellow MAPU leaders Elizabeth Rekas Urrea and Antonio Elizondo Ormaechea. The commemoration documented and included in this video shows relatives and friends of the victim holding a vigil in Maino's honor. Characterized by its testimonial tone, the work exposes part of a Memorial Day organized by the Juan Maino Committee. With

tears, applause, songs, and speeches, the attendees commented on aspects of the young photographer's life. Both in the beginning and at the end, a female voice-over states the following:

I commit ... to tell this and other stories. To collaborate with the committee in every possible way. I promise to be aware of what is happening and pass it on to those around me. Not to be an indirect participant in all these events, not to shut up, not to grant through silence. To say, "Enough." To control and work on my fear. ...

It should be noted that, at the end of this piece, just like *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada*, there is a reflection on the concept of fear. These two pieces denote, in first person, the artist's persistence for fighting the fear of repression that she experienced in those years. As Gaviola recalls: "That work was so important to me because it linked me to Juan Maino, and that group of young university students. And I started working on a film called *Ángeles* (*Angels*), based on the story of Juan Maino. I made that film, which is a tribute to those students."<sup>28</sup>

Another work, the medium-length film *Ángeles* (1988), which stars actors Santiago Ramírez and Adriana Vaccarezza, portrays the life of a young photographer named Juan Segovia, his partner Ángela, and a group of university students a few days before the coup. The coup resulted in the detention and torture of these students, one by one. In one particular scene, a shot shows Juan hidden and looking through a shuttered window, which he then closes. The scene is followed by a sequence of shadows of people bursting into a room in which were scattered objects—the result of a fight. The next scene shows a group of people loading someone into a vehicle, which can be interpreted as a direct allusion to Juan's arrest. Later, in a distressing scene, Miguel, one of Juan's companions, played by the Chilean actor Alejandro Goic, runs away from a man who is chasing him on a motorcycle, into an open field. Miguel is pushed and surrounded by other bikers until they finally stop him. The film concludes with the scene of Juan's sister inviting Ángela to participate in a university tribute act in honor of Juan.

In *Ángeles*, we can also identify several elements that are present in Gaviola's previous audiovisual works. For example, the play of shadows and the reflection of gazes portrayed through windows in *Yo no le tengo miedo* are recreated in order to emphasize Juan's arrest. Furthermore, *I am not afraid* was strongly motivated by the artist's own experience; her house being raided and the arrest of her partner. It is thus possible to consider that the violence she experienced, which motivated her to create that video, also holds a narrative meaning associated to Maino. Likewise, the final desperate cry in the vacant lot is invoked by the persecution suffered by Miguel. The image of the open space, on the other hand, holds a connection to another video made a year earlier and titled *La gallinita ciega* (The blind hen).

Made in 1987, *La gallinita ciega* touches upon several recurrent themes of Gaviola's production throughout the 1980s, including fear, persecution, and torture. It also includes a critical reading of a theme not previously

addressed in such a direct manner—gender violence. Its title alludes to a popular children’s game in Chile, in which a blindfolded participant (the blind hen) tries to reach for other players. Through their voices, participants that do not wear the bandage try to guide or, rather, mislead the blindfolded player. In some versions, participants can even touch the touch the “blind hen” to further contribute to their disorientation and the process of looking for others.

The opening sequence of the video shows Chilean actress Gloria Lazo blindfolded and in a state of panic. She is terrified by a group of men that are screaming at her, and whom both she and we, the viewers, are unable to see. They violently insult and humiliate her on a rocky wasteland. The scene begins with a general panorama of an outdoor, natural environment, in the background of which the dogs howl and bark. Quickly, we hear male voices insulting Lazo with strong words and an overall sense of rudeness. She is constantly stumbling, expressing despair. Among the shouts and insults, we hear: “stand up, bitch, walk, the dogs follow you, run, they’re fucking dogs and they’re going to eat you, stand up, you fucking bitch, we’re going to give your shit to the dogs, we’re going to kill you, we’re going to fuck you up...” As this happens, Lazo falls onto the ground again and rolls over. She then begins to cry and express pain. The noise then stops, and we see Lazo without her bandage: her face makes it seem as though she is sad and lost. She then walks disoriented throughout the place. We hear more insults in the background: along with hysterical laughing, anonymous voices direct sarcastic comments at her. We hear: “that cunt is a bitch, we’re going to burst your uterus, don’t play dumb, silly bitch, make girl decisions, go and better take care of your son, crazy shit, you’re going to end up old, crazy and alone, that’s what you wanted.” After that sequence, after the male voices are silenced, we are able to hear the sound of a running river, while Lazo, still on the floor, continues to roll around with a lost gaze. She then stands up and walks half-naked. In the final sentence we hear the voice of a woman saying: “She now leaves the place, which is filled with steel gazes.”

Without a doubt, *La gallinita ciega* is Gaviola’s most explicit video work of that period. It shows the feelings of fear and effects of violence that the artist experienced. As I previously mentioned, in other works, the artist presents a series of codes, such as fear, Roma women, dogs, and the CNI, which are to be taken as metaphors of the violence of the regime. This is also the case with *La gallinita ciega*. For instance, the reference to dogs in *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada* is reiterated in *La gallinita ciega* through the sounds of barking and chasing, exposing anguish and despair perception through the act of hunting. Art historian José Emilio Burucúa argues that hunting has been used by humankind to express absolute states of massacres and genocides. As he explains:

Already in Classical Antiquity, hunting metaphors have been used to refer to slaughter, since they described what happened with hunting scenes, which implied the possibility of animalizing the victims. However, using that simile had as a consequence, more than once, of transferring animal ferocity to perpetrators, then described, for example, as “hunting dogs.”<sup>29</sup>

Exposing this notion of animality in children's games is a rather complex issue. Symbolically converting a bandaged person into a chicken regards the ambivalent path that these animals develop. An animal that is mainly domesticated for food consumption must be chased in order to be captured and slaughtered. Even though this hunting act is presented literally on the catch—at the hands of dictatorship agents or Miguel in *Ángeles*, for instance—*La gallinita ciega* shows not only a woman's desperate movements and gestures while nobody is hunting her in a literal way, yet she is being yelled at and insulted by a group of men. The video ensemble presents men as though they were “hunting dogs,” and they paradoxically call—insult—her by using the category “bitch.” On the other hand, not only is Lazo unable to see the siege, for she is blindfolded, but so are we, the spectators, who never see those men. In this way, the spectator becomes a witness to a violent act of torture, despite the fact that there is no literal image of physical torture or blow. Violence is thus manifested through the male screams.

As described above, these cries are turned into insulting commentaries when Lazo appears in the scene with no bandage. This invites us to think that Gaviola's *La gallinita ciega* alludes to another level of violence as well: the victim is released from her temporary blindness, showing the consequences and shock experienced in the first part of the torture process. Despite the fact that the woman is able to see, her gaze remains lost, unable to react to the fact that she was not physically chased by anyone. However, male voices sarcastically repeat phrases related to female sexuality, which are linked to maternal roles. Again this recalls three concepts that are present in *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada*: aging, madness, and solitude. As she said at the Festival: “I'm not afraid [...] either [of] getting old, crazy, and alone.” In *La gallinita ciega*, the sentence “you're going to end up old, crazy and alone” works as a mechanism of post-traumatic violence, a common formula of patriarchal oppression, the aim of which is to reduce the victim's ability to see reality and to prevent the victim's denunciation before the law. The concepts of aging, madness, and solitude commonly operate from a macho conception that disparagingly refers to women. They also operate as a method of oppression that works as a code of gender violence, representing the simulation act of torture during the brutality of the dictatorship. This reveals the relationship between state violence and violence against women. Finally, in Gaviola's work, Lazo's face is shown looking straight ahead and escaping from the steel gazes. Although there is not a physical precinct, *La gallinita ciega* suggests that prison is a permanent place conceived from the violence and trauma of the regime and exercised, indeed, not only under dictatorship. Chile's heteronormative society beats and punishes woman, turning it into a permanent place of imprisonment.<sup>30</sup>

*La gallinita ciega* closes a cycle that Gaviola begun with her little-known early video work in the 1980s, which refers to and expresses her willingness to face fear. Gaviola was exposed to fear through her personal experience with the dictatorship, witnessing the torture and killing of family members and loved ones. This personal experience motivated her to develop a complex video production, creating a political and aesthetic tool to denounce

human rights and gender violations, and the way in which they go hand-in-hand. In so doing, she faced her own fears, elaborating in turn on the collective body of trauma that exceeds the moment of torture and is an ongoing prison designed by the heteronormative locus of Chilean society. Today, with the support of the new feminist administration in Chile as well as recent political and human rights events associated to the October 2019 social uprising, her work seems more urgent than ever, as it exemplarily elaborates on the relationship between human rights and feminist practices in Chile in the dark decades of the dictatorship.

## Notes

1. This article has been produced as part of the FONDECYT project No. 11191061 “French-Chilean/Latin American Video Art Festivals.” I thank Tatiana Gaviola for contributing with an interview, as well as Javiera Bagnara and Gonzalo Ramírez, who have worked hard on the project. Likewise, to my FONDECYT thesis student Daniela Ávila who initially contributed to this article.

2. This can be exemplified by a press release made by the Chilean magazine *Revista Análisis* on November 16, 1985 in which the following is stated: “Thanks to the sponsorship of the French Embassy, it has been possible to make contact in the last four years with the work that the French artists Robert Cahen, Jean Paul Fargier, Patrick Prado, or Michael Jaffrennou, among others, have created in this expressive medium. This panorama is complemented by the work done by Chilean artists based in other latitudes (Juan Downey, Mariano Maturana, Gonzalo Justiniano) and the creations of artists established in the country (Eugenio Dittborn, Roberto Farriol, Tatiana Gaviola, Magaly Meneses, Juan Enrique Forch, to name just a few). However, the works developed by the North Americans Bill Viola, Robert Wilson, and Gary Hill are unknown, even more so the complete work of those who are considered the pioneers of videoism: Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostel, and Aldo Tambellini. Marco Antonio Moreno, “Video art: critical alternative and reflection,” *Revista Análisis*, November 26–December 3, 1985, 31.

3. As I have written elsewhere, the Franco-Chilean Video Art Festival had a program of just over a week where videos by French and Chilean artists were exhibited, as well as talks and conferences that gave an account of the latest reflections on video art and experimental audiovisualism, also giving rise to political reflections based on visuality and artistic media.

4. Along with the return to democracy in 1990, the Festival undergoes significant changes and broadens its horizons, and in 1992, in its twelfth version, it changes its name to the Franco-Latin American Festival (FFLV), with main stage in Colombia, Argentina, and Uruguay, finding new instances of dialogue between video artists in the democratic times of the continent.

5. In its first versions, it was called the Franco-Chilean Video Art Encounter, and after the fifth version in 1985, it was finally called the Franco-Chilean Festival.

6. During those years, television played a fundamental role for the civic-military dictatorship, since the regime concentrated important efforts to intervene the information and programming, in order to display strong regime propaganda.

7. Some of the pieces that stand out are those of Lotty Rosenfeld at the Andalusian Center for Contemporary Art CAAC, Spain, 2013; *Poetics of dissidence*, at the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985* at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California; Brooklyn Museum, New York and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017–2018, where Lotty Rosenfeld, Diamela Eltit, and Gloria Camiruaga participated.

8. Nelly Richard, “Contra el pensamiento teorema” (Against Theorem-Thought), in *6th Franco-Chilean Festival Catalog* (Santiago: Cultural service of the Embassy of France / French-Chilean Institute of Culture), 19.

9. This number corresponds to the individual and/or collective works by women’s teams that participated in the first twelve versions of the Festival. I have not included here twenty-two mixed teams (of women and men). Information provided by the Festival catalogs and programs.

10. For more on this see Gonzalo Barosso Peña, *Pinochet dictatorship through documentaries 1973–2014*, (Madrid: UNED, 2018).



11. Teatro Imagen Company was founded in 1974, under direction of Chilean playwright Gustavo Meza, among actors Tennyson Ferrada and Jael Ünger. The company, still working, is well-known also as an important actors' training school in Chile.

12. The NO campaign was the political propaganda made by the opposition in occasion of Pinochet's referendum to decide his government continuity, in 1988. This campaign reunited several important politicians, artists, and filmmakers.

13. CADA collective (1979–1984) was made up of artists Juan Castillo, Lotty Rosenfeld, poet Raúl Zurita, writer Diamela Eltit, and sociologist Fernando Balcells.

14. ICTUS Drama Company, founded in 1955 in Santiago, is currently the oldest independent company in Chile. The Festival exhibited ICTUS videos, related to their plays, as *Toda una vida* (*A lifetime*, 1980) directed by Luciano Tarifeño, based on the play *Lindo país esquina con vista al mar* (*Nice country with sea view*), or *Música y palabras* (*Music and words*, 1978) by Claudio Di Girólamo, or *Historia de un roble solo* (*Story of a lonely Oak*, 1982) by Silvio Caiozzi, among others.

15. *Yo no le tengo miedo a nada* was shown also at the San Sebastián Film Festival, in 1987.

16. Previously, Gaviola made documentary videos, such as *Nguillatún* (1981), *Tiempo para un líder* (*Time for a leader*, 1982) and *Tantas vidas, una historia* (*So many lives, one story*, 1983). The last one, to which I will return later, is about recordings of a women's camp near Ochagavía, in the commune of Pedro Aguirre Cerda.

17. Translations are all by the author, unless otherwise noted. These translations come from an interview I conducted in Spanish with Gaviola as part of the FONDECYT Project No. 11191061.

18. Gaviola, interview with author.

19. *Mujeres por la vida* was a movement against Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship that emerged in 1983. Made up by Mónica Echeverría, Mónica González, María Olivia Monckeberg, Patricia Verdugo, Marcela Otero, Estela Ortiz, Lotty Rosenfeld, Fanny Pollarolo, and Kena Lorenzini, they used to carry out peaceful protest actions in the streets of Chile.

20. José Emilio Burucúa and Nicolás Kwiatkowski, *How These Things Happened: Reenacting Massacres and Genocides* (Buenos Aires: Katz publishing, 2014), 184.

21. Pudahuel is a popular mid/low-income district in Santiago and The National Intelligence Center, or CNI, was the military dictatorship organism responsible for the tracing, capture, torture, and disappearance of the Pinochet regime opponents. Operating from 1977 to 1990.

22. Gaviola interview.

23. During dictatorship, this institution, made up by civilians, judges, and the military, had the power to censor audiovisual content for public display. Although it currently exists and continues to operate under the protection of the law, the Council was modified in relation to its powers under democracy and currently depends exclusively on the Education Ministry.

24. During the dictatorship, former president Eduardo Frei Montalva was the main opposition leader. He died in 1981 after a complicated medical procedure, which led to the suspicion that his death had been a murder perpetrated by the military. In 2017, after several investigations carried out by the family, a trial determined that Frei Montalva had indeed been killed with sarin gas in the clinic where he was hospitalized, six of those involved being sentenced; however, in 2021 this was revoked by the Chilean justice system, dismissing the evidence and releasing all the previously guilty suspects.

25. Gaviola, interview.

26. MAPU, Unitary Popular Action Movement, was a social Christian left movement founded in 1969. After supporting Allende, during the dictatorship the movement went underground, its members being traced and exiled. Back in democracy, several members moved to the Socialist party, while others founded the PPD, Party for Democracy; both actively participate in political activity in Chile. MAPU was definitely dissolved in 1994.

27. DINA (National Intelligence Direction) was an organ created by the military dictatorship in 1974, responsible the persecution, detention, torture, and murder of its opponents. Dissolved in 1977 and replaced by CNI (National Intelligence Center).

28. Gaviola, interview.

29. Burucúa and Kwiatkowski, *How These Things Happened*, 47. Translation by author.

30. In Chile a precinct, besides meaning a specific space, is commonly linked to spaces of detention and seclusion.

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## CHAPTER 13

# Dialogue on Hearing: A Conversation Between Cecilia Vicuña and José Pérez de Arce, with an Introduction by Carolina Castro Jorquera

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The Earth is listening

Cecilia Vicuña

**Carolina Castro Jorquera:** Over the years, as cultural transformations in the Andean world have taken place, many human and non-human sounds have disappeared, completely changing their former soundscapes. Imagine the wide-spread acoustic richness of ancient Andean cultures from the different instruments found throughout the territory, images of musicians and dancers, and, to some extent, the cultural expressions that remain in practice today.

While museums make crucial conservation efforts for some artifacts, many of the instruments kept there have never been played again. Their ecological, spiritual, and ritual functions have been put on hold while they fill display cases and integrate neocolonial and anachronistic narratives. Museums were created to show objects, not sounds. Local inhabitants everywhere have always understood that the sounds they create synthesize with the sounds of nature to form an acoustic ecology. Since then, they have known that the Earth listens.

By recalling various collaborations and shared stories, artist, poet, and filmmaker Cecilia Vicuña and musicologist and museographer José Pérez de Arce reveal in this conversation their transformative experiences with the sounds of Chile. Reliving those sounds that no longer exist, as well as those ancestral sounds that resisted colonial influence, this reunion also invites non-human beings to share their acoustic knowledge. Listening to them is a way of perpetuating the knowledge of Andean cultures, which may provide key answers to confronting current ecological and social crises. This conversation is an invitation to a dialogue on hearing and noticing what surrounds us. In fact, such notice may be a powerful form of reciprocity with the Earth and all the beings and entities that coexist here.

**José Pérez de Arce:** Sound is a gigantic universe that always exists.

**Cecilia Vicuña:** Every time someone talks to me about sound, I immediately think of you, José.

**JPA:** Come on, I'm not that loud! (Laughs).

**CV:** I'd like to talk about my experience at an exhibit that José put together in 1996, when he was working with Claudio Mercado at the Pre-Colombian Art Museum in Santiago. The show was called *Música en la piedra* (Music in Stone).<sup>1</sup> I went into the museum thinking that I was going to see an exhibit, any kind of exhibit. I remember that I entered and suddenly my body was transported to another universe—just like zap! In the flash of a second. That's the power of the work you guys had done. You had assembled all kinds of sounds, some from everyday life and others from instruments that no one thinks are instruments in Chilean reality. And so, after taking several steps into that dark room, my consciousness was transformed.

There were all kinds of acoustic objects: musical instruments, a warped string, a small can hanging from a wire—implausible things. So, both the visual effect of these objects and the object itself and the ambient sound took me into the true universe of the sounds of Chile. It wasn't that I had never been in that sound before; I've always been there, but I didn't know it beforehand. I hadn't been vividly and unforgettably aware that this total ensemble of Chilean sound is an impossible sound to disrupt, whatever happens. That's something that changed me.

**JPA:** We created the museology of that exhibit hoping that people would have an immersive experience, but the responses that we began to receive from people, like what you mentioned, Cecilia, were very different. People said things like, "I spent an hour in the exhibit with my eyes closed." And closing your eyes in an exhibit is really strange, right? So, this experience leads us to ask, what is the acoustic identity that we are looking for?

I remember the first couple of times I traveled abroad, I loved sitting in restaurants and realizing that the acoustic identity of each place is completely different—the virtue of listening to a hushed sound, for, as Chileans, we are a bit more reserved. On the other hand, people from other countries have other ways of sounding, like Colombians, for example, who tend to speak louder. And that different way of sounding has a lot to do with musical instruments; the form of instruments, their materiality, and all the acoustic aesthetics are all intertwined. It's not only the way in which an instrument sounds, but the acoustic ecosystem to which the instrument belongs, and that ecosystem changes from one place to another. And what you say, Cecilia, is really beautiful, because it means that through that exhibit, we managed to create a kind of window into a particular ecosystem. I was interested in showing that sound has its own expression; sound has that beautiful ability to take us back, to tie us to a very complete ecosystem.

All sound can be heard as music. In China, I could spend hours listening to my Chinese friends without knowing their language, sometimes understanding, other times not. Because when we talk we use gestures, but the sound is musical. And I'd love to be able to play that instrument of the human voice, which is infinite, of which we only use 1 percent, but has a million possibilities.

**CV:** One of the effects that the exhibit had on me was to open up to the possibility of what you, along with Claudio, call the "acoustic aesthetic." This happens when we become aware that this kind of thing is really a threshold or portal through which we can pass. During my lifetime, I've passed through that threshold several times, in intense and clearly recognizable ways, and each time it has changed my perspective of reality.

The first time was when I was 14 or 15 years old, at my aunt Lola's (Aurora Vicuña) house. Out of the blue, someone began playing a recording of Violeta Parra's "El Gavilán." Even though Violeta was a friend of the family and everyone knew her, I remember crossing the threshold into that room and being hit by a shriek, that world-shredding cry—Violeta's savage scream. That left a profound impression on me—I understood that this was the true sound of Chile. However, even though I understood that, it wasn't until I entered the gallery of the "Music in Stone" [at the Pre-Columbian Art Museum] that Violeta's music came back to me. Her singing had turned into a total ensemble that included frogs, grass hoppers, bugs, birds, dogs, children, streets, buses, everything. It was like an amplification of that all-encompassing reality.

Since then, I began to realize that I had a highly acute sense of sound and voice; that I could perceive many things and understand each person I came across, whether through their tone or range of speech. I realized that in my performances I was working with that tonality in an absolutely specific way, as if I had always been, since my first breath, aware of this. However, and even today, I do this without knowing how I do it, but I know that it is necessary, like an act of love, for the love of making and hearing sound. Because making and hearing sound go together: they are like a couple.

**JPA:** In your performances, Cecilia, you use your voice in an absolutely unprecedented, groundbreaking way, and you do it so well. You begin using your voice, and the audience is automatically taken to another plane. It's the opposite of when a person begins to read in public, sustaining a monotone, dehumanized voice. Not only do you transform your voice into a performance tool, but you also disorient people, and after disorienting everyone, you have the power to act. And without screaming, you dictate everything with a small string. That's so Chilean: we speak in the diminutive, everything is small.

**CV:** In England, my first performances weren't performances at all. They were rather talks with labor unions which had taken up solidarity with Chile.<sup>2</sup> It was a completely unknown context for me. I was young, dressed like a hippie, and had long hair. I would go visit these enormous men and talk to them about the Chilean class struggle. And I discovered that I couldn't talk to them about the class struggle in just any way, because no one listened to me, it wasn't believable. But if I mixed that with my own suffering, with my own stories, not only did they become interested in what I was saying, but it created an emotional atmosphere and we all ended up hugging each other. So, I discovered that this opening up, like you say, José, is an opening up toward the inside, toward my own pain. That's something that any human can do, because no one escapes terrible forms of pain. But that's the past, and you can't talk about it. We've been taught that if we show our feelings it's like walking around naked. It was then that I began to grasp that my performances had a special meaning.

**JPA:** In another one of our exhibits, entitled *Son-ido*, we explored the idea of disappearing sounds (Fig. 13.1). There were archaeological instruments and four-eyed frogs (*Pleurodema thaul*), an animal that is also disappearing.<sup>3</sup> This acoustic ecosystem, this landscape, was as common as air. We don't talk about air because it's just there, but when it's not we

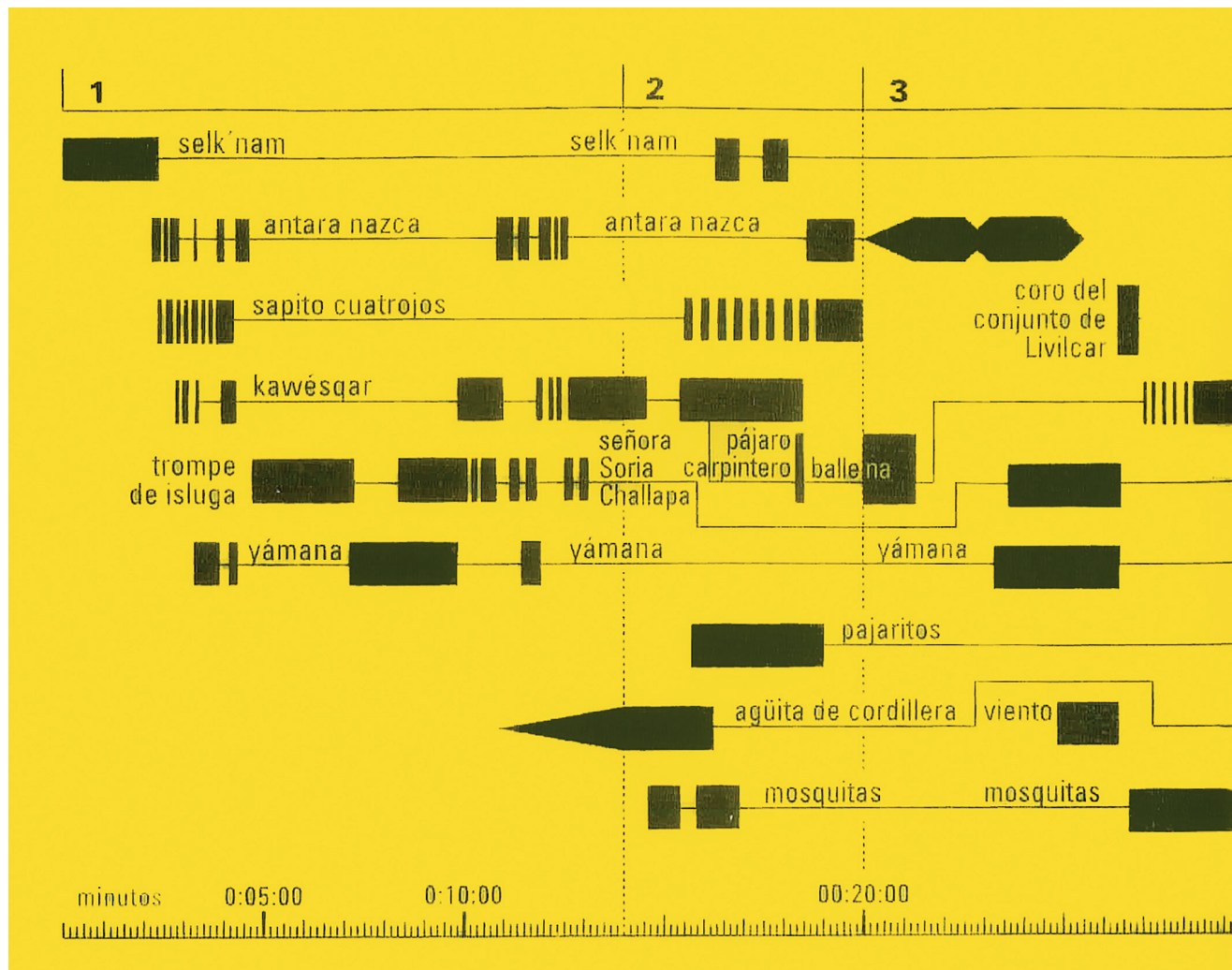


FIGURE 13.1 José Pérez de Arce. *SON-IDO* (CD edition sheet). 2002. Chimuchina Records, Feria del Disco.

miss it, we suffocate. The same thing happens with sound: one day, the sound of the four-eyed frog started to disappear, and people started to notice its absence. So, in this exhibit each speaker played one endangered voice or sound (like the *trompe* of the Chilean Altiplano), a frog, etc.<sup>4</sup> The first installation was in the central hall of the National Museum of Fine Arts, which has a terrific resonance with its enormous dome. However, when doing the sound tests, I realized that the four-eyed frog, which goes like *gri, gri, gri!* almost without breathing, overpowered all the other sounds, and I had to lower the volume of that sound so all the others could be heard. It was then that I began understanding that these



acoustic intensities are really special; like your voice, Cecilia, the four-eyed frog makes a soft, faint sound, but with a penetration that you can hear everywhere.<sup>5</sup> That was the lesson I learned from this exhibit, which has left a mark on me to this day, and it has to do with how sounds are used in our country.

The sound of the *chino* dances, for example, that comes from afar and resembles birds, has an enormous penetration.<sup>6</sup> Often times when I recorded these sounds, I would distance myself, leave the town, go to a nearby hill in order to perceive how the sound mixed with the valley. To my surprise, the sound of *chinos* playing the flute is a very ecological sound. You don't perceive it as a human sound—it is not a transgressive sound, like a machine, for example, that bursts with artificial clarity. The sound of the *chino* dances is mixed with and melts into the wind, into the noise of water, it travels far and penetrates places outside the festivities. In all these places this sound is performing a task, and that is really beautiful.

**CV:** When we met, you and Claudio started talking to me about the *chino* dances, and you invited me to hear them at Pachacamita in the Aconcagua Valley. I'm positive I had already heard them, but being three kilometers away, we began to hear that strong piffff! paffff! I thought-felt<sup>7</sup> that it was the throbbing heart of the entire Aconcagua Valley, because just like you, José, what you're describing, the whole valley acted like the resonance box of that sound. It wasn't possible to really know where the sound came from, but I could hear those two sounds of the flute like the heart—pum, pum! Three kilometers away, I began feeling that state of trance in which the body disappears and turns into part of the vibration. That's when I understood this was a healing process for the whole valley.

**JPA:** Different kinds of musical organizations attend the festivities held in the countryside of Iquique, from heavy sounding orchestras with trumpets, trombones, huge industrial bass drums, really strong sounds, to orchestras with traditional instruments like *sikus*, which are pan flutes, or *pinkillos*, which are like *quenas*, a typical Andean flute. When the festivities begin, the orchestras come from other places and start playing as soon as they leave their villages and play along the road as they travel to the main square. One might think that these heavy instruments like the bass drum would have a larger on-site resonance, but that doesn't happen. On the contrary, instruments like the *siku*, which are lighter, thinner, can be heard much louder, and in a way, makes it seem like the hills are responding. So, there's something in this sound that makes such a penetration, like you say, Cecilia, a healing penetration of sound for the valley. It's meant for the valley, not for human listeners, but rather for the hills, small animals, and grasses to hear. And this sound's presence goes against the logic of strong or important sounds—we tend to think that they can reach anywhere, and that some sounds will be lost. The wisdom that I liken to ecology collapses that whole idea. Those sounds have emerged along with animals, with the rivers, with the wind, and they've known how to generate this conversation. Sound is conversation. Speaking and hearing are one and the same, as you say, Cecilia. The sounds and responses of the environment, when generated by tradition, are all the same thing. They cannot be separated.

**CV:** I put together a homage for you both (Claudio and José). I wrote a text called "Hear and Pray" and presented it at a poetry conference at the Universidad de Chile, and, as always, no one came, no one cared about it. That must have been in the '90s.

When I stepped into the Pre-Columbian Museum's *Son-ido* exhibit, whose name means sound that has gone, and I heard the sound of the four-eyed frogs (ribbit, ribbit, ribbit), I realized I had heard them since I was a baby. I was raised by that sound: in La Florida, where I was born, you could hear frogs all the time. A wide irrigation canal ran just a couple of meters outside my bedroom window, and a lot of frogs lived there. They sang every night. And when I hear you speak, I realize that that baby grew up and learned to speak with that sound. That master sound that exists in creatures is the master sound of this planet and of any instrument we have created. That's why *Son-ido*, which was really an exhibit about extinction, spoke to us about our ability to hear. That is the aesthetic of "the precarious": it's about feeling fragility, the delicate strength of every living thing, because everything disappears, everything needs to disappear in order to exist again in another form. Although now with extinction, which is the issue of our time, there is a form of death and disappearance that doesn't recreate anything, because we don't know what will emerge from the tremendous, massive extinction we are provoking (Fig. 13.2). Each being, each creature that disappears, disappears toward a new reality that we are unaware of. This meditation on sound is a meditation on hearing.



FIGURE 13.2 Cecilia Vicuña. *Semiya / Seed Songs*. 2015. Video Still. Colchagua.

**JPA:** There's something really important in the *chino* dances, which is the resistance of sound. If you hear a *chino* dance today you can tell it's a pre-Hispanic sound, something you can also learn about because there are studies on it. But in very few parts of the world you can say there is a culturally constructed sound that has not been externally modified during five hundred years of colonialism. However, in the case of the *chino* dances, you *can* actually say that because they are so unique and different. There is no likelihood that they have been influenced by Spanish or African music. That doesn't mean they sound the same as they did five hundred years ago. We can't know that, but we can say that the change they have undergone is unique and it lacks external influences present after the process of colonization. This is an extraordinary case. I don't know of any other cases like this in the world, although there probably are others. So, the *chino* dances are what is called a cultural resistance through sound, which also happens in a totally autonomous way. Here, in the Central Valley of Chile, people who go to see the *chino* dances think: "This is a Catholic tradition" because they see the Virgin or Saint Paul. Others think it's a Chilean tradition, because the Chilean flag is present. Others think it's an expression from the Bible, because they sing verses to God. Everyone can have their own version of this festival, which incorporates a lot of cultural mixing, but the harmony of the sound remains intact. This has a force, like the four-eyed frog, which is not the only force penetrating the landscape. As the Aymaras say, "the sound of the festivals soaks the place." This is a sound that soaks through time and remains for centuries. It's a soaking that isn't wet, that is soft and strong. That is one of the jewels we have from this part of the planet, which can teach us incredibly beautiful things. I think, Cecilia, that your poetry is soaked with this.

## Notes

1. *Música en la piedra: música prehispánica y sus ecos en Chile actual* (Music in Stone: Pre-Hispanic Music and Its Echoes in Contemporary Chile) was designed by José Pérez de Arce and held at the Pre-Colombian Art Museum from November 1995 to June 1996. For more information, see: <http://precolombino.cl/en/biblioteca/musica-en-la-piedra/>
2. These talks, held in London pubs from 1973 to 1974, were organized by the Chile Solidarity Campaign in England.
3. Play on words with *sonido* (sound) and *ido* (something that is gone).
4. A *trompe* is a jaw harp.
5. The use of "penetrate" in this context is important because, in *chino* dances, splitting sounds "penetrate," soak, and, in a way, inseminate the Earth, awakening its fertility.
6. The so-called *Bailes chinos*, literally Chinese Dances, are not from China; rather the word "Chino" is a Quechua neologism that means "servant,"—in this case, to the Virgin Mary or a saint. These dances exist throughout Central Chile and the Near North region of the country and their sounds date back some 2,500 years, to a pre-Hispanic past. There is evidence that these dances had ritual importance and today they are connected to spiritual aspects of the different peoples who have inherited them.
7. Neologism coined by Cecilia Vicuña in her performances and used in *Palabrarmas* (1984). However, there is no exact date for when she first created the term.



## CHAPTER 14

# Impulse to Capture: A Spoken Portrait\*

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Matías Celedón

\* This essay forms part of *Autor Material* (Material Author), an artistic-literary project published by Banda Propia in 2023 and based on the recordings that retired major Carlos Herrera Jiménez made for Santiago's Central Library of the Blind. The title is a play on words with Author and Perpetrator. Using quotations from the audiobooks read in his voice, I wrote an acoustic narrative that echoes his criminal record as an Army intelligence agent during the military-civic dictatorship in Chile.

Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for  
thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that.  
Thank God that's all done with anyway. (Pause.)

*Krapp's Last Tape*, Samuel Beckett

There is no silence for the living

R. Murray Schafer

The first time I heard his voice was in 2013. It was included in an online article by Pablo Basadre, published in the *The Clinic*, a satirical weekly magazine that was founded after Augusto Pinochet's arrest in a hospital in London, in 1998. The magazine had prepared a special issue commemorating the 40-year anniversary of the September 11, 1973, coup d'état, addressing many topics that continue to divide Chile. In a series on the lives of prisoners incarcerated in Punta Peuco, the penal colony founded in 1995 to house military officers convicted of human rights violations, Basadre focused on retired army major Carlos Herrera Jiménez, sentenced to life in prison for the assassination of Tucapel Jiménez and Juan Alegría. Basadre writes:

In 1996, ex-CNI [National Information Center] officer Carlos Herrera Jiménez, known as Bocaccio in Pinochet's intelligence circles, recorded his first audiobook in prison. His martial, heavy voice is captured on dozens of cassettes that

were then sent to the Central Library for the Blind in Santiago's central Providencia borough, directly from Punta Peuco, where his neighbors include the likes of Álvaro Corbalán, alias The Pharaoh.<sup>1</sup>

The report mentioned a list of books that Herrera Jiménez had recorded during his prison sentence. Along with pictures that showed different stages of the process, the text posted several fragments of the audio which could be reproduced online.

Santiago's Central Library for the Blind is an unusual library where no one keeps quiet. The audio collection was created in 1967 and currently holds more than 3,600 books recorded with human voices and nearly 25,000 general audio tapes. The computer and reading halls are loud places. Human voices alternate with acoustic interfaces of programs and extensions for accessibility. Common applications like *Voiceover* let users control the computer through a keyboard with voice commands and braille options for various screen interactions. Without speaking, each reader can create a dialogue with their voice-over by typing on the keyboard. Although the users are quite varied, they are generally skilled stenographers who share a heightened spatial sense of sound. Several library employees are also blind, and sound is a way of being present. Even the braille printers have a particular pulse that turns this place into a living library and active sensory environment, dismantling the image of an enclosed, silent space meant to store the words of dead people.

The books read by Herrera Jiménez exist—they are available to the public, yet his particular voice is listed as an anonymous reader. On 60-minute cassettes, among the eight recorded books, there are 82 hours of direct sound coming from his cell. One can hear Herrera Jiménez reading masterpieces from universal literature, such as Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*; references of Latin American literature like Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara* and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; William Shakespeare's dramatic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and several thriller and spy novels such Jack Higgins's *The Eagle Has Landed* and Frederick Forsyth's *The Deceiver*. As for nonfiction, as a reader, he also recorded a catechetical message by a Carmelite priest from the Sanctuary of Sor Teresita of the Andes, *Cómo superar el dolor* [How to Overcome Pain], written by Father Marino Purroy Remón; and, as a way to criticize the institutional order enforced by the military regime, a comparative study of the history of constitutional law, *Teoría de la constitución* [Theory of the Constitution] by Francisco Cumplido and Humberto Nogueira.

The sentences used in *Autor Material* are highlighted quotations from these books. While audiobooks generally evolve from a written text on paper, this narrative, on the contrary, was written between the lines, with sound. The text, printed and transferred to braille, functions as a physical transcription and remnant of an acoustic archive specter. In his book *Voices of Tyranny, temples of silence*, R. Murray Schafer writes that, "Interesting fictions have been invented for weighing or measuring sounds: alphabets, music scripts, sonograms. But everybody knows you can't weigh a whisper or count the voices in a choir or measure a child's laughter."<sup>2</sup>



The word is the body of the voice. Sound can be identified as a subtext that intervenes space directly and indirectly. As a vibration or movement, touch and hearing connect when the lowest audible sound frequencies turn into tactile vibrations (close to 20 hertz); indirectly, hearing enables meaning and determines sound, which allows us to distinguish between a noise and a sound, simultaneously generating instinctive and conscious reactions. For David Toop, sound is a component of the mental map that unites memory and the delicate overlapping of perceptions and memories with a “predictive sense of where, and how and how long,”<sup>3</sup> even though the limits are always vague and dispersed. As Toop writes in his book *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener*, “This relative lack of form creates perplexing relationships between the properties of states: inside and outside, material and immaterial, the way thoughts become sound through speech, and external sounds become sensory impressions that may be thoughts as they pass through the ears and outer membrane into awareness.”<sup>4</sup>

Images stained with emotion are easier to remember than words. Even if it didn’t say anything new, this was the voice of Herrera Jiménez—it wasn’t just any reader. Why leave remnants? What was his need to perpetuate his voice? What provoked this impulse to capture? Was it a way of showing good behavior? Did he read to redeem himself or as penance? Or simply to kill time? Words are not the same as a text. What is heard cannot be understood in the same way as what is seen. Sound can escape the limits to which bodies are confined. Breaking the pact of silence, a tentative exploration: “‘To encounter ... the body of the voice (the grain, as Barthes puts it), this physical chaff of meaning, is to encounter ... the subject fallen to the status of object, unmasked ... On the one hand, the naked, neutralized, absurd sense (“the king is naked”); on the other, his “body,” his cadaver: his noise, his cacophony.’”<sup>5</sup>

Until his arrest in Buenos Aires, Carlos Herrera Jiménez used various operative identities. At different times and places, he was Mario Bravo Oyarzún, Sergio Bravo Muñoz, Marcos Belmar Oyarce, Mauro, and Bocaccio. In 1971, he took a class on Intelligence at the School of the Americas, in Panama. He was an Army Lieutenant in Iquique for the military coup d’état. He was 22 years old. He was sent to the prisoner camp at Pisagua. He tortured and executed prisoners, such as Nelson Márquez, a member of the Communist Party. Regarding this murder, Herrera Jiménez said on TV: “All of the officers who were there at that time had received training at prisoner war camps in Panama. And that’s how we ran the camp.”<sup>6</sup> In the early ’80s he was transferred to the National Intelligence Center (CNI) and later to the Army Intelligence Directorate (DINE), where he participated in the cold-blooded assassination of Tucapel Jiménez, president of the National Association of Government Employees (ANEF); he murdered the popular union leader and framed Juan Alegría, a carpenter, authoring a fake suicide note with a confession, after slitting his wrists. It is for these crimes that Herrera Jiménez and his accomplices are serving a prison sentence in Punta Peuco, surrounded by hundreds of retired military officers and ex-State agents convicted of human rights violations during Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship. In Concepción, he murdered Víctor Hugo Huerta. He was also convicted of having provoked the death of Mario Fernández López in

torture sessions in La Serena, for which he endured a house arrest on an estate that the Army purchased close to Quillota, in Pochay.

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In his book *Derechos de Mirada: Arte y visualidad en los Archivos Desclasificados* (“The Right to See: Art and Visual Culture in Declassified Archives”), Chilean scholar Cristián Gómez-Moya suggests that recently declassified archives are the heirs of a time when the main control over knowledge consisted in disappearing people who had information and simultaneously erasing the evidence of these crimes. Gómez-Moya writes that,

In retrospect, the violence of the power to disappear communications during the collaborative military intelligence operations in the '70s and '80s (e.g., *FUBELT Project*, *Caravan of Death*, *Operation Condor*, *Operation Colombo*, etc.) responded to one of the primary mechanisms of archival information and administration of political events, whose particularity resided in protecting the historical edition of those very events while exercising an early form of the right to see.<sup>7</sup>

This political act of seeing is a way to fill the empty spaces of memory. But visual space is very different from auditory space and presents a dissonance. “We are always on the edge of visual space, looking in with the eye. But we are always at the centre of the auditory space, listening out with the ear. [...] Visual awareness faces forward. Aural awareness is centred.”<sup>8</sup> Audio description is the descriptive narration of key visual elements in live theater, movies, and other means of communication to improve the experience for blind people or others with visual impairments.

“We make meaning with our voices”<sup>9</sup> reads one part of the guidelines for Audio Description in the American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Project. As for censorship and audio describers (narrators), the Council enforces an essential ethical standard: in the context of quality reception, describers must transmit all visual elements of the exhibited material. They must not censor information for any personal reason, such as their own discomfort with the material or political beliefs. In other words, they have the moral duty to objectively transmit visual elements of nudity, sexual acts, or violence, for their users have the right to comprehend the visual material that is evident or relevant for those who can see.

In *Familiar* (2014) and *Arribo* (2014), short films that form part of her trilogy *Tristezas de la lucha* (“Sorrows of Struggle”), Paraguayan filmmaker Paz Encina activates an unsettling acoustic dimension of the Archives of Terror.<sup>10</sup> Taking on the perpetrator’s point of view (in this case, their voices), she masterfully shows the mundane tone of interrogations and reports carried out on a daily basis by both State agents and civilians during Alfredo Stroessner’s dictatorship in Paraguay from 1954 to 1989. The human dimension evoked in the victims’ voices

creates a contrast with the mechanical dispatches and files that corroborate their death. The audios of these tapes are documents that register the different mechanisms of repression that separately coexist within a single ideological apparatus, managing to outlive contradictions through simulation.

For Argentine film director Lucrecia Martel, “the image is a form of blindness.”<sup>11</sup> In her work, sound is a tool of observation. Relegated to a savage and less dominated place, sound enables us to see things, propagating an enveloping atmosphere that expands spaces and deactivates certain conditionings determined by a world organized around visual ideas. Sound is another place implicit in representation, for its resonance can create an alternative reality. According to Martel, this effect responds to an unprecedented construction of sound: “When you look through books, they end up becoming acoustic spaces that you create for yourself.”

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As opposed to a library, the archive “is not based on a thematic or semantic order, but rather on the principle of origin.”<sup>12</sup> On September 19, 1991—a national holiday celebrating the Army’s “glories”—high-ranking military officials organized for Herrera Jiménez to leave Chile, thus initiating what is known as Operation Silence. Processed for 138 cases after democracy returned in 1990, his imminent capture was a threat to many other culprits.<sup>13</sup> Trapped, he sought help from a friend, retired lieutenant coronel Héctor Celedón Nohra, who, despite his last name, is no relative of mine.

The two had worked together in the CNI in Iquique and Viña del Mar. Herrera Jiménez felt persecuted and betrayed by the Army and was willing to make confessions in exchange for a reduced prison sentence, as long as he would be absolved for the charges of killing a truck driver in La Serena. The mediation was decisive. As a connection to Herrera Jiménez, Celedón Nohra operated as an informant for the plaintiff lawyers and provided the investigation with two anonymous letters that he had written to Father Miguel Ortega in which he described the details of Tucapel Jiménez’s assassination. Herrera Jiménez fled to Uruguay—where he connected with Eugenio Berríos (a chemist who had worked for the DINA) little before his assassination—and later moved to Argentina. Exposed as playing both sides, he was arrested in Buenos Aires in November of 1992 and spent two years in the Caseros jail. After his extradition, he denied the incriminating conversations with Celedón Nohra and claimed that he was only a friend who had visited him in Argentina to help with an inexistent problem. But Celedón Nohra did not vouch for this story.

The books used in *Autor Material* were recorded from 1997 to 1999. During this period, Herrera Jiménez lived his own judicial torment. With the pre-trial proceedings closed and no confession, he was granted a brief stint of conditional freedom by the questionable judge Sergio Valenzuela Patiño, but this was revoked by a Court of Appeal. In November of 1998, with ample evidence against him and to the dismay of victims and plaintiff lawyers, judge Valenzuela absolved Herrera Jiménez—as well as his accomplices Álvaro Corbalán, Osvaldo Pincetti,

and Armando Cabrera—arguing that his participation in the crimes could not be proven. It was in this context that for the first time in democracy, an ex-CNI agent made a public apology: Carlos Herrera Jiménez continued to deny his culpability, but he expressed regret.<sup>14</sup>

The Supreme Court finally removed Sergio Valenzuela Patiño from the case and, in April of 1999, designated judge Sergio Muñoz as a replacement. The following day, Herrera Jiménez admitted his participation in the death of Tucapel Jiménez and Juan Alegría. In 2004, he was sentenced for both crimes as a perpetrator of aggravated homicide.

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The prison of Punta Peuco is in Tiltil, close to a landfill, in a sacrifice zone. Herrera Jiménez insists that the truth is outside; those incarcerated have spoken, that's why they're there. The deaths that he carries don't seem to be the biggest problem, but rather the fact that his institution closed ranks and he took all the punishment for fulfilling his duties. Is it fair that the entire apparatus behind the order to eliminate Tucapel Jiménez hides behind an Army captain? He doesn't conceive that there are generals who faked illnesses to avoid facing their responsibility in the chain of command. Or that there are generals who have blamed dead generals or that they have hidden out of cowardice behind claims that their subordinates acted in rebellion and disobedience.<sup>15</sup> What kind of command is that? Herrera Jiménez is certain the order came directly from Pinochet. But who put that idea into Pinochet's head?

Every day is just like the last. He gets up at around 7 a.m. He exercises for 30 to 45 minutes on an elliptical bike. He eats breakfast. At 9 in the morning, the guards count the prisoners and make sure no one is sick. After the "morning ceremony,"<sup>16</sup> prisoners are allowed to spend their time as they like. Some practice sport, others walk. Herrera Jiménez reads and writes. Sitting in front of a computer on his desk, he turns on the microphone and adjusts his headphones.

Listening with the headphones directs him toward a new state of integrity with himself. The other person's voice seems to emanate from inside his consciousness. The hours of tape are allegories of an open microphone inside his cell. There are no codes or hidden messages. What we hear is what is happening. A voice that is never present. Every now and then dogs bark, his voice is irritated but nothing happens—cut—he reads another sentence and continues with the open book. No one can know what has happened in the interim. He never loses the thread of the story.

In *Autor Material*, the executioner does not hide his face, but he speaks to those who can't see him. Through an operative identity, the reader appropriates the silence in anonymity to conjure the echoes of an ominous past. As Gómez-Moya suggests, "The recursive effect between the graphic sign of covering up, erasing, and hiding

evidence of clandestine documentation—registering and at the same time hiding the witness—adjoins an apocryphal act of seeing.”<sup>17</sup>

The particular nature of this bibliographic material covers documentary significance that opens an invisible symbolic dimension. The original books, alienated from their function and context, were degraded into fragments of audio, echoes, transient phrases that were dispersed into decomposition. “Places are saturated with unverifiable atmospheres and memory and these are derived as much from sound as any other sensation.”<sup>18</sup> In these audios recorded within a detention center, there are no codes, no hidden messages—there is nothing more than what was said. There is an institutionalized language that facilitates separating the events. As if the horrors were committed by that other person.

At one moment in the narration, the protagonist gets distracted in the middle of an interrogation and realizes that he is swimming in the middle of nothing and drowning in an ocean of nonexistent words: the author is a conscious reader incapable of objectifying consciousness. In an attempt to find him, the detectives go to his mother’s house, no longer located in the city. No one is home, no one is living there. Some time ago, in a conversation with Celedón Nohra, Herrera Jiménez perceived a distant return. In this exchange, he comments that he suspected the detectives were getting closer.<sup>19</sup> An unusual cold crawled over the shadows. That night he dreamt about a strange dark voice. His calls were being recorded. In the morning, he got up early and went to feed the pigs. He had a pig farm, a respectable mess that he knew how to exploit. The investigators found the estate because of the smell in a sector called Pocochay, municipality of La Cruz. On November 13, 1991, at 5:30 p.m., deputy commissioner José “Huaso” Barrera and his team raided the estate. They only found his wife, who said she had last seen him in May of that year.

## Notes

1. Pablo Basadre, “El proyecto secreto del ex agente Carlos Herrera Jiménez, ‘Bocaccio,’” *The Clinic*, September 4, 2013.
2. R. Murray Schafer, *Voices of Tyranny, Temples of Silence* (Ontario: Arcana Editions, 1993), 162.
3. David Toop, *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.
4. *Ibid.*, 36.
5. Pascal Bonitzer, quoted in Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, translated by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 53–54.
6. *Informe Especial: Carlos Herrera Jiménez*. Report by journalist Raúl Gamboni, broadcast on Chile’s State-owned TV channel Televisión Nacional de Chile, 2004. Museum of Memory and Human Rights.
7. Cristián Gómez-Moya, *Derechos de Mirada: Arte y visualidad en los Archivos Desclasificados* (Santiago: Palinodia, 2012), 60.
8. R. Murray Schafer, 163.
9. *Audio Description Guidelines and Best Practices*, American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Project. September 2010—A Work in Progress Version 3.1—Joel Snyder, Editor (<https://adp.acb.org/>).

10. A series of documents produced during the Stroessner dictatorship as part of Operation Condor, discovered in Paraguay in late 1992. Museum of Justice, Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defense of Human Rights. Asunción, Paraguay (<https://www.pj.gov.py/contenido/132-museo-de-la-justicia/132>)

11. *El cine como inmersión sonora*. Mariano Vespa. *Diario La Nación*, Argentina. January 20, 2019. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/lifestyle/el-cine-como-inmersion-sonora-nid2211214/>

12. Anna María Guasch, *Arte y archivo, 1920-2010. Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2011), 20.

13. “The next day, while the country was up in arms over the news of the crime [the assassination of Tucapel Jiménez], captain Herrera was granted permission to travel with his family to Talca. Meanwhile, general Arturo Ramses Álvarez scheduled a morning meeting in the conference hall of the Intelligence Community building, located at 6 Juan Antonio Ríos street, with all employees who knew anything about the events, especially the CIE officers and two lower officers who collaborated with Herrera. All were forced to sign a pact of honor consisting of the “oath of silence” or “*omerta*,” a universal code for the agents, agreement to never speak of the topic again.” *Emblemático crimen de Tucapel Jimenez. El Cóndor quiere carne*, Benedicto Castillo Iribarra (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Mare Nostrum, 2005), 85–86.

14. Ana María Sanhueza, “Habla Mayor (R) Carlos Herrera Jiménez, procesado por el Caso Tucapel Ex agente de la CNI pide perdón,” *latercera.cl*, January 1999. <https://memoriaviva.com/nuevaweb/criminales/criminales-h/herrera-jimenez-carlos-alberto-fernando/>

15. *Informe Especial: Carlos Herrera Jiménez*. Report by journalist Raúl Gamboni, broadcast on Chile’s State-owned TV channel Televisión Nacional de Chile, 2004. Museum of Memory and Human Rights.

16. Leslie Ayala, “Mayor (R) de Ejército preso hace 29 años: ‘No busquen en Punta Peuco la verdad que falta en DD.HH.’” October 1, 2017. <https://www.latercera.com/noticia/mayor-r-ejercito-presos-29-anos-no-busquen-punta-peuco-la-verdad-falta-dd-hh/>

17. Gómez-Moya, 64.

18. Toop, IX.

19. Pascale Bonnefoy Miralles, *Cazar al cazador* (Santiago de Chile: Debate, 2018), 337.

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## CHAPTER 15

# Sounding Manifesto

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Nicole L'Huillier

October 18, 2019, is known as the day that Chile *despertó* (woke up). It is also known as the *Estallido social*.<sup>1</sup> And like any loud blast, this one carried a significant sound that stirred up the air and agglomerated all types of bodies as a large energized vibrant mass.

During the demonstrations that started those days, the sound of casseroles was a fundamental section of the vibrations occupying the air and resonating among every type of body and membrane that was present. In Chile, we know this as “*cacerolazo*” and it is a strong form of protest that is done by collectively banging pots and pans. The casseroles became vibrating bodies of metal that manifested the heartbeat of the marches and kept the pace, with the *heart* of their sound oscillating between 2 kHz and 6.6 kHz. Along with the whistles, chants, sirens, and other sounds, they agglutinated the participants into a giant invisible vibrating social membrane. The Earth, the people, the non-human animals, the casseroles, the rocks, the concrete, the trees, the buildings, and every single bone resonated, vibrated, and sounded together, again and again. They echoed and transduced.<sup>2</sup> They were a collective body that was being rearticulated on the go. A collective system of resonances and movement. A type of collective intelligence through vibration.

For the past few years, I have been interested in exploring transduction as a key feature of the vibrational universe of listening, sounding, and the perception of vibrations. I am intrigued by the multiple dimensions and media that are woven through transduction as a physical phenomenon as well as its productive and stimulating possibilities as a metaphor and as a concept. It is possible to unravel a long chain of processes and a series of transformations of energy that enable something to sound; to weave invisible resonant membranes.<sup>3</sup> This chain is a system with no exact beginning or end. Within this transductive discussion, the concept of *la membrana*<sup>4</sup> emerges as a very stimulating and productive organizational apparatus, a physical and theoretical place for ontological transfigurations.

By manifesting oneself, one appears and becomes present. An act of manifesting oneself could be, for example, raising one's voice, or being part of the *cacerolazo*. Any manifested sound is mechanical energy, vibrations

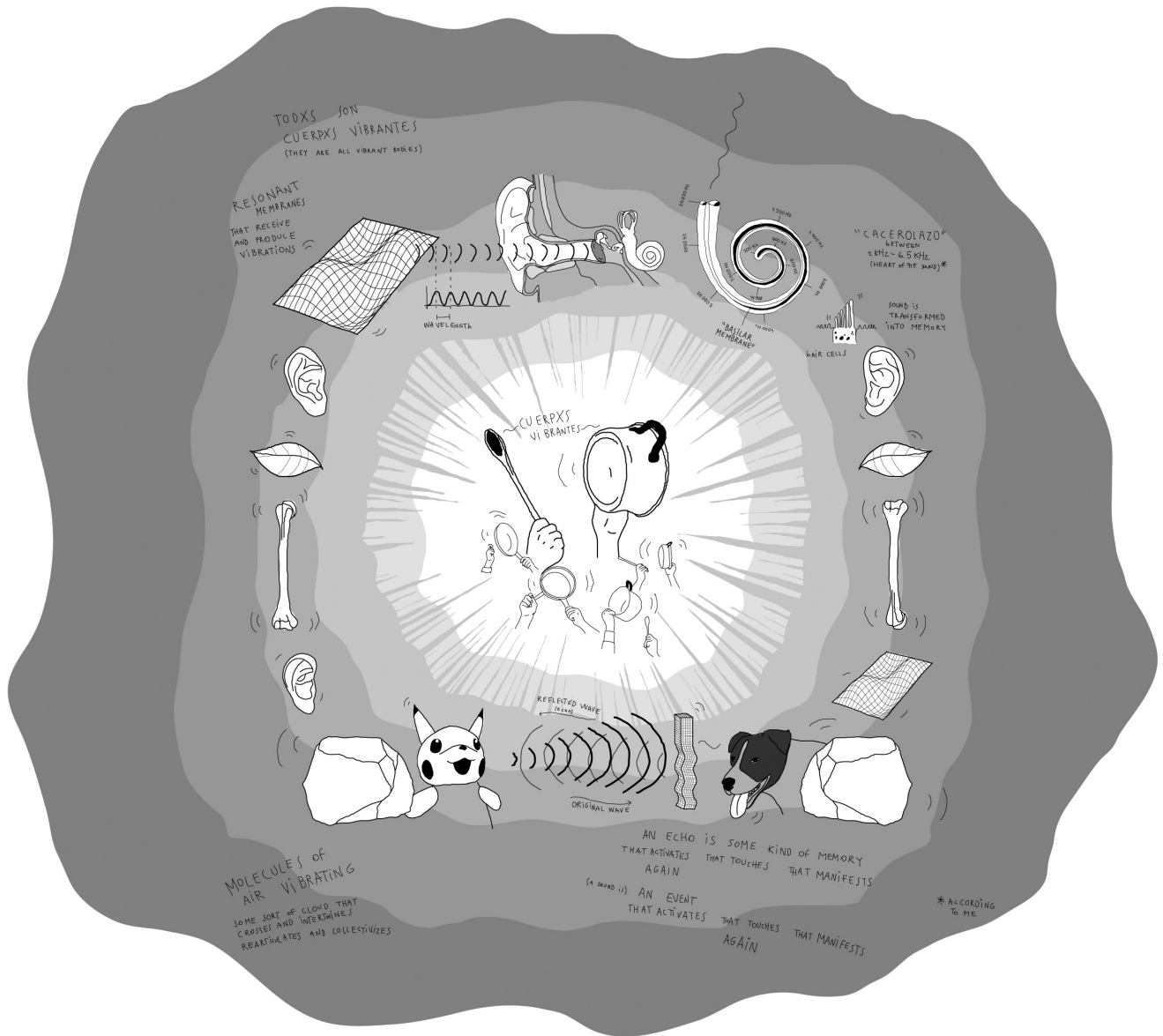


FIGURE 15.1 Nicole L'Huillier. *Manifesto*. 2022. Digital Drawing.

that propagate through different media; touching and crossing other bodies, as well as merging and interfering with other manifested sounds. By manifesting oneself, one becomes part of something as sound weaves into collectivity.

Some of the bodies that are activated by the sounds of the *cacerolazo* have listening apparatuses: resonant systems of membranes, bones, cilia, and fluids that transduce mechanical waves into sound when it is perceived as an electrical impulse in the brain. Some of the bodies activated by the *cacerolazo* store this sonic event in their material memory (as they are touched by sound), some others also store this event in their minds (as sounds are aurally perceived), as well as in their hearts (as sounds concatenate with affections). This way, the *cacerolazo* can exist as an echo, a manifested sound that sounds again and again as it bounces back and forth in material and affective ways. The *cacerolazos*, as part of the energizing blast of the *Estallido Social*, will keep the beat in our hearts for the forthcoming.

\*The drawing (Fig. 15.1) depicts some iconic elements and characters that have been part of the demonstrations in the last few years in Chile, as a way of paying homage and respect to them. Most notably “Tía Pikachú” and “El vaquita.” Tía Pikachú was always present in the demonstrations and became a symbol for the people and their demands for justice with a fun and playful touch. As she was wearing the costume of the famous Pokémon during the protests, one time she fell down as she was vividly dancing in the streets. A group of young demonstrators reacted immediately and helped her stand up as they were singing “Baila Pikachú, baila Pikachú” (dance Pikachu, dance Pikachu) repeatedly, this moment was filmed and went viral. El Vaquita or “Perro Vaquita” is a street dog from Antofagasta (a port city in the north of Chile) that participated in the protests and was dear among the demonstrators. This dog was one of the many dear street dogs that also participated in the marches and resistance against police oppression and brutality during these events.

## Notes

1. This translates as *social outburst*.
2. Transduction is a process through which one form of energy is converted into another. For example, in audition, transduction takes place when sound waves are converted into electric impulses that are interpreted in the brain as sounds. As a form of energy, sounds are constantly being transformed and transferred to exist in multiple media, forms, and dimensions.
3. A membrane produces and receives vibrations; it is a porous boundary that can both separate and connect, a threshold that is activated by vibrations.
4. Translates as the membrane.



## CHAPTER 16

# Landscapes of Resistance: A Conversation Between Carla Macchiavello and Colectivo Últimaesperanza

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**Carla Macchiavello:** I would like to begin our conversation by recognizing the territories where we are located. I am on the lands of the Lenape nation, the original inhabitants of the New York City area, who were removed from their lands by the Dutch and English. I'm a visitor on these lands. Where are you located and what is your relationship with that land? The very name of your collective is a political gesture that establishes your position.

**Nathaniel Álvarez:** We live in the extreme south, on the limits of Chile. Our relationship with the territory is deep and rooted.

**Sandra Ulloa:** We are an art collective that, since 2004, has led artistic expeditions that cross disciplines and languages. Since 2008, we have produced monumental projections in different locations on southern landscapes. We have also created a territorial laboratory where we organize artistic residencies and promote the circulation of works and exhibits in the region. We've set up exhibits in nearly all the rural towns of the region of Magallanes, which is enormous. There are close to 250,000 inhabitants who live here, the majority in Punta Arenas and the rest in towns like Puerto Natales, Porvenir, Cerro Sombrero, and Seno Obstrucción. All these places have a strong presence of dramatic toponymy, which led us to name the collective Última Esperanza (Last Hope), the province where I was born. The name is a rallying banner. The last hope is for action, for collective efforts, for art, and we re-signified this idea by joining the two words and turning it into one: Últimaesperanza (Lasthope). These names represent the colonizers' absolute disconnection when they arrived here and encountered the inhabitants: for them, everything was evil, horrible, useless, like when they named a place Bahía Inútil (Useless Bay).

**CM:** When someone says, "the end of the world," it's like they're talking about a homogeneous space, but there are many territories. Where is the border, the limit, the end of the world?

**NA:** The limits here are blurred, especially the political limits. Where I come from, Puerto Natales, there is a close relationship with Argentina. You're 15 minutes away from the border. The girls I went to high school with, for example, used to party at the discotheque in Argentina and they didn't cross the border at customs.

**SU:** And what is a border anyway? Is it barbed wire?

**NA:** Here, everyone is part Argentine, part Chilote.<sup>1</sup> We've realized that the Hielo Sur fields, the glaciers, and rivers don't obey geopolitical borders; they are constantly crossing these borders. If you follow the route of Grey Glacier, for example, you'll reach Argentina in no time.

**SU:** Thanks to bioregions, we can observe how we're all part of nature.

**NA:** The end of the world also refers to strong energy that, perhaps, we owe to Jules Verne's *The Lighthouse at the End of the World*. I like to expand the reference to Verne into the plural and think of ourselves as inhabitants of *one* of the ends of the world at this time of crisis, when colonial nationalism attempts to destroy plurinational forms of life. We could say that there have already been ends of the world in relation to the Selk'nam, Kawéskar, and all the first nations that have lived here.

**SU:** It's important to become conscious of existence, of the beginning, the end, the entire cycle. We've always been in a crisis.

**NA:** This space is not a blank page, as Magallanes writer Óscar Barrientos says. It's not a place where artists from outside the region arrive and find nothing.

**CM:** The places where you work have many memories. But they've still been categorized as an end of the world where nothing exists and everything is yet to be done. Chile has sold itself on landscapes, the idea of extreme territories, the spectacular.

**UE:** Like a landscape that has been exoticized.

**CM:** While, simultaneously, it is being destroyed, consumed, and sold. How do you propose, as a collective and from the organizational resistance in which you participate, to avoid falling into a sort of artistic ecotourism, considering, for example, the Radicante residence that consists of navigating with artists through the Strait of Magellan for several days? How do you decolonize artistic residencies and their relationships with the territory?

**NA:** It's a transversal issue. There are several layers of what you mentioned: the place, which is promoted as exotic, is sold and privatized. Salmon farms, for example, are destroying various ecosystems. There's a project that aims to dynamite the Kirke Pass, which is really narrow, so bigger boats can pass and ship out more salmon. The glacier we visit, on the other hand, is a site that tourists visit on a boat drinking whiskey or pisco sour with glacial ice. All the information about the glacier is reduced to a drink. The Radicante residency is a response to many government-designed activities to commemorate the 500 years since Magellan came through here. Thinking that it was important to create a space of reflection from the maritory and not the land, we decided to organize the first navigation in 2017. Today it is in its fifth version. The boat that navigates is a relic; it's not a tourist boat. Since it's small—about 15 meters long—it gets beaten around by the sea, which turns into a challenge for those of us onboard. As you go farther out to sea, the waves begin to pick up and everyone gets seasick, they suffer that moment. Then comes the calm, the navigating, which is like a gift. It's as if the maritory was testing you.



**UE:** For the navigating excursion, we care less and less about artists who apply with megaprojects that represent solitary stories, and more about those with a horizontal connection with all entities.

**NA:** That's where we can answer the question of how to decolonize artistic residencies in these territories. During the journey, there is no production plan or internet connection. Therefore, contemplation and collective dialogue between human and non-human entities becomes the residency's driving force. This uncomfortable situation is interesting because it enables disconnecting from comfort zones and gradually diluting borders and limits.

From an outside perspective, what we do can seem extractivist: a bunch of artists get on a boat, navigate the strait, have a good time, and leave. However, our invitation is for the people to connect with these territories for a while, set aside their need to create, so they can totally enter the experience, which is always transformative. Every journey has its period of emptying the body: when they leave, everyone starts to write and they understand the point of the residency. We are critical of the extractivist models that generate this image of the end of the world. For example, among the activities related to the commemoration of the 500 years of Magellan's journey, there was an exhibition of a project with artists from Santiago called *Incognitum: Circunnavegaciones Contemporáneas* (Incognitum: Contemporary Circumnavigations). It was a Chilean-Portuguese collaboration. These artists approached us through our laboratory, Liquenlab, to form part of the collaboration. Then we found out we would have to work as producers to organize all their logistics.

In a public act organized by the Seremi (Ministerial Regional Secretary) of Culture, in which we had been invited along with all the *Incognitum* participants, I said that any project related to the 500 years of colonization should establish contact with local communities. If they bring a group to see the sites, but don't contact the community or invite an artist from the community, we don't value that kind of project.

**SU:** It is violent.

**NA:** And incoherent. Voluspa Jarpa, one of the artists from Santiago, said we took a chauvinist stance, that we were regionalists. It was interesting to observe how, when we defend ourselves, people from Santiago are quick to label us as "a bunch of provincial folk," as if being from the provinces or from an island should keep us silent and assimilated.

**CM:** How have you dealt with this topic in the Radicante navigable residency?

**SU:** The maritory itself has helped. The *Incognitum* people couldn't cross the strait in the end; they only had two days to set up their project and then cross over to Porvenir.

**NA:** The weather turned bad. They left, the pandemic came, and the project ended.

**SU:** This is why I think it's important to name and give presence to the maritory. I don't want to disassociate nature from the human dimension, because we're a part of it. But she, they say ...

**NA:** Our non-human colleagues ...

**SU:** Manifest themselves. After all these years of visiting the glaciers as the Últimaesperanza Collective, to listen to the ice fields and project images onto the landscapes, we can communicate with them. This also happens when we go out

to navigate. The most incredible artists with the biggest structures in their heads can come, but if they don't cross that portal, something happens and you can tell.

**NA:** When you're really going to connect to a place, things flow. If you're rushed to do what you want to do, somehow, you're acting in an extractivist way and that doesn't work.

**CM:** Another concrete demonstration of more-than-human agency. How have you developed this sensibility of directing your attention, of hearing in regard to the memories of the non-human, such as glaciers?

**SU:** We've been going to the glaciers for a decade (Fig. 16.1). Ecuadorian artist Paul Rosero has defined the experience of visiting a territory as "thinking with the body." This thinking with the body activates other bodily memories: feeling



FIGURE 16.1 Colectivo Últimaesperanza. *Untitled*. 2014. Video projection, photography.

the cold, for example, activates something ancestral. The body is our tool for communicating, generating agency, so we have to know how to listen to it.

**NA:** The experience of listening next to a glacier has changed the way I feel and my consciousness of the place where I live. This region has all the tourist vibe of Torres del Paine, the ice fields, the glaciers, and very few local people can actually access those places because the entrance fee is based on the tourist market. I'm really interested in imagining how people from here think of those places. What do they imagine when they hear "ice fields" or "the pampa"? Or even when tourists visit Puerto Natales, they say there's nothing to see, they find it monotonous. But once you stay in those places you begin to see other things that you don't see as a tourist.

**CM:** What have you noticed is different from the passing gaze of tourism in regard to the glaciers?

**NA:** One thing has been climate change. Once, we were waiting for the sun to set to do a projection. That time of day is really pretty, because it's silent and you can connect with the place. Suddenly, a hot gust of wind came. I asked Tadeo, a collaborator and friend, what it was and he told us: that's the *puelche*, a current of hot wind that comes from the Pacific. I then understood many things: that each winter it snows less, and fewer precipitations of snow mean more water. There is snow in the form of rain that falls over the glacier and cracks it, and that's how it begins to break. You don't learn those things if you don't go to the place and take notice through a profound impact of feeling.

**CM:** The glacier in and of itself is an image that can register time, extinction, time beyond human existence.

**SU:** Right, a landscape of resistance.

**CM:** Which also shows us its vulnerability.

**NA:** Scientists talk about proxies. For example, tree rings are climatic proxies; the glacier is a proxy. We have been learning and internalizing these concepts. As Timothy Morton says, hyperobjects—glaciers, ice fields—move at their own rhythm. When people see the glaciers, they say, "how peaceful," "how calming." But they're the exact opposite. They have internal rivers, waterfalls, leaks. When they begin to move, they make a lot of noise.

**SU:** They're always vibrating.

**NA:** And, all of a sudden, comes the stampede of detachment ...

**SU:** The tsunami ...

**NA:** It's not only a place of peace and calm. The Kawéskar people have the upmost respect for glaciers. There is a spirit called Mwonon who gets angry and speaks. When he speaks it's because there is danger and you have to leave.

**CM:** How is your relationship with the Indigenous people of the area?

**NA:** We've become conscious of our mixed background, trying to identify ourselves as we are. We are not Selk'nam, Kawéskar, or Mapuche. Our condition of being mixed requires that we approach the glacier with a lot of respect and love.

**SU:** For us, projecting images onto the landscape is also an act of love, of intimacy. We try to share and establish a dialogue.

**NA:** In conversation with Mapuche artist Raimundo Nenen, he suggested that, despite being Indigenous, he didn't coincide with his community's dogmas. He said there are certain taboos that you have to overcome to be able to find what we don't know. In our work, we question our dynamics with these places, trying not to produce any damage.

**SU:** Our work has always begun from an ethics of care and observation.

**CM:** In your work, there is a mapping and rewriting without leaving marks, in the sense of not leaving permanent footprints (or as little as possible), but rather to awake, evoke, and recognize them. I was thinking about your work that is based on the album of Romanian explorer Jules Popper, dealing with one of the region's stories of colonization, extraction, and genocide. What is your relationship with this album?

**SU:** It began in 2008 and, given that the most famous image from the album is so brutal, of a dead Selk'nam sprawled out naked next to Popper and others posing as hunters, we decided to stage the same scene but with other bodies. Instead of exposing the same body that has been seen ad nauseum—a sad, dreadful image—we used our own bodies and projected them onto the pampa. Then ten years passed ...

**NA:** And then came the social upheaval. News emerged of the first deaths, of people who, supposedly, had looted a supermarket, but they had gunshot wounds. A candlelight vigil was organized and we were invited to project all the names of the deceased onto the local government building in Punta Arenas (Fig. 16.2). Some of the projections said "unidentified corpse." This image is related to that of Popper: we know the dead body is Selk'nam, but we don't know his name or age. So, we started to investigate.

**CM:** You did a projection that says, "look down," as if calling on people to observe other memories.

**NA:** The album has location information that Popper registered. He added captions to all the photographs, he was obsessive. That photograph is called "look away."

**SU:** Looking away, to kill.

**N:** We changed it from "away" to "down" and projected it in the same place as the photograph, at least the closest we could get to the geolocated site.

**SU:** We arrived at two sites.

**NA:** We decided to retrace the route that Popper took and which we still haven't finished, partly because of the pandemic and because you have to cross over to Argentina, where he finished his expedition.

**CM:** It's a delicate topic, that of representation and overexposure.

**NA:** For me, it's a chance to talk about Selk'nam history with care and respect. We aren't painting bodies, which has been used so many times to manipulate and exoticize, transforming the Selk'nam world into a cliché. Instead, we're talking about the specialist's archive, his information, his decisions of where to place the camera.

His photographs are full of visual acuity. Taking a photograph of a corpse was a way of justifying that they [the inhabitants of these territories] were savages. Four pictures show the same cadaver. Justifying what he did, Popper titled one of them "Muerto en el terreno del honor" (Death in the terrain of honor). Popper gave a speech in Buenos Aires on





FIGURE 16.2 Colectivo Últimaesperanza. *Cuerpo sin identificar*. 2019. Video projection, photography. Photograph by archivo Liquenlab.

his photographs, which total ninety-nine altogether. He spoke to the elite Buenos Aires society and then, in 1886 and 1887, came here with his Darwinist ideas and exhibited his album. People were amazed, and they gave him money to set up an extractivist gold mining company. This story reminded us of the movie *Blade Runner*, where the main character studies photographs to find a person in the background. We're interested in the idea of studying pictures to find what Popper was trying to hide, the coloniality that his images conceal.

**CM:** Tina Campt, in her book *Listening to Images*, talks about listening to low frequencies of photographs when working with colonial archives.

**NA:** We work with this burden, which seems phantasmal. We decompose the photographs, only taking out the body's silhouette, and we project it again onto the pampa, like a specter. It's like re-illuminating the colonial wound that this place has tried to erase for so long. *Porvenir*, for example, was named because it had a future, a future of gold. But the people who live there today like to say, in jest, that it's a future "to die."<sup>2</sup> All these places, Punta Arenas, for example, have a historic debt with blood.

The recent social movements re-awoke many silenced wounds that have always been present. Here, there are strong social movements led by young people who hoist the banner of Indigenous peoples' rights. People talk about ethnocide. The Selk'nam community is reorganizing itself and wants to be recognized as a living people.

**CM:** They're recovering their language.

**NA:** It's an important moment, this constitutional moment.

### *Notes*

1. Demyonym of the inhabitant of the island of Chiloé.
2. *Porvenir* in Spanish means future.



## **Part III**

Futurity and the Antistate



## CHAPTER 17

# \$hileyem (Chile se acabó, The End of Chile): Indigenous Media and Decolonial Futurities beyond the Settler State

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Antonio Catrileo Araya, Manuel Carrión Lira, and Marcelo Garzo Montalvo

This text is a dream, un sueño, a pewma. It is a nocturnal conversation, an interstitial meeting place—a dialogue that serves as a gesture of building, between us, a collective positionality as Indigenous people, who, for various reasons, have migrated or have been displaced by colonialism and imperialism. Mapuche, champurria, mestizx, \$hilenxs, epupillan (two-spirit), exiliadx, en diáspora.<sup>1</sup> It is from these interfaces, these knots, these worlds, in community, that we would like to share.<sup>2</sup> The collective voice we have chosen for this text is informed by the diverse scholarly, activist and artistic practices or *armas culturales* we have been in relationship with: danza, design, tejido, video, writing, and speaking. From these interconnections, we linger with, and nourish the concept: \$hileyem.<sup>3</sup> \$hile se acabó, \$hile is over. “\$hileyem” is a dream that has emerged from various agents, activists, artists, Mapuche collectives and other Indigenous peoples, and is a desire that has traveled across borders, until reaching us here in Kumeyaay-iipay-Tipay and Payómkawichum territories, from where we are now living and writing together. The suffix *-yem* in Mapuzungun (Mapuche language) is a word that evokes an energy that invites us to reflect on death, on the cycles of transformation and life that often go beyond our human understanding. Therefore, this work is something we consider as a ceremony, as a collective focused intention that asks us to shift our consciousness and modes of perception.

These reflections are guided by the artistic and cultural work of Indigenous Media collectives in \$hile. Engaging with Indigenous Media in this way—as a concept and a field of study—helps to trace the colonial violence embedded in Chilean society, and highlights the ways in which these works negotiate self-determination. Creating a narrative that centers the critical interventions of our Indigenous relatives offers perspectives that are often skeptical of institutionalization. In this way, thinking with and from Indigenous Media provides the possibility of autonomous connections with *cosmovisión/worldview* where relationality is enacted through audiovisual creation and reflection.

Therefore, this writing/thinking is part of a larger transformational process, connected to a chain of prayers and healing/transformational actions that occurred in Temuco (Wallmapu) and in Valparaíso (Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu) as part of an *eluwün* (funeral) for Chile that we want to offer. It is an invocation of the *newen* (strength and potency) that we repeat over and over again: when we say *\$hileyem* and pronounce it as an utterance, as a spoken word, in order to evoke the energy of this concept. The vibrations of Mapuzungun and Wingkazungun (non-Mapuche language) together water the seeds of a decolonial futurity in the present. It nourishes a decolonial imagination as it creates a decolonial world. It is a reminder that language is a bridge between waking and dreaming worlds, between times and spaces; it is a bridge, a *kuikuitun*, a process of building bridges from one side of the river to the other. In this ceremony, we are building a bridge through the word *\$hileyem*, we are breathing life into this bridge, as a decolonial crack in the world, as a fissure in the porous borders of modernity.

This dialogue is informed by our connections with Xicanx, Indigenous, decolonial and other theories/practices, but also by our own journeys of displacement, migration, and movements across states, territories, and borders. Like Haraway, we each share from our situated knowledges and experiences as artists, writers, and thinkers across media (dance, weaving, film, music) and territories (Wallmapu, Tawantinsuyu, Kumeyaay, Payómkawichum). We write and think from these lived experiences, within yet beyond nation-states, sustaining displaced Indigenous life, fostered always in relation with other Indigenous nations. We are building a nation of relationalities. In this way, we view a migrant-Indigenous subjectivity not as a contradictory (legal) identity but as an epistemological privilege to decompose and deconstruct colonial borders.

We offer these reflections from the cultural front of transnational Indigenous struggles. That is, celebrating the victories of those who are, for example, working to transform the national constitution from below, or who have won the settler presidency, or who are working from a diversity of tactics to transform *\$hile*, we will be articulating our own interventions from the dreamworlds of ceremony, Indigenous Media, and the arts. We come together as scholars and practitioners, as thinkers and doers, to trace the contours of this desire called *\$hileyem*. In this way, we follow the visions of *patlache* Xicana feminist ancestor, Gloria Anzaldúa, who writes:

My job as an artist is to bear witness to what haunts us, to step back and attempt to see the pattern in these events (personal and societal), and how we can repair *el daño* (the damage) by using the imagination and its visions. I believe in the transformative power and medicine of art. As I see it, this country's real battle is with its shadow—its racism, propensity for violence, rapacity for consuming, neglect of its responsibility to global communities and the environment, and unjust treatment of dissenters and the disenfranchised, especially people of color. As an artist I feel compelled to expose this shadow side which the mainstream media and government denies. In order to understand our complicity and responsibility we must look at the shadow.<sup>4</sup>

As Anzaldúa is thinking here from the “country” of the United States, the occupied territories of Gringolandia, we are thinking from here, and there, an Other nation, from the shadow side of this “country” called \$hile, an exiled territory. Following the *estallidos sociales*, the social uprisings of October 2019 in \$hile, we gather to reflect on this moment of awakening and possibility. In this way, we would like to problematize the notion of “\$hile despertó,” “Chile has awakened,” a common slogan that emerged from this most recent wave of popular social movements. We ask: What is it exactly, or who, that has awoken? For us—that is, the authors, and also the greater communities with which we are thinking—*el despertar* is part of another temporality, an awakening of ancestral memory, a *llamada de sangre*, a *florecimiento* that is also a hospice for the story of \$hile. The story of \$hile *se acabó*. The story, *el cuento*, *la leyenda de \$hile se está disolviendo*. It is a story that we can leave, a narrative that we can destroy. This *despertar* is in relation to our *pewma*, dreaming as a way of knowing and receiving guidance from the ancestors. How can we make a connection between the *despertar* of Chile, and our dreams of abolishing the settler state and the *pewma* of our situated Mapuche knowledge that allows us to navigate different temporalities and spatialities?

We would like to understand Chile as a settler capitalist nation-state.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the colonial difference as something that creates non-homogeneous realities through settler-colonial logics that are imposed and masked through neoliberal multiculturalism (and of course in terms of the resistance and pushback from Indigenous and Afro-Chilean communities).<sup>6</sup> For this reason, we prefer to say \$hile, as a provocation today that asks us to consider how, in fact, \$hile has never existed. What happens when we consider \$hile as an illusion, a fantasy created by *wingka* (non-Indigenous) nation-states that are still occupying our territories? \$hile is an unsustainable concept that was sculpted by settler relationships that divide humanity/nature, and define who is more civilized or barbarous. All are conceptions translated *from* Europe that have laid the foundations of this fiction that is \$hile. In so doing, they both make invisible and deny over and over again that these territories are related to by Indigenous peoples such as Wallmapu, Qullasuyu, Rapa Nui, Madre Tierra. In this way, \$hile is a temporal spatial rift. It requires the negation of Indigenous reality, that is, reality as such. Therefore, \$hile is another kind of dream, a *wingkavision*, a disembodied nightmare, that requires the constant paving of roads, the constant extraction of resources, the constant cutting of trees. \$hile requires relations of domination and exploitation, that is, colonial ways of being and doing, and therefore does not actually have an abundant futurity built into it, but a disastrous and scarce one. This is part of why \$hile is over. This is not only late stage *Chilensis*, this is *Chile se acabó*. It has already happened. This is a periodization, a placing in time and space, of the actuality of *des-\$hilenización*.

In other words, it is in the terrain of the imaginary, the dreamscape, the world of images, that we wage our struggle as artists and writers. However, it is important to clarify, following our ancestral cosmovisiones—Mapuche *kimün*—that there are no separations between the “real” and the “imaginary,” between waking life and

dreaming life, as there might be in the Westernized, settler-colonial, heteropatriarchal, materialist worldview that relies on binary thinking. Instead, in our worldview(s), these worlds are only two sides of one totality in which we live. In this text, and in conversation with the artists with whom we are related, the struggle for territory is, at once, on land, and in our hearts. Therefore, it is important for us to articulate our critiques through the concept of *cosmovisión*, a term that itself has been taken up and activated as a site of struggle by transnational Indigenous movements and dialogues across Abiayala, especially in the Spanish-speaking Native world.

We translate and consider *cosmovisión* as both “cosmology” and “worldview.” Here we can be informed by a brief etymology of the term as such, *cosmos*—from the Greek *kosmos*—refers to “an orderly harmonious systematic universe” (“Cosmos”). Tewa Pueblo scholar and artist Gregory Cajete<sup>7</sup> has theorized cosmology as “the contextual foundation for philosophy, a grand guiding story, by nature speculative, in that it tries to explain the universe, its origin, characteristics, and essential nature. A cosmology gives rise to philosophy, values, and action, which in turn form the foundation of a society’s guiding institutions.”<sup>8</sup> Cajete points to the radicality, that is, the primordial nature of *cosmovisión*, when he advances that “cosmologies are the deep-rooted, symbolically expressed understandings of ‘humanness.’ They predate all other human structured expressions, including religion and social and political orders.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Euro-American poet and scholar Drew Dellinger argues, in dialogue with cultural historian and theologian Thomas Berry, that cosmology is “the basic worldview of a culture: its foundational story of how the world came to be and how it got to be as it is now, and how we, as humans, fit into it.”<sup>10</sup>

In this way, we critique settler aesthetics—embodied, for example, in colonial monuments to military “heroes”—as expressions not only of a colonial history, but of a settler, genocidal, nation-state orientation toward time/space, language and what it means to be a human being, that is, as institutional embodiments of a Westernized, Eurocentric and modern/colonial worldview. In a Mapuche context, this cosmology could be described as a *winka cosmovisión*, a worldview rooted in invasion, exploitation, theft, and a logic of elimination. We understand the survivance of Indigenous *cosmovisiones* en Abiayala in the context of genocide as a form of surviving *cosmocide*—that is, resisting the attempted erasures of the systems of stories, languages, and symbols that remember and sustain Indigenous lands, lifeways, peoples, and relationalities. These Other ways of knowing and Other ways of being form a cosmological antagonism, not just two different interpretations of history, but two different paradigms of experiencing and perceiving reality as such. It is in this context that in their widely quoted essay “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, in conversation with Frantz Fanon, ask us to consider the incommensurability of settler and Indigenous futurities, as “an acknowledgement that decolonization will require a change in the order of the world.”<sup>11</sup> Our critique centers the work of Indigenous creators who have taken up this task and articulated a form of decolonial aesthetics—pushing our political imagination beyond limited demands for representation, beyond aesthetic desires for more inclusive monuments, and toward another world altogether.



## ON INDIGENOUS MEDIA

To de-center ourselves from this dialectical relationship, we embrace what Gloria Chacón reinterprets as *Indigenous Cosmolectics*—inspired by Kamau Brathwaite’s *Tidalectics*—to offer a different notion of writing that challenges colonial orders in cultural/literary analysis. Indigenous Cosmolectics refers to orders of knowledge alive in textualities such as textiles, ceramics, orality, dreams and many other forms of “writing” that work differently than the alphabetic modality. In this way, Cosmolectics “allows writers to challenge the idea that the 16th-century collapse of the Amerindian world left the colonized subjects without the possibility of producing critical thinking”<sup>12</sup> and finally the Cosmolectic “counters the sociological imagination that Indigenous (thesis) and European roots (antithesis) produces a mestizo synthesis, or, in José Vasconcelos’s work, the culmination in the cosmic race where Indians and blacks eventually disappear.”<sup>13</sup> Indigenous Cosmolectics allow us to stop reducing contemporary Indigenous cultural and literary production under the binary rubric of tradition/modernity, orality/writing, Western/non-Western; since they tweak Western temporality, placing colonial contact as one more of the transformations that have pushed Indigenous textualities to adapt and change. This is precisely how we would like to engage with the framework of Indigenous Media to help advance an understanding of the Cosmolectical Mapuche textualities that Chileyem replicates as a dream, as a vision or *pewma*.

Juan Francisco Salazar and Amalia Córdova, referring to the state of Indigenous audiovisual production in Latin America, comment:

Over the past twenty-five years, Indigenous videomakers from Latin America have been “making culture visible” from their own perspective. In creating, imagining, and reinventing traditional social relationships through the moving image, Indigenous organizations are finding new forms of cultural resistance and revitalization. At the heart of this emerging Indigenous video movement in Latin America, we see a process grounded in local struggles for political self-determination, cultural and linguistic autonomy, and legal recognition, with potentially transnational and pan-American implications.<sup>14</sup>

This making culture visible implies the process of repetition and alteration of tradition, but it also implies the construction of networks that from their genesis are understood as transnational, trans-Indigenous, and collaborative. This is what the authors call “the poetics of Indigenous Media,”<sup>15</sup> for which they point out that the Indigenous video in Latin America “can be characterized as imperfect media that respond in a constructive way to calls for unthinking the Eurocentric foundations implicit in many of the Latin American cultural and creative industries.”<sup>16</sup> Avoiding Eurocentric reason, it becomes necessary to build other distribution circuits, which makes it easier to converge representation (what you want to show) with the creation process (with whom

and from where you want to show), although also articulating a space to house a sustainable model—although sometimes precarious—based on a community of Indigenous creators rooted in cultural activism. In this way, the building of images by Indigenous creators coming from Abiyala would always entail a community process where authorship and the positions of producer/spectator are negotiated differently.

To further elaborate this field of Indigenous Media, we echo the words of our lamngen Amalia Córdova referring to the way Indigenous Media works in Wallmapu and beyond.

Indigenous filmmakers and communicators in Wallmapu are exploring how video-making can serve as a tool for advocacy, cultural affirmation, and creative expression; to document alternate histories and project their concerns and visions toward future generations; to strengthen contemporary community identity, traditions and language; and to help dispel the myth of the “noble savage” and “disappearing native.”<sup>17</sup>

Indigenous Media manages to negotiate stereotypes and self-determination through resistance and revitalization. The manifestations and visions that Chileyem gathers are also signaling strategies that are closely related to the narration that Córdova offers, particularly when she refers to the way Indigenous creators in Wallmapu are projecting a vision of the future through the screen. Chileyem media strategies respond to a different political moment and are placed in a territory that is beyond Wallmapu. These create a constellation grounded in Mapuche relationality that is open to different singular and collective positionalities. Some of these strategies include refusing to show clear images of pain, refusing to translate a prayer into any colonial language and finally keeping something concealed out of the frame. Understanding Indigenous Media as textualities that are in a cosmological relationship allow us to take a closer look at our cosmovisión/worldview as a site where relationality is negotiated as futurity. This would mean that Indigenous decolonization is a collective project that requires a political and critical engagement with our ancestral knowledge and cosmogony.

## THE GENEALOGIES AND MIGRATIONS OF \$HILEYEM

Kimaymi, kimaymi, chumgelu—feypi

petu kvpa pewmalelfun tvfachi

Mapu mew?

Will you understand, will you understand

why, they say

I still wish to dream of this land?

Elicura Chihuailaf

As a *witral* (loom), Chileyem was woven by many hands, times and spaces that together have been named in a single word that articulates this *sentipensar* and *palabra sentida*.<sup>18</sup> We want to share these interwoven stories on how Chileyem emerged as a possibility to name our intuition that came to us as Indigenous that move across boundaries like *raki*, or *bandurrias*, that migrate from one place to another reporting news, bringing and connecting messages. Like a flock, we want to mobilize these reflections to share it with more people. Adriana Paredes Pinda, *machi* and poet, points out: “El raki, la bandurria mensajera, es la metáfora que expresa la comunicación entre los mundos de arriba y de abajo.”<sup>19</sup> Her beautiful words motivate us to imagine that our collective writing is a bird-text, as a *raki* “que danza como el huso en la mano de la tejedora, cíclicamente, igual que el pensamiento, en estos dos movimientos: del rakizuam consigo mismo y el rakizuam con otros pensamientos.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Chileyem begins its flight in Temuco from the coordination led by Gonzalo Castro Colimil and Danay Mariman Catrileo along with the support of Fentxen Mañum Cultural Center and the Coordinadora de Operaciones Artística (COA). These relatives met with other Mapuche agitadores culturales, educators, political agents in a *trawün* (encounter) that was called *Kimeluwal* (self-formation). Here they carried out various actions in the public space, self-producing an interpretation from an Indigenous perspective on what the Chileans were saying was an “awakening of a new Chile,” but which once again left out Indigenous peoples. They all shared this discomfort, thus this collective reflection emerged as a wish, a criticism of the generalized Chilean attitude of surprise in the face of the colonial/state violence exercised during October 18, 2019. A violence that the Indigenous peoples have been resisting for centuries in those territories. In this way, Chileyem became a slogan in a sans serif typography together with a *wuñelfe* (venus star), both in solid black tint, that spread around Temuco city. In one of its variations there is a black Chilean flag outlined in white while burning with flames from below, from where the word “Chileyem” stands as a transformative force. The color black accentuates the *eluwün*, the ceremonial aspect of a burial. This imagery was reproduced through posters, graphics, serigraphy, and online campaigns to multiply and invoke a transformation.

After articulating this desire that is Chileyem, in 2021 Gonzalo and Danay edited the video *Chileyem zugukelu* (Fig. 17.1). In this video we see a fractal image that is constantly turning. We can recognize some elements: chairs, plants, and soil. Filmed from above, this video refuses direct representation using symmetrical division through the number four. These four repetitions create an atmosphere that is strange yet familiar and connects with the four territories and energies that Mapuche cosmovisión animates. Similarly, the texts and voices are in Mapuzungun as a return, a provocation, a challenge:

Mapuzugun mew “yem” kam “em” pigekey tañi tukulpayal kiñe che zew lhalelu. “Tañi chuchu yem” reke, fewla ta “Chile yem” feypigeafuy tañi feypial ta Chile tañi lhael. Femechi feypigey rupachi oktufré ka nofiempüre küyenh, 2019 rupachi txipan, petu tañi txipan ta che rüpu mew wirarkunual tañi afal ta feyti Chile mogelelu ta feychi. Welu faw



FIGURE 17.1 Gonzalo Castro Colimil. *Chileyem zugukelu* (still). 2021. Video.

püle ka ayilu am iñchiñ tañi lhayal feychi chile, ka txawükefuiñ ka gütxamkakefuiñ kiñe txokiñche mu txawülelu iñchiñ Kimeluwal pigelu Temuko mew, txawülüwkülefuiñ taiñ püchiken günezuamal chem zugu ñi rupalen ta feychi ka püchiken kelluntukual feytachi zugu mew. Ellaka mu Chile yem choyü tañi txapümal kom feychike zugu taiñ ayiel ñi rupayal, ka tañi azentugeal kiñe pare mu Fentxen mañum welliñ mew, feyti centro cultural chew taiñ txawmum gütxamkakunual zugu. Türpu kolotugelay, welu pegelfali fillke gütxamkan mew, serigrafia mew ka kake azentun mew. Chile yem choyü mapuzugun mew, Wallmapu mew. ¡Tañi norümzugugeal ka tañi wiñoltugeal taiñ niefel, feyentukeiñ ka wirarkeiñ taiñ ayin tañi afal ta Chile!<sup>21</sup>

Can we understand everything that is in this video? For whom does it make sense? And for whom does it not? Who does it leave out and why? These are questions that began to emerge after the video, which like an immersive journey we let ourselves be carried away by its *ülkantun*, its sound, its fractal images that, like bridges, make us remember what Audra Simpson defines as refusal:



My notion of refusal articulates a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of ethnographic data, and so does not present “everything.” This is for the express purpose of protecting the concerns of the community. It acknowledges the asymmetrical power relations that inform the research and writing about native lives and politics, and it does not presume that they are on equal footing with anyone. This presumption of equal footing is false.<sup>22</sup>

This refusal strategy occurs through different layers, which are not easily accessible for those who are not close to the Mapuche people. On the other hand, the messages can make a lot of sense for those who are. The video takes a position in this regard, it is directed toward Mapuzugun speakers, but also in the gesture of not translating into Spanish or giving a clear or total image, we are facing a media that wonders to whom this message is directed, this vibration, *ülkantun*. What has been put as a fractal image is a *rewé* (sacred space) that is located in the Fentxen Mañum Cultural Center and by making it unrecognizable Gonzalo and Danay protect that image from cultural extractivism and exploitation. For those who do not know the place it is difficult to identify it, but this is because they seek to protect certain knowledge from the *wingka*, from the settlers. Projecting the *rewé* toward the four directions evokes situated knowledge that expands even beyond Wallmapu, understood as the ancestral Mapuche territory. Since the word “wall” refers to circularity, to planetariness. In this way it reaches us, who are also part of those turns, movements of the Wallmapu itself.

By creating bridges, Chileyem began to proliferate with more people and other communities. It began to sprout through many conversations with people from other territories in *rume trawün*, *muchos encuentros*, many encounters. After the *Kimeluwal trawün*, Chileyem was interwoven with Constanza Catrileo, Malku Catrileo, and Alejandra Carrión, part of the Catrileo+Carrión Community.<sup>23</sup> They traveled to Temuco, Wallmapu in February 2020 to be part of a protest in support of linguistic revitalization of the Mapuzungun. There, they met Gonzalo, Danay, and other *pu lamngen* (siblings) that shared the Chileyem experience with them. Constanza, Alejandra and Malku brought that knowledge from Wallmapu to *Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu* and shared it with more people. Motivated by Chileyem’s calling, they performed a ceremony in Valparaíso on October 12, 2020, and the statue of Cristobal Colon that sits on Avenida Brasil, a central thoroughfare of the city.

One year after the original uprisings of October 2019, and now during the realities of the coronavirus pandemic, the municipality of Valparaíso decided to preemptively remove this statue in September of 2020, in order to avoid further unwanted attention during the upcoming October 12 holiday of Columbus Day/Día de La Raza/Día de la Lucha Indígena, etc. Under the auspices of “restoration” and “protection,” the city removed the statue, with a crane and having to dodge nearby power lines (ADN Radio). Though a small protest did pass by the area on October 12, the action that emerged from Chileyem happened in a different way—quietly, later in the day, led by a small group of queer, nonbinary, *epupillan* relatives who organize Indigenous youth in this territory. They arrived with the images and written words of human and non-human ancestors,

relatives, political prisoners, those who have been assassinated by the settler state throughout the long *durée* of occupation but also expanding the ceremony toward migrants and also Indigenous thinkers that are alive. This multiplicity of names challenges the settler aesthetic of monumentalization and linear temporality and instead dissolves them into a kinship of resistance that goes beyond the nation-state, centering and honoring the names of Amelia Choque Mamani, Macarena Valdés, Bartolina Sisa, Federico Quidel Córdova, Alex Lemún, Joane Fovril, Maria Elena Moyano, Camilo Catrillanca, Leftraro, Cristina Calderón, Matías Catrileo, Adriana Guzmán, and many more. Similarly, they brought small bundles of lawen, medicinal plants that grow in the Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu territory such as matico, ruda, and melissa, that they weaved around the empty pedestal along with the images using Andean cords of wool, cordones andinos woven by them. In the empty void of Columbus, these relatives opened an Other cosmovisión, another temporality using ceremony to connect with a trans-Indigenous horizon of kinship.

In dialogue with this action, Antonio and Manuel then edited in 2020 an experimental video, *Mapuche temporalities of care* (Fig. 17.2). This video includes the footage from this intervention, online found-footage of the many Mapuche eluwün and protests performed in the last years, and using the footage of two intimate ceremonies performed in 2019 in Pewenmapu (Pewenche Territory) by Lorenza Aillapan, Antonio Catrileo, and Manuel Carrión. The video opens with a scene of Lorenza introducing Antonio to the many pewen, araucarias located in Icalma, Pewenche territory. Antonio wears female traditional Mapuche clothes and Lorenza is teaching Antonio how to dress with them. While this happens fragments of the footage from the intervention of October 12, 2020, start to appear, centering the names and the lawen being honored at the empty pedestal of Columbus in Alimapu. All of this is accompanied by Lorenza's *ülkantun*: she sings a traditional song connecting the temporalities clashing on the screen. A second moment shows Lorenza and Antonio covering Manuel who is naked with lichens that are lawen and that grow in symbiotic relation with the many pewen. While Manuel is being erased by the lichens the empty pedestal of Columbus is shown one last time before the sound changes. This time the sound is played backward and we see much ceremonial footage of Mapuche eluwün also played backward. The video negotiates temporalities and uses the technical possibility of video-edition to excite a futurity that connects intimate epupillan ceremonies for the itrofilmongen (biodiversity and relationality) with public Indigenous protests mourning the assassination of many lamgnen (siblings).

Exploring the relationship between Indigenous Media and ceremony, this video raises an important question: Is it possible to use audiovisual language to make visible ceremonial relationships between different times, spaces, and beings? What is the place for our queer Indigenous bodies inside a settler-colonial dying state? How can we flourish from this death? How can we metabolize its death into new life? Chileyem lives in this video through its affective trajectory of community process creation connected to Temuco but also shows a specific relationality: different Mapuche protests in public spaces in the city connect with intimate ceremonies in the



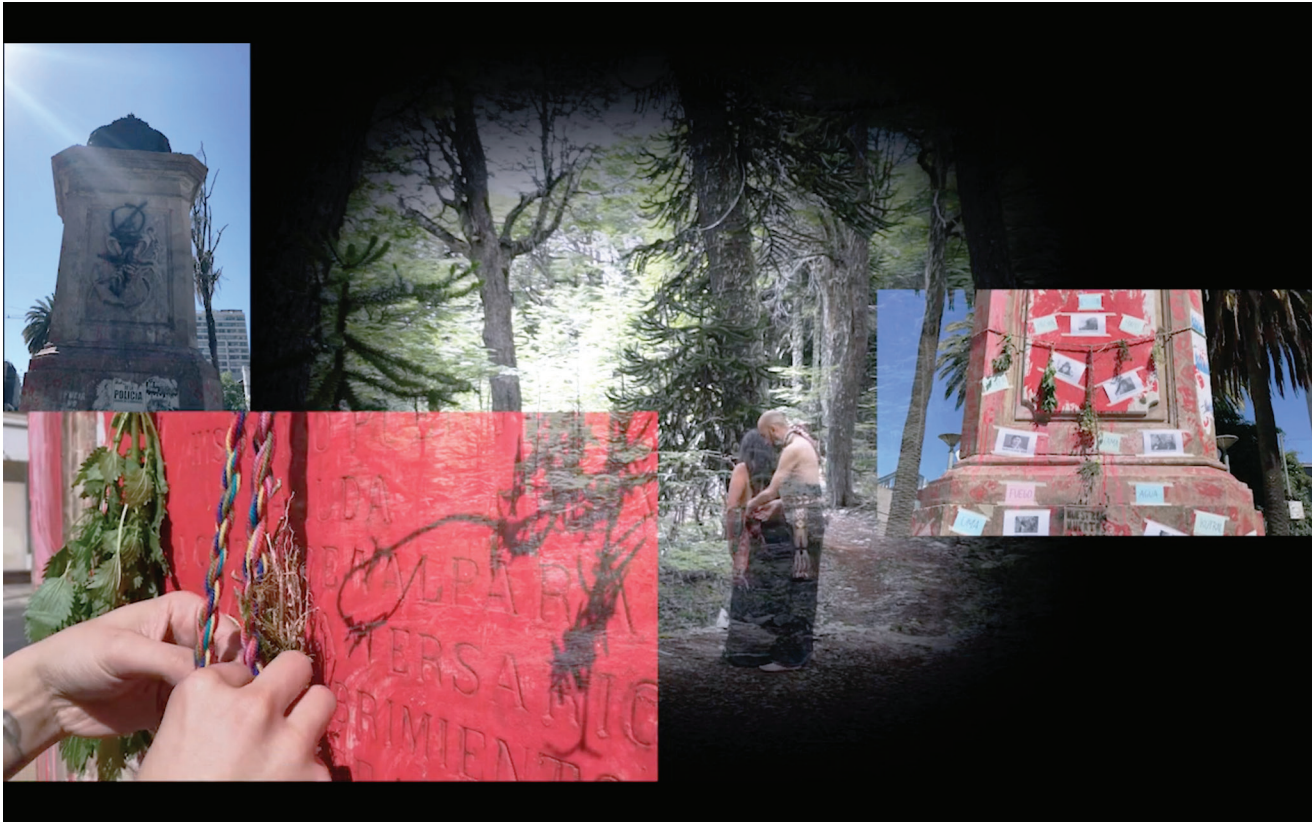


FIGURE 17.2 Catrileo+Carrión Community, *Mapuche Temporalities of Care*. 2020. Video.

forest, creating a nonlinear and nonbinary relationship that negotiates the city/forest, male/female and human/non-human dichotomies in the screen.

This is because temporalities of care are temporalities that de-center the human. From this perspective, Chilean time is a colonizing force—a neoliberal, settler chronopolitics.<sup>24</sup> More than human relatives live in another time. How can we position ourselves in relation to these many times, this multiplicity and simultaneity of times? While Chile seeks homogeneity and capitalist efficiency, a temporality of care is an abundant temporality, it is a time of relationality, of honoring the sovereignty of all times that are present in space. Becoming conscious of this coexistence of times allows us to embody a spirit of humble interconnection. Indigenous Media is a tool in this collective work. It is a technology for continuing to open and stretch this time of many times, this place with many spaces. For these worlds to thrive, Chile must die.

Here Chileyem migrated again, this time through the Zoomiverse, toward the northern territories of Kumeyaay-iipay-Tipay and Payomwakichum lands. *Chileyem: An Experimental Mapuche Film Program* was born as a way of contributing to the reflections amplified in other territories, honoring the ceremony already started in Temuco but also building bridges of solidarity between Indigenous peoples beyond borders. It was streamed on November 20, 2020, through UC San Diego's The Loft streaming services, sponsored by the Department of Literature at UC San Diego. It was curated by Antonio Catrileo and Manuel Carrión in collaboration with Cherokee scholar Dr. Kathryn Walkiewicz. This program was divided into three parts where after each set of videos a commentator offered insight from poetry and history about the video pieces seen: Trans queer Chilean filmmaker and performer Anto Astudillo and Chilean communicator and PhD student in Communications at UC San Diego, Loreto Montero. Each part of the program highlighted different Indigenous decolonial strategies to face issues of representation, state violence, gender, and culture.

We can see for example in *500 años de Estado de Emergencia / 500 hundred years of State of Emergency* (2020) by Mapuche artist Cristian Inostroza, how the violence experienced in 2019–2020 in Chile is put into relation with colonization, invoking a sense of kinship that complicates linear time and the discourse of national progress. The artist uses only his voice and the color blue to invoke a certain colonial difference when understanding Chilean and Mapuche realities as different although not contradictory: “dicen que Chile despertó, el pueblo Mapuche ha estado despierto hace siglos. No son 30 años, son ciclos de colonización, usurpación y violencia. La chilenidad ha visto cómo se vive el día a día en el Wallmapu.”<sup>25</sup> Inostroza reminds us that Chile is a settler-colonial state and links the rise of the metro fare in Santiago with colonization thus connecting neoliberalism with colonial dispossession. During the video his affected voice contrasts with the deep *kalfü* (blue color) and the *wuñelfe* (venus star) getting closer and closer to the camera as the narration gets heavier and more dramatic. By centering the *wuñelfe*, this video engages *cosmovisión* as a creative space for political decolonial Indigenous practices. The use of blue responds to the many ways in which Mapuche relationality is expressed, because blue is the sacred color.

Similarly, *Dark Warria/Dark City* (2016) directed by Mapuche artist Patricia Pichun creates an atmosphere through the use of light and opacity. Filmed in Wallmapu three years before the October 2019 Chilean Revolts, this video anticipates the atmosphere of surveillance that the Chilean people will soon also experience, showing how Mapuche people have been enduring police and military harassment for centuries. Pichun shows us the city of Temuco, an urban place where many Mapuche have migrated to through a visual and aural spatiality of dark/light. The narration of an anonymous voice tells us about how one of their sisters was kidnapped and taken by the police. The short film closes with a steady shot of a sacred forest where you can see an opaque presence passing by. We interpret this as a way of honoring *pu ngen* (the spirits) of the forest, particularly because this shot comes after a close-up of an *apon küyen* (full moon) in the sky. In this final shot the artist offers a glimpse of Mapuche

relationality and cosmovisión, but with many opaque layers on top of it. This act of refusal, of not offering all the cultural coordinates to an outsider, is also an Indigenous strategy of concealing and protecting. Instead of interpreting these coordinates we want to understand this resistance to interpretation as an invitation to build a new relationship with this history. Pichun is inviting us to adjust our gaze, to look otherwise, toward a view that can engage with pu ngen.

This long journey of how Chileyem multiplied, transformed, and inhabited different languages has had its own life in an episode of the Podcast *¿Origi-Ke?* created by a group of Indigenous artists and activists from the central valley of Chile. It is composed by Aymara, Colla, Chango, Quechua, Mapuche, and Diaguita queer women and two Indigenous men. They have been one of the Indigenous collectives that have answered to the calling of Chileyem, evident from their first episode:

Luego de Chileyem, desde Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu brota una fuerza joven que no teme ser indígena y ser de ciudad, porque también bailamos trap. Pero también sentipensamos la forma de habitar y reconstruir nuestra identidad cruzada por la herida colonial y decidimos que crearemos nuestra propia versión de nosotrxs mismxs, 100% Original No Fake. ¡Y en tiempos violentos y virulentos sé OrigiKÉ (original)! Presentamos una propuesta sonora experimental y contra-informativa para seguir recorriendo la memoria reciente construida también en los relatos de nuestrxs antiguxs que habitaron actualmente el saqueado Valle del Akunkawa (zona central). Nuestros manifiestos serán liberados según nuestra küyen/phaxsi/killal para que prepares tu mejor awayu, lawen y mate y viajemos juntxs porque aunque no nos conozcamos, nos necesitamos.<sup>26</sup>

Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso used Chileyem to name the social uprising of October 2019. They understand Indigeneity as already a plural experience that includes other Indigenous nations beside their own. This is evident when they name the central valley of Chile Pikunmapu (north of Mapuche ancestral territory called Wallmapu) /Qullasuyu (the south of the Tawantisuyu). This is then a shared space that goes beyond a single nation-state logic. The politics of language in the quote speaks loud about a “champurreo”<sup>27</sup> that also includes English, not only Mapuzungun, Quechua, Aymara, and Spanish. We interpret this coordinate as also a way of acknowledging the US intervention in the territory of Chile from 1973 until nowadays as a cultural and economical force very much present in Chile, but also English speaks about the potentiality of creating trans-Indigenous conversations across colonial languages that have tried to homogenize indigeneity. English and Spanish also become a way of communicating different Indigenous experiences across the hemisphere.

This poetics is also present in their episode 2 of season 2, *\$hileyem: el oasis de la impunidad*. This episode marks one year since Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso met each other while protesting in the streets of Alimapu warria (City of Valparaíso) in November 2019. They decided to add a money sign “\$” to the word, replacing the

“C” of Chile, performing a transformation/adaptation of the anticolonial critique of Chileyem from Temuco into a potential queer abolitionist Indigenous poetics. This is evident when we dive into the episode that offers deep reflections about incarceration as a political tool used for repression. This episode specifically reflects on how incarceration has affected trans/queer people during the 2019 uprising in Chile. Engaging with the autonomous trans/queer anti-incarceration collective Amigues Sin Barrotes, Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso centers the experience of “personas disidentes y monstruuxs, en general seres que hemos decidido vivir fuera de lo normal”<sup>28</sup> that have had or have a relation with prison. This is relevant since \$hileyem here converges with trans/queer politics in the way they shake colonial and patriarchal normative structures. By creating a link between the trawün in Temuco, the human rights violations suffered by the trans/queer political prisoners of October 2019 and the resurgence of Indigenous claims and practices across Pikunmapu/Quyasullu, Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso create a trans/queer Indigenous abolitionist temporality opened up by the ceremonial iteration of Chile’s funeral.

Finally, we can see in the following quote how gender-neutral language is included in an Indigenous political claim. What is most important is how the beginning of this episode is also a ceremonial start inviting us to reflect on the trajectories and utterances of Chileyem/\$hileyem:

Muy buenas tardes hermanas, hermanos, *hermanxs*, sean por favor *bienvenidxs* al espectáculo más grotesco de todos los tiempos. Prepárense a disfrutar de nuestra función acontecida en *\$hile*, un oasis imaginario, largo y angosto, ubicado al sur de Estados Unidos. Limita al *norte* con la tortura, al *este* con el horror, al *oeste* con las desapariciones y al *sur* con las violaciones.<sup>29</sup>

The trans-Indigenous politics enabled in and through *¿Origi-KE?* is a co-creation that is firmly based on cosmovisión as we have discussed it, but this is a cosmovisión that can connect different nations. The four directions and the number four are key elements here that connect the diverse cosmovisiones, creating a common ground from which to co-create and dissent. We interpret this as part of a decolonial and indigenizing strategy: to use media and indigenize it through language and cosmovisión to create a change through a political practice.

The irony that this quote communicates rests on the use of the four directions that are sacred geometry for all the Indigenous peoples that share this territory. We interpret this as a way of conceptualizing colonial and state violence as a continuum for Indigenous experience in Chile. Besides placing Chile in the Global South—particularly in relation to the US empire—the four directions limit with different concepts that conflate temporalities opening up particular experiences through key words. That the limit of the North is torture alludes to the dictatorship (1973–1989) coordinated by the US CIA, but also to the recent violence experienced in Chile by the military and the police. Limiting with horror at the East references the “Campaña del Desierto” that tried

to eliminate Mapuche people in Argentina at the end of the nineteenth century. That the West is the place of disappearance speaks about the many political dissidents thrown into the sea by the Chilean military forces in the 1980s during the dictatorship but also references an oral story told by elders on how, during the government of Carlos Ibañez del Campo, Indigenous queer people were captured and thrown into the sea. Finally, that the South limits with violations (as in human rights but also as synonym for rape in Spanish) is a clear commentary about the different intensities of colonial and state violence lived in the South of Chile in comparison to the capital; but also centers sexual violence and rape as the colonial logics that created a “Chilean” population, highlighting the control of human reproduction as a colonial and Western-liberal project.

### PREGUNTAS ABIERTAS

Having woven some threads of this tejido llamado \$hileyem, we have mapped an *itrofilmogen*, a web of relations. It is with these relatives—human, non-human, more than human—that we have been lingering with this concept, and today what we nourish as a cosmological consideration: \$hileyem, Chile se acabó, Chile is over. From these frayed edges we ask: Is this what the end of \$hile looks like? Thinking again, from the intervention on October 12, 2020, at the site of the recently removed statue of Christopher Columbus in Valparaíso, we ask: Instead of seeking to replace colonial monuments with Indigenous figures, how do we show up at the pedestal that remains and relate to it as a ceremonial altar, a rewe, a connection to an Other cosmovisión? What will we bring to these ceremonies and temporalities of care as they unfold in the spaces left behind by the settler state as it, in fact, begins to dismantle itself (supposedly for its own restoration and protection)? What is the cosmovisión that we can develop, the “orderly harmonious systematic universe” of relations, now that the story of \$hile is over?

In her 1996 essay “The Indian with a Camera,” Laguna Pueblo writer and photographer Leslie Marmon Silko argues that the Indigenous photographer/cinematographer is “an omen of a time in the future that all Euro-Americans unconsciously dread: the time when Indigenous people of the Americas will retake their land.”<sup>30</sup> Silko continues by noting how “Euro-Americans distract themselves with whether a real, or traditional, or authentic Indian would, should or could work with a camera ... Hopi, Aztec, Maya, Inca—these are the people who would not die, the people who do not change, because they are always changing. The Indian with a camera announces the twilight of Eurocentric America.”<sup>31</sup> It is in this space and time of twilight, with the sun returning, as the sun is also dying, a turn toward darkness in the north, and light in the south, that we are also thinking as Indigenous peoples with cameras and other *armas culturales* (cultural technologies). Writing, thinking, weaving, dancing, singing, praying with the setting sun—we continue to dream.



## Notes

1. *Champurria* refers to “mestizaje” from the Mapuche perspective, and \$hilenxs to involuntary citizens of the settler-capitalist state of Chile.
2. For more on knots, see Antonio Catrileo, *Awkan epupillan mew* (Santiago: Pehuen Press, 2019).
3. \$hile and \$hileyem will be written interchangeably with \$ and C, depending on the appropriate context and project it is related to in the text.
4. Gloria Anzaldúa, “Let Us Be the Healing of the Wound: The Coyolxauhqui Imperative—La Sombra y El Sueño,” *Voices of Mexico* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), 121.
5. Shannon Speed, “Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala,” *American Quarterly* 69(4) (2017): 783–790.
6. For more on the colonial difference, see Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
7. Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 2000).
8. *Ibid.*, 58.
9. *Ibid.*, 52.
10. See Drew Dellinger, “Change the Worldview, Change the World: New Generations and the Power of Story,” *Kosmos: Journal for Global Transformation* (2018). [https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj\\_article/new-cosmology-and-social-justice/](https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj_article/new-cosmology-and-social-justice/).
11. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1) (2012): 31.
12. Gloria Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab’awil and the Making of Maya and Zapotec Literatures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 13.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Juan Francisco Salazar and Amalia Córdova, “Imperfect Media and the Poetics of Indigenous Video in Latin America,” in *Global Indigenous Media*, eds. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 40.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 41.
17. Amalia Córdova, “Wallmapu Rising: Re-Envisioning the Mapuche Nation through Media,” in *From Filmmaker Warriors to Flash Drive Shamans: Indigenous Media Production and Engagement in Latin America*, edited by Richard Pace (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018), 71.
18. Sentipensar is a way of knowing as thinking/feeling, with the mind, the heart, the body at once. See also: Escobar 2014
19. Adriana Paredes Pinda, *Epu Rume Zugu Rakizuam: Desgarro y Florecimiento*. PhD thesis (Valdivia: Universidad Austral de Chile, 2013), 44.
20. *Ibid.*, 12.
21. Coordinadora de Operaciones Artísticas (COA), *Chileyem zugukelu*. PhD thesis. Written and directed by Gonzalo Castro Colimil and Danay Mariman Catrileo, Temuco, July 8, 2021, full HD digital video, 2:08. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS0UsmrXhJg>
22. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 105.
23. Catrileo+Carrion Community is a queer/trans/nonbinary Indigenous epupillan (two-spirit) community that has been working since 2015 to articulate generative spaces of reciprocity and relationality. We honor the land and our ancestors through ceremonies materialized in our audiovisual, textile, editorial, curatorial, and community practices. They currently reside divided between Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu (Valparaíso Region, Chile) and Kumeyaay Territory (San Diego, California, USA), supporting trans-Indigenous circuits and conversations. Currently composed by Antonio Catrileo Araya, Constanza Catrileo Araya, Malku Catrileo Araya, Alejandra Carrión Lira, and Manuel Carrión Lira.
24. See also Mills, 2020.
25. Cristian Inostroza, *500 años de Estado de Emergencia*, Santiago de Chile, November 4, 2019, full HD digital video, 1:29. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNADoGsFwsA>



26. Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso, “Un mundo ch’ixi/ champurria es posible” Episode 1 Season 1, April 8, 2020, in *¿Origi-ke?*, podcast, MP3 audio, 32:30, <https://anchor.fm/origi-ke/episodes/ORIGI-KE--Un-mundo-chixi-champurria-es-posible-ecic2u>
27. See footnote 1.
28. Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso, “Shileyem: el oasis de la impunidad,” Episode 2 Season 2, November 15, 2020, in *¿Origi-ke?*, podcast, MP3 audio, 50:29, <https://anchor.fm/origi-ke/episodes/Temporada-2--episodio-payaepuiskay-hileyem-el-oasis-de-la-impunidad-emhhr8>
29. Jóvenes Indígenas Valparaíso, Episode 2 Season 2 (emphasis added by authors).
30. Leslie Marmon Silko, “The Indian with a Camera,” in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 178.
31. Ibid.

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## CHAPTER 18

# Contemporary Mapuche Art and the Cycle of Decolonization<sup>1</sup>

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Cristian Vargas Paillahueque

Over the last three decades, Indigenous movements in Chile have gained a relevant position within the public debate for social change. The Mapuche people are the largest Indigenous group, representing 79.8 percent of the Indigenous population and nearly 9.9 percent of the total population.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are based on self-identification, a complex phenomenon related to Indigenous political resistance and prolonged struggle against the Chilean state's colonial policies throughout the twentieth century. In fact, colonialism in *Wallmapu* dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, when the state decided to colonize Mapuche territories in the so-called “Pacification of the Araucanía” (1861–1883), thus breaking the long tradition of political sovereignty that the Mapuche people had maintained for centuries.<sup>3</sup>

Critical literature on this topic shows that the “Pacification” fragmented Mapuche political and cultural unity.<sup>4</sup> However, despite territorial usurpation and exploitation, during the twentieth century, different Mapuche organizations built a movement of political and cultural articulation. This movement sought to, among other things, express and defend the rights to and restitution of lands, promote access to education, and encourage a sense of self-worth by valuing the Mapuche people's “own culture.”<sup>5</sup> Such ideas still constitute the most notorious aspects of Mapuche resistance.

This brief overview situates the central topic of this chapter: to exhibit the contemporary visual traits and development of discourses present in the aforementioned resistance. I suggest that these practices are closely linked to a decolonizing impulse which different Mapuche artists have extended through diverse mediums over the last thirty years. This chapter, therefore, offers some background on the development of decolonizing discourses and the production of works and situations conducive to said discourses. The text also posits that one of the fundamental axles of this process has consisted in installing a critical reflection on the imaginaries which have been used to comprehend indigenous images and bodies on different levels of representation, both in Chilean and Mapuche societies.

As Alvarado Lincopi, Ivette Quezada, Elisa Loncon, and Belén Villena point out, Chile’s “popular revolt” or “social uprising” in 2019 had an important anticolonial vector that, while most evident in protestors toppling statues of the country’s founding fathers, was also present in the creation and reclaiming of indigenous visualities and languages.<sup>6</sup> Recognizing the contribution of these theoretical approaches, I would add that, in the field of visual arts, a decolonizing impulse that confronts hegemonic imaginaries has existed for quite some time, specifically since the early 1990s. This chapter will explore these early manifestations with the hopes of contributing to a genealogy that problematizes contemporary Mapuche art as a multi-layered discursive production aligned with Mapuche anticolonial thought.

In order to develop my arguments, I have divided this chapter into three sections. The first analyzes decolonizing artistic production in the context of the 1990s, a period defined by criticism of the 500-year celebration of America and the “indigenous emergence.”<sup>7</sup> The second part explores how decolonizing discourses were formulated at a key time for reflections on contemporary Mapuche visuality: the Indigenous Art Biennale (organized in 2006 and 2008, but, due to space restrictions, I will only focus on the first version). The third section problematizes Republican colonial imaginaries through the works of two Mapuche artists: Bernardo Oyarzún and Paula Baeza Pailamilla.

### THE 1990S AND REFORMULATING PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZATION

Although several studies have focused on Mapuche art at different periods,<sup>8</sup> these approaches lack theoretical perspectives to analyze contemporary Mapuche visual production as part of a decolonizing impulse. In *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argues that all decolonization processes imply a parallel project of self-reformulation in which the colonized rewrite *their own* history.<sup>9</sup> We can identify this process in the case at hand. At the dawn of the 1990s, intellectual and artistic Mapuche production developed a clear anticolonial impulse that promoted the revitalization of Mapuche culture and awareness of its status as a nation-people. This process was characterized by resistance to “internal colonialism,” a concept coined by Pablo González Casanova to explain the perpetuation of oppressive colonial models in Latin America after Independence from Spain.<sup>10</sup> As Enrique Antileo and Claudia Zapata have argued, González Casanova’s perspective contributed to the diversity of contemporary indigenous reflections on this topic.<sup>11</sup> Although this hypothesis currently predominates the analysis of colonial relationships and the prolonged struggle of Indigenous groups, it is important to situate it in the context of the 1980s and early 1990s, when it enhanced critical perspectives on the commemoration of the 500-year anniversary of America.

This period witnessed the formation of several relevant Mapuche organizations, including the Mapuche Cultural Centers (later AD-MAPU) in the 1980s and the Awkiñ Wallmapu Ngülam (Council for All Lands) in

the 1990s. Both initiatives aimed to revitalize Mapuche culture within a wider call to resistance that responded to the context of dictatorship and the potential that indigenous demands themselves would acquire on a national and international scale. These organizations promoted a series of cultural actions that sought to reclaim their double identity as a people and a nation, moving beyond notions of ethnicity and race. One example is the Mapuche Cultural Artistic Development Workshop (TACUM), also known as the Ad-Mapu Theater. This community-based cultural group organized performances throughout some of Chile's major cities, such as Temuco, Concepción, and Santiago. Other instances, such as public statements and independent publications like the *Boletín Awkiñ* or *Revista Nüttram*, also reflect the decolonizing impulse of this period.

According to Sergio Caniuqueo, these initiatives were crucial for spreading a discourse of autonomy and self-determination as indisputable axles of Mapuche resistance, an idea that still persists through different forms of politics, whether taking the institutional route or through direct action.<sup>12</sup> Appreciating and revitalizing Mapuche “culture” was one of the most decisive processes promoted by these organizations, primarily the Council of All Lands, and that objective constituted an effective means to install a decolonization alternative profoundly linked to a particular idea of cultural resistance. As Enrique Antileo observes,

In the early 1990s, the CTT [Spanish acronym for Council of All Lands] fractured a line of century-long relationships between the Mapuche world and the modern nation-state's party politics, which prevailed since the Caupolicán Society to Ad-mapu. With this strategy of enacting and exerting their leadership, the CTT opened up the Mapuche movement, producing a historic moment of cultural revalorization and a new beginning. It also enabled the politicization of cultural repertoires that shaped a “must be” of Mapuche identity.<sup>13</sup>

These impulses were also expressed in the profoundly political artwork that infused these organizations' newsletters and political-cultural flyers in different urban spaces.<sup>14</sup> Created by artists like Jessica Cona, Felicita Lleufuman, and Rolando Millante, this artwork evoked a particular representation of the Mapuche people that highlighted textiles and silversmith iconography, strengthening the internal recognition of the culture's own visuality in massive formats. This visuality was also expressed in the murals painted by artists like Eduardo Rapiman or Christian Collipal in the streets of Temuco. However, while Mapuche theater and artwork were indeed significant decolonizing projects, the promotion and revitalization of cultural activities, such as the *palin*, *ngülamtuwün*, or *ngillatun*, etc., also offered decolonizing outlets in urban spaces.

Such initiatives significantly influenced the development of critical perspectives on the 500-year commemoration of the so-called “discovery” of America, helping to induct the ongoing belief that indigenous peoples have the right to organize and defend autonomous political futures. Several concrete actions from this period include the five-hundred-years resistance march in Chile and Argentina, a law to erect the Caupolicán monument in

Temuco, and the process to collectively create a national symbol that would unify Wallmapu, embodied in the Mapuche flag, known as the *wenufoye*.<sup>15</sup>

During the first half of the 1990s, Mapuche visual arts provided a space to reflect on the multiple efforts to resist colonial continuity, positioning aesthetic and visual trajectories as possibilities to enunciate cultural appreciation. As mentioned above, this aesthetic reflection has yet to be discussed. José Ancán explains that, “In the extensive bibliography on the Mapuche people, what coincides from different angles is that, from the time of the chronicles to the present, there is minimal or very general allusion to artistic aspects (normally referred to as handicrafts).”<sup>16</sup> For Ancán, this omission was promoted by the influence of discourses on “Indigenous art” evoking an asymmetrical relationship that, supposedly, existed between “monumental” Indigenous civilizations (thus, “expressive”) and “low” Indigenous cultures (with “ornamental” arts). These perspectives, situated between monumental and artisanal, continue to define the current debates on Indigenous art in Latin America and reveal the complexity of such a category.<sup>17</sup> However, Indigenous art in general, and Mapuche art in particular, represents an encounter of diversities in dialogue and discord that elaborate aesthetic and resilient proposals of decolonization.

From this perspective of what I call diversities in dialogue and discord, Mapuche poet Elicura Chihuailaf highlights two cultural instances in Temuco: the murals with their vindicative iconography of Mapuche visibility; and the “Zugutrawvn/Reunión de la palabra” (Gathering of the Word) conference in 1994.<sup>18</sup> As a means to articulate intellectual and artistic exchanges between Mapuche and non-Mapuche, Zugutrawvn brought together Chilean poets like Raúl Zurita, Nicanor Parra, and Jorge Teillier, and Mapuche writers and artists such as Bernardo Colipan, Graciela Huinao, Mónica Huentemil, Rayen Kvyen, among others. Synthesizing this Mapuche cultural context, Chihuailaf writes: “The characteristic of this group is that, making use of foreign technical elements, it does not only allude to or explore Mapuche topics, rather it creates and recreates from its condition of belonging—as part of the diversity—to our people.”<sup>19</sup> In a way, this group described by Chihuailaf promoted a Mapuche national conscience through the inclusion of non-traditional formats, motivating poets and artists to reclaim a site for Mapuche enunciation within the Chilean artistic field.

The importance of the political processes promoted by first nations at this time was conceptualized in what José Bengoa calls the “indigenous emergence,” that is, a period in Latin America when these groups organized movements to place their demands for autonomy and self-determination, as well as Indigenous culture, at the center of public debates. This implied promoting a perspective of Mapuche national reunification through culture or, as Antileo argues, through political strategies that defended both traditional and contemporary cultural affirmation in public spaces.<sup>20</sup> From a similar perspective, Maribel Mora Curriao has analyzed the convergence of Mapuche political demands and the emergence of a cultural context that supported it. She writes:



Aside from the proliferation of organizations and movements to recover lands, another element that influenced the construction and reconstruction of a Mapuche identity, or *mapuchidad*, was the rise of artistic and cultural references.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the importance of artistic and cultural actions consisted in that, despite their low profile, they were largely accepted in the different areas of national endeavors.<sup>22</sup>

However, despite the enthusiasm that such intellectual articulation generated, disputes within the cultural field in Chile, particularly the visual arts, were not absent. As Mora Curriao explains:

A second version of Zugutrawun was organized in October of that same year [1994] in Santiago. The situation there wouldn't have been much different if Guillermo Núñez, in conversation with Chilean painters at the National Library, had not claimed that the Mapuche people did not exist, that not even their dress was of their own culture: "They buy those colorful headbands from the Lebanese," he shouted in a frenzy, before the bewilderment of many Mapuche in the audience. Of course, the discussion blew up, but moderators Roser Bru and Concepción Balmes managed to calm things down. This incident clearly suggested that the topic in the capital had still not been discussed among the Chilean intelligentsia. Denial was still a form of not confronting the reality right in front of them.<sup>23</sup>

This experience highlights the agency that the Indigenous world urgently sought to introduce in the capital. And said agency of decolonization implied, on the one hand, recognizing the legitimate difference that exists in regard to other peoples/nations and, on the other, permanently elaborating aesthetic proposals to dispute cultural hegemony.

The transversal call to self-identify as Mapuche and generate an anticolonial visuality continued to strengthen during the 1990s through, for example, Christian Collipal's murals and sculptures. Pablo Mariman explains that, "As a member of the first Mapuche muralist brigade, Aukatun, Collipal's early experiments with painting led him to mega sculptural works made of native wood, which include the *chemamull* on the Ñielol Hill in Temuko."<sup>24</sup> This installation of traditional sculptures displays the impulse to demarcate Mapuche visuality as an anticolonial gesture in territories where such representations are lacking. Collipal himself remarked that,

The idea behind the *Chemamull* was to vindicate the sculptural work of the Mapuche people that had been somewhat forgotten, because it was only focused on the *rehues*. The idea was to go back and renovate this aesthetic vision of wood and that's what we tried to do with Jorge Ancán, who was the person who sculpted the figures of the elders. But it also has to do with a spiritual issue and with reclaiming territorial aspects for the Mapuche people.<sup>25</sup>

Accounting for the cultural production of the 1990s is crucial to resituate contemporary Mapuche visual production within the frame of an extensive genealogy of works that have sought to decolonize the indigenous art

canon. These works help to shape an all-encompassing panorama of struggle and resistance in the political, cultural, social, and also aesthetic spheres, as well as its intersection with decolonizing discourses.

### **BIENNALES OF INDIGENOUS ART: CONTEMPORARY AND HETEROGENEOUS DISCOURSES**

During the first decade of the new millennium, the decolonizing impulse in the struggle for autonomy, self-determination, and cultural vindication proliferated even more in the visual arts, as shown in the work of Bernardo Oyarzún, Eduardo Rapiman, Francisco Hueichaqueo, Lorena Lemunguier, and Jeannette Paillan. In this context, the Biennale of Indigenous Art and Culture was fundamental. Organized by Chile's ex-Ministry of Planification (MIDEPLAN), the National Corporation of Indigenous Development (CONADI), and the Origins Program, the Biennale had two versions in 2006 and in 2008, respectively. The first version took place in the Estación Mapocho and the second in the La Moneda Cultural Center, and both incorporated the production of Indigenous artists from all over Chile. Due to space restrictions, I will only focus on the first version from 2006.

Including the work of 120 Indigenous artists representative of the Mapuche, Rapa Nui, Quechua, Likan, Antai, Kolla, Kaweskar, and Yagan, the event was divided into four sections: "Current Traditional Art," "Current Contemporary Art," "Arts of the Word," and "Performing Arts." According to curatorial director Eliseo Huencho,

Behind the selection of the Biennale there is a plural vision that looks to value the indigenous contribution as an essential part of the roots and culture of Chile. It also hopes to bear witness to the indigenous point of view, featuring representative elements that are used to express discourses toward their own people, the rest of the country, and the world.<sup>26</sup>

Channeling discourses that celebrate the voice of social actors themselves is a relevant gesture due to the historic disparity that still weighs over Indigenous peoples in the institutionalized space of art. Situating the Biennale in the historic discussion over the subaltern's place as a subject of enunciation in contexts of colonial subordination,<sup>27</sup> Huencho writes,

We have [at the Biennale] the resilience of peoples who want to be seen in their real magnitude through their artistic expressions, without stereotypes or labels. We have the full meaning of creations inspired by the ancestral roots which continue to define an aesthetic that, for those of us who belong to indigenous peoples, we identify with. As mentioned [at the Biennale], this ability is a power that you construct; perhaps the first step is to recognize ourselves in all of our social and cultural diversity.<sup>28</sup>

Such remarks display a collective proposal to introduce aesthetic-political coordinates of a common task, pointing toward that “social and cultural diversity,” decisive for reflecting on the Indigenous world not only as heterogeneous, but also contemporary. This dimension was manifested during the Biennale in conferences like “Urban Indigenous Identity” and “Contemporary Works by Indigenous Peoples.” In these discussions, and in the Biennale in general, both the Indigenous urban perspective and the need to reflect on contemporary Indigenous characteristics decentered the representative imaginary that continues to weigh over these groups, where subaltern Indigenous peoples are seen as rural garrisons or as ahistorical subjects fossilized in the past.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has critically explored colonialist imaginaries that sustain an illusory definition of Indigenous subjects as garrisons of the past. Stressing the importance of reclaiming Indigenous contemporaneity and peoples as transformative agents and creators in constant resistance, she writes,

When talking about peoples situated at the “origin,” their contemporaneous condition is denied and they are excluded from the conflicts of modernity. They are granted a residual status and, in fact, they are turned into minorities, boxed into indigenist stereotypes of the noble savage, protector of nature.<sup>29</sup>

These considerations allude to an unquestionable dimension that, since the 1990s, has singled out Indigenous resistance, challenging colonial continuity by emphasizing the condition of transformative, political agents. Therefore, the defense of Indigenous peoples’ contemporaneity and heterogeneity has been a fundamental pillar in the struggle for decolonization, and specifically in what I call the decolonizing cycle in contemporary Mapuche art.

In line with Rivera Cusicanqui, the first Biennale of Indigenous Art provided a platform to gather a “state of the question” of Mapuche art, displaying the heterogeneous and contemporary traits that define it. However, as Nadja Lobensteiner has pointed out, this event also embodied vicissitudes that, for certain Indigenous sectors, meant affiliating themselves with institutions in a context of political persecution of Mapuche activists and rural community members.<sup>30</sup> This situation exposes the discrepancies generated by the multiculturalist cycle and its policies for recognizing cultural diversity in neoliberal contexts.<sup>31</sup> Although Indigenous peoples were valued, the state (which was part of the event’s organization through MIDEPLAN, CONADI, and the Origins Program) was also incriminating and repressing them.

From a genealogical point of view, we must stress that the attempt to build narratives toward collective efforts as a “movement” was not evident in the expository proposal of different Mapuche artists in this context. According to Ancán,

Despite the fact that over the past several years, we have seen a series of promotional initiatives, more or less isolated, by individuals and public and private institutions, such as the “Biennales” or “indigenous art exhibits,” current

artists—specifically, Mapuche artists—have not found a central thread that could allow us to strictly speak of a contemporary art “movement,” recognizable in styles, intentions, or ways of addressing the creative process.<sup>32</sup>

However, I believe the biennales were significant in terms of creating a genealogy of the decolonizing impulse, for they initiated a process that reinvigorated aesthetic visibility in a context of increasing self-identification in the Mapuche world—a Mapuche world that, I would insist, was conscious of its cultural legacy and significance, all the while experiencing an artistic movement that was articulating a channel for anticolonial thought.

### **DECOLONIZING AXLES OF MAPUCHE ART: REAPPROPRIATING AND DISMANTLING COLONIAL LEGACIES IN BERNARDO OYARZÚN AND PAULA BAEZA PAILAMILLA**

The fact that Ancán observes no clear “connecting thread” or “movement” attributable to Mapuche artistic practices is interesting, for it problematizes the validity of such a perspective. In contrast, I argue that there are currently different articulating vectors that characterize the production of contemporary Mapuche art. Elsewhere, I have elaborated several thematic axles in contemporary Mapuche art connected to different levels of the discursive foundations that emerged from Mapuche cultural production in the 1990s.<sup>33</sup> These axles are: 1) the visibilization of colonial violence and continuity over the Mapuche population by the Chilean State in the neoliberalist and extractivist context; 2) the problematization of cultural identity based on heterogeneous strategies of re-ethnification that complicate the category of “Mapuche” through testimonial and/or collective instances; 3) the positioning of the intersectional perspective as a necessary place for debating the trajectory of Mapuche thought; and 4) the reflection on Mapuche imaginaries shaped by both hegemonic and community-based forces, thus straining the notions of tradition and contemporaneity.

These axles are central for criticizing colonialism and reveal a constant and particular elaboration of a decolonizing visibility. Artists such as Eduardo Rapiman, Francisco Huichaqueo, Paula Baeza Paillamilla, Bernardo Oyarzún, Sebastián Calfuqueo, Gonzalo Castro Colimil, Paula Coñoepan, and Marcela Riquelme Huitraqueo, among others, constitute fundamental references of this production. In what follows, I will briefly refer to the fourth axle by analyzing the work of Bernardo Oyarzún and Paula Baeza Pailamilla.

In 2011, Bernardo Oyarzún (b. Los Muermos, Chile, 1963) installed *Rélicas* for the *Informe País* (Country Report) exhibit at the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (GAM) in Santiago. In the installation, Oyarzún included a “replica” of the 100-peso coin that, put into circulation in 2001, displays a Mapuche woman in traditional clothing surrounded by the text: “Republic of Chile. Indigenous Peoples.” Since it entered circulation, this controversial coin has been criticized by the Mapuche people for openly taking advantage of Indigenous iconography and symbols, considering that the state supposedly “values” these aspects but has historically repressed Mapuche

resistance. Oyarzún reproduces a large-print of the coin through a politically charged gesture: he literally hammers a nail into the Mapuche woman's left eye. This violent gesture visibilizes the contradictions over the use and abuse of indigenous images, especially in national emblems. Oyarzún's operation thus taps into a double sensitivity: that which emerges from colonial appropriations registered in the dynamic of exchange value and that which is born as the product of colonial violence over Mapuche bodies.

The second example is the performance *Mi cuerpo es un museo* (My Body is a Museum, 2019), by Paula Baeza Pailamilla (b. Santiago, 1988). The artist criticizes imaginaries of "the Mapuche condition" by drawing on different practices of confinement that have branded the history and representation of the Mapuche and, in general, indigenous bodies, such as the forced shipment to and exhibition at fateful ethnological expositions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in France and other empire-states.<sup>34</sup> We should note that one current problem in the Latin American multiculturalist cycle involves the internal tensions that Indigenous peoples experiment in regard to "valuing" what is understood as "their culture" and the public representations of them in the neoliberal context.<sup>35</sup> In her performance, Baeza Pailamilla shows how museums exhibit Indigenous topics and uphold a colonial discourse through certain languages. One such language is the tendency to collect and exhibit pieces like mannequins that refer to "indigenous characteristics," often times without even showing a face. *Mi cuerpo es un museo* begins with the artist entering the display case of the Galería Callejera, a small mobile gallery that has operated in Santiago since 2014. Sporting a *küpam* (traditional dress), *iküllla* (shawl), and pieces of Mapuche silverwork, Baeza Pailamilla slips on black gloves and covers her face with a black cloth, preventing the audience from recognizing any physiognomic trait. This act urges us to contemplate the indetermination of a non-body, of an unidentifiable non-subject, but which, literally, breaths, lives, and thinks. This gesture—this paradox—reveals the tension between the exhibit regime and a discourse that incorporates indigenous culture, but fails to criticize the condition of historical anonymity that these institutions have weighed over these bodies as "types of Indians." This value and discourse of the necessarily unidentifiable, of "any Indian" because all of them are supposedly the same, is what this performance evokes.

As Claudia Zapata indicates, one transversal axle of decolonization consists of Indigenous peoples critically reinterpreting the past.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, her reading not only deals with representations made by the colonizer, but also—as Frantz Fanon would say—the alienation of the colonized as a result of complex colonial relations. In line with Fanon, these artists criticize hegemonic society and also different aspects of Mapuche society by inviting the audience to break free of inferiority complexes and, simultaneously question the representative order of *mapuchidad*, or Mapuche identity.

Reflecting on the presence of anticolonial visual repertoires in Chile, contemporary Mapuche art clearly emerges as a prolific field from which to consider these contributions. Currently, the political, social, and cultural reformulations which Chile is undergoing in the framework of the constitutional process—led during its first

months by a Mapuche woman, Elisa Loncon—has rendered even more urgent the reflections that Indigenous peoples construct, as well as drawing attention to the historic debt and reparations that the Chilean State holds with these societies as subjects of collective rights. From this perspective, the visualities and discourses that Mapuche artists have developed since the 1990s serve as points of convergence to reflect on these debates. Accordingly, this production visibilizes the necessary relationship between artistic practices and processes of decolonization as a field from which Indigenous society, the Mapuche in this case, has constructed and will continue to construct political thought and aesthetic proposals.

## Notes

1. I am grateful to the Residencia de Investigación Curatorial at the Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo for supporting part of this research. I am also grateful to the editors of this volume for their feedback.

2. These numbers are provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), based on the 2017 census. According to this information, the Mapuche population comprises 1,745,717 people.

3. *Wallmapu* is the transnational, historical and political Mapuche territory, spanning the southern regions of Chile and Argentina. In the case of Chile, it corresponds to the space between the Biobío River and the island of Chiloé.

4. Fernando Pairacan, *Malon. La rebelión del movimiento mapuche 1990–2013* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2014); Pablo Mariman et al., *¡...Escucha, winka...!: cuatro ensayos de historia nacional mapuche y un epílogo sobre el futuro* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2006); Comunidad de Historia Mapuche, *Ta ñi fijke xipa rakizuameluwün. Historia, colonialismo y resistencia desde el País Mapuche*. (Temuco: Ediciones Comunidad de Historia Mapuche, 2013); Comunidad de Historia Mapuche, *Violencias Coloniales en Wajmapu. Awükan ka kuxankan zugu Wajmapu mew* (Temuco: Ediciones Comunidad de Historia Mapuche, 2015).

5. Rolf Foerster and Sonia Montecinos, *Organizaciones, líderes y contiendas mapuche* (Santiago: CEM, 1988); Víctor Naguil, “De la Raza a la Nación, de la Tierra al País. Comunitarismo y nacionalismo en el movimiento mapuche, 1910–2010” (PhD Dissertation, Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2016).

6. Claudio Alvarado Lincopi and Ivette Quezada Vásquez, “Derribar, sustituir y saturar. Monumentos, blanquitud y descolonización” *Corpus* 11(1) (2021), <https://doi.org/10.4000/corpusarchivos.4560>; Elisa Loncon and Belén Villena, “El mapuzugun en las calles de un Santiago insurrecto” *El mostrador*, November 27, 2019, <https://www.elmostrador.cl/cultura/2019/11/27/el-mapuzugun-en-las-calles-de-un-santiago-insurrecto/>.

7. José Bengoa, *La Emergencia Indígena en América Latina* (Mexico City: FCE, 1998).

8. Mabel García, Hugo Carrasco, and Verónica Contreras, *Crítica situada. El estado actual del arte y la poesía mapuche. Rakizuam: Pu mapuce tañi kimvn ka tañi vl zugu fahtepu* (Temuco: Ediciones Universidad de la Frontera, 2005); Pablo Mariman, “Arte y Cultura Contemporánea Indígena: el caso mapuche,” in *Arte otro: problematizaciones desde lo indígena*, eds. Pablo Mariman and Sandra Caqueo (Santiago: Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes/Universidad de Chile, 2017), 36–81; José Ancán, et al., *El bosque de la memoria: reflexiones y testimonios sobre arte indígena* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2017), [https://issuu.com/catedraindigena-uchileindigena/docs/el\\_bosque\\_de\\_la\\_memoria](https://issuu.com/catedraindigena-uchileindigena/docs/el_bosque_de_la_memoria).

9. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

10. Pablo González Casanova, *Sociología de la explotación* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2006), <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/gsdll/collect/clacso/index/assoc/D8778.dir/gonzalez.pdf>.



11. See Enrique Antileo, *¡Aquí estamos todavía! Anticolonialismo y emancipación en los pensamientos políticos mapuche y aymara (Chile-Bolivia, 1990–2006)* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2020); and Claudia Zapata, *Intelectuales indígenas en Ecuador, Bolivia y Chile. Diferencia, colonialismo y anticolonialismo* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2013).
12. See Sergio Caniquero, “Tacum. El grupo de teatro de Ad-Mapu: Un espacio para la práctica anticolonial Mapuche, 1981–1989,” in *Zuamgenolu. Pueblo Mapuche en Contexto de Estado Nacional Chileno, Siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Pedro Canales (Santiago, Chile: Editorial USACH, 2016), 179–204. See also Fernando Pairican, *Malon*; Fernando Pairican, “Los horizontes autonomistas del movimiento mapuche,” *Nueva Sociedad* 295 (2021), <https://nuso.org/articulo/los-horizontes-autonomistas-del-movimiento-mapuche/> (accessed December 1, 2021).
13. Enrique Antileo, “La politización de la cultura y la tradición en los movimientos indígenas de Chile y Bolivia,” *Revista Chilena de Antropología* 40 (2019), <https://revistadeantropologia.uchile.cl/index.php/RCA/article/view/55766>.
14. A recent and unpublished investigation on this material can be found in *Memoria Mapuche* at their digital repository, which incorporates part of this graphic legacy. Available at: <https://memoriapmapuche.cl/graficasmapuche-2/>.
15. José Ancán, “A 25 años de la Wenufoye. Una breve genealogía de la bandera nacional mapuche,” *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, 13 (2018): 283–305, <https://anales.uchile.cl/index.php/ANUC/article/view/49007>.
16. José Ancán, “Montado en un caballo azul: reflexiones acerca del arte mapuche,” *Revista Nüttram* 24 (1991): 213–291.
17. Alesandra Caputo-Jafré, “¿Arte o artesanía? Imaginarios occidentales sobre la autenticidad del arte en culturas indígenas,” *Aisthesis* 66 (2017), 187–210, <http://doi.org/10.7764/aisth.66.9>; Ticio Escobar, *El mito del arte y el mito del pueblo. Cuestiones sobre arte popular* (Santiago: Metales Pesados, 2008); Ticio Escobar, “Culturas nativas, culturas universales. Arte indígena: el desafío de lo universal,” in *Una teoría del arte desde América Latina*, ed. José Jiménez (Madrid: Turner, 2011), 31–52; Marta Penhos and Alba Bovisio, et al., *Arte indígena: categorías, prácticas, objetos* (Editorial Brujas: Buenos Aires, 2010).
18. Elicura Chihuailaf, “Plástica,” *Revista Pentukun* 1 (1994): 91–94.
19. *Ibid.*, 91.
20. Enrique Antileo, *La politización*.
21. The term *mapuchidad*, also sometimes *mapuchicidad*, generally alludes to the characteristics that sustain and recognize anything constitutive of Mapuche identity and, in this sense, its use is indicative. Although we can recognize common cultural elements (language, territory, history, for example), traditional and contemporary visions are usually reduced to what would define this condition, precisely by the irreducibility of thinking of the Mapuche world from one sole perspective.
22. Maribel Mora Curriao, “Identidad mapuche desde el umbral o la búsqueda de la mismidad étnica en el Chile de los noventa,” in *Intelectuales indígenas piensan América Latina*, ed. Claudia Zapata (Santiago: Tinkuy, 2007), 29–44.
23. *Ibid.*, 37.
24. Pablo Mariman, *Arte y Cultura Contemporánea Indígena*, 48. A *chemamull* is a traditional Mapuche wood, of anthropomorphic appearance, located in religious spaces (*ngillatuwe*) and cemeteries (*eltuwe*). These *chemamull* are also located in the *rewe* with ceremonial trees, flags, spears, pots, and jugs. Their use is ceremonial, as opposed to the current context in which they are “appropriated” as adornments by Chilean institutions.
25. Cristian Collipal, “Chemamull en Cerro Ñielol,” *Araucanía Noticias*, March 17, 2011. <https://araucanianoticias.cl/2011/chemamull-del-cerro-ielol/0317865>.
26. Ministerio de Planificación, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena and Programa Orígenes, *Memoria Primera Bienal de Arte Indígena* (Santiago: Urrea y Asociados, 2006).
27. Gayatri Spivak, “¿Puede hablar el subalterno,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 39 (2003): 297–364. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=105018181010>.
28. Ministerio de Planificación, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena and Programa Orígenes, *Memoria*, 9.
29. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakaxutxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010).

30. Nadia Lobensteiner, “Patrimonialización e indigeneidad: políticas de identidad y políticas culturales en el conflicto chileno-mapuche” (PhD Dissertation, University of Tübingen, 2019).
31. Claudia Zapata, *Crisis del multiculturalismo en América Latina* (Mexico City: CALAS, 2019), <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/d3800522-0d6f-4768-ae5f-4c986f2c7816/9783839445259.pdf>.
32. José Ancán, “Encierros, exhibiciones, disecciones, re-uniones... Apuntes a propósito de Kalül Trawün de Franciso Huichaqueo,” in *Kalül Trawün. Reunión del Cuerpo*, ed. Francisco Huichaqueo (Santiago, 2012), [https://issuu.com/hernanrd/docs/libro\\_museo\\_bellas\\_artes-espaa\\_\\_ol\\_e](https://issuu.com/hernanrd/docs/libro_museo_bellas_artes-espaa__ol_e).
33. Cristian Vargas Paillahueque, “Algunas consideraciones sobre la escena del arte mapuche contemporáneo,” *Revista Historia Mapuche* 4 (2018): 33–41; Cristian Vargas Paillahueque. “El proyecto descolonizador en el arte Indígena Contemporáneo en Chile y Bolivia (2006–2018)” (MA Dissertation, Universidad de Chile, 2021).
34. Rolando Báez and Peter Mason, *Zoológicos humanos: fotografías de fueguinos y mapuche en el Jardín D’Acclimatation de París, siglo XIX* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2016)
35. Enrique Antileo, *La politización de la cultura*; Claudia Zapata, *Crisis del Multiculturalismo*.
36. See Claudia Zapata, *Intelectuales Indígenas*, 2019.

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## CHAPTER 19

# *Video Trans Americas: The Networked Body and Bordered Violence*

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Catherine Spencer

The work of Juan Downey in video, performance, and sculpture constitutes both an attempt to foster networked communication, and an exploration of the intersecting geographical, embodied, and psychosocial borders that fracture efforts to de-hierarchize information relays. In the 1990 statement “The Smell of Turpentine,” Downey compared Marcel Duchamp’s playful provocation that painters become addicted to turpentine with his own immersion in media technologies. Downey credited this experience to his fascination with “the will of something personal made public. A fragile signal is tenderly revealed, with the meaning of a bomb. An internal fact is unconcealed, like removing a glove with guts.”<sup>1</sup> The startling image of a glove being peeled back to reveal fleshy, viscous innards conveys how Downey’s engagement with video combined technocratic and utopian proclamations with a vivid awareness of how the body—in all its messy corporeality—might disrupt and divert the very communication networks it attempts to instigate.

As Downey expounds, these networks supersede the individual subject to encompass the transnational, global, and even planetary: “communication is attempted while trying to find the world-wandering flock of exiles that constitute my country.”<sup>2</sup> This statement immediately calls to mind Downey’s biography, as an artist born in Chile who traveled first to Europe and then to the United States, arriving in Washington DC in the mid-1960s and working between the latter city and New York into the 1970s, before undertaking multiple journeys across the Americas during this decade. However, we might equally interpret Downey’s assertion as a disavowal of the nation-state, instead positing the possibility of a dispersed meta-country defined by exilic experience. This consciously dis-located perspective became particularly pronounced after the 1973 CIA-backed military coup in Chile led by General Augusto Pinochet and murder of President Salvador Allende, which sharpened Downey’s critique of US imperialism in Latin America and his increasing ambivalence toward New York as a hegemonic art world site.

Downey's concerted attempts during the 1970s to supersede, alongside his simultaneous acknowledgment of, the border regimes that control and police mobility saw him undertake a project which can be compared to Walter Mignolo's deconstruction of the "idea of Latin America," notably his observation that: "Internal colonialism was [...] a trademark of the Americas after independence and was directly linked to nation-state building."<sup>3</sup> Downey's videos, embodied performances, and alternative mapmaking consistently sought to unmake the colonial history of the Chilean nation-state, as well as the precarization, racialization, and impoverishment of Latin America through continental divisions, and of Latinx people in the US through border regimes and racial capitalism.<sup>4</sup> He pursued this through a series of interventions into cybernetic discourse, critiquing systems of communications exchange that grew out of the Global North's military agendas.

The videos, performances, and drawings that relate to Downey's long-term project *Video Trans Americas* in the 1970s form a powerful—as well as challenging—manifestation of the drive in dissident cultural production across the Americas, articulated by Macarena Gómez-Barris, to "push beyond the boundaries of the nation-state by means of transnational analyses that make connections between racial, extractive, and military capitalism."<sup>5</sup> The artist and writer Coco Fusco warns against reading Downey's work in Latin America, and in particular his engagement with Indigenous praxis, as an exploration of "his own roots," given his status as a "middle-class, [and] thoroughly Westernized," artist, while also observing that "his notion that Chilean culture is based on appropriation [...] has yet to be viewed as integral to his sense of identity."<sup>6</sup> This chapter, building on writings by Julieta González and Bill Anthes which have contextualized Downey's work in relation to cybernetics and decolonization respectively, shows how his fragmentation of the constructed and repressive nature of Chile, and by extension "Latin America," resulted from his unique contribution to cybernetic thinking, in which the networked technologies of media feedback are not divorced from the drives, demands, and vulnerability of the body, but deeply imbricated with the "fragile signal" of the gut-filled glove.<sup>7</sup>

## CYBERNETIC DECENTERING

Downey moved to Washington DC in 1965 at the invitation of José Gómez-Sicre, head of the Visual Arts Unit in the Organization of American States (formerly the Pan-American Union). Prior to this, after graduating from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, he studied for several years in Paris at the printmaking studio Atelier 17 with the British artist Stanley William Hayter.<sup>8</sup> During his time in Washington, Downey co-founded the New Group with Douglas Davis and Ed McGowin, which undertook happenings and performances in the city, and participated in works by the Argentine artist Marta Minujín. The latter included Minujín's video installation *The Soft Gallery* (1973) at the Harold Rivkin Gallery in Washington, and her happening *Interpenning* (1972) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for which Downey created an "invisible architecture" using



electronic waves.<sup>9</sup> He also forged connections with the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, presenting a solo exhibition of his early sculptures in 1969. Built in collaboration with the engineer Fred Pitts, many of these were interactive kinetic works which established a basic feedback loop with the viewer. *Do Your Own Concert*, as its title suggests, offered audiences the chance to generate a soundtrack by pressing a series of buttons. Similarly, when a viewer clapped their hands in front of *The White Box*, this activated lights across the sculpture's surface.<sup>10</sup>

The framework within which Downey presented these sculptures was explicitly cybernetic, drawing on a discourse which had emerged within the context of World War II, spearheaded by Norbert Wiener's investigations at MIT into ways of making radar detection systems on airplanes more efficient. As Julieta González has shown in her scholarship on Downey's relationship with cybernetics, while his sculptures of the late 1960s map onto what has become known as first-order cybernetics—concerned with regulation, control, and the creation of recursive feedback loops—his subsequent work developed in tandem with the interest in reflexivity that characterized second-order cybernetics, which envisioned the reactive subject as not simply determined by an environment, but rather contributing dialectically to the construction of their networked context.<sup>11</sup>

Cybernetics was a fundamentally interdisciplinary body of thought, expanding from mathematics, statistics, and computing to incorporate psychology, sociology, anthropology, and psychiatry.<sup>12</sup> There were many cross-overs with the system theory devised by the biologist Ludwig van Bertalanffy, who in a distinct but related way emphasized the interconnectivity of organic life.<sup>13</sup> A number of art historians have shown not only how cybernetics and system theory were key reference points for artists working from the 1950s to the 1970s, particularly those involved with media technologies, but also how artists themselves made key contributions to this evolving array of ideas.<sup>14</sup> This was particularly so in areas where, as Andrew Pickering has elaborated, understandings of cybernetics moved away from Wiener's emphasis on control, prediction, and homeostasis, and instead emphasized change and responsiveness.<sup>15</sup>

While cybernetics and system theory developed primarily in institutions in the US and Europe, particularly the UK, a large number of practitioners and institutions across Latin America engaged with both discourses.<sup>16</sup> The Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) in Buenos Aires pursued interlinked exhibitions which took "art systems" as their organizing metaphor during the 1970s, and artists who featured in its projects, notably Luis Fernando Bénédict, engaged consistently with cybernetic theories and writings.<sup>17</sup> Such invocations of cybernetics drew critiques from some contemporary commentators, such as Marta Traba (subsequently expanded on by the artist Luis Camnitzer), for their reliance on artistic and scientific frameworks from the Global North.<sup>18</sup>

Undeniably, these crossovers need to be understood within the wider context of what Joanna Page identifies as the imperialist networks of scientific funding in Latin America, dominated by US institutions.<sup>19</sup> Yet Chile was also the site of an ambitious project initiated by the Allende government to fuse cybernetics with socialism. Project Cybersyn, developed by a team in Chile led by the engineer Fernando Flores, in collaboration with the

British cybernetician Stafford Beer, sought to use the possibilities to manage complex systems apparently offered by cybernetics to meet the challenges posed by the rapid nationalization of private industries undertaken by Allende. As Eden Medina has shown in her study of Cybersyn, Beer's approach to cybernetics rejected models of control based on domination, and instead sought responsive, homeostatic engagement with organizational complexes.<sup>20</sup> For Pamela M. Lee, Cybersyn's attempt to connect real-time information from multiple different enterprises constituted a form of "data-driven collectivism," but ultimately became "a relic of a failed utopia" when it was destroyed during the coup, before it could be implemented.<sup>21</sup> Equally, Karen Benezra warns against interpreting Cybersyn as placing cybernetics at the service of socialism, instead pointing to the ideological complexity of the Popular Unity government Allende headed, and to the way in which Cybersyn fused managerial cybernetics with design in attempt to exploit labor along Fordist models which treated workers as "transmissible bodies of information."<sup>22</sup> Cybernetics and systems theory potentially offered ways of counteracting hegemonic structures, but paradoxically because they necessitated acknowledgment and awareness of systemic control in the first place.

The work Downey created during the 1970s nuances the utopianism of socialist cybernetics. Rather than an alignment with nationalist aims, it moreover manifests a rerouted cybernetic potential to supersede national and continental border zones, that, following Page, might be said to decolonize the science of cybernetics, while attending to the challenges posed by embodiment to systematizing flows and their neoliberal tendencies.<sup>23</sup> The locational politics of Downey's position is significant in this respect. Despite being based in New York and immersing himself in the downtown scene of the early 1970s, he never felt rooted there. In a 1974 letter to the curator Jane Livingston at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Downey described how: "I recently returned (full of Andes) from Peru and Bolivia, where *Video Trans Americas* was enthusiastically received. Lots of hard work: beautiful life: super-quality! Although I have big plans in work; I still do not adjust to New York. Will I ever?"<sup>24</sup> While associating with the Raindance Corporation of video practitioners, and regularly contributing to the magazine *Radical Software*, Downey questioned the supposed hegemonic centrality of New York in relation both to the art world and to global politics.<sup>25</sup>

Downey's disaffection with New York became particularly pronounced after the 1973 coup, and shaped the *Video Trans Americas* project referenced in his letter to Livingston, which he worked on between 1973 and 1976, and then again between 1976 and 1979 in a series of linked but distinct phases.<sup>26</sup> This project grew out of multiple journeys Downey made to countries including Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, and Chile, accompanied at different points by his wife Marilys Downey, her son Juanfi Lamadrid, daughter Titi Lamadrid, and members of the Raindance Corporation. On each visit, he made recordings which he then played back in situ, creating what the artist described as "infolded" feedback loops: "*Video Trans Americas* is a videotaped testimony extending from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. It is a form of infolding space while evolving in time—to play back a culture in

the context of another; the culture in its own context; and finally, editing all the interactions of time, space, and context into a work of art.”<sup>27</sup> Downey also showed the videos together in exhibitions, some of which involved a live performance response.

Downey’s notes from the journeys that generated *Video Trans Americas* between 1973 and 1976, parts of which would become incorporated into the soundtracks of the video themselves, logged the trip by car over the US/Mexico border in summer 1973, from Tennessee into Monterrey, followed by Mexico City, La Venta, and Yucatán. Later that year in December he traveled to Peru. In Lima he reflected on his physical and psychological distance from New York, writing that while the US city was a “fabulous” place where “ideas coexist, interact, copulate, rip-off and proliferate,” “there is nothing in New York that I wish to remember right now. The essence and the tenderness are in Latin America.”<sup>28</sup> Downey’s travels prompted him to reflect: “After ten years spent in Spain, France, and the USA, I realized that I would never adapt to the developed world and, conversely, my own third world would never be a market for my cultural aesthetic makings. A perpetual cultural shock was easy to handle at first: but age only increased the gap and the *saudade* for a country that no longer exists.”<sup>29</sup> These sensations of rupture were exacerbated by the fact that Downey could not enter Chile from Peru due to the military coup, and his travel notes are interspersed with references to assassinations and self-exhortations never to forget.<sup>30</sup> Downey’s work emerges from a desire to counter the bordered violence of neoliberalism, whereby states simultaneously reinforce their boundaries against people but open them up to the free flow of capital, instead centering bodily connectivity through cybernetic loops.<sup>31</sup>

### THE BODY IN THE NETWORK

The writings Downey published in the New York-based magazine *Radical Software*, such as the 1973 article “Technology and Beyond” which celebrated “cybernetic technology operating in synchrony with our nervous systems,” need to be situated within his experience of geographical slippage and destabilization during this decade.<sup>32</sup> Downey’s was ultimately a qualified vision that balanced the technocratic claims of cybernetics with an intimation of the eroticism and violence that threaten to undo predictable systems. Although these ideas would arguably receive their most sustained treatment in *Video Trans Americas*, they inflected the many works in video and performance that Downey undertook from New York, which can be approached as attempts not merely to establish communicative networks between embodied subjects, but as equivocal statements in communicating estrangement.

This tension can be detected even in apparently utopian projects such as *Three Way Communication by Light* of 1972, presented at Central Michigan University and the New York Avant-Garde Festival. The work involved an intricate, complex setup, comprising three performers placed in a triangle formed by laser beams. Their faces

were painted white, and each was provided with a hand mirror, a laser-voice receiver, a super-8 film projector, and a laser beam for voice transmission. The performers could communicate through the laser beams, which were not immediately visible to the audience; Downey periodically filled the space with fog to reveal their flickering trajectories. Meanwhile, the super-8 projectors screened footage of the performers onto each other, their whitened faces offering screens across which the images moved. Individual performers could watch the process by which their features fused with those of another using the handheld mirror. Downey videoed this setup for about half an hour, after which television monitors transmitting the recorded footage took the place of the performers.

Although in *Three Way Communication by Light* each performer gazed at their own reflection in a mirror, what they saw was their face overlaid by that of another. *Three Way Communication by Light* reconfigured the scene of cybernetic feedback as a multidirectional communication through which transformations—or, in Downey’s terminology, “transfigurations”—might occur via the interpenetration of consciousness.<sup>33</sup> The effects of *Three Way Communication by Light* were not as transparent as Downey’s descriptions of the work and his use of video apparatus indicate. When shown at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 2017, they conveyed less a sense of one united, transcendent collectivity forged through the self-corrective feedback of mirrors and film, than a divided, confused, and multiple self continually dissolving into pieces. The video footage of the performers attempting to communicate from beneath the layer of super-8 projection is uncanny and disconcerting. The viewer sees the three different faces assailed by shadows and movement, their contours repeatedly lost in those of another. The result is hardly a seamless fusion: fragments of different faces remain distinct and identifiable, sliding over each other in eerie formations.

*Three Way Communication by Light*’s treatment of subjectivity echoes the notion of a “divided self” put forward by R. D. Laing in his 1960 book of this name, which applied cybernetic ideas to psychoanalytic models of the psyche.<sup>34</sup> While Laing rejected mechanistic and behaviorist models for the relationship between the subject and the world—“account[s] of man as a machine or man as an organismic system of it-processes”—he nonetheless attended to the relationship of the individual to their environment, arguing that the manifestation of so-called madness was less an expression of a single person’s psyche, than an indication of the irrationality of society as a whole.<sup>35</sup> For all *Three Way Communication by Light*’s aspiration to networked communication and the creation of an interlinked psyche, it also explored the threat of bodily dissociation and division, encompassing the difficulty of interrelation as much as its desirability.

Around 1974–75, between the many trips that would result in *Video Trans Americas*, the photographic partnership of Harry Shunk and Janos Kender created four photographs of Juan and Marilys Downey at their White Street studio in New York. Each image positions their naked bodies in relation to a Portapak video camera. One is jokey and deliberately overblown, Downey angling the camera as penis substitute at his wife’s vagina, while

she smiles down at him with an air of resigned tolerance. Another reiterates the equation between the camera's invasive gaze and phallic dominance: Downey stands on the building's fire escape, the sun illuminating his skin, as he aims his priapic device upward. In the most striking photograph, Juan and Marilys stand against a curtain as if posing for a nude studio shot (Fig. 19.1). However, the studio setting is thrown off kilter by the way in which Marilys's head is hooded in the hanging sheet. Downey's gesture toward her could be one of encirclement and protection, but for all its playfulness, the image is shadowed by violence and objectification. Their feet stumble together in an intimate yet awkward dance, threatening to become entangled in the wires that snake between video camera and monitor.

While this might initially appear to be scene of instant feedback, the monitor seems to relay another moment altogether, transmitting what looks like a playback shot of a woman lying horizontally, breasts exposed. This disrupted erotic-technological unification finds its apotheosis in a photograph where Shunk has used movement to generate a psychedelic image in which Marilys and Juan can just be made out at the center of a blurry vortex. The series is striking because it indicates how, in even the most ostensibly technocratic understandings of video, frustrated, unintelligible, and even irrationally violent urges surge through its apparatus.<sup>36</sup> The traumatic side of what Laing described as the "unembodied" self thus shadows the utopian dispersal of body into fluid information envisaged by Downey's work.<sup>37</sup> In the studio photograph of Juan and Marilys, although the artist and his wife are in close physical proximity to each other, the obliteration of Marilys's face introduces the specter of violence and inserts an insurmountable division between them. The possibility of erotic communion is displaced onto the monitor, where fantasy plays out on a disconnected, dissociated plane. Their physical bodies, meanwhile, are stuck, frozen in a frustrated and partial embrace.

This series of photographs, although seemingly idiosyncratic and even incidental to Downey's wider work, are instructive for how they figure the body's experience of networked subjectivity, and their reference to the confrontational eroticism and power imbalances that shape the dematerialized interactions facilitated through communications media. Within the context of *Video Trans Americas*, this bodily insight has geographic and geopolitical implications. The video from the series entitled *Yucatán* from 1973, for example, opens with the camera sweeping across a vista of empty canoes and lattices of lily pads on a river. It then charts the journey from the Mayan ruins of Tulum, which dramatically overlook the sea, to Palenque further inland in Chiapas, combining kaleidoscopic segments of black-and-white footage with a soundtrack of Juanfi reading from the diaries, together with the intense rasping of cicadas. But rather than a documentary study of the sites which can be easily followed, the video camera moves increasingly erratically, swinging across the ruins, zooming in and out on their architecture and refusing to settle. At one point toward the end, the camera captures another figure shooting further footage, but despite this self-reflective attention to information capture, the shifts of the video camera mitigate against coherence or transparency and induces a vertiginous sensation in the viewer.<sup>38</sup>





FIGURE 19.1 Shunk-Kender, Juan and Marilys Downey, New York, c. 1974–75. Black-and-white photograph. Getty Research Institute (GRI 2014.r.20.15473).



As well as screening video recordings made in different countries as they moved from place to place, Downey presented simultaneous screenings of the tapes in the US at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse (1974) and the Whitney Museum of American Art (1976). In these presentations, Downey deployed multichannel video, live performance, and closed-circuit video projection, screening images across the spaces and videoing the interactions between audiences and images. At the Everson Museum of Art, the dancer and choreographer Carmen Beuchat—a frequent collaborator in Downey’s happenings and performances—moved underneath the *Debriefing Pyramid* (1974), which consisted of a circle of twelve monitors suspended from the ceiling showing footage gathered during his travels.<sup>39</sup> The photographic documentation of this performance positions Beuchat’s body as a sensitized receptor of the screened images, corresponding with cybernetic models of bodily integration with the environment. Downey also videoed Beuchat as she danced, and a thirteenth monitor placed in the floor of the plinth on which she moved relayed her messages back to her.

*Video Trans Americas* might seem to be a bid for integration, putting into practice the networked connectivity that Downey attributed to technology, when for example he described how the Telstar satellite facilitated a communications architecture that bridged distance and collapsed geographic borders: “The structure of our city is the means of communication that maintains our unity. My family in Chile is part of this invisible city when we speak by phone via Telstar. Thus, the satellite and its orbit around the earth exist as a living neural cell.”<sup>40</sup> Yet as Benjamin Murphy has argued, the temporality of *Video Trans Americas* was not the immediate present, but the recursive, disrupted, and fragmented time of playback; the project thus also speaks to loss and miscommunication.<sup>41</sup> In the Everson Museum of Art screening-performance, Beuchat’s body functioned as both sensitized receptor, and a potential point of rupture and divergence. As Carla Macchiavello has shown in her in-depth analysis of this collaboration between Downey and Beuchat, and of Beuchat’s improvisatory choreography in particular, the work can be read as an interrogation—signaled by the “debriefing” of the title—which at once registered the interconnected pyramidal architectures of Mesoamerica (notably Teotihuacán, Palenque, Tajín in Mexico and Tikal in Guatemala) but also questioned their mediation.<sup>42</sup>

The temporally and geographically spaced screenings of *Video Trans Americas* disclosed the chimerical dream of networked contiguity, shattering it through gaps, elisions, and failures to connect. *Video Trans Americas* shows how the fantasy of the networked psyche is indissolubly bound to its obverse: a fragmented psyche, the product of a subjectivity that is continually faced with what Laing termed “unembodiment” across time and space as well as its concomitant reduction to an object, as earlier works like *Three Way Communication by Light* intimated.<sup>43</sup> Beuchat’s dancing form under the *Debriefing Pyramid*, dominated by the hanging television screens, conveyed the challenge of processing information, and the pressures it places on the body.

The first phase of *Video Trans Americas* between 1973 and 1976 anticipates Downey’s later video recordings created with the Indigenous Yanomami on the border between Brazil and Venezuela during the second phase

after 1976, whereby he attempted to re-route ethnographic models of information gathering using video feedback. While these videos inevitably reinscribe the colonial structures in which ethnography is implicated, despite their problematic power imbalances, they also destabilize the documentary model.<sup>44</sup> When screened in the US, these works retained potential decolonial effects through their emphasis on Indigenous knowledge formation, together with their challenge to the legacies of colonialism in the bordered nation-states of Latin America. A computerized text exchange which Downey participated in together with the US critic Rosalind Krauss, the British sculptor Henry Moore, and the German artist Joseph Beuys in 1976 starkly illuminates this potentiality. The dialogue was organized by Donald Lupton, a computer scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology working in a lab funded by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. A crucial moment in the exchange occurs when Downey refutes Krauss's conceptualization of modernist avant-garde activity, responding to her definition by saying: "Tell that to the Amazonians. They make art but they don't declare it as such. What we are dealing with here is a concept. The term art is a concept. Concepts do not represent given compartments in reality that are our instruments that deal with it."<sup>45</sup> Tellingly, Krauss retorts that she is "not interested in what the Amazonians make in this case [...]. The Amazonians may make quite fascinating things but they do not contribute to this discourse."<sup>46</sup> Downey's reaction is at once nonplussed and damning: he questions why Krauss is not interested in Indigenous creativity in the Amazon, asserting that "art has already engaged the political and philosophical."<sup>47</sup>

Krauss's refusal to engage with Indigenous art in the Americas underscores the importance of Downey's intervention in foregrounding ephemeral Indigenous architecture, alongside the vast pyramid complexes of sites such as Tikal and Teotihuacán during the first phase of *Video Trans Americas*. That the exchange—or rather missed communications—between Downey, Krauss, Moore, and Beuys occurred on a cybernetic computer network sponsored by DARPA underscores the way in which Downey's own networking attempts sought to question the instrumentalized and militarized flows of information which characterized increasingly neoliberal regimes in the Americas.

## BLOODY TRACES

Downey's activist interventions comparably addressed the geopolitical fractures and divisions relating to the construct of "Latin America" in *Video Trans Americas*. Although these aspects of his oeuvre are often not considered in direct relation, they have been brought together in exhibitions such as *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature* (2017). In 1972, Downey initiated *Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus*, during which he and a group of friends made a giant papier-mâché octopus for a peace march in New York. Each tentacle of the octopus was labeled with a US firm linked to interference in Latin American politics. Downey videoed the making process and the ensuing protest, framing the pre-march discussion, debate, and creation as equal to the final statement in the street.

In a 1974 action that grew out of this earlier use of street performance, but specifically addressed the Chilean coup, Downey invited participants to gather outside the International Telephone and Telegraph headquarters in New York, an organization whose activities encompassed communications, transport, aerospace, and energy, and which was closely involved in the US political establishment. Downey printed T-shirts with the slogan “Chile sí, junta no” encircling blood-like smears. Downey videoed the march, which he edited and presented as part of *La Frontera* (1976) within *Video Trans Americas* (Fig. 19.2).<sup>48</sup> The stains on the T-shirts evoked the blood spilled during the coup. They contrasted the disembodied communication networks presided over by the International Telephone and Telegraph headquarters with a moment of visceral specificity, while the protest itself showed how such networks, rather than offering de-hierarchized communication, are in fact centralized nodes of imperial power.

If in other statements and works Downey eulogized global telecommunications networks, the *Chile Sí, Junta No* participants with their bloodied clothes registered the concrete bordered violence that supposedly dematerialized networks might uphold, as well as treating the body as a vital point of divergence from their regimes. The ephemeral, oppositional performance moreover established alternative connections with the graffiti and street interventions developed in Chile itself during the months and years after the coup, notably by groups such as Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA), which as Sophie Halart has shown, sought with their most famous action *No +* (1983) to reconstitute the urban public sphere.<sup>49</sup> Although produced in New York, *Chile Sí, Junta No*'s re-signification through the combination of slogans and stains printed on clothes worn by breathing, marching bodies established a set of semiotic actions displaced from technocratic media into an affective DIY collectivity, contributing from afar to the “cuts and fractures” that Nelly Richard identifies as constituting the artistic *escena de avanzada* which emerged in opposition to the Chilean dictatorship during the 1970s.<sup>50</sup>

The scholar Candice Amich situates the creation of precarious utopian zones through embodied performance in Latin American and Latinx art within the context of a neoliberal framework grounded in “the radical breakdown in communal and collective life that the Chilean coup originated across rural and urban regions of the Americas.”<sup>51</sup> For Amich, the coup can be construed as “the site of the original neoliberal disaster” in Latin America, encapsulating the regimes of racism, extractivism, and exploitation that dominated colonial powers and the nation-states which followed.<sup>52</sup> As Mignolo argues, this process involves “the elites celebrating their dreams of becoming modern while they slide deeper and deeper into the logic of coloniality.”<sup>53</sup> In a comparable way to the performances that Amich considers, Downey's foregrounding of the murderous Chilean coup, the traces of blood that mark the moment of obliteration, and the subsequent strengthening of nationalist borders, underscores how it is the body that suffers neoliberal's consummations of colonial violence, but nonetheless forms a site of potentiality for networked resistance.

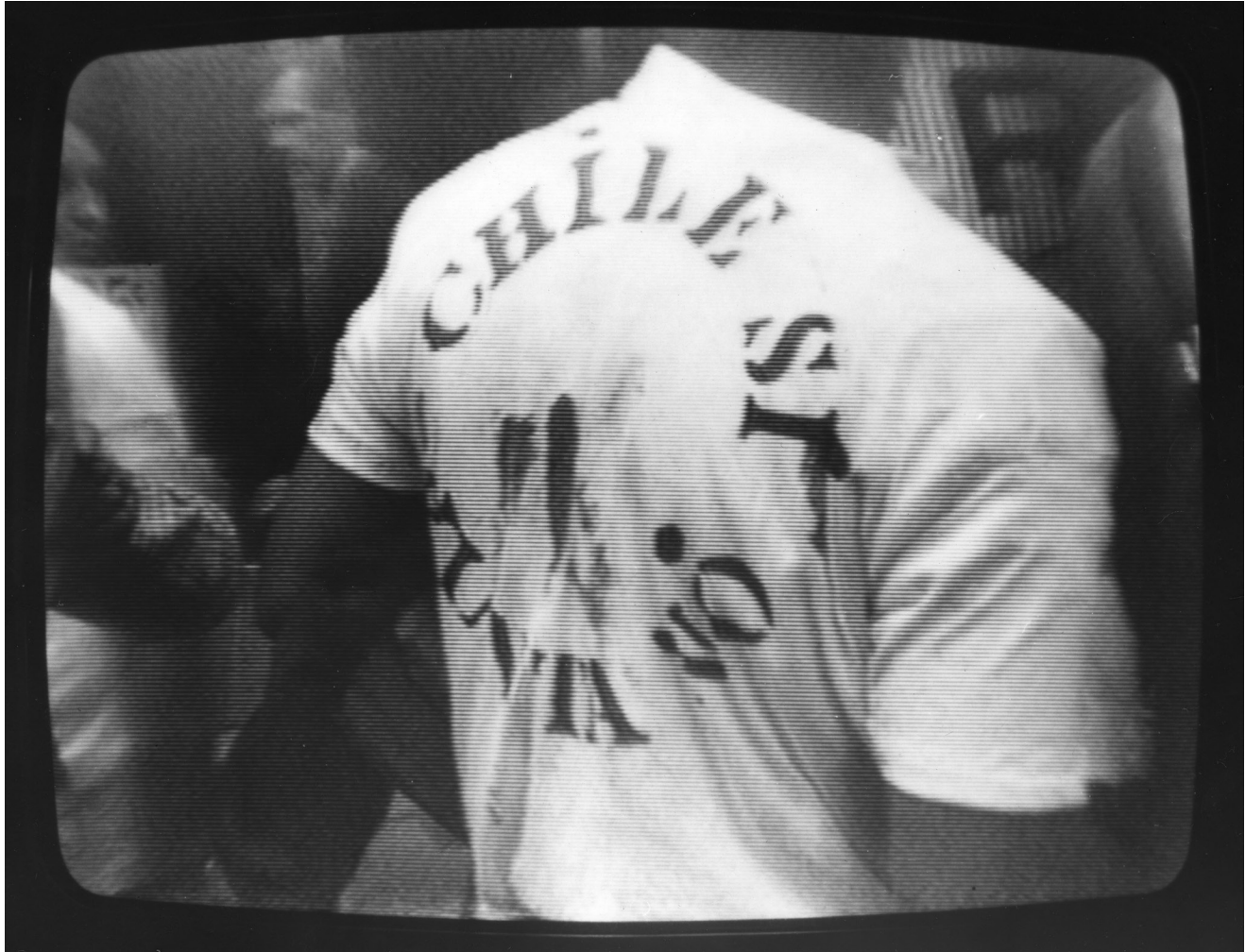


FIGURE 19.2 Juan Downey, *Chile Sí, Junta No.* 1974. New York. Video still.

### Notes

1. Juan Downey, "The Smell of Turpentine," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, eds. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture in association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), 343.
2. Ibid.
3. Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 86.

4. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 95–148; Leticia Alvarado, *Abject Performances: Aesthetic Strategies in Latino Cultural Production* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1–23; see also the foundational texts Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza=La frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987); and Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America,” *International Sociology* 15(2) (2000): 215–232.
5. Macarena Gómez-Barris, *Beyond the Pink Tide: Art and Political Undercurrents in the Americas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 69–70.
6. Coco Fusco, “Ethnicity, Politics, and Poetics: Latinos and Media Art,” in *Illuminating Video*, eds. Hall and Fifer, 308.
7. Julieta González, “From Utopia to Abdication: Juan Downey’s Architecture without Architecture,” in *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect*, ed. Valerie Smith (Cambridge, MA and New York: MIT List Visual Arts Center and Bronx Museum of the Arts, 2011), 59–74; Julieta González, “Juan Downey’s Communications Utopia,” in *Juan Downey: Una utopía de la comunicación=a communications utopia*, eds. Julieta González, and Arely Ramírez Moyao (Mexico City: Fundación Olga y Rufino Tamayo, 2013), 10–81; Julieta González, “Beyond Technology: Juan Downey’s Whole Earth,” *Afterall* 37 (Autumn/Winter 2014): 17–27; Julieta González, “The Use of Cybernetics in Juan Downey’s Early Work,” in *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature*, eds. Robert Crouch and Ciara Ennis (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions and Pitzer College Art Galleries, 2017), 81–95; and Bill Anthes, “Activating ‘The Difference which Makes a Difference’: Juan Downey’s Decolonial Field,” in *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature*, 177–183.
8. *Juan Downey of Chile*, exhibition pamphlet, Pan-American Union, Washington DC, September 23 to October 12, 1965, A0008; Juan Downey, Guggenheim Museum Artist Files, Guggenheim Archives, New York. Claire F. Fox notes that Gómez-Sicre and the PAU Visual Arts Section attempted to promote a “continental consciousness” whereby “Latin America would exchange parochial and fractious nationalisms for a progressive and outward-looking regionalism that did not dispense with the national altogether but instead featured it as one tier on a progressive scale of affective spatial and communal registers linking American metropolises to the rest of the world.” Downey’s work however developed in a way that built on, but ultimately challenged and questioned, this state-sanctioned model. Claire F. Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 6.
9. Jimena Ferreiro Pella, “Interpenning, 1972,” in Victoria Noorthoorn et al., *Marta Minujín: Obras 1959–1989* (Buenos Aires: Malba-Fundación Costantini, 2010), 86.
10. Accounts of works taken from the exhibition catalog: *Juan Downey: Electronic Sculptures* (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), n. p.
11. González, “The Use of Cybernetics in Juan Downey’s Early Work,” 89. González draws on the important writing of N. Katherine Hayles to make this argument; see N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
12. Andrew Pickering, *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
13. For the crossovers but also the contrasts between cybernetics and system theory, see Manfred Drack and David Pouvreau, “On the history of Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s ‘General Systemology’, and on its relationship to cybernetics—Part III: convergences and divergences,” *International Journal of General Systems* 44(5) (2015): 523–571.
14. This literature is extensive, but on art and cybernetics see especially María Fernández’s examination of Jasia Reichardt’s influential 1968 exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity: The Computer and the Arts* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, “Detached from HiStory: Jasia Reichardt and Cybernetic Serendipity,” *Art Journal* 67(3) (Fall 2008): 6–23; and Kate Sloan, *Art, Cybernetics, and Pedagogy in Post-war Britain: Roy Ascott’s Groundcourse* (New York: Routledge, 2019). Art’s links with system theory have arguably received greater attention, as a result of Jack Burnham’s foundational 1968 *Artforum* essay “Systems Esthetics.” On the impact and implications of Burnham’s thinking, see Francis Halsall, *Systems of Art: Art, History and Systems Theory* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Luke Skrebowski, “All Systems Go: Recovering Jack Burnham’s ‘Systems Aesthetics,’” *Tate Papers* 5 (1 April 2006), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/all-systems-go-recovering-jack-burnhams-systems-aesthetics> (accessed 23 April 2013).
15. Pickering, *The Cybernetic Brain*.



16. See Rodrigo Alonso, *Sistemas, acciones y procesos, 1965–1975*, trans. Jaime Arrambide, Laurence Henaff, and Agustín Bruni (Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2011); and Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

17. Vanessa Badagliacca, “Life Inside a System: Eco-critical Stances in the Art of Luis Fernando Bénédict, 1968–72,” *Burlington Contemporary* 5 (November 2021): <https://doi.org/10.31452/bcj5.benedict.badagliacca> (accessed May 2, 2022). I examine CAYC’s complex relationships with systems, structures and cybernetics in “Navigating Internationalism from Buenos Aires: The Centro de Arte y Comunicación,” *ARTMargins* 10(2) (2021): 50–72; and in “After Dematerialization, Cybernetics: Art, Systems and the Centro de Arte y Comunicación,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* blog, April 8, 2022, <https://jhiblog.org/2022/04/08/after-dematerialization-cybernetics-art-systems-and-the-centro-de-arte-y-comunicacion/> (accessed May 9, 2022).

18. Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas Latinoamericanas, 1950–1970* (1973; Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005), 143; and Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 248–250.

19. Joanna Page, *Decolonizing Science in Latin American Art* (London: UCL Press, 2021), 9.

20. Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende’s Chile* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2011), 28.

21. Pamela M. Lee, *Think Tank Aesthetics: Midcentury Modernism, The Cold War, and the Neoliberal Present* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 138 and 142.

22. Karen Benezra, *Dematerialization: Art and Design in Latin America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 136.

23. Page, *Decolonizing Science in Latin American Art*.

24. Juan Downey, Letter to Jane Livingston, February 4, 1974, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Curatorial Office Records, COR.0005.0.RG: Juan Downey, George Washington University Libraries Special Collections.

25. William Kaizen traces the cybernetic interests of the *Radical Software* group, which included the video artists Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, in “Steps to an Ecology of Communication: *Radical Software*, Dan Graham, and the Legacy of Gregory Bateson,” *Art Journal* 67(3) (2008): 86–107. The name Raindance Corporation was a deliberate pun on the RAND Corporation, signaling an inversion of its neoliberal values.

26. In 1976, supported by a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation, Downey traveled to Venezuela; from August to October 1976 he stayed with the Indigenous Guahibo community and from November 1976 to May 1977 with the Yanomami. Downey’s stepdaughter Titi Lamadrid was involved in this later phase (notably *The Laughing Alligator* of 1979).

27. Juan Downey, *Videotapes and Drawings*, exhibition pamphlet, Everson Museum of Art, November 19, 1977 to January 15, 1978, A0008: Juan Downey, Guggenheim Museum Artist Files, Guggenheim Archives, New York.

28. Juan Downey, “Lima, Peru, December 28th, 1973,” from “V.T.A. First Journeys 1973–1976,” reprinted in Nuria Enguita Mayo, Juan Guardiola Román, and Marta Arroyo Planelles, *Juan Downey: With Energy Beyond These Walls=Con energía más allá de estos muros* (Valencia: Institut Valencià d’Art Modern IVAM, 1998), 331.

29. Downey, “Lima, Peru, December 28th, 1973,” 331.

30. Juan Downey, “Mexico City, next morning, July 28th, 1973,” from “V.T.A. First Journeys 1973–1976,” reprinted in Enguita Mayo, Guardiola Román, and Arroyo Planelles, *Juan Downey: With Energy Beyond These Walls*, 330.

31. Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, trans. John Pluecker (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018), 46.

32. Juan Downey, “Technology and Beyond,” *Radical Software* II, no. 5 (Winter 1973): 2

33. Juan Downey, “Three Way Communication,” *Radical Software* II, no. 5 (Winter 1973): 5.

34. Pickering, “Gregory Bateson and R. D. Laing,” in *The Cybernetic Brain*, 171–211.

35. R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (1960; London: Penguin, 2010), 23.

36. These are dynamics that the US critic Rosalind E. Krauss influentially ascribed to early video art in New York as a form in “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” *October* 1 (1976): 50–64.

37. Laing, *The Divided Self*, 69.

38. See Juan Downey, *Yucatán*, 1973, 28:09 min, black and white, sound, courtesy Electronic Arts InterMix.



39. On Beuchat see Gabriela Rangel, “Carmen Beuchat and Interdisciplinary Pollinations in the 1970s,” *BOMB* 120 (Summer 2012): 12–22. See also Archivo Carmen Beuchat, <https://carmenbeuchat.org/> (accessed May 9, 2022); and the essays collected in *Cuerpo y visualidad: reflexiones en torno al archivo*, ed. Jennifer McColl Crozier (Santiago: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2019; Kindle), which is linked to the documentation gathered on the website.
40. Downey, “Technology and Beyond,” 3.
41. Benjamin Murphy, “Juan Downey’s Ethnographic Present,” *ARTMargins* 6(3) (2017): 44.
42. Carla Macchiavello, “Red invisible real: entretejiendo video, danza y archivos en torno a *Video Trans Americas’ De-Briefing Pyramid*,” in *Cuerpo y visualidad*, ed. McColl Crozier, 106.
43. See Laing, “The Embodied and Unembodied Self,” in *The Divided Self*, 65–77. The work might also be read in relation to the histories of psychoanalysis in Latin America, particularly the connections between psychoanalysis and the trauma of dictatorship traced by Nancy Caro Hollander, *Love in a Time of Hate: Liberation Psychology in Latin America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); and Bruno Bosteels, *Marx and Freud in Latin America: Politics, Psychoanalysis, and Religion in Times of Terror* (London: Verso, 2012).
44. See Nicolás Guagnini, “Feedback in the Amazon,” *October* 125 (Summer 2008): 91–116. For an important critique of both Guagnini’s position and Downey’s use of video with the Yanomami community, which argues that the use of instant feedback reiterates one of the most problematic tropes in anthropological literature—that of the “timeless,” ahistorical nature of the othered subjects under study—see Murphy, “Juan Downey’s Ethnographic Present,” 28–49.
45. Juan Downey, in Joseph Beuys, Juan Downey, Rosalind Krauss and Henry Moore, “The Arpanet Dialogues,” March 22, 1976, reprinted in *Juan Downey: Una utopía de la comunicación=a communications utopia*, eds. González, and Ramírez Moyao, 326.
46. Rosalind Krauss, in “The Arpanet Dialogues,” 326.
47. Downey, in “The Arpanet Dialogues,” 326.
48. Anthes, “Activating ‘The Difference which Makes a Difference,’” 183.
49. Sophie Halart, “Cogs and Clogs: Sabotage as Noise in Post-1960s Chilean and Argentine Art and Art History,” in *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America*, ed. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra and Sophie Halart (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 121. See also Camilo D. Trumper, *Ephemeral Histories: Public Art, Politics, and the Struggle for the Streets in Chile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).
50. Nelly Richard, “A Border Citation: Between Neo- and Post-Avant-Garde” (1990), reprinted in *The Insubordination of Signs: Political Change, Cultural Transformation, and Poetics of the Crisis*, trans. Alice A. Nelson and Silvia R. Tandeciarz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 24.
51. Candice Amich, *Precarious Forms: Performing Utopia in the Neoliberal Americas* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 16.
52. Amich, *Precarious Forms*, 24; Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
53. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 58.

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## CHAPTER 20

# Una mirada sobre afuera/A View from the Outside: Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile: An Audiovisual Documentation

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Verónica Tello

¿Cuál sería la mirada—o las miradas—desde afuera sobre la escena chilena?

Nelly Richard

### MI

When the invitation to write this chapter arrived in my inbox, I was only just beginning to attempt to write the history of “MI.” MI could stand for *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile since 1973* (1986), an iconic monograph in Chilean art history and criticism authored by Nelly Richard, published by the Australian journal *Art & Text*.<sup>1</sup> But here MI stands for something else: an exhibition that toured across Australia in 1986, titled *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile: An Audiovisual Documentation* (Fig. 20.1). While the text, *Margins and Institutions*, managed to migrate across time and space, burrowing itself in the depths of Chilean art historical discourse, the archives of its sister, the exhibition MI, were left behind in Australia where I live, waiting for a transnational exhibition history to be charted.<sup>2</sup>

Over time, MI has suffered the fate of forgotten archives, and is barely written about in Chilean or Australian art history. When it is cited, it is in passing, and its details—its materials, agents, and critics—are not properly engaged. In Nelly Richard’s *Reescrituras y contraescrituras de la Escena de Avanzada* (2020), for example, some of the MI archives are published, a pamphlet, install shots, and slide-artworks, I believe for the first time since the MI exhibition.<sup>3</sup> But several errors are introduced,<sup>4</sup> the key one being that in the image captions Richard is cited as the sole curator. Yet, MI was co-curated by the eminent Australian-Chilean artist Juan Dávila, a figure who

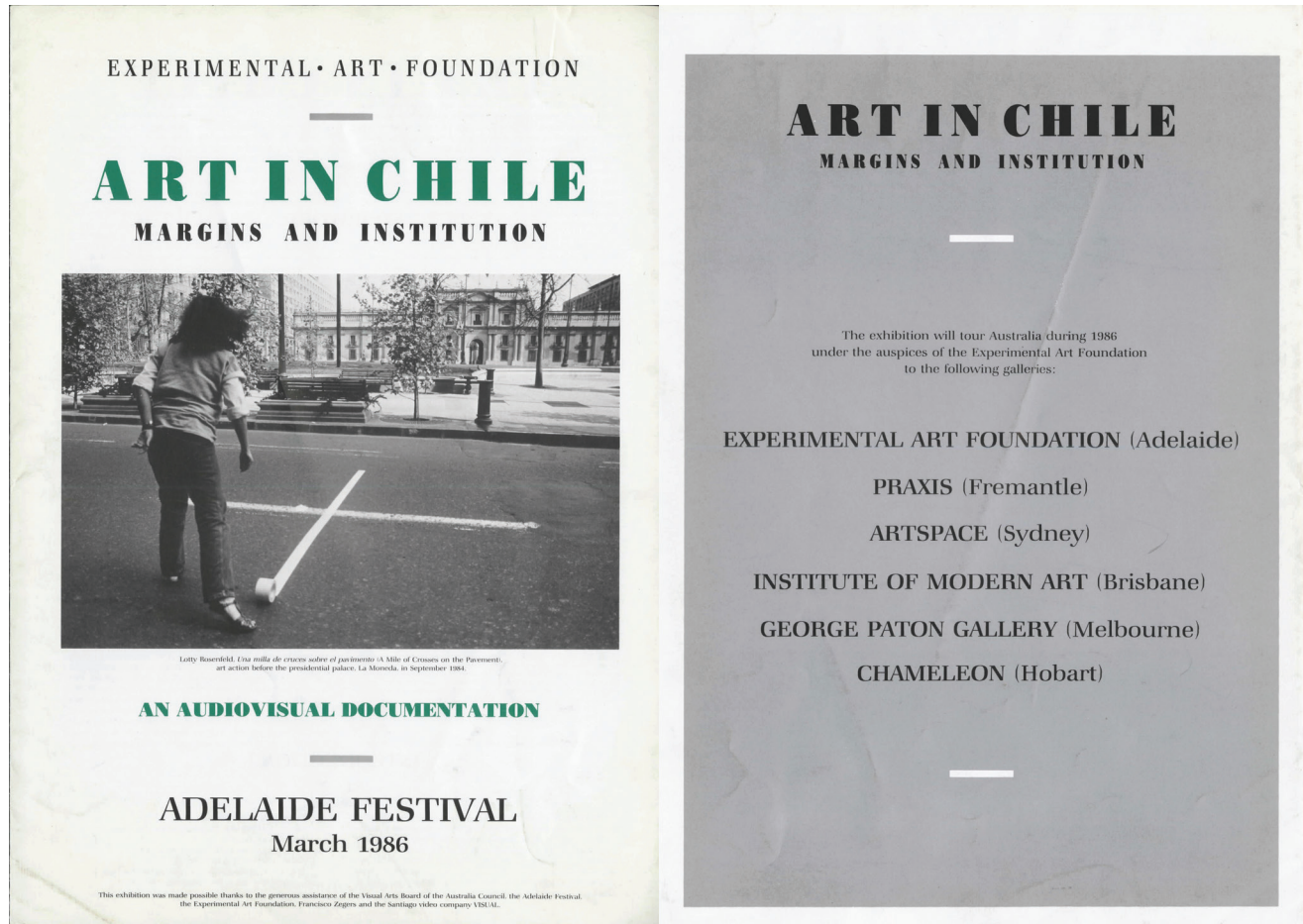


FIGURE 20.1 Exhibition pamphlet. *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile: An Audiovisual Documentation*. 1986. Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide Biennial.

has had a complex and fraught relationship with factions of the Chilean art scene,<sup>5</sup> not least those that Richard influences, which may explain his omission from the captions. In *Reescrituras y contraescrituras de la Escena de Avanzada* Richard shows no real interest in MI and instead reflects on already historicized and theorized exhibition histories: *Chile Vive* (1987, Madrid), a large-scale exhibition, curated by Rafael Blázquez Godoy, offering a broad, arguably apolitical, overview of practices that emerged during General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990), and the 1982 Paris Biennale, which saw Richard curate the first international exhibition of



the *escena de avanzada* (the advanced scene) a group of artists including Colectivo Acciones de Arte (CADA), Carlos Leppe, Eugenio Dittborn, Gonzalo Díaz, Lotty Rosenfeld, Diamela Eltit, who, according to Richard, developed conceptual artistic strategies informed by French post-structuralism, and to a lesser extent the work of the Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School, to contest the repression and censorship of the dictatorship. Richard's discussions on transnational exhibitions forged during the dictatorship (i.e., the Paris Biennial and *Chile Vive*) focus on both the international framing and reception of such Chilean art, and the critical, if not also problematic, role of transnational collaborations in exhibiting the *escena de avanzada* out of context. Can the same framework be applied to MI?

Certainly, as the archives show, like say the 1982 Paris Biennial, MI also predominantly focused on the *escena de avanzada*, exhibiting all the artists named above; and on the cover of MI's exhibition pamphlet you'll note that Rosenfeld's *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (*A Mile of Crosses on the Pavement*, 1984) is featured. But it's still worth asking, given that MI came into being through the support of both Dávila, who left Chile in 1974, and notable Australian art institutions with which Dávila held relationships, does MI trouble the narratives of transnational exhibitions forged by Richard? Can MI offer an otherwise marginal view of the international circulation of Chilean art after 1973?<sup>6</sup> Much of Richard's writing on the *escena de avanzada*'s transnational exhibitions, including on the 1982 Paris Biennial and the 1984 Biennale of Sydney (for which Richard was Chilean Commissioner),<sup>7</sup> is concerned with a particular geopolitical tension. That is, the tension between the aesthetics and politics of *peripheral emergencies* structured by the Pinochet dictatorship and an *international circuit* structured by Western art historical values effectively alienating artworks from their means, and context, of production.<sup>8</sup> One could read MI—which traveled across Australia, including via biennale circuits, and then London, as I will detail below—as being in lockstep with Richard's sustained grappling with how the outside saw *la avanzada* while simultaneously attempting to give value to their work through international institutions. But MI is different. As mountains of archival evidence show, MI (and *Margins and Institutions*) was part of a research project led by the eminent Chilean-Australian artist Juan Dávila and Richard, initiated after the 1984 Biennale of Sydney.<sup>9</sup> This project would take the form of a book written by Richard, *Margins and Institutions*, and an exhibition, MI, curated by both Dávila and Richard.<sup>10</sup> At least on Dávila's behalf, MI was an attempt to import into Australia a support structure through which he could grapple with being a body, at a time when Chileans were being dubbed “insurgents” in the Australian news media,<sup>11</sup> and as a radical transnational migratory body that could contest the borders of Australia and Chile.<sup>12</sup>

I am myself, like Dávila, a Chilean-Australian, and bring this to bear in my engagement with MI. Or in other words, in this essay I grapple with a question Richard posed some forty years ago while anticipating the reception of Gonzalo Díaz and Eugenio Dittborn's works at the 1984 Biennale of Sydney: “¿Cuál sería la mirada—o las miradas—desde afuera sobre la escena chilena?” (“What will be the external view—or the views—of the Chilean

*escena de avanzada?*”). The partiality and specificity of my position—for example, I did not train as an art historian in Chile, but rather in Australia—undoubtedly effects how I read MI. I come to MI from a migrant, transnational body. As such, I make this explicit and in turn construct a personal epistemology and exhibition history of MI. Writing in an embodied and performative mode, I reflect on how I’ve come to know what I know about MI and why it matters to me—I draw on autobiography and trace my migration from Chile to Australia in 1987 as a kid; my unexpected encounter in Australia with Carla Macchiavello’s work on the *escena de avanzada*, which spurred me to conduct archival research on the histories of *Margins and Institutions* and MI; and, finally, the dialogues I’ve had with Dávila since I learned about MI, and how this has shaped my own thinking on Chilean and Australian art history. When I write this history of MI, I write in an embodied way to stress the “I” because I want to make plain the specificity of the position from which I write, rather than give way to the usual totalizing art historiography so common in my discipline, where objectivity and universality are the default positions. The diasporic, linguistic, and generational differences between me and the subjects I focus on here (*MI/Margins and Institutions*, Dávila and Richard) make clear that no history, or archive, is ever complete. Various omissions and speculations ensue from the limitations of my position. Embodied modes of art historiography are still emerging, even if they are more advanced in other areas, founded on the politics of visibility and voicing to enable historically marginal ways of writing and thinking to come to the fore.<sup>13</sup> My embodied writing practice aims to decenter national art histories and their erasure of border subjects.<sup>14</sup> The project is personal, as all art-historical projects should be—why else bother to be with the past in the present, and carry the weight of history?

### “I” VIS-À-VIS MI

I left Chile (at the age of 6) the same day that Pope John Paul II arrived in Santiago de Chile—April 1, 1987. The airport, Aeropuerto Internacional Arturo Merino Benítez, was shut to the public. Farewells, waves, hugs, kisses, and last-minute declarations or affirmations between family and friends were prohibited. Pinochet, dressed in white military garb and surrounded by armed *milicos*, was at the airport to personally receive the Pope. After passing through security, my mum, brother, and I boarded our plane. We were just 3 of the 23,305 Chileans who crossed the Pacific to find sanctuary in Australia between 1973 and 1990.

Some of us left after the coup of 1973; others after the riots of 1983 or 1986, or at other points it became timely to flee the country, as Pinochet moved to *eliminar* Allende’s allies. For others, our departure correlated with more insidious forms of violence born out of Pinochet’s extermination of social welfare and support structures for the poor. Or his systemic imposition of *la patria* (fatherland)—a patriarchal society aided and abetted by neoliberal logics—lowering wages for jobs usually performed by women, such as teaching and care work; cutting welfare for

single mothers; and defunding or privatizing community centers that supported poor women.<sup>15</sup> These cuts made it impossible for women to survive outside of marriage, even if those marriages were structured by sexualized and gendered violence, as was the case for my *mamá*.<sup>16</sup>

The Chileans who came to Australia were not the intellectual elite or romanticized exiles of Europe or the United States.<sup>17</sup> Those who came to Australia were factory workers, childcare workers, cleaners, taxi drivers, and low-level administrative workers; exiles/migrants who were in and out of work, who didn't know proper English, who weren't white (or white enough). They were exiles/migrants who found that the *territory*, with its monuments to colonial heroes of the nation-state, made no space for them, so they preferred to live instead on the *border*.

Living on the border was characterized by a state of in-betweenness. In Australia, I became part of generation 1.5, or 1.5G: first-generation migrants who arrive old enough to remember a different culture but who are young enough to acculturate and learn how to pass as white, with various degrees of success.<sup>18</sup> Passing was easy for me. When I was little, I was given the nickname *lechecita* (milky) as my skin was a distinctly lighter shade than most of my family. Rather than feeling pride for embodying “revered whiteness” as a “symbol of purity,” I became hyperaware of how complexion establishes racial hierarchies even within mixed-race families.<sup>19</sup> My genealogies span Spanish (maternal lineage), Italian (paternal great-grandma/*bisabuela*), French (paternal great-grandpa/*bisabuelo*), Polynesian (paternal great-grandma/*bisabuela*), Afro-Peruvian (paternal great-great-grandma/*tatara abuela*) and Cantonese (paternal great-great-grandpa/*tatara abuelo*) heritage. When people asked me, “Where are you from?” at first, I'd reply, “Santiago,” to which people would respond, “San Diego?” Australians would hear Santiago as San Diego so often that, for a period, it was easier for me to pretend that I was from San Diego. Or sometimes someone might stare at me and ask, “Italian?” Since this question usually came from a member of the Italian diaspora seeking nothing more than a smile and affirmation, I offered it up.

As the Chicana thinker Gloria Anzaldúa writes, to make oneself appear, the first step is to take an inventory:

*Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja.* Just what did she inherit from her ancestors? ... (Anglo, Spanish, Indigenous) ... Pero es *difícil* differentiating between *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto* (that which is inherited, acquired or imposed). She puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been a part of.<sup>20</sup>

The Chicana border subject takes inventory of the disparate, at times conflicting, histories that have been inscribed on their body, including those that are concealed, repressed, or erased. They learn the power of taking critical inventory, and how (embodied) history can generate otherwise elusive ways of being in/with time.

It wasn't until one of the editors of this book, Carla Macchiavello, came to Australia that I registered that my transpacific subjectivity had a history and archive which I could utilize to make myself appear through art history in/out of Australia and Chile.

#### LEARNING ABOUT THE CANONIZED VERSION OF MI

It's July 7, 2016. My friend, the artist Sarah Rodigari, texts "Do you know about this?" with a link that opens to details of an event:

*Contesting Marginality: Three lectures on recent Chilean art and art historiography by Carla Macchiavello. Discipline and Ensayos*, along with Gertrude Contemporary, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and The Alderman, are pleased to present three lectures on recent Chilean art and art historiography by Chilean art historian, Carla Macchiavello. The lectures will take place at three different venues in Melbourne between Tuesday 12 and Thursday 14 July. All are free to attend.<sup>21</sup>

I live in Sydney, 800 km away from Melbourne, so instead of going to the lectures I google "Carla Macchiavello" and find her PhD thesis:

Marking the Territory: Performance, Video, and Conceptual Graphics in Chilean Art, 1975–1985

A Dissertation Presented by

Carla Macchiavello

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History and Criticism, Stony Brook University, May 2010

I begin reading the introduction. Macchiavello discusses Pinochet's control of Chile's geopolitical and ideological frontiers via school curricula that emphasized Chile's founding patriarchs/colonizers, museums that mounted exhibitions of "traditional landscape painting," and tourism campaigns boasting Chile's natural riches and icons (*la cordillera/Andes*).<sup>22</sup> On page 2 she articulates how, after 1973, a group of artists working across photography, performance, and installation in small ad hoc galleries aimed to generate an alternative geography of Chile,

featuring shanty towns, hacked-up images of *la cordillera* and desolate deserts (where Pinochet was burying bodies). By page 3, Macchiavello begins to explain how such a group of artists came to be known as the *escena de avanzada*. She argues that Richard first articulated the characteristics of *la avanzada* in her 1981 text *Una mirada sobre el arte en Chile*, in relation to their use of non-traditional mediums, including performance and installation, and experiments with semiotics, language, discourse, embodiment, and visuality. But, as Macchiavello clarifies, it wasn't until 1986 that Richard properly articulated the politics of the *escena de avanzada*, claiming that it emerged as a matter of survival after the coup, which had brought the “breakdown of a whole system of social and cultural references,” leaving both artists and the public with historical amnesia amid pervasive and brutal censorship, producing an ambience of general dislocation.<sup>23</sup> Because Macchiavello doesn't mention the title of Richard's 1986 publication, I scroll down to the bottom of page 4 of her thesis to check the footnote:

<sup>13</sup> Nelly Richard, *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile since 1973* (Melbourne: Art & Text, 1986), 17.

A footnote is an integral yet secondary aspect of an essay. It supports its body, but it also generates new flights of inquiry for the reader. For this selfish reason, it's the part that many writers love most. Footnote 13 in Carla's PhD moves me to search through my university library's database for *Art & Text*, an Australian journal I was vaguely familiar with, thanks to my undergraduate studies. I take note of its catalog number, 705 60, and since I'm on campus, I walk over to the library. The tall stacks that hold the university's collection of art journals are located on the library's ground floor. Each journal is bound in red leather; their titles, printed on the spine, glimmer in gold:

*Art & Australia*  
*Art in America*  
*Art Network*  
*Art & Text*

*Art & Text* is a fabled publication in Australia.<sup>24</sup> Founded by the enigmatic, energetic, and charming wunderkind, Paul Taylor, it is mainly known for introducing French post-structuralism into the Australian art world, translating the work of Jean Baudrillard, Michel Serres, and Roland Barthes, and mobilizing a dialogue between Australian art and “international”—read European/North American—art discourses more broadly.<sup>25</sup> Like Chile, Australian art discourse is structured by a sense of inferiority, of being an antipodean periphery lagging behind the “real” avant-garde located in art world “centers” (New York, Paris, Berlin, London).<sup>26</sup> As a result,

Australia—perhaps more than Chile—has alienated itself from its critical southern location and its colonial context, instead over-identifying with the Northern Hemisphere (especially the UK and the US). As such, it's not surprising that existing histories of *Art & Text* almost exclusively focus on the journal's translations of European continental philosophy and its critical dialogues with New York postmodernism.

However, *Art & Text* was in dialogue with foreign bodies other than those in Europe and North America, and indeed with bodies across the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> Even though *Art & Text's* transpacific collaborations with Chilean art workers remain underacknowledged, they were sustained and significant; their publication of *Margins and Institutions* didn't emerge from a vacuum. As I have recounted elsewhere, in an essay with my collaborator Sebastián Valenzuela-Valdivia, for almost a decade (1981–1990) Dávila worked with *Art & Text* to create a voice for Chilean artists and art writers, especially the work of Richard, and also helped to solicit the input of other Chilean cultural workers, including the philosopher Patricio Marchant and the designer and publisher Francisco Zegers.<sup>28</sup> Essays, interviews, and artist pages by Dávila, Richard and, to a lesser extent, Marchant appeared in issues 4, 8, 9, 12/13, 15, 16, and 23/24 of *Art & Text*, and issue 21 was wholly dedicated to Richard's writing, culminating in the special issue-cum-monograph *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile since 1973*. In 1985, Dávila and *Art & Text* editor Paul Foss initiated the Art & Criticism Monograph Series, which published as its first book *The Mutilated Pietà* (1985), a monograph on Dávila's appropriations of Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1499), featuring a long essay by Foss.

It is barely known that in collaboration with the Santiago-based designer/publisher Zegers the Art & Criticism Monograph Series also published two Spanish-language books for circulation in Santiago: *La estratificación de los márgenes* (1989) by Nelly Richard; and *El fulgor de lo obscuro* (1989), which focused on the paintings of Dávila and contained essays by Richard, the Peruvian art critic Gustavo Buntix and the Chilean art historian Carlos Pérez Villalobos. In 1990, when the dictatorship ended and the media, along with other institutions, was democratized, the Art & Criticism Monograph Series (and more precisely Dávila) also supported and funded Richard to publish the first seven editions of the influential Santiago-based magazine *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. This list of publications reveals the extent of Dávila's collaborations with Chilean art workers, *Art & Text* and the Art & Criticism Monograph Series, including but far exceeding *Margins and Institutions*.

#### **DÁVILA AND THE INITIATION OF TRANSNATIONAL EXHIBITION HISTORIES BETWEEN CHILE AND AUSTRALIA**

One can go a step further and overlay the transpacific history of art criticism charted above with a transpacific exhibition history between Chile and Australia initiated by Dávila. As Valenzuela-Valdivia and I worked out, MI was part of a broader paradigm of cultural exchange across the Pacific, largely supported by Dávila after 1973.



Through a brainstorming session we connected Dávila's arrival in Melbourne in 1974 and his first Australian show (*The Mechanism of Illusion in Dávila*, 1977), with the first publication of Richard's writing in Australia (*Los mecanismos de la ilusión en Davila*, 1977); the first presence of the *escena de avanzada* artists in Australia (Díaz, Dittborn, Richard) at the 1984 Biennial of Sydney, alongside Dávila's work; and the first proper extensive presentation of the *escena de avanzada*—and to an extent the broader cultural scene after 1973—via MI in 1986 (which toured to no less than four Australian art institutions and two biennials).

Drawing on our distinct knowledges, we also mapped how Dávila played a role in supporting (by advocating and networking) Dittborn's *Another Periphery* (1985–1986) and *La Casa, The Letter, the House* (*Transperiphéria*, 1989–1990) as well as Paz Errázuriz *Adam's Apple, Chile—Transvestites* (1989–1990). Inevitably, because of Dávila's friendships, these exhibitions feature artists that were either firmly part of, or at some point aligned with, the *avanzada*. Even if the commitment to supporting various artists only partly or loosely associated with *avanzada* has not been properly registered in the archives of Chilean art history, it is an important paradigm of post-1973 transnational exhibitions, the histories of which we are only now forging.

## MEETING DÁVILA

Not long after finding footnote 13 in Macchiavello's PhD thesis, I emailed Kalli Rolfe, Dávila's gallerist. I introduced myself and outlined my research, specifying that I wanted to learn more about his collaboration with Richard, including MI. Kalli replied, "We're busy preparing shows for the Melbourne Art Fair and Spring 1863 ... write back in a month," which I did. When she responded, she told me to meet Dávila at 10 a.m. at Sugo, an Italian café located on the high street of one of Melbourne's eastern suburbs. I arrived at 9.55 a.m. I was 37 and he was 73: it had been thirty-one years since I came to Australia, and for him forty-four.

After many months of talking to him, I finally get the courage to ask, "Can I have access to your archives, including your correspondence with Nelly?" These archives—the Papers of Juan Davila—are held by the National Library of Australia under the title. The library's catalog states: "Correspondence with Nelly Richard, 1976–96" is embargoed "until 20 years after the death of Juan Davila."<sup>29</sup> In spite of the embargo and his hesitation to discuss Richard and the *escena de avanzada*, his commitment to supporting research on MI, especially from a diasporic/Australian-Chilean perspective, won and he let me in.

## DÁVILA'S ARCHIVES

I've visited Dávila's archives at the National Library of Australia on two occasions, each time learning a bit more about MI. The archives mainly contain correspondence between him and Richard. The handwriting is often

rushed and intimate, presuming knowledge of the topics that I don't often have. My Spanish is good enough, but at times I feel inadequate, or as if I don't have an authentic connection to the history I'm writing about, but then, via Anzaldúa, I am reminded that this feeling of inauthenticity, of broken language and history, is how the diasporic subject connects to, and withdraws from, nations.<sup>30</sup> What did I inherit by way of being a border subject? How do I reconstruct the history of MI at the interstices of national art histories, Australia/Chile, English/Spanish, Juan/Nelly?

Perhaps this history can only be constructed relationally, born out of the connections and incongruities between us.

### RECONSTRUCTING DÁVILA, AND MI, AT THE BORDER

After he crossed the Pacific in 1974, Dávila once told me, "I couldn't catch a break"; curators would ignore him or say things like "All you Latin Americans are the same," implying they were derivative of European avant-gardes.<sup>31</sup> In 1977, the gallerist, Georges Mora, offered him his first Australian show at Tolarno Galleries (and his second Australian show in 1981, also at Tolarno). Paul Taylor, editor of *Art & Text*, went to see Dávila's monumental paintings at Tolarno, which played with both the genre of history painting and signifiers of Australian patriarchy (such as the settler-colonial hero, Ned Kelly), and asked Mora for a meeting with Dávila. Soon after Taylor invited Dávila to contribute *Art & Text* for the first time.

In issue 4 of *Art & Text* (1981), Dávila continues his analysis of the nexus of nationalism, colonialism, and gender, though not through painting but rather mediums highly suitable for a magazine, an essay and a photo-based artwork (drawing on Dávila's interest in embodied performativity).<sup>32</sup> In issue 4, across a three-page spread, Dávila appears in drag as 'Spider Woman,' donning black fishnet stockings, a black leather dress, and long black wig (the work is entitled "Spider Woman in *Playing with Fire!*" 1981).<sup>33</sup> Dávila's artwork draws on the novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976), authored by the queer Argentine author, Manuel Puig. In Puig's novel, two cell mates and lovers—a transfeminine window dresser (Molina) and a cis male political prisoner (Valentin)—immerse themselves in plots, images, and characters from actual and fictional films.<sup>34</sup> After Puig, Dávila experiments with how images and his body can exceed socially existing normative dyads of gender (male/female) and nationalism (citizen/exile, Australian/foreigner). In his essay, "Spider Woman in Australia," which accompanies Dávila's artwork in issue 4 of *Art & Text*, Dávila critiques the disembodied nature of Australian art discourse, arguing that its producers are alienated from their location, unable to bring to bear a critical settler-colonial position or circumvent the toxic patriarchal colonialism that underpins Australian culture. In response, dressed in drag, he proclaims to insert himself "as a transgression," making space for non-hetero, non-European subjectivity capable of manifesting an embodied relationship to a colonial antipodean context.<sup>35</sup>

After his first collaboration with *Art & Text*, the writings of Richard and the discourses and aesthetics of the *escena de avanzada* began to appear in *Art & Text* with some regularity. Dávila has said that he was pleasantly shocked that an Australian art institution would give time to an “‘avant-garde movement at the end of the world’ working within the military regime.”<sup>36</sup> To publish this work from the other side of the Pacific in Australia was, he said, “a strong gesture,” as it acknowledged the role of the *escena de avanzada* and its “fight against the system—in our case, the dictator in Chile. It wasn’t a challenge, it was a life and death situation.”<sup>37</sup> His rallying of support for the *escena de avanzada* via not only *Art & Text* but also through the numerous other institutions and exhibitions he cultivated (as detailed above) was an act of sustained solidarity, a means to transmit their images, stories, and experiences across the Pacific to exceed the limits of the dictatorship. In this light, increasingly I view MI as part of Dávila’s broader solidarity work, and even part of an important genealogy of other curator/artists’ solidarity work after 1973, spanning: The Venice Biennale’s 1974 *Libertà per il Cile (Freedom for Chile)* program, wholly dedicated to the Chilean struggle; and *Art Festival for Democracy in Chile* (1974) organized by the collective Artists for Democracy (Cecilia Vicuña, Guy Brett and David Medalla) at the Royal College of Art, featuring the work of Vicuña and Roberto Matta.

It’s not insignificant that for Dávila MI, and the correlative project *Margins and Institutions*, was a means to historicize art “after 1973” and “make possible [the] voice” of Chilean artists in Australia.<sup>38</sup> From the outset, it was an “archaeological”<sup>39</sup> project, which mined the archives of local artists, curators, and art historians<sup>40</sup> to trace and “analyse the relations existing between art and the social and political institutions of a country such as Chile, where a system of censorship prevails.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, MI, like *Margins and Institutions*, was a means to interpret the disparate yet connected cultural manifestations of the post-1973 period, examining how and what strategies had survived, and under what conditions they could appear/disappear<sup>42</sup> (and certainly one proposition is that they could appear through the support of international/Australian art institutions).

For Dávila and Richard, in MI, the history of a scene would manifest through a slide-art program—spanning 756 images including the work of artists such as the usual suspects, Leppe, CADA, Rosenfeld, Dittborn, Díaz, but it also interestingly included figures that had either nothing or little to do with the *escena de avanzada*, such as APJ, Sonia Montecino, and Ana María Lopez, demonstrating that MI sought to map the heterogeneity of art after 1973 (a matter which requires further discussion but is beyond the scope of this essay). To offer further commentary on the cultural history of art after 1973, the exhibition also included the video essay *Art in Chile: Context and Interventions* (1986), especially commissioned for MI and produced and edited by Richard and Juan Enrique Forch, which combined archival and documentary footage of talks, galleries and artworks that were important in the post-1973 era<sup>43</sup> (especially those shaped by the *escena de avanzada*). Much of the footage was shot at the end of 1985 while Dávila was visiting Santiago and collecting the slides and materials for MI.

In the spirit of further excavating key discourses of the post-Allende period, in late 1985, Dávila decided to include an extensive library in the exhibition.<sup>44</sup> The “MI Library,” as I’ve come to think of it, spans over three hundred documents gathered by Dávila during his visits to Santiago or mailed to him by friends in Chile while he lived in Melbourne. The Library presents Dávila’s collection of art publishing and literature after 1973 under the categories “Artists Postcards,”<sup>45</sup> “Art Magazines,”<sup>46</sup> “Artists’ Catalogues and Publications,”<sup>47</sup> “Gallery Catalogues and Publications,”<sup>48</sup> “General Literature,”<sup>49</sup> “Newspapers, Magazines and Publications with Art Reviews,”<sup>50</sup> and finally, “Photocopy Mode of Publication.”<sup>51</sup> Like the other elements of MI, the Library offers a space to reflect on how art discourse, under the pressure of censorship and fascism, formed and continually reformed canons and their margins.

Dávila’s collaboration with Richard, to produce *MI/Margins and Institutions*, and present the work of art and writing of those living under Pinochet, manifested in one of the most influential books of art theory and criticism in Chile (*Margins and Institutions*) and an ambitious, if not also yet to be historicized and theorized, exhibition. I hope that by giving even a very brief sketch of MI’s itinerary, below, the significance of the exhibition, and its dependence on Dávila, is revealed or at least hinted at. MI was supported by multiple notable Australian and international art institutions in which Dávila held sway. MI began at the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) as part of the 1986 Adelaide Biennial (Dávila had shown at the 1984 Adelaide Biennial, hosted by the EAF); it then went on to tour to important experimental contemporary art spaces: Praxis (Perth, where Dávila showed in 1983), Chameleon (Hobart), George Paton Gallery (Melbourne, where Dávila showed in 1982, 1983 and 1984), and Artspace (Sydney, where Dávila showed in 1983 and launched his book *The Mutilated Pietà* in 1984). At Artspace, MI was exhibited as part of the 6th Biennale of Sydney (1986, of which the Artistic Director was Nick Waterlow; Dávila had been included in the 1982 and 1984 Biennales).<sup>52</sup> MI’s presence at the Biennale built on the Chilean representation of Gonzalo Díaz and Eugenio Dittborn at the 5th Biennale of Sydney (1984), for which Nelly Richard had been appointed Chilean Commissioner by the Biennale’s Artistic Director, Leon Paroissien (who also included paintings by Dávila). In 1989, MI toured to the highly respected London gallery, Showroom, with the support of the British art historian and curator Guy Brett (a long-term supporter of Dávila and Richard) as well as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (for which Paroissien was the Director). As this brief account of MI’s itinerary shows, Dávila, who by the mid-1980s was one of Australia’s most respected and influential artists, leveraged his networks to ensure the presence of artists and writers working under the pressures of the dictatorship were supported by leading Australian art institutions.

It’s undeniable that Dávila saw himself as being a curator and playing an “administrative” support role for others to show their work, in an act of solidarity.<sup>53</sup> But I also think his role, and collaborative work with

Richard, was a means to create a transpacific support structure for himself and his practice in Australia. He once said:

It was amazing that these works and publications [by the *escena de avanzada*] were circulated in Australia, at the time it was all geared toward mainstream Europe and [North] America ... That was the world. Australians only repeated this logic ... so to show a small group of Chilean artists was something out of the blue. And for migrants, it was quite astonishing to see themselves in English ... at the time, it was as if “migrants didn’t exist.”<sup>54</sup>

It was odd that he called the *escena de avanzada* “migrants.” It was more likely that their works traveled, via reproductions, not their bodies. I guess by migrants Dávila meant that within Australia the *escena de avanzada* was displaced, racialized even, dubbed “derivative and provincial” by critics as he once had been (circa mid-1970s, as noted above, and before he became the renowned figure he still is).<sup>55</sup> Yet, in spite of these derogatory remarks, for Dávila, the presence of MI/*Margins and Institutions*/Richard/the *escena de avanzada*, offered him a means to appear in Australia in a way he could not otherwise. Unlike the United States of America, Latin Americans represent only a small portion of the population in Australia (less than 1 percent).<sup>56</sup> As such, by importing the aesthetics of the *escena de avanzada* and other artists (APJ, etc.), Dávila was constructing an art historical and socio-political framework through which his migrant/Chilean subjectivity could be read in Australia in the post-1973 paradigm. Such a transnational framework makes sense. After he migrated, Dávila frequently traveled to Santiago (returning almost annually over Summer), and actively participated in the art scene (showing at CAL, the Chilean-French Institute of Culture, Cromo, Sur). MI was the culmination of Dávila’s analysis of his migrant subjectivity in Australia and Chile over many years (as in his Spider Woman works) and an attempt to offer an otherwise elusive frame for his practice that is neither fully legible in Chilean nor Australian art discourses.

#### VIEW OF AUSTRALIA VIA CHILE

I have been trying to locate other traces of migration across the Pacific, between Chile and Australia, in the annals of Australian art history. In *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850* (1960), Bernard Smith, often described as the founding father of Australian art history, discusses the voyages of Captain James Cook, especially those he led for the British Empire between 1768 to 1775. In the *Endeavour* (1768–1771), Cook traveled from Tierra del Fuego (Chile) via Tahiti toward the land mass now named Australia, arriving in 1770. In the *Resolution*

(1772–1775), he passed via Rapa Nui (or Easter Island, colonized by Chile in 1888). As Smith argues, artists who accompanied Cook on these voyages recalibrated European visions of the Pacific. Its peoples, lands and waters were historically shaped by theology, Greek mythologies of the Antipodes, and the aesthetics of neoclassicism (such as the noble savage). But artists in Cook’s voyages introduced new forms of empiricism to document and communicate the Pacific to Europe and, more specifically, the British Empire. As Smith argues, their artworks both reflected and advanced discourses of empire via the aesthetics of cartography, botany, and realism, mobilized by the fiction of terra nullius.

There is another way to recalibrate visions of the Pacific by rereading Smith after 1973. Every Chilean who left for Australia during the dictatorship, including Dávila and myself, flew the same route: Santiago/Mapuche land, Easter Island/Rapa Nui, Tahiti, Sydney/Gadigal and Bidjigal land and then if required, as it was for us, Melbourne/Naarm. Until I read Smith’s book, I didn’t realize our route literally mimicked that of the British Empire. Nonetheless, I wonder if the dispossession experienced as the result of Pacific histories of settler-colonialism, exile, and migration might in turn lead to a solidarity for those subjected to militarized and racialized violence (beyond Dávila’s work, I am thinking of First Nations artist Vernon Ah Kee’s *The Island*, 2020).<sup>57</sup> Might it conjure an aesthetic that is distinct from the botany, cartography, and documentation developed by those on Cook’s voyages of the Pacific?

In *Untitled fig.132* (2013) Dávila juxtaposes government propaganda directed at migrants seeking to arrive in Australia by boat with a memento mori painted in a clumsy, derivative cubist-like aesthetic (Fig. 20.2). Australia’s cultural dependency on European/North American art histories to tell its stories is interconnected to its dependence on empire, especially US imperialism post-9/11, to forge its border politics. Just as Australian art history erases bodies and ideas foreign to the British Empire, Australian politics disenfranchises, imprisons, and dispossesses “foreign” bodies across the Pacific. The epistemological violence found in Australian art history, which has led to its near erasure of the histories of both MI and *Margins and Institutions*, finds its equivalence in camps and border zones.<sup>58</sup>

In a 2014 essay, “White Australia’s Ghosts,” Dávila wrote that the settler-colony of Australia “is joined with the United States in an obscene pact of military bonding, the war of western civilizations against barbaric others ... our culture requires for its survival a vilified figure like the refugee.”<sup>59</sup> He invokes the violence of September 11, 2001, and the Pacific Solution in relation to 1770. Quietly, he also exhumes another ghost: the coup of September 11, 1973, led by Pinochet with the support of the CIA and the Australian government, catalyzing our history of migration and violence across the Pacific.<sup>60</sup> While such migrant histories are incommensurable, they share the vilification of bodies foreign to the British Empire. After 1770, First Nations peoples were cast as “subversive to the good order”;<sup>61</sup> after 1973, Chilean exiles and migrants were labeled “subversives ... planning an insurgency”;<sup>62</sup> and after 2001, refugees arriving from conflict zones and failing states in the Global South were called





FIGURE 20.2 Juan Dávila. *Untitled fig.132*. 2013.

“terrorists.”<sup>63</sup> Sometimes paranoia is real: at the very least, such bodies *are* co-conspiring against the epistemological wars cast by US imperialism and the British Empire.

### MI FROM THE OUTSIDE

Migrant approaches to art history, such as the one proposed here, locate different genealogies of the transnational collaborations forged during the Pinochet dictatorship. Centering the “I” and the different modes of

relationality between subject/object, author/artist, migrant/citizen and outsider/insider in the reconstruction of archives allows the cracks and fissures of existing canonical histories to appear, thus not only avoiding a reiteration of the usual narratives of *Margins and Institutions* but also doing away with the fiction of single origin tales.

To return to the question Richard posed in the lead up to the 1984 Biennale of Sydney, “¿Cuál sería la mirada—o las miradas—desde afuera sobre la escena chilena?”: When I look at the history of the *escena de avanzada*, especially as it is articulated in *Margins and Institutions*, I don’t see a lot of room for border subjects. Yet, if I look at this history via the archives available in the settler-colonial nation-state of Australia, it’s clear that the making of both *Margins and Institutions* and MI was contingent on not just one particular border subject—Dávila—but on an attempt to critically position Chilean subjects (including Richard, Marchant, CADA, Leppe, Dittborn, and other artists, writers and art workers involved with the *escena de avanzada* and beyond) within Australia during the dictatorship. This is evident not only in Dávila’s sustained efforts across the Pacific for over two decades, but also in his “Spider Woman” work and text, which explicitly critique the exclusionary nature of the nation-state. Further, the making of *Margins and Institutions* and MI was dependent on the support of numerous Australian art workers and art institutions actively seeking to engage with epistemologies and bodies that adopted a critical approach to center/periphery binaries dominant at the time.

The legacies of these varied efforts to support both MI and *Margins and Institutions* are vital for broader contemporary attempts to animate art histories otherwise abstracted not only by the hegemony of Western art history, but the weight of the canon. Even if born out of a critique of the marginalization of the *escena de avanzada* by both the Pinochet dictatorship and “international”/Western art circuits, as a text *Margins and Institutions* has, by now, become canonical—a monument. It is part of the territory, not the border. It territorializes knowledge of the *escena de avanzada* as opposed to being attuned to, or accountable to, the ways it has created ruptures and divisions between both migrant/citizen (or those who remained during the dictatorship) and insiders/outsideers of the scene.<sup>64</sup>

As Anzaldúa explains, “Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, borders are established to delimit what is permissible and what is to be excluded. In the borders of *Margins and Institutions* you’ll find MI and Dávila, as well as the numerous unacknowledged Australian art workers that supported both projects. MI opens a way to think this singular exhibition history, but not as an antagonism to the canon, for that would just reproduce binaries. Rather, MI shows how it and *Margins and Institutions* were forged through a vast transnational network of subjects, visions, positions, and desires aiming to affirm solidarities that might evade various nationalist, imperialist, and colonialist hierarchies *and* forms of doing—art, exhibitions, art history—that structure not only social relations but epistemologies of the Pacific, both in and outside of Chile and Australia.

## Notes

1. For a history of *Margins and Institutions* and *Art & Text*, see Verónica Tello and Sebastián Valenzuela-Valdivia, “A Partial History of South–South Art Criticism: Juan Dávila’s Collaborations with *Art & Text* and Chilean Art Workers during the Pinochet Dictatorship, 1981–1990,” *Third Text* 35(6) (2021): 709–731, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2021.2019954>.
2. Archives of MI are located at the National Library of Australia, the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, ACE Open, and Artspace, Sydney.
3. Nelly Richard, *Reescrituras y contraescrituras de la Escena de Avanzada*, ed. Diego Parra Donoso (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, Facultad de Artes, Departamento de Artes Visuales, 2020), 22, 24–25, <https://repositorio.uchile.cl/handle/2250/178463>.
4. MI is misnamed *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile 1973–1989*. It was in fact only for its Showroom exhibition in London that MI was renamed *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile 1973–1989*. The book also states that MI was shown as part of the 1989 Adelaide Biennial (Australia). Memory can fail us. MI was staged at the 1986 Adelaide Biennial, the same year Richard’s book *Margins and Institutions* was published (MI opened in Adelaide on March 2 1986, and *Margins and Institutions* was launched at Artspace on May 23, 1986 during the Biennale of Sydney). Exhibition invitation, in Juan Dávila, Papers of Juan Davila, National Library of Australia, 1972–2007, MS 9578 et al.; Promotional material for launch of *Margins and Institutions* in Papers of Juan Davila and archives of Artspace, Sydney.
5. See Paco Barragán, “Interview with Juan Dávila,” *Art Pulse*, 2016, accessed February 10, 2020, <http://artpulsemagazine.com/interview-with-juan-davila>
6. For example, different from what has been theorized in: Paulina Varas, “De la vanguardia artística chilena a la circulación de la Escena de Avanzada,” ICAA Documents Project papers: Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 2007, 54–61; Carla Macchiavello, “Vanguardia de exportación: La originalidad de la ‘Escena de Avanzada’ y otros mitos chilenos,” in *Ensayos sobre artes visuales: Prácticas y discursos de los años ’70 y ’80 en Chile* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones—Centro de Documentación de Artes Visuales, 2011), 85–112; Francisco Godoy Vega, “conelchilenoresistentearte, Solidaridad: *Chile Vive*, una Exposición en España contra el Chile Dictatorial,” *Aisthesis* 48 (2010): 186–204; Sebastián Andre Vidal Valenzuela, “La exposición olvidada: El CAYC en Chile, 1973,” *Revista* 180(45) (2020): 48–57, [http://dx.doi.org/10.32995/rev180.num-45.\(2020\).art-616](http://dx.doi.org/10.32995/rev180.num-45.(2020).art-616).
7. Nelly Richard, “Dal Cile sul Cile,” *Domus* 616, April 1981, 48–50; Nelly Richard, “Latin American Cultures: Mimicry or Difference?,” in Leon Paroissien, ed., *The Fifth Biennale of Sydney: Private Symbol, Social Metaphor* (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 1984), np.
8. See, for example, “Archivos de arte chileno, memoria y resistencia crítica, 2007,” in Richard, *Reescrituras y contraescrituras de la Escena de Avanzada*, 131–176.
9. See Papers of Juan Dávila, the EAF archives, and press for *Margins and Institutions*, for example, Tim Hilton, “A Case for the Camera: Critics’ Choice Visual Art,” *The Guardian*, July 12, 1989.
10. “Proposal for “Art in Chile after 1973,” c. 1985, in Papers of Juan Davila.  
Ibid.
11. Manuel Amsteins, “Chileans in Australia,” *Canberra Times*, December 16, 1975, 2.
12. Juan Dávila, “Spider Woman in Australia,” *Art & Text* 4 (1981): 15–16.
13. See, for example: Julieta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (Goleta, CA: Punctum Books, 2018).
14. For important precedents see the anthology J.A. González, C.O. Chavoya, C. Noriega and T. Roma, eds., *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
15. María Elena Acuña Moenne, “Embodying Memory: Women and the Legacy of the Military Government in Chile,” translated by Matthew Webb, *Feminist Review* 79 (2005): 150–161.
16. Patricia Moreno, conversations with Verónica Tello, April 24, 2021.
17. Veronica Quinteros, “Chileans,” Sydney Dictionary, 2011, accessed September 10, 2021, [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/contributor/quinteros\\_veronica](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/contributor/quinteros_veronica). Dávila is an exception. He came from a wealthy bourgeois family with familial ties to the European avant-garde (his grandmother was a patron of André Breton). See the 2016 biographical documentary, *Juan Davila*, directed by Pauline Senn.

18. Gen 1.5 is defined as children and teens who migrate between the ages of 5 and 14. Sarah Benesch, “‘Generation 1.5’ and Its Discourses of Partiality: A Critical Analysis,” *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 7(3/4) (2008): 294–311, DOI: 10.1080/15348450802237954.
19. Adrian Piper, “Passing for White, Passing for Black,” *Transitions* 58 (1992): 4–32.
20. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2012 [1987]), 104.
21. Details of this event are archived on the *Discipline* website: <http://www.discipline.net.au> (accessed 13 September 2021).
22. Carla Macchiavello, “Marking the Territory: Performance, Video, and Conceptual Graphics in Chilean Art, 1975–1985” (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2010), 1.
23. Richard, *Margins and Institutions*, 17.
24. See Helen Hughes and Nicholas Croggon, eds., *Impresario: Paul Taylor, The Melbourne Years, 1981–1984* (Melbourne: Surpluss/MUMA, 2013).
25. Heather Barker and Charles Green, “No More Provincialism: *Art & Text*,” *emaj* 1(5) (2010): 1–30, <https://index-journal.org/media/pages/emaj/issue-5/no-more-provincialism-art-and-text/89823290-1602118907/barker-and-green-no-more-provincialism.pdf>.
26. This sense of inferiority and belatedness was famously articulated by Australian art historian Terry Smith as the “provincialism problem,” where so-called peripheries like Melbourne (and implicitly, Santiago) were dependent on centers such as New York, the result of colonialist and imperialist logics that constructed a particular locale and historical context/specificity for the avant-garde on the one hand, and a different one for the derivative and the belated on the other. As Dávila and Foss argue in their preface to *Margins and Institutions*, as a result of colonialism, Australia, like Chile, carries the burden of dependency on Europe and the US. See Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem,” *Artforum* 13(1) (September 1974): 54–59; and Juan Dávila and Paul Foss, preface to *Margins and Institutions*, 11–14.
27. See Tello and Valenzuela-Valdivia, “A Partial History of South–South Art Criticism.”
28. Ibid.
29. Papers of Juan Davila. National Library of Australia, 1972–2007, MS 9578, etc.
30. “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” in Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 53–64.
31. Juan Dávila, email correspondence with Verónica Tello, July 16, 2020.
32. For a further discussion of Dávila’s play with racialization and ‘queering’ of his body, see Verónica Tello, “Juan Dávila, *Self-Portrait as Ingre’s Violin* (1984),” Queer Readings of the Monash University Collection, Monash University Museum of Art, <https://www.monash.edu/muma/collection/queer-readings-of-the-collection/queer-readings-of-the-collection/juan-davila>.
33. Juan Dávila, “Spider Woman in *Playing with Fire!*” *Art & Text* 4 (1981): 15–16.
34. For a discussion on Molina’s gender, see Jessica Burke, “Fantasizing the Feminine: Sex and Gender in Donoso’s *El lugar sin límites* and Puig’s *El beso de la mujer araña*,” *Romance Notes* 47(3) (2007): 291–300, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rmc.2007.0020>; and Jonathan A. Allan, “Femininity and Effeminophobia in Manuel Puig’s *Kiss of the Spider Woman*,” *Mosaic* 47, no. 3 (2014): 71–87, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mos.2014.0031>.
35. Dávila, “Spider Woman in Australia,” 16.
36. Juan Dávila and Janine Burke, “Reacting with Enthusiasm,” in *Impresario: Paul Taylor, The Melbourne Years, 1981–1984*, 246.
37. Ibid., 247.
38. Juan Dávila, correspondence with Louise Dauth, February 12, 1986. EAF archives.
39. Juan Dávila, correspondence with Louise Dauth, October 28, 1985, EAF archives.
40. Nelly Richard, correspondence with Juan Dávila, c. 1985, in Papers of Juan Dávila; Dávila, correspondence with Dauth, October 28, 1985.
41. “Proposal for ‘Art in Chile after 1973,’” c. 1985, in Papers of Juan Davila.
42. Juan Dávila, correspondence with Louise Dauth, March 6, 1985, EAF archives.
43. Nelly Richard, correspondence with Juan Dávila, April 3, 1985, Papers of Juan Dávila.
44. Dávila, correspondence with Dauth, October 28, 1985.
45. Promoting shows at, for example, Galería Sur, Galería Bucci, VISUALA and the 5th Biennale of Sydney.



46. For example, *La Bicicleta, La Separata, CAL*.
47. These include the work of Samy Benmayor, Carlos Leppe, Francisco Smythe, and Marcela Serrano.
48. Such as *Pintura Social en Chile, In/Out Four Projects by Chilean Artists* and *Mujeres en la Plástica*.
49. For example, *El Espacio de Acá, Anteparaiso*, and *Mujeres de la Tierra*.
50. For example, *Boletín, El Mercurio*, and *Mensaje*.
51. For example, *Inter/Medios, Dickdactrick050S, Let's see if you can run as fast as me*.
52. Nick Waterlow, *Origins, Originality + Beyond* (Sydney: The Biennale of Sydney, 1986), 296–297. MI was also meant to tour to the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, but this never manifested due to a change of directors. Michael Snelling, letter correspondence with Sue Kramer, March 13, 1987, Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) archives; Verónica Tello, email correspondence with Natasha Vigar, Institute of Modern Art, October 24, 2019.
53. Juan Dávila, correspondence with Louise Dauth, February 12, 1986. EAF archives.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Donald Brook, “Poverty, Terror and Injustice in Toytown,” *The National Times*, March 21–27, 1986, 34.
56. Victor Del Rio, “Latinos in Australia,” in *Australia and Latin America: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Millennium*, eds. B. Carr and J. Minns (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2014), accessed September 19, 2021, <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p286941/html/Ch07.xhtml?page=14>.
57. For an analysis of Ah Kee’s *The Island* see Andrew Brooks, “The Island (parts 1 and 2),” *Running Dog*, February 5, 2020, <https://rundog.art/the-island-vernon-ah-kee-part-one/>; <https://rundog.art/the-island-vernon-ah-kee-part-two>.
58. Rex Butler, “UnAustralian Art,” lecture presented at University of Queensland Art Museum, June 26, 2015, SoundCloud, audio recording, 1:34:34, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://soundcloud.com/uqartmuseum/rex-butler-on-unaustralian-art-podcast-2015>. Camps and border zones have long been a focus of Dávila’s work. For example, see Juan Dávila, “Woomera: An Artists Response,” *Artlink*, March 1, 2003, <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/2423/woomera-an-artists-response/> accessed April 20, 2022.
59. Juan Dávila, “White Australia’s Ghosts,” *Art and Australia* 51(3) (2014): 425.
60. Paul Daley, “Declassified Documents show Australia assisted CIA in Coup against Chile’s Salvador Allende,” *The Guardian*, September 11, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/sep/11/declassified-documents-show-australia-assisted-cia-in-coup-against-chiles-salvador-allende>.
61. Deirdre Tedmanson, “Isle of Exception: Sovereign Power and Palm Island,” *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 4(2/3) (2008): 150, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17422040810870042>.
62. Amsteins, “Chileans in Australia,” 2.
63. James C. Simoen, ed., *Terrorism and Asylum* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).
64. Carla Macchiavello, “Territorialidad y construcción de una escena en el arte chileno, 1973–1983,” Fundación Cultural CEaA, Miércoles, June 17, 2020, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrt4LJxMCM>.
65. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3.

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## CHAPTER 21

# Unlearning as a Collective Tactic: Our Place in the Struggle

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Colectiva Somoslacélula

*Qhipnayra uñtasis sarnaqapxañani.*

*Looking backward and forward (to the future-past), we can walk in the present-future.*

—Aymara aphorism translated from Aymara into Spanish by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

The practice of study starts from the perspective that one cannot unlearn what one has been taught by oneself, but instead that we need each other to do this. As we unlearn, we can also help each resist the call to individuation that learning in our society makes so insistently. With no knowledge to own one can begin to evict the owner.

—Amit S. Rai and Stefano Harney

We are a collective of people connected to various migrant, feminist, and anti-racist struggles working toward food sovereignty; we also teach and study at the public university in Lenape territory. Our experiences, while distinct, find a common thread in “Chile,” that neocolonial republic built by and designed for the oligarchs and the traders on unceded territories—Qullasuyu, Wallmapu, Rapa Nui. The histories and ways of life of these territories run parallel to that of the extractivist republic where, despite massacres, persecution, and the constant cultural invisibilization and media distortion of struggles for sovereignty, subaltern and racialized communities have not stopped resisting.

We produce and disseminate investigative and creative work in the form of video-essays. We want to rouse the senses, incite thinking, and activate insurgent memory. We began to make video-essays moved by the desire to agitate and mobilize—to establish a dialogue with our fellow accomplices, to inconvenience and provoke our enemies, to set fire to the dry pastures created by colonial invisibility, hunger, and death. In our practice, the image and its composition are not there for authoritative analyses of historical events. Rather, a deep mistrust informs our relationship with authority, authorship, and calls for individuation; only the collective process of

learning-doing connects us with those who worked before us and with those who continue the struggle. We want our work to be an integral part of the event in the present, one more action in creating futures-to-come from the ground up, from below, in solidarity.

We understand the video-essay as a tool of popular education and provocation in service of collective unlearning, following, repeating, and working alongside the many individuals and collectives who have developed and used this tool for decades across the world, particularly in the Global South. Through our video-essays, we seek to interrogate common notions (citizenship and belonging, political memory, nation and statehood, among others), unravel complexities without simplifying them, and encourage collective organization. We play and experiment with different forms of writing—both our own and that of others—which we combine with documentary images and other archival materials. Our voices take center stage, but only as a form of collective performance. We make these voices emerge, come together, and generate choruses. We operate through cutting, reframing, montage, and collage: we create and recycle sounds, we cross sources and bibliographic references. Our montages are inspired by the temporality of the crossroads. We follow Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and the Aymara thinking-feeling in our attempt to inhabit and represent a temporality in which “the future-past is contained in the present: the past’s regression or progression, its repetition or its overcoming, are at stake at every crossroads and they depend on our actions more than on our words.”<sup>1</sup>

Our audiovisual practice centers experiences, not expertises; our ways of creating video-essays are closely linked to contingency and emerge from our life experiences as educators, students, and community organizers. In our work, perfection is not only the enemy of the good; it is close to power—it is power’s measuring stick. The visible seams, the errors of continuity, the pixelation of the image and ambient noise are signs of the *potencia* of collective thinking-doing which function as its traces, in that they take the viewer back to the process of editing and assembling.

Our collective writing is audiovisual. We recognize the inherent tension involved in publishing these ideas in an academic platform. We point out this contradiction without seeking to resolve it. In this place of masters and mastery, we invite you to read us as unauthorized speakers, as students committed to the practice of unlearning. We reject the language of mastery and the position of the expert, and we invite you to do the same.<sup>2</sup> Now, we turn to some of the questions and principles that guide and sustain our activist practice.

One of our starting points is to activate archival images—create new archives, perhaps—through cropping, displacements, and reframings that take us back and forth: the cropped image emerges as a political-temporal crossroads.

In *Vientos de agitación* (2020), we cut an image from the documentary *Nutuayin Mapu/Recuperaremos nuestra tierra* (1971) by Chilean film workers Guillermo Cahn and Carlos Flores (Fig. 21.1). The image appears in a sequence on *corridos de cerco*, where fenced boundaries are dismantled and pushed back during the Agrarian Reform in Chile at the beginning of the 1970s. The original sequence combines several scenes that we reuse



FIGURE 21.1 colectiva somoslacélula. Barbed Wire. Screenshot from *Vientos de agitación*. 2020. Edited film sequence from *Nutuayin Mapu/Recuperemos Nuestra Tierra*, co-directed by Luis Araneda, Guillermo Cahn, Antonio Campi, and Carlos Flores (Producciones Tercer Mundo, 1971).

throughout the video-essay: peasants appear walking in a vast field and then approach a barbed wire fence, their bodies forming a line. We see them crouch down, one by one, guiding one leg and then another below the barbed wire. They carry shovels and sticks, tools they'll use to dig up the posts that mark the boundaries of the landowner's property. This sequence combines images of moving bodies with wider shots of the fence and close-ups of a single prong of barbed wire—a montage that draws our attention to this image and makes us shudder. Watching this film, we wanted to do something with that barbed wire. We wanted to repeat it, re-signify it, so we decided to clip the image. Throughout the video-essay, which combines cut sequences from a number of documentaries from the late sixties and early seventies, archival photos and documents related to the Chilean Agrarian Reform, excerpts of testimonies, and historical accounts, we return again and again to the close-up of the barbed wire from *Nutuayin Mapu*. We expand it and freeze it, we make it appear and disappear, we make it flicker faintly as

if it were a specter, so that its meanings become amplified, so that everything this barbed phantom invokes and summons acquires more weight and density. This is our process of studying and unlearning.

Through the ghostly image of the barbed wire we explore the historiography and the visuality of the struggle for recovering and reclaiming land inscribed in the archive. Enticed by the image, we interrogate the “field” that this barbed wire delimits, the “peasants” who are assembled and categorized under the same rubric, and the reformist or revolutionary “process” that emerges in public discourse and propaganda.

In the wire, we see a tension: how do worker-peasants’ demands for land and the Agrarian Reform as signifier intersect, oppose, or entwine with Mapuche anti-colonial struggle?

*Vientos de agitación* came from an invitation to create something in response to the following question: How did 1968, as a node of struggles that came before and continued after, play out in “Chile”?<sup>3</sup> In our attempt to answer, we could only pose more questions. What “Chile” are we talking about? What revolutionary processes are we considering and according to what time frames? Due to the centrality of Agrarian Reform in the 1960s, and given that we were asking ourselves these questions from a charged present—the present of the 2019 uprising, which mobilized us—it became necessary, urgent even, to shift our gaze from the city toward the countryside and interrogate the colonial foundation of the state right there.

During the construction of our archive we found a disparate constellation of documentary records: some, like *Nutuayin Mapu*, celebrated *corridos de cerco* in the Wallmapu.<sup>4</sup> The steady march of peasants seemed to indicate to us that, in order to answer these questions, we had to continue forward, toward the years of intensification of the Agrarian Reform during the period of the Popular Unity. However, because the “countryside” is an already fenced-off territory, the signifier “Agrarian Reform” holds other meanings—in our video, the countryside is not only articulated as a space for subaltern struggle or a process of modernization, but also, obliquely, as a face of the usurping colonial state and the settler. The visual exercise also makes manifest to what extent the idea that one can go “backward” or “forward” in time, as if time were linear, is also a colonial legacy, just like the regime of land ownership and the barbed wire fence that emerges in *Vientos de agitación* as a sign-image of the racial and colonial capitalist order. By editing, we draw the movement back and forward together in the same plane, allowing us to reconsider the process of Agrarian Reform beyond the temporal sutures of the nation-state.

What does “el campo” (the countryside, the farmland, the estate) mean when that notion is already a demarcation of private property and primitive accumulation?

Does the slogan “the land for those who work it” convey the complexity of various territorial claims in a span of time that exceeds the parameters assigned to Agrarian Reform and to racial and patriarchal capitalism?

How do we return that which, until the colonial massacre of the nation-state, had never been appropriated or demarcated within a capitalist framework?

How can we repair (in) the present?



This last question is inescapably linked to the temporality activated by the October 18, 2019 uprising. This temporality runs through us, agitates us, and challenges us. The uprising enables and makes visible other ways of inhabiting the present—temporal sequences and forms of organization that break historical accounts. The spaces and times marginalized or erased by colonial history make their way to the center of the struggle, questioning the very center from which “Chile” is seen and thought.

If we think and feel the uprising as an open-ended process, free from the anxious telos of success or failure, we can ask ourselves: What does the insurrection teach us? It teaches us, first, to denaturalize and unlearn “Chile,” to ask what Chile names, who it summons, who it glorifies, who it benefits; to whom, and to what, does it harm, and who, or what, does it usurp. The collective affect-impulse that emerges is that “Chile”—its history, its slogans, its symbols, its heroes—must be dismantled from the root. Here, we invoke the collective provocation the emerged in Wallmapu and beyond, a provocation echoed by our comrades from the Catrileo-Carrión community: *Chileyem*. Chile is over!

Let’s dismantle the Chile built “By reason or by force”—that violent slogan inscribed on the emblem of the colonial homeland that was never a collective affirmation generated from below, but rather a mandate from the oligarchy against the insurgent peoples.

Let’s dismantle the Chile erected by national heroes. Headless monuments, plinths without statues, scratched, toppled, intervened, and painted heroes make up the anti-colonial pedagogy of the insurrection. This is a popular pedagogy without teachers or masters. The toppling of monuments declares, in its very doing, the most absolute rejection of the colonial narrative put forward by the nation-state. This kind of counter-history or popular history ruins the *winka* history that models and teaches us, through colonial indoctrination techniques, what it means to be citizens of the Chilean *reyno*.<sup>5</sup>

As with the *corrida de cercos*, it takes many hands and many arms, ropes, and tools, working at the same time to bring down, to topple from below, the bodies and heads of the false heroes. We come to this collective act as students. We decide to cut it, to repeat it, to continue expanding this destituent act.

*Voltear la cabeza de Chile* (2019) is the form that our *winka* unlearning takes. Countless images—photos and videos—of these acts of popular pedagogy have circulated. We chose one of these photos: a photographic record of the toppling of the statue of Pedro de Valdivia in the central square of the city of Concepción, in the heart of the Wallmapu. This photo urges us to dismantle our *winka* subjectivity. In *Voltear la cabeza de Chile*, we repeat and reproduce this moment; we add our hands and our arms to this collective toppling carried out on the date commemorating the first anniversary of the assassination of the Mapuche *comunero* Camilo Catrillanca.

We enlarge the photo until we feel ourselves immersed in its pixels, because one photo is enough for us to study and understand the power of this act which repeats itself, but which takes different forms. The video-essay begins with a frame flooded in gray—there seems to be no distinction between image and frame. From the depth

of these tonalities, we review the *winka* history that we were taught in school, that colonial history of a white-mestizo, democratic-military Chile—a Chile of “disasters” and “battles.” As our voices reflect, the shapes of a fallen monument and its frame appear: a square full of people, strings pulled. We say:

It is the ideological trap called Chile that allows the usual suspects to continue usurping and annihilating human lives and ecosystems.

Neocolonial Chile that estranges and shames us, turning ourselves against our Indigenous heritage.

Extractivist and neoliberal Chile that exploits materials and bodies for consumption by countries in the Global North, and which refuses the sovereignty of native peoples.

Racist Chile that reveres and makes monuments of European ancestry and white modernity.

Patriarchal and sexist Chile that tortures, rapes, and murders women and nonbinary people.

Xenophobic Chile that excludes, discriminates, and deports.

If the revolt of October 2019 is an event—we think it is—then the video-essays that we have created during this time operate as reverberations of this event by other means/media. They are never a mere comment or analysis formulated from an authoritative outside/exterior. We distrust the extractive and opportunistic gaze of the expert, which contemplates from a distance and analyzes a situation in a disaffected and objective way. We know that this disaffection and objectivity are fictions constructed by the patriarchal-imperial eye. The production of the expert is constituted from a detached and disaffected gaze, and it is disarmed by the situated gaze—one that is committed and activist, an eye that’s not only an eye. The inexperienced practice takes a position, responds, becomes a participant, becomes part-of.

These struggles here and there are always a call to situate ourselves. The movement of our own migrations demands from us a situated production. The call to deconstruct our *winka* subjectivities has its own material meaning here in the occupied territory of Manahatta. Our migrant positionality at the same time moves us away from the *reyno* of Chile and its specific forms of exclusion, opening up the common territory of all the from-below across Abya Yala. Our work with our communities in the many souths in the North implicates us in the struggles here—the right to a life of dignity and to the abolition of colonial borders—and this has been the trigger for our audiovisual interventions.

How do we visibilize, here and there, the effect that different forms of everyday violence have on the lives of so many of our community members and neighbors—violences whose alibi is not having the right papers demanded by the state? How can we expand the space of action of voices that denounce these systemic violences carried out by states that act with the utmost impunity? How can we respond to these acts of violence that interpellate and implicate us, here and there? How can we implicate others in our struggle?

Our first video-essay, *Tácticas de solidaridad en la era de la deportación masiva / Tactics of Solidarity in the Era of Mass Deportation* (2019), emerged from these and other related questions. In a context in which mainstream media and imaginaries tend to associate violence against immigrants and the crime of family separation as exclusively tied to the (imaginary and real) space of “the border,” we thought it urgent to generate and disseminate an intervention that made visible the everyday material violence exerted by the US immigration system against our neighbors in a city like New York. Families and communities are not only terrorized and separated at the southern border, but also right here in this city known for its “diversity” and “progressiveness.” The bureaucratic violence generated by the deportation machine presses and oppresses thousands of neighbors every day. It is a machine that operates silently, protected by the shadows of big skyscrapers and the constant activity and hustle of this big city. In the video, we describe the affects that emerge when we and our neighbors circulate through the alleys of immigrations courts, trying to orient ourselves through those rooms and labyrinthic spaces. We connect that architectural violence, those spaces built for the subaltern to lose herself, with the bureaucratic violence imposed by immigration documents, with the questions that asylum applications and other documents formulate, with the state imposition of narratives of violence that overwrite the specific and singular violences each migrant and each community has had to confront in their territories.

In order to confront these racist violences so characteristic of colonial states, we also celebrate the instances of solidarity that emerge in these contexts. These solidarity practices, and in particular the sanctuary movement in all its manifestations, exceed, overflow, the violences designed by the state in order to scare and punish migrants who dare to exert their right to movement and that reclaim the potential of building a life of dignity wherever they desire. One such solidarity practice is accompaniment. Although maybe less lauded than other political strategies, accompaniment can be found in every struggle from below in our continent and beyond. Whether in the territorial struggles against extractivism, patriarchal extermination and violence, state terrorism, the struggle for migrant rights, or the struggle for reproductive justice, accompaniment puts two or more bodies together, one beside the other and weaves strong ties that bind in the midst of violent and racist spaces of “legality” that fracture.

The question about citizenship is always at the center of our collective study. We believe that to unlearn citizenship, to decouple it from our individual and collective subjectivities, is a condition for the transformation of the realities in which communities live and move through. Citizenship is the biggest monument to a belonging based on exclusion, the door forged by racial capitalism, coloniality, patriarchy, and imperialism. It is this monument which we have to topple. This is the door that we need to un-imagine through every possible operation. This is the place from which we work and study. It is from this place that we collectively unlearn.

## Notes

1. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2019), 55.

2. On the work of decolonization and unlearning there is a long list of political organization and theoretical elaboration. We share here the movements, the people, and some of the texts that have inspired our collective thinking-action. First, we mention the sanctuary, land back, and food sovereignty movements, and the mutual aid work organized in different communities in Lenape territory by comrades: Myrna Lazcano, Fabiola Mendieta-Cuapio, Juan Carlos Ruiz, La Morada Mutual Aid Kitchen, the North Bronx Collective, and the South Bronx Mutual Aid, among others. Interviews with many of these individuals and collectives can be found on the website of the project *Ecologies of Migrant Care* (<https://ecologiesofmigrantcare.org/>); La Morada Mutual Aid Kitchen work is also featured in the collaborative project *Archives in Common: Migrant Practices/Knowledges/Memory* (<https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/public-engagement/seminars/archives-in-common>). We have also (un)learned from these authors and sources, listed in alphabetical order: Yásnaya Aguilar Gil, *La lengua, la sangre y el apellido*, comp. Marc Delcan Albors (Buenos Aires: Madre Selva, 2021); Claudio Alvarado Lincopi, *Mapurbekistán, ciudad, cuerpo y racismo. Diáspora mapuche en Santiago, siglo XX* (Santiago: Pehuén, 2021); Ariella Azoulay, *Unlearning Imperialism. Potential History* (New York: Verso, 2019); Antonio Calibán Catrileo, *Awkan Epupillan Mew. Dos espíritus en divergencia* (Santiago: Pehuén, 2019); Sergio Caniuqueo, Rodrigo Levil, Pablo Marimán, and José Millalén, *j... Escucha Winka...!* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2006); Kency Cornejo, "Writing Art Histories from Below: A Decolonial Guanaca-Hood Perspective," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1(3) (2019): 72–77; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005); Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Studies* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War. Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2019); Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Marcos Saavedra, "The Mis-education of the Migrant," in *Eclipse of Dreams. The Undocumented-Led Struggle for Freedom*, eds., Marco Saavedra, Claudia Muñoz, Mariela Nuñez-Janes, Stephen Pavey, Fidel Castro Rodríguez, Pedro Santiago Martínez (Baltimore, MD: AK Press, 2020); Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery. Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1) (2012): 1–40; Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research" in D. Paris and M.T. Winn (eds.) *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with youth and Communities*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014); Various Authors, *Strike MoMA Reader* (<https://www.strikemoma.org/reader>); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3(3) (2003): 257–337.

3. This collaborative project was co-edited by Denisse Andrade (PhD candidate in the Geography Program at the CUNY Graduate Center) and Hồng-Ân Trương (Artist & Associate Professor, Studio Art at UNC-Chapel Hill) and titled *A Return to the Source*.

4. For a comprehensive list of sources, see the credits/bibliography at the end of *Vientos de agitación/Turbulent Winds* (<https://vimeo.com/470406106>).

5. "Winka" is a concept in Mapuzungun that refers to settlers. "Reyno" is a Spanish archaism that refers to the territories controlled by the Spanish colonial empire. In using the latter, we aim to mark the continuities between colonial and neocolonial times/history.

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## CHAPTER 22

# Cooking, Knitting, and the Cultivation of the Whole: A Conversation Between Florencia San Martín and Paula “Paly” Carvajal Bórquez

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**Florencia San Martín:** In her 2006 essay, “The Trouble with (The Term) Art,” art historian Carolyn Dean writes: “Much of what is today called art was not made as art. This is the case [...] with regard to objects made outside the West in places where the concept of art traditionally has not been recognized.”<sup>1</sup> Through the neoliberal metaphor of “diversifying” art history, a discipline essentially linked to coloniality, the West has used its modern museums to exhibit a wide variety of objects created in the so-called Global South. Many times, this process of appropriation has obscured the original meaning of such objects, often related to ceremonial or spiritual experiences, by insisting on calling them “art.” This means that the colonial and museological lens conceals the original function of many of the exhibited objects, replacing their dynamic, alive dimension with the Kantian aesthetic and static value of pleasure or displeasure in the viewer’s gaze.

In the winter of 2021, while I was teaching remotely this text by Dean in my introductory course to art history at California State University, San Bernardino, I visited Caldera, a coastal city in the Atacama region of northern Chile. I was visiting my friend Alejandro Moreno, a play writer and filmmaker who was then preparing a feature film on mining, love, and death. Alejandro introduced me to Tania, the film’s producer, and together we visited several buildings in the area, such as the Gruta del Padre Negro (Black Priest’s Cavern), a stone chapel built in 1940 by the Afro-Colombian priest, Crisógono de Sierra y Velásquez. When we stepped into the chapel, not only did we observe the prominence of Crisógono’s black body in the frescos of the Final Judgment, but also the brown bodies in the scenes of the Passion. We also noticed that these frescos, which expanded the Catholic narrative beyond a dominant race or ethnicity (or Western white supremacy), had been painted by a self-taught painter from Caldera. And so, observing the paintings in the desert and talking about non-hegemonic ways to create and represent, Tania told me about you, Paly. She told me about your dolls and about your work creating and activating Diaguita culture in the Atacama Desert. What a pleasure to meet you! And thank you so much for participating in our book. My first question is about the topic of denomination. How

do you describe your work? Do you coincide with Dean (and with the proposal of this volume in many respects) that the Western terms “art” and “aesthetics” can limit and thus negate the meaning of creations made by, for example, the Diaguita culture?

**Paula Carvajal Bórquez:** I don’t consider myself an artist or an artisan. I consider myself a cultivator. I cultivate my Diaguita origins. Furthermore, I consider myself Diaguita and not Indigenous. Lately, the term Indigenous has started to bother me because I find it perpetuates colonial ideas. I believe we must decolonize ourselves from that term which, like “art,” as you mention, was invented by Europeans. That’s why here, in our community, we prefer to call ourselves a First Nation. On the other hand, I live in a rural town, in the Andean foothills. Even though the county is known as Alto del Carmen, the territory’s ancestral name is Huasco Alto. I began receiving my cultural inheritance when I was a baby, and much of it has to do with the oral tradition. This is why I prefer “cultivator” over “artist” and “Huasco Alto” instead of “Alto del Carmen.”

**FSM:** And how do you practice the oral tradition?

**PCB:** By making dolls and cooking (Fig. 22.1).

**FSM:** Tell me first about the dolls ...

**PCB:** As women of Huasco Alto, we express our culture every day, in our daily activities. That means that we need to do everything. One of those things is the dolls, which is a very old tradition in my family. My mother’s grandmother used to make them. The dolls are full of aromatic herbs that we cultivate and gather in the mountains. Each herb has a meaning. For example, when you are sad, if you hug one of these dolls, it will help you overcome that anxiety. Life is dynamic and we make the dolls to help us understand ourselves better, understand how we are constantly changing. For example, the dolls reconnect with newer generations who have left and forgotten fundamental parts of Diaguita culture while living in the city. Our job is to preserve our culture.

**FSM:** And what are the dolls like?

**PCB:** Like I was saying, it was through a family oral tradition that we managed to restore the dolls. At first, my grandmother made them with the clothes of the person the doll was meant for. I have two versions: one cloth, the other loom. In the case of the loom version, the face is made of loom, the dress, the whole doll is loom. In both cases, the form of the eyes is preserved through word of mouth: it was my mother who told us how to make the eyes. They don’t have arms or legs, and the hair is covered with a veil. But these versions vary; each doll is unique and its form and meaning depend on the traits of the person the doll accompanies. They are personalized. They are the other self.

**FSM:** And how are they personalized? Do you get together with the person they are meant for?

**PCB:** Yes, I get together with that person, we talk, and I observe what trade best represents them. We have twenty-five trades, and that is our contribution to tradition—to grant them a trade. For example, there are gatherer dolls. They carry firewood, which we make from aromatic sticks with herbs. In their bag, they carry seeds, corn. The gatherers are for very active people who move from one place to another, restless people. There are also shepardesses. These women



FIGURE 22.1 Paula Carvajal Borquez. 2020. *Muñecas*. Wool, cloth, loom, wicker, seeds, herbs. Photograph by Alexandra González.

carry a flute or a musical instrument and serve as guides, teachers. Then there are the bakers, which are for reflexive people. They knead ideas, flip them around, like kneading dough. Then we have the warriors, who defend, and the cooks, who are attentive. When the doll is ready, we put it in a small box. Everyone can touch the box, but only the owner can touch the doll. They have a long life that begins when we talk for the first time and continues into the healing process. They are an amulet for health. Well-being is important for us, and this has to do with health on many levels.

**FSM:** You are talking in the plural. Who makes the dolls?

**PCB:** We make them: my daughters, my granddaughters, and I. My granddaughters sew. They learned to sew when they were 3 years old. The dolls are made by women and for women.

**FSM:** Do you consider yourself a feminist?

**PCB:** Yes, but I don't belong to any feminist movement like the ones everybody knows about now. I believe in a feminism that doesn't separate women from being mothers, rather the contrary. In Diaguita culture, the figure of the matriarch is fundamental and the grandmother is the family guide. From raising, creating, and sewing, everything is always made from love. It's a culture of love. In our way of life, it is impossible, for example, to even conceive of sending a grandmother or mother into a nursing home. We live in community, always.

**FSM:** How many generations has your family lived in Huasco Alto?

**PCB:** My great-grandmother, Beatriz, lived in Tucumán, Argentina. She and her daughter, Pascuala, crossed the Andes every year to the Limarí Valley in Chile. From there, they walked to Andacollo in the Elqui province of Coquimbo. Andacollo is our place; it's a very important territory for Diaguita culture, where we find the *chino* dances. With time, crossing the mountains became more difficult and my ancestors stayed here, where my grandma and mom were born.

**FSM:** This is really interesting in terms of territory, oral culture, and the changes you proposed at the beginning, when you spoke of a dynamic life that accompanied the dolls, or the other self. Of course, it is a territorial change that doesn't distinguish between modern nation-states, since the mountain range in your culture is not the border of two nations, rather a particularity in geography and a place for gathering. For gathering aromatic herbs, in the case of your grandmothers, your mother, your daughters, and granddaughters. A place for making the dolls. In this sense, the idea of being a cultivator, as you mentioned, works on several levels. On the one hand, it moves away from the Western idea of the term "art" that Dean questioned: the doll doesn't enter the museum, rather its meaning is in its function, in daily life. It has to be touched, cared for, in order for it to heal. At the same time, your work as a cultivator, which is materialized in the dolls, does not become a solely individual meaning in regard to the person the doll accompanies. While the doll can heal by using Andean herbs that give it body and spirit, it can also remember and reproduce, on a larger level, a specific culture—Diaguita culture.

**PCB:** Yes, in order to keep our culture alive, we need to cultivate it. And in this sense, we find simplicity and happiness. Happiness is always next to you; you just have to decide whether you are going to embrace it.

**FSM:** So, the dolls' spiritual function would include existence, simplicity, and happiness, the latter two as goals for healing.

**PCB:** Right. We don't need our own house, for example, or a job in the system. We are born happy, but with the system centered in humans and material accumulation people start to lose their happiness. For instance, I studied at the University of Chile's Pedagogical Institute in Santiago and I never adapted. I was used to eating soups, stews, and there you had to eat sandwiches. Here, we get around in rural buses with chickens, but in Santiago it was different, everything smelled like oil. I didn't like it and didn't end up finishing the major. That experience helped me value what I am: a cultivator and Diaguita.

**FSM:** And is that a shared recognition in your community?

**PCB:** The truth is that a lot of people do not recognize their Diaguita identity. We all live the same way, but some recognize themselves as Diaguita and others don't, since they bear a history of humiliation and discrimination. On the other hand, it is also true that, over the last ten years or so, with more social awareness, with more openness in society, more youth and people in general have begun to identify themselves as Diaguitas. But it wasn't like this before. My dad, who is from Huasco Alto, carried that shame. Instead, my mom, who is from Limarí, would tell us: "We are Diaguita." She would secretly tell me how to do certain things, "how Diaguitas cook."

**FSM:** At first, you told me that you practiced the oral tradition not only by making dolls, but also by cooking. Actually, at least two of your dolls, the baker and cook, are related to this activity.

**PCB:** My work focuses heavily on nutritional heritage, which is also natural medicine. It is a part of my being a cultivator. In fact, both the dolls and cook are part of the same project of cultural recognition and activation. In this sense, my relationship with the earth is important. The earth helps me preserve my culture because the earth provides everything. Our valley in Chile is on the southern border of the Atacama Desert. It is green, and it gives us everything. In turn, glacial water keeps the valley from drying up. All of this makes our valley a sacred territory. As I mentioned before, the youth are emigrating because they have been fed ideas about being something more, about studying, that if you don't study you'll be a failure. But that erases our knowledge, which is necessary for life and happiness. Young people in the city don't have time to eat healthy; they only find industrialized food in supermarkets. In this process of disassociation, the first thing you lose is food. Here, on the other hand, we consume nourishing food, and everything we eat is made here. I teach workshops on nourishment and a lot of my students are people who left and want to recover what they lost. They want to revive our customs. Most of them, as soon as they come to my workshops, start taking notes. I ask them to not write anything down. I teach them that there is no such thing as an exact recipe, because what we want to do is recover our ways of cooking. For example, it's a splash of milk, not a cup of milk. It's about using your senses. If you take notes, the recipe will stay there on the paper. Instead, if you don't write it down, you're forced to make it, to cook it so you don't forget. It's like reliving the orality of culture through the experience of cooking, which, like I was saying, is not separated from the dolls. It is all intertwined and that relationship is always moving.

**FSM:** Talking about movement, how has the pandemic affected your work as a cultivator and your daily activities?

**PCB:** Hardly at all. There have been very few cases and our work has not been affected; we keep living the same way we did before. We keep living from agriculture; people have not stopped eating because we don't depend on external industrial resources. Also, there has been an important impact on ancestral music, which is related to the fact that the girls stopped going to school and kept studying on their own. Before, when they were at school, they listened to reggaeton all day, and during the pandemic, at home, they stopped listening to that music. Now they are painting, they are exploring the arts so much more. They want to keep creating, cooking, knitting. Maybe someday they will also call themselves cultivators.

**FSM:** And this brings us back to the beginning. Did you always call yourself a cultivator?

**PCB:** I used to call myself an artisan, a cook. Now I only say: I'm a cultivator. It's a process of realization, of valuing oneself. That happens in the experience of traveling the territory, of creating workshops, of the joy of giving someone a doll. It is like encapsulating the Diaguaita culture in one whole entity.

### **Note**

1. Carolyn Dean, "The Trouble with (the Term) Art," *Art Journal* 65(2) (Summer, 2006), 24.

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## CHAPTER 23

# Ptoschí

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Demian Schopf

### I.

the sailor Parker is bizarrely “swallowed up by an angle of masonry ... which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse.”

Graham Harman quoting H. P. Lovecraft

This text begins in Potosí, a small Bolivian mining city which I visited in 2009—without any intention of creating a site-specific piece—and where I never once encountered an Afro-Bolivian.

Founded at 4,067 meters above sea level as the Potosí Imperial Village in 1545, the city held the world’s largest silver deposit between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its tunnels comprised the viscera of Cerro Rico, a mountain identified with several divinities: the *Apu* Ptoschí, the Virgin Mary, and the Pachamama, a goddess worshipped by many Andean cultures today. Now tin mines cover the landscape. When I first arrived, disoriented by altitude sickness, I perceived the mountain as a hostile entity, almost like a conscious being. Its soil had the color of a red scab. No painting overlooks this detail.<sup>1</sup>

In the Inca worldview, Pachamama invokes the earth’s maternity and fertility: a mother earth comparable to the Venus of Willendorf, the Greek Dione and Gaia, the Sumerian Ninhursag, and Phrygia’s Cybele. The Pachamama, mother of Moon and Sun—whom she later marries—is associated with fertility prior to the sowing and harvest. She is a generality: the Earth. But she extends to the *Apus*, local divinities and regents of limited territories, such as a valley. The Apoquindo Hill in Santiago de Chile, for example, was worshipped by the Incas as Apukintu. When the Spanish arrived, the Cerro Rico was simply an *apu* known as Ptoschí.<sup>2</sup>

It’s worth mentioning later religious mixtures, especially from the Augustinian order, between the Virgin Mary, the *Apu* Ptoschí, and the Pachamama. According to Bolivian art historian Teresa Gisbert, “The prevailing mannerist spirit at the beginning of the 17th century and the Augustinians’ exuberant interest in ‘hieroglyphs’

and literary allegories, led to establishing a series of similes between Mary and a mountain.”<sup>3</sup> Ramos Gavilán, a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Augustinian chronicler, wrote that “Mary is the mountain from which emerged a rock with no feet or hands—this rock is Christ.”<sup>4</sup> He adds: “that is, without using his hands and feet to resist. Christ is a footless rock, cut from that divine mountain of Mary.”<sup>5</sup> Mary is a mountain of precious stones and Jesus a rock. He cannot escape or defend himself. He has no limbs.

Drawing on the scriptures, Ramos Gavilán claims that the Church is built on precious stones, which Saint John witnessed in the Apocalypse. Among them are the apostles absorbing Christ’s beams of light, which is the Sun of Justice. But that same Christ, according to Ramos, is also a stone—“a gleaming stone or diamond”—which brings the light to the viscera that it shelters. Thus, Mary’s interior or the hill that sheltered the Stone Christ, the Sun Christ, is also capable of transferring her light to other stones.<sup>6</sup>

Mary is a mountain of precious stones, a large baroque mound in the form of a spiral column whose golden surface is covered in silver, emeralds, rubies, and an array of gems.

I’d like to dig deeper into the syncretism of the Virgin Mary and Pachamama. Several anthropological studies emphasize this identification.<sup>7</sup> The pictorial representations of the Virgin Mary as Pachamama are not common. No more than five. However, according to Teresa Gisbert, the idea of their synchronization has become established and widespread.<sup>8</sup> This is demonstrated in several drawings, especially one from 1583, falsely or doubtfully attributed to the mythical Indigenous sculptor of the Virgen of Copacabana, Francisco Tito Yupanqui (1550–1616).

In the painting *La Virgen del Cerro*, the most famous of these pictorial representations and currently part of the collection at Bolivia’s National Mint Museum, the *Apu* Potoshí, Pachamama, and Mary constitute one sole entity. The small head of a woman and two hands with open palms emerge from the hill. I wonder: If such things are in heaven, what can we expect to find in hell? The pieces of Mary are crowned by the Holy Trinity. At the top of the painting, we see Jesus on the left, a dove in the middle, and God on the right. Behind Jesus, in the far left, is St. Michael the Archangel. Another angel to the right of God holds a heart. The scene takes place in a Christian heaven, the top part of the three levels included in the image. Below is the twilight, time, and, according to St. Augustine, an alienated form of Christianity as any religion which does not *recognize* the invariable Father as anything but transfigured. To the right, the Inti Sun god. On the other side, Mamaquilla, goddess of the Moon, daughter of Pachamama, and sister and daughter-in-law of the Sun. We will expand on the meaning of Sun and Moon below, but it is worth pointing out that they are common in viceregal symbolism: ambivalent symbols, they evoke pagan gods. As in every pantheism, incest frequently abounds, for example, between Pachamama and her child the Sun. But nothing can overcome a God who engenders himself to be reborn from the womb of

a human and die crucified. At the feet of the hill, there is a sphere, a world—Potosí is at its center. On the right, we find Pope Paul III, a bishop, and a cardinal. To the left, Charles V and a noble Inca.<sup>9</sup> Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans had different statutes: the former were considered vassals while the latter objects and animals meant for work.

The mountain is a scenery full of histories and allegories. Several paths cross the foothills, where we find Inca Maitac, conqueror of Collasuyo, the southernmost part of the Inca Empire where Potosí and Santiago de Chile are currently located. Maitac is holding his son's hand. We see fruit trees, paths, caves, tunnels, llamas, horses, and Spaniards and *collas* praying. In the upper right-hand corner, we see the Indigenous Diego Huallpa making a fire. The image narrates a myth. When Huallpa awoke, he saw silver trickling over rocks like paint. Others say he discovered it in a hole after pulling out a root.<sup>10</sup> This is the discovery of the silver mine in 1545.

In the painting, enslaved Afro-Andeans are conspicuous by their absence. They have been erased. They lay underground in the belly of the Virgen, pushing out endless copies of the stone Messiah who bleeds silver.

In Gisbert's book, the reproduction is backward, showing how historical accounts can be incidental or paraconsistent.<sup>11</sup> In another text, the author points out that "it is the chronicler Arzans de Orsúa y Vela (in 1736) who said that this *Apu* belonged to Pachacámac, god of the underworld."<sup>12</sup> Pachacámac is the Inca version of Wiracocha, creator of earth and father of Pachamama. "When the Spanish arrived, they identified the hill with the Virgen Mary, who was equivalent to *Pachamama*."<sup>13</sup> Pachamama belonged to Wiracocha.

Pachacámac, god of the underworld or the Ukupacha, is himself El Tío. Tío comes from Tiw, a deity whose origin can be traced back to another ethnic group: the Uros, a nomad people despised by the Aymara and later dominated by the Quechuas (Incas), the founders of Tawantinsuyu (the Inca Empire). The Aymara word *uro* means night hunter and fisher. The offense lies in the nomadic and gatherer aspect of an ethnic group whose name we ignore in their own language. The word Oruro, another mining town, comes from *uro-uro* and the town's carnival organizes the world's largest Diablada dance.<sup>14</sup> Each mine has its own Tío, whether at the cavern's entrance or further in. It is a mud idol with horns, goatee, and a disproportionately large phallus. Besides this last detail, the Tío is identical to the Western representation of the Devil.

How was that effigy distributed throughout the multiple conduits of the Virgen of the Hill? I pose this question keeping in mind the ideas of Ramos Gavilán, who considered the hill a large uterus with different entrances.

Let's return to the hill's first worshippers: the Uros. Little remains of them. They adopted the Aymara language, but kept their belief in the Tiw, later associated to Ukupacha. Overlapping gods and worlds was common before Europeans invaded the region. It has more to do with invasion than with Europeans. The Tiw cult dates back to the first century and is expressed in an older version of the Diablada dance, known as the *llama-llama*, which the Spanish referred to as "a dance of devil Indian miners from the underworld." The Indigenous danced with masks of Tiw. Another unavoidable reference is the *Ball de Diables*, a theatrical procession originating in

Catalonia and which represents the combat between the celestial armies of Michael and those who took up arms against Lucifer. The present-day Diablada is a combination of both dances.

Augustinian missionaries are responsible for a notable mutation. During the colonial exploitation of the silver mines, Tiw was Hispanicized as *El Tío* (the uncle). There is something of Faun and Pan in the Tío's horns. The representation of Satan as a male goat-like figure can be attributed to these pagan gods.<sup>15</sup> In the Bible, he is merely a jackal. The Aymara language is responsible for another mutation. The Indigenous could not pronounce the Spanish word for god, *dios*, transforming it into *tiós*, which became Tío. From Tiw to Tío, and *tiós* to Dios, the Tiw became the patron saint of the mines for the evangelizers and God for the Aymaras. Even today many mines of the high plateaus have their Tío, including the mines of Potosí. The Tío's phallus impregnates the Pachamama, or the Virgen, providing generous veins and avoiding landslides and tremors.

Tío must remain happy, usually through offerings of coca leaves, beer, liquor, cigarettes, streamers, confetti, and a formidable weekly drinking spree centered around the idol—celebrations that are not inconspicuous to Bolivian or foreign clergy. John Paul II even had a Vatican medal sent to the Great Traditional and Authentic Diablada of Oruro.

## II

On the contrary; it helped keep her from black  
feline movements, from simian gesticulation,  
from the preponderance of a belly and buttocks  
over her shoulder, neck, and feet

Gabriela Mistral

The devotees of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit brought the first Africans to the high plateau. Disembarked at sea level, they were immediately taken to the high lands where on average they survived two or three weeks. The Cerro Rico was the world's largest mine and Potosí one of the most populated cities. People said a silver bridge could be built to Toledo. Some would add that the bridge could be made of bones. Even bones were sent to the place where the green-blooded quartz Jesus was born. Silver skeletons, black midwives, and copper accoucheurs of turquoise urine.

With the arrival of Europeans, land was for the first time considered a natural resource, devoid of any mythical, animistic, or religious-magical component. The book of Genesis says: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."<sup>16</sup> Everything became a good, capital, and asset.

In the high plateau, Africans were never treated like humans. Considered work animals and objects, they were bought, sold, or exchanged for horses, cows, and chickens. According to Spanish law, Africans lacked souls. The

Indigenous were thought of as children who needed to be converted to Christianity. As vassals of the Empire, they were introduced into the *mita*, an Inca system of forced labor which the Spanish quickly adopted. Every five years, imperial subjects had to serve in the *mita* for an entire year. Potosí was the most common destination for these workers, referred to as *mitayos*. But why import slaves if they were more expensive than *mitayos*? The answer could have economic reasons. As Díaz, Ruz, and Galdames suggest,

Indeed, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Crown had to confiscate private goods, generally from conquistadors and merchants who returned from the Indies. In exchange for these goods, the Crown granted high interests through *juros*, instruments similar to government bonds. As the years went on, these turned into licenses to introduce black slaves into the Americas.<sup>17</sup>

This was perhaps one of the bloodiest merchandise evolutions in recent history. The Crown promoted the slave trade. It was more lucrative to confiscate goods and grant licenses. But there may be another reason as well. It could have been influenced by the indigenous population's dramatic decimation in light of inadequate antibodies needed to fight new illnesses like influenza, harsher work regimes, dietary changes, etc.

Seen from an anthropological perspective, the conquest and colonization took part in this modern, European, and cyclopean project to overwrite the entire world's decline with the birth of a new one: mercantilism. In the context of a talk on my piece *Máquina Cóndor*, Pablo Oyarzún commented that the seventeenth century was the “baroque century, the first century that we can truly speak of as global.”<sup>18</sup>

In the sixteenth century, Spanish America received some 900,000 enslaved Africans.<sup>19</sup> After the capture of Atahualpa and the fall of the Inca Empire, they were apparently distributed evenly from Ecuador to Chile. It was said that the number of Africans in the Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru was the same as in the Caribbean, which today has a much more numerous African American population. In Chile, there is a seventeenth-century historical figure who has become a legend: Doña Catalina de los Ríos y Lisperguer, commonly known as La Quintrala.<sup>20</sup> All of her biographies invariably mention her mulatto lover Juan de Moya.

Just as the pre-Colombian world was an extremely complex web of nations, ethnicities, conquests, wars, insurgents, feuds, alliances, and treasons, the origin of enslaved Africans is heterogeneous and conflictive. There are records of at least fifty original tribes. Relations between them were not always harmonious, as observed in many *palenques*, that is, secret settlements of fugitive and politically organized slaves. Here, rivalries brought from Africa subsisted, as well as conflicts between different cultures that had never previously been in contact except under slavery: “The Congos expelled the Terranovos [...] Francisco Congo confronted Martín Terranovo, eventually killing him.”<sup>21</sup> Sadly, America united different ethnicities and cultures from Africa. The mixing or *mestizaje* produced some of the most outlandish colonial classifications: *mestizo prieto* (dark-skinned mix of Spanish and Indian), *mulato* (mulatto: mix of black and white), *mulato claro* (light mulatto), *mulato oscuro* (dark

mulatto), *mulato morisco* (mulatto with Spaniard), *mulato pardo* (brown mulatto), *lobo* (mix of Indian man with black woman), *tercerón* (one-third black), *cuarterón* (quadroon, one-fourth black), *negro chino* (black-skinned mulatto and Indian), *china cambuja* (mix of black man and Indian woman), *zambaigo* (mix of *cambuja* and Indian woman), *chino* (mix of *lobo* and black woman), *chino prieto* (dark *chino*), *chino claro* (light *chino*), *zambo* (mix of Indian woman with black man), *zambo claro* (light *zambo*), *zambo prieto* (dark *zambo*); *ahí te estás/tente al aire* (mix of *zambaigo* and *lobo*, literally: there-you-are/stay-put), *salto atrás* (mix of *chino* and Indian woman, literally: a-step-back), and... *no te entiendo* (mix of *tente al aire* and Indian woman, literally: I-don't-understand-you).<sup>22</sup> Thus caste painting was born, flourishing throughout the Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru. Its most famous exponents were the Mexican painter Miguel Cabrera and the Peruvian Cristóbal Lozano. This genre of painting has a clear conceptist bias that hides racist ideals. The *negro's* skin color is as black as coal.

In 2002, I painted my own version, fusing caste painting with another exclusively Andean genre: the viceregal paintings of apocryphal angels and archangels. In order to build a scene to photograph, I bought a mannequin and painted it as black as Cabrera and Lozano would have done. Then I enlarged his lips so as to represent the altitude sickness that many enslaved Africans suffered. This same sickness is expressed in the dark-skinned characters of the Morenada dance (Fig. 23.1).

In both of the images that accompany this text—one compiled of references and the other basically a found piece—Afro-Andeans appear ill and maladjusted to a landscape that rejects them, announcing their extinction or expulsion. Death was always waiting around the corner in the high plateau.

Regarding the African American presence in the Andes, it is worth mentioning a small anecdote that occurred in the Royal Court of Charcas, headquartered in La Plata, also known as Chuquisaca and present-day Sucre, one of Bolivia's two capitals. A judge named Manuel Barros de San Millán, was accused, among other crimes, of treating his black slaves "as equals."<sup>23</sup> He also supposedly had an affair with his favorite slave, a male dancer and particularly talented vihuela player, whose freedom he later bought.<sup>24</sup>

The foothills of the Cerro Virgen set the stage for an uprising. As recorded in the Archive of the Indies, it appears the uprising was part of a conspiracy with "Spanish bandits."<sup>25</sup> These records describe the plans of some sixty or seventy settlers ("loose men of Extremadura") consisting of simultaneous revolts in different Andean cities.<sup>26</sup> In La Plata, the president of the Royal Court and the judges would be killed. In Potosí, the king's mayor, royal officials, and some "rich men" would meet the same fate.<sup>27</sup> On the way to Arica, they planned to kill the muleteers who transported silver to the king. Thereupon they would attack a docked galleon and use the bounty—a year's worth of silver—to pay people to join their cause and "preach freedom for the blacks and exemptions on tax and mita for the Indians."<sup>28</sup> The most frequently named insurgent was Alonso Yáñez from Potosí, son of a mulatta. Becoming Afro-Andean had several names during the colonial period: slave, palenque, maroon, mestizo, insurgent, etc.





FIGURE 23.1 Demian Schopf. *La Revolución Silenciosa, Ángel castizo, no te entiendo*. 2002. Photography, electronic printing of mineral pigments on cotton paper of 310 gr./m<sup>2</sup>. 105 x 130cm.

In collusion with the loose men of Extremadura—bandits according to the king—abolitionism strayed from the Virgen's feet; and along its wet walls secreting a Jesus crystalized into the silver sugar bowl I inherited from my grandmother.

Two of the Andean world's most important religious festivals are the Carnival of Oruro (second in continental relevance behind Río de Janeiro's carnival) and the Great Power of Jesus Festival in La Paz. In both, Afro-Andeans have a predominant role: in the latter, representations of dark-skinned men and women appear in the Morenada, the festival's main dance.

Laden with symbolism, the dance represents the enslaved Africans who were brought to the high plateau. The aforementioned altitude sickness is expressed in their swollen lower lip, found in all Andean masks of Afro-descendants. This is a biological symbol of alienation. The lower part of the costume has the form of a barrel in order to recall their main task in La Plata: mashing grapes for mead. Their rattle is made of the Andean animal *quirquincho*. The *Virrey Moreno* (Black Viceroy) has a more sinister outfit, sporting a long whip that invariably represents the cruelty of foremen. As for the *Rey Moreno* (Black King), he always carries a scepter which normally has his own image at the end.

Since the 1970s, the *China Morena* (Black Folk Woman) vindicated the role of transvestites in Bolivian folklore. Before, female characters of all dances were exclusively interpreted by men.

In 2015, I photographed Alicia Galán, president of the LGBTQI+ Collective of Bolivia, dressed as a China Morena in one of Freddy Mamani's unfinished and unpainted Cholets.<sup>29</sup> There is something of a uterine core in that image. It could also be in the inside of a spaceship.

The foremen are exclusively represented in the dance of the *Sambo Caporal* or Head Foremen, who proceed bare-faced but with some form of the *Z* of *Zambo* in their outfit. The contrast in popularity and number of guilds that dance the Morenada and the sparse presence of Afro-Andeans in the high plateau is disturbing. When a *Moreno* takes off his mask, we generally see an indigenous face, or a mestizo, or even white face. The Afro-Andean element only persists in this empty mask.

Afro-Bolivians found refuge in the tropical valleys that exist as fissures within the high plateau, such as the Yungas close to La Paz. There, near the town of Coroico, there is a *palengue* with a king. But can this explain such an abrupt and massive disappearance? The hypothesis of genetic dissemination through mixing holds little weight considering the predominance of African Americans in the Caribbean, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, etc. In contrast, currently only 1.6 percent of the Mexican population identifies as Afro-Mexican. The first free city to be founded near Veracruz is called Yangas.

Yangas, Yungas. Similar, right?

A large part of Latin America has relentlessly denied its African American roots, as can be observed in the quote by Gabriela Mistral which opens the second section of this essay.

Motivated by the disturbing cone-shaped mountains of Dunwich, the Yog-Sothoth god who appears over them, and the immaculate conception of Wilbur Whateley and his brother,<sup>30</sup> I confess I have attempted to compare the Andean myths discussed in this essay with Graham Harman's interpretation of H. P. Lovecraft's literature. Surprisingly, one of the essential issues for Lovecraft is recognizing how indispensable language is. Phrases such as the following display this: "It would be trite and not wholly accurate to say that no human pen could describe it."<sup>31</sup>

But Lovecraft brilliantly describes his creatures after declaring them indescribable. Illustrations abound on the internet. I wanted to juxtapose Harman's hypothesis with Andean mythology's "motley"<sup>32</sup> characteristics, variegated from endless cultural mixing which may very well outlive Christianity.

Against philosophical beliefs, both have the virtuous sin of innocence and excess of figuration. On the other hand, Lovecraft's racism is problematic. Who are those alien beings who threaten "his world" and which he fears and loathes so much? This is a crucial alternative to Harman's reading of Lovecraft. It may also help us identify correlations with the conquest and colonization of the Americas, of which Lovecraft and his literature are nothing more than a historical consequence.

## Notes

1. The blood red is not so unvarying in the photographs, although it generally persists at the top of the hill. Since the camera is a mechanical apparatus, the more intense reds of the early paintings are most likely the painter's impression.

2. Teresa Gisbert, *Iconografía y mitos indígenas en el arte* (La Paz: Editorial Gisbert y Cia., 2008), 20.

3. *Ibid.*, 19

4. Ramos quoted by Gisbert, *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 17.

8. *Ibid.*

9. It was common practice to marry noble Incas with Spaniards in order to forge alliances between the conquered dynasty and the conquerors.

10. Teresa Gisbert, "El cerro de Potosí y el dios Pachacámac," *Revista de Antropología Chilena* 42 (2010): 169–180.

11. Gisbert, *Iconografía y mitos indígenas en el arte*, 15.

12. Gisbert, "El cerro de Potosí y el dios Pachacámac," 170.

13. *Ibid.*

14. La Diablada is the most important folk dance in northern Chile, western Bolivia, and southern Peru.

15. According to Margaret Murray's arguments. See: Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

16. *Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:28, King James Version.

17. Alberto Díaz Araya, Luis Galdames Rosas, and Rodrigo Ruz Zagal, "Introducción," In *Y llegaron en Cadenas. Las poblaciones afrodescendientes en la Historia de Arica y Tarapacá*, eds. Díaz Araya, Galdames Rosas, and Ruz Zagal (Arica: Ediciones Universidad de Tarapacá, 2018), 5.

18. Pablo Oyarzún, *La mariposa y el cóndor*, 2021, 7.
19. Henry Kamen, “El negro en Hispanoamérica (1500–1700),” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos XXVIII* (Sevilla: 1971), 123.
20. Magdalena Petit, *La Quintrala* (Santiago: Editorial Zig-Zag, 1961), 96.
21. Luis Miguel Glave and Alberto Díaz Araya, “Características de la Esclavitud y la Resistencia Negra en el Virreinato Peruano,” in *Y llegaron en Cadenas. Las poblaciones afrodescendientes en la Historia de Arica y Tarapacá*, eds. Díaz Araya, Galdames Rosas, and Ruz Zagal (Arica: Ediciones Universidad de Tarapacá, 2018), 17.
22. *Ibid.*, 11.
23. Although I would personally never use this phrasing, this is how the situation is described in the general Archive of the Indies.
24. Luis Miguel Glave and Alberto Díaz Araya, 14.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Cholet* is an acronym which combines the French *Chalet* and the Andean term *Cholo*, referring to the Indigenous population’s dark skin. Its inventor, Freddy Mamani, prefers to call his constructions New Andean Architecture.
30. H.P. Lovecraft, *El horror de Dunwich*, Madrid: Alianza, 1993 (1928).
31. Lovecraft, quoted in Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012), 133.
32. Zavaleta Mercado opposes syncretism’s evangelizing nature by referring to spontaneous and unplanned mixes as *abigarrado* or *motley*. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui also tends to use this concept. See: Hugo Rodas Morales, *René Zavaleta Mercado: expresión barroca y bonapartismo* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2018), 149.

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## CHAPTER 24

# Supercritical Collasuyo

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Camila Marambio and Ariel Bustamante

Are we complicating things ahead of time with the title?

Yes, we do that a lot.

Two-fourths of our joint toroidal energy is spent on calculations.

How long will we hold up before drying out?

The supercritical is exhausting.

It's pressure, yes, but we can get there together. The supercritical doesn't have to be exhausting, it's just a state above the threshold of knowing whether we are solid, liquid, or gaseous H<sub>2</sub>O, both wind and water at the same time.

The Collasuyo can help us remember what happened (around us) when we were there, at the birth of the wind.

We can rest when we get there. Or better yet, we could use the Collasuyo to write about it as if we were still there, walking together. Before countries were countries, the land walked, the suyos walked in the same old deserts, but with wiser borders.

Bolivia, Chile,

Pozo Almonte,

Pampa del Tamarugal,

Santa Ana de Chipaya.

That's our destiny for now.

I hit a nail with a hammer (use value).

She came with me (connective tissue).

Fiction-fusion (lines of living winds).

Wait, before we go on, I think we need to flesh out the fiction-fusion. Last week I told you I was going to write fiction to fix all the mistakes caused by my third eye being stuffed up, sticky; you said to me that our friend



Bernardo might call that a blockage, or stupidity, not daring to do what we feel we should be doing with others. Then you asked me to remember when you had told me that people who know you well know you're very stupid, remember? I must have missed that, but I think we can write to remember. We can write to feel our feelings again, to recall what it was like to be along the wind line, as if we were still in the desert, being looked at by the geoglyphs.

OK. Vamos.

There are two aimless people (let's call them boy and girl, not because they are gendered. In fact I'll be the boy, you be the girl, for now). They meet in Iquique after some years of physical distance. Does she pick him up at the airport? No, she awaits at the house, then takes him by the hand and walks him to see the wind being born at sunset. They sit on the beach and squint their eyes as they look out into the Pacific Ocean. Some 50 kilometers out, a flippant wind torques itself into existence.

They witness the cosmological birth of a wind.

Imagine a minute curly globule fermenting in the air, growing out like a sound into a softly living tunnel. They see it and prepare to slide into it by walking within it. Their walk is educational. She has been learning how to jump into the windway for five years now, to stand in its queue by walking with others. Together, they will keep learning as an excuse to practice listening. Listening is the need of an encounter, an act of love.

There are countless forms of love, and this is good. More forms are being created daily in the laboratories of land and sea, but what makes this specific fusional encounter possible is a gift. The gift is a compass, a set of cosmic navigational rules given to her by Veronica Cereceda in the form of ancient oral maps, incantations, whispers, and jokes voiced in the desert by the Uru-Chipayans.

The Uru-Chipayans have marked the wind paths across the Collasuyo, their elders have flown around waters and mountains, within the very low and the very high reaches of this land.

To this day, they keep being both Alteños and Abajeños, water people and wind people, with a natural habit, a supercritical habit: to stream, to swirl around, to transit. The cause of the habit is the pleasure for travel, drive to exchange and also displacement. Girl and boy follow the habit of Alaxpacha. Fortunately for them, they are not escaping.

The littoral zone of Iquique is the beginning. It's a new beginning for them but also for the ones that are able to make it there alive. It is a new beginning for whoever is attentive enough to the ocean, to the constant recreation of the old/new. Beginnings happen all the time, but not everywhere. This is why they gather there in silence, and silence is impossible and the key.

Preparedness to sincerity is first.

Quietly, they open their offerings: a freehand map, some coca leaves, alcohol. The first word that is pronounced out loud is the Uru-Chipayan name of the wind of the west; they call the *Śoqo źoñi* of the west by his/her name, waving coca leaves with their left hands.

*Werhnak teqhś źelučha amkiśtan śiśxapa, anaż amtan śhijkiśxapa.*



*We are not here to disturb you but to learn from you.*

They both ask and offer their company, which in turn produces orientation. Protection is also asked for. Protection for all the beings that have spoken and walked before them, future and present.

New permissions can always be improvised.

Breathing, boy, and girl, who are sitting on the rocky beach, are now three. girlwindboy begin to walk, and it matters less and less who is who and which is which. Every time it matters, it hurts. Every time they fall out of the tunnel, it hurts. All wound up in each other, they move and stray far far away from the identity politics of their colonial upbringing. Stray into the wind.

Wind and wind are the same word. She winds her arms around his slim waist while standing in front of a big mirror. They stand there looking out into themselves before they wormhole into the air. They are in the city, dry and fresh, looking suspiciously similar, too similar to be lovers, but not enough to be rivals. What are they? And who's the custodian of this city? The wind picks up speed and swishes over their heads, whisking away their thoughts. They listen and begin to bargain. The economy of wind travel is severely bargained. They can't be two, or three, they must be one. Till a point of exasperation, they weigh the price of walking sandals, the right amount of sea water they are willing to carry. The mantra that must be repeated to amicably persevere and preserve is "money is food, food is vitality, food is care, food is a contract, money is a contract, to value us and anyone else we must carry sweetness."

50,000 Chilean pesos, transmuted into 200 grams of coca leaves, 100 ml of alcohol, and 20 gr of dried blueberries for spiritual commensality.

At the bus stop, they negotiate a ride to La Tirana. They hop into a beat-up minivan and leave the broken city behind. Peace and death are the primary problems of the cosmos. Emotional collisions create friction and when walking this can be very dangerous. Out there, you need to become transparent. Peace of mind is fragile and to be unseen it is a requirement. Quiet. Find the pace and carry the right ID. Safety is never guaranteed.

There are different kinds of death, not all are equal. Illness is also unevenly distributed so, before the fiction continues, here are just a few warnings before crossing the desert.

- Be Chilean!
- Avoid mirages by speaking out loud.
- The road should always flow from west to east.
- You are never alone, so you should always ask for permission and you can always ask for help.
- Geoglyphs are not alone.
- Ojos de agua no son safe.
- Nothing is free.

We land back in the fiction, I sigh every time.

Nothing is free and it sits heavily on my conscience today. I have taken what is not mine. I have returned it (and sometimes I have not). I am paying my dues, but I may have to carry them into the next life. Is this what the drawings on the side of the mountain are about? Is it *un pagamento*, a due? A due to the earth, that would perhaps explain their mountainous scale. I too need to draw a symbol as big as my love. I'll blow into the wind.

We are again sitting in the shade of an Algarrobo, mesmerized.

Deep in a critical reading of the mountain, I took *not only* notes of the stunning scars that decorate *estos seres que Marisol de la Cadena nombra seres tierra*, but I took time. The mountain foresaw us coming, among many other things, and it awaited us with messages. Intimidated, we kept a safe distance from the geoglyphs. We sizzled our brains to come up with a dignifying account of the language of giants. Permissions to Cerro Pintados take hours, because they knew the future, they knew how corrupted we would become, they asked for time (Fig. 24.1).

Where are they now?

It is not easy to describe why, but after weeks that turned into months, one odd day, the feeling faded, and we walked closer to the signs. The images were inviting, communal, commensal, but at the same time, they possessed a warning. Dangerously seductive, we sensed their power. You became overwhelmed with confusion. Puzzled by the clashing sentiments, we sought more information. Later, we read accounts of others' encounters with them, and looked into scholarly interpretations that only heightened our mystification, because—to no true surprise—the studios who have been trying to understand the existence of these geoglyphs for years have no coherent explanation. They are as con-founded as we were, back then. Scientific dating attempts only shed light on the fact that the markings we were seeing connected remote Andean sites to sites deep in the jungle, strewn in the driest of deserts, and high in the pampas. We found what we had sensed: these markings connected foreign cultures, distant language groups, and radically different landscapes.

Do you think there was ever such a thing as a stable “lingua franca” in the Andes? She asks.

No.

There is nothing more unstable and fragile than tongues.

Challamos.

Yes, *salúcita por la lengua Ckunza*, health to the Ckunza tongue ...

OK, so if it is not lingua franca then this is another form of communication, beyond our grasp. Beyond our grasp because it is beyond this place, beyond ourselves, and beyond the rocks themselves.



FIGURE 24.1 Cerro Pintados, 2022. Photograph by Camila Marambio.

It is about traffic, about the messages or signals transmitted through a communications system as feeling. Feeling traffic, or traffic as feeling. Feeling the exchange of resources of all sorts, of many kinds, spiritual and material, even when you are not here or there. Feeling portals, and the moment in which your skin tells you that you are ready to depart and your gut alerts you that you have arrived.

Deciphering traffic signs can be fast and quick or slow and improbable. Some are easily described: rhomboids, rectangles, straight and squiggly lines, stick-figure humans, reptiles, and lamas. Others unsettle: the half-human figures, the absurd sizes, codes in a language we do not yet know or have forgotten.

**Everybody.**

**Every body!!!**

**(Loudly busting in) Listen up:**

**Let's create a wide language that gives space to so much difference that it can be picked up instantaneously in whichever frequency.**

Wait, I'm getting carried away, always leaping toward utopia.

Are you trying to say that geoglyphs are this language? A language beyond time, beyond Chile, made for the future? A code that is absolutely safe from misinterpretation?

No.

But, maybe. Maybe it's a language that requires another form of relating? How to "get with" a language that travels with such strength that it can't be deviated by mentality? A supercritical language.

Yes, a future foolproof road that articulates the time and space of our editing.

Grammar between realities.

Dreaming of this brings me peace. Or, have I mistaken your question and what you need is for me to just be close to you when it finally happens? Where would you choose to die this time? I have a hunch that it would be south of here, near that room where the wind rattles my song. In Karukinka, Tierra del Fuego, I am right?

Speak to me more ...

I hate the internet. Mostly, because it is not you. We assume, naively, that there is no noise, no mispronunciations, no physical barriers, no gusts of colder air that might interfere in our conversation; believing that when we say to the wind "let's play," he/she will not hear instead "let's pray." This would get us into trouble.

I'm afraid of trouble.

The Collasuyo desert is dangerous, fucking dangerous. The mummified bodies of immigrants attempting to cross into Chile constantly remind us of this. We say a little prayer for the dead and the sweat is only part of the offer we give to them. We greet their spirits as we walk in the other direction, tracing the path that has been swept by the wind coming from the west of Iquique for eons. It is another highway, a gregarious road where a multitude of creatures collide with one another at different velocities and for different reasons.

Dissociation, fear, and hurt spiral inwards. I drift toward the teen fantasies that appease them, momentarily, to laugh and cry about it all, to forget I'm old and broken. Then, I decide that I'm going to write fiction and fix all of my mistakes.

Here is that thought experiment: You're walking the wind and you encounter a speaking mountain that might conserve its original name, you have not much trouble understanding it. Plain and simple it is standing there and you hear it and it hears you. It tells you how to navigate its contours and how to exchange goods and souls. You thank it and ask: "And how are you today?" It responds by giving you a lake.

We are walking along a highway made of concrete, asking ourselves who takes care of this road? Above the concrete we feel the shape of the wind, a narrow tunnel of dry air that smooches us together. It is carnal. Do you feel the sensual whirlpool twisting inside our tent?

He likes to rest on his back lying on the ground mostly because there are also invisible rivers flowing down there. They choose a good spot to rest and to eat. Since everybody eats here, our mesa is shared with whoever needs to be fed.

They prayed.

The sun is already scorching the desert, but they are shaded by the embracing Algarrobo and Tamarugo trees. He inhales the morning heat and her snoring. He wonders what awaits them, they have little water and no plans. He is still halfway in the dreaming, unable to grasp his flesh, he is still overtaken by gravity and feels the pebbles and seeds they did not clear when sweeping penetrate his skin leaving grooves in his back. He recalls the bloodshed, it was menstrual and it came as a surprise. Does she smell it? Is this the metallic eroticism she has spoken of, the whirlpools?

Yes, it is. Before then they were like children, learning to listen. Everything was at stake, but there was no purpose. Purposeless experimentation is their only power.

She is not fully awake, so he moves into a good fart as a salute to the west, the wind of the west. Now, breakfast, his favorite meal of the day. He slithers along the ground toward the small sack containing their food. He can't remember what they ate out there. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that they must now tell the story of what happened every afternoon when they paused their meandering.

Is prayer the right word?

That was a good example. Now let's begin:

Remember what happened to us when we were there? Under the geoglyphs' gaze we lacked the protocols. Just think of all the protocols that colonization has obliterated from our memories, taken from this huge desert and beyond; all the tools and all the roads that have been broken.

The howling wind inside my refrigerator says, "get up, get out, get on."

What am I to say?



The sun is still high but the wind has quieted, for now. They must find somewhere to sleep and it won't be here. It can't be. The images occupy them and they must rest. She told him of this occupation once, now he knows what it feels like to be inhabited by the subversive force of a language that wants to move, needs to move.

Speaking and listening are not the same, he thinks for a fleeting moment. This phrase is a serious point of contention. He doesn't fully grasp what it means when he thinks it but then he is certain when he says: "Why do you assume I am white?" Just stay out of the confusion you've created on my skin, leave me with my opacity and suspend right now, for this sole sentence, your politics of semiotics and its inevitable cultural symbolism, because if I allow you to mine us all is lost; the highway to the wide language gets obliterated for all future time. I won't have it. We won't have it. You need us. So stop forever ravaging my grandmother's body.

It's been three or four hours, they haven't budged but the aliveness of the verb has. (That's survival by the way.) The circulation between speaking and listening is making him dizzy.

He remembers she told him it felt like a displacement, like being swung from an oscillatory chord that refused to be spotted. What is it attached to? Her thoughts grab at the source and miss. It is holding him, and it is avoiding being groped back.

Under the optics of these fugitive movements, they wonder together: if someone else, at another point in time, has had this experience? Someone outside of the time of her and him. Outside of you and me. Shapes that exist in between realms, blur dimensions, and act as bridges between the clear and the unsettling.

"Feelings are facts," Yvone said, or wrote, or read.

Inspired by that dancer's energy, he wants to kick off the beginning of this (momentary) conclusion with questions about geoglyphic artistry: Is the grab-power they feel embedded in the shape of the images themselves? Have the hands that scratched the surface conspired with the rocks and minerals to slowly grow a suitable canvas to which they are now irrevocably attached? Or, is it the wind that shapes them (and us)?

Lithic creativity pushed to emerge to our gaseous reality.

Then, a set of final burning questions: Who is conjuring the creative energy of these drawings? Or more importantly, were the creators of these signs aware of their power? Were they consciously making images that would live in time, over time, and out of time, supercritically?

Whistling, they arrived at the turbulent sensation that staring at the geoglyphs certainly happened. Loud and clear, in their silence, in the presence of them she declared, "confusion is constitutive of these geoglyphs and that confusion is, at the same time, unavoidable."

This inevitable trajectory between clarity and unclear blurriness, in between her and him, and the two different worlds they are and cease to be is the Supercritical Collasuyo. Under this infrastructure of partially



effective and partially uncontrollable sign language, they converse with a wind, and she dreams he is impregnated by it.

Face to face, she speaks to a Soqo and he speaks back to her. Over the course of five years, she keeps expecting her desires to match her words and hopes this wind listens to her carefully, with full undivided attention, with open ears and no distractions, but this is already a lot to ask of anyone. But regardless of the possible confusions between them (that I know are happening right now) you, reader, have kept going and they keep meeting at these words. This is an oblique communicational architecture.

Simultaneously they are hitchhiking back to Iquique now and there is sadness in both of them. After all, something couldn't be expressed, a blockage, a shared stupidity, or shared wounds that did not let them do what they felt they should do. No real conclusion in their Collasuyo, no real despacho, just transformations of what they believed love might be and cannot be.

They both part ways, and that is the most cryptic event of all. He leaves, and she stays to walk up even further to the very edges of the Collasuyo. Don German Lazaro will receive him now, a strong Uru-Chipayan, ready to triangulate new gifts for their future along with the wind.

Dwarfed by the geoglyphs, swept away by the wind, carried away by these words, desire to connect regardless of the incommensurability seems to be greater than the urge to sense-make, at least for now. To say this meeting mattered is more than to say I do.

Take this with you for when we meet again: water exits the course of the river and sinks into the turbid shapes, more wise, less run off.

\*All words in the Chipay taqu language were translated by Germán Lázaro, from the Uru-Chipayan Indigenous nation. Thank you hermano.

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## Contributors' Biographies

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**Carolina Arévalo Karl** is adjunct professor in the School of Art and Craft at Universidad Academia Humanismo Cristiano in Santiago, Chile. A researcher and curator, her curatorial projects include *Sheila Hicks: Reencounter* at the PreColumbian Art Museum in Santiago (2019) and *Soft Territories* at the Knockdown Center in New York (2019), among others. Her research has been published in edited volumes and exhibition catalogs, including *Hilos Libres: Sheila Hicks* (Puebla, México: Museo Amparo, 2018), *Jaume Xifra* (Gerona, Spain: Universitat de Girona, 2018), and *Anni Albers Influjos Precolombinos y Legado* (Bogotá, Colombia: Goethe Institute, 2019). Carolina holds an MA in History of Design and Curatorial Studies from Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum and The New School; and a BA in Design from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She also holds a certificate in Gender and Sexuality Studies from The New School in New York.

**Francisca Benitez** is a Chilean-born artist living in New York since 1998. Through video, photography, performance, and drawing, her art practice explores the relationships between space, place, politics, and language, being closely linked to the places where she has lived and the communities she interacts with. Her work has been exhibited internationally in galleries, museums, art centers and biennials, and recent exhibitions include *Riego* at Die ecke, Santiago; *In Support* at The Kitchen, New York; *New/Now* at the New Britain Museum of American Art, CT; *Uprisings* at the Jeu de Paume, Paris; *Much wider than a line* at SITE Santa Fe, NM. She holds a BA in Architecture from Universidad de Chile and an MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York. Francisca is an alto singer in the Stop Shopping Choir, an anti-capitalist direct action performance group based in New York City.

**Ariel Bustamante** is a sound artist based in La Paz, Bolivia, and a member of the Multispecies Laboratory at the Institute of Anthropological Research at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, Bolivia. He is also a current artist fellow in the residency program of the Academy Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany. He is a wind follower who practices new and old ways of walking with humans and wind-persons, using breathing and conversation as a social form of healing.

**Manuel Carrión Lira** (he/they) is a Pikunche researcher, video-artist and curator originally from Pikunmapu/Quillasuyu (Quillota, Chile). Currently, Manuel is pursuing their PhD in Cultural Studies at the Department of

Literature at University of California San Diego as a Fulbright International Fellow. Manuel holds an MA in Latin American Art, Thought, and Culture from the Instituto de Estudios Avanzados at Universidad de Santiago de Chile; and a BA in Design at Universidad de Valparaíso. As a member of the Catrileo+Carrión Community, they have collectively published the volumes *Poyewün Nütramkan Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu* (2020); *Poyewün witrál: bitácora de las tejedoras de Neltume* (2019); *Torcer la palabra: escrituras obrera-feministas* (2018); and *Yikalay pu zomo Lafkenmapu* (2018). Manuel is also part of the Global Center for Advanced Studies Latin America Collective.

**Fernanda Carvajal** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) and teaches courses on cultural studies at Universidad de Buenos Aires; Universidad del Salvador; and Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero in Argentina. Her work examines the crossroads between art, sexuality, and politics in the Southern Cone since the 1970s through the present. A member and former Coordinator of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur, she has co-curated the exhibitions *Perder la forma humana. Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina*; and *La Bondadosa Crueldad. León Ferrari 100 años*, both at the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid. She is currently leading the digital project “Archivo Yeguas del Apocalipsis” alongside Alejandro de la Fuente. Fernanda holds an MA and PhD in Communication and Culture from the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA). She lives and works between Santiago de Chile and Buenos Aires.

**Paula (Paly) Carvajal Borquez** is the daughter of Laura and Manuel. She grew up in San Félix, a town in Alto del Carmen in the region of Atacama in the Chilean Norte Chico. A cultivator of her Diaguita culture and roots, her work includes the collective making of dolls and textile, as well as cooking and cultivating agri-food, and practicing oral tradition. A writer of short stories about the Diaguita cosmovision, she published the books *Voces de Huasco Alto (tradicion oral del Valle del Guasco Alto)* in 2010; and *Cuentos de las abuelas Kakanas (relatos de la tradicion oral diaguita y cuentos inéditos)* in 2021. She is currently working on the book *Historias con sabor a valle (cuentos relacionados al patrimonio alimentario de los valles transversales, territorio diaguita mestizo)*.

**Carolina Castro Jorquera** is an art historian, critic, and curator. She is guest lecturer at the MFA program in image making and research at Universidad Finis Terrae in Santiago. Her first book, *Camino de la conciencia: Mira Schendel, Víctor Grippo y Cecilia Vicuña*, was published by Ediciones Universidad Finis Terrae in 2020. As a curator, she has organized numerous exhibitions, including *Alejandro Leonhardt: Líquida Superficie Sólida* at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Santiago (2021) and *Rodrigo Arteaga: Diorama en expansión*, at the Museo de Artes Visuales in Santiago (2021). Her articles have appeared in international art magazines and newspapers such as *Artishock*; *Latinxspaces*; *The Miami Rail*; *Terremoto*; and Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. A participant of the 4th Gwangju Biennale International Curator Course in 2012, Carolina holds a BFA from Universidad del Desarrollo; an MA in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture from the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía; and a PhD in Art History from Universidad Autónoma in Madrid.

**Antonio Catrileo Araya** (they/them) is a Mapuche writer, artist, and weaver from Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu (Curico, Chile), currently pursuing their PhD in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego. They hold a BA and an MA in Chilean and Hispanic Literature from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. Antonio is the author of the books *Awkan epupillan mew: dos espíritus en divergencia* (2019) and *Diáspora* (2015). As a member of the Catrileo+Carrión Community, they have collectively published the volumes *Poyewün Nütramkan Pikunmapu/Qullasuyu* (2020); *Poyewün witrál: bitácora de las tejedoras de Neltume* (2019); *Torcer la palabra: escrituras obrera-feministas* (2018); and *Yikalay pu zomo Lafkenmapu* (2018). They are currently part of Fecundações Cruzadas, a network of transfeminist dialogues and Indigenous epistemologies of Abya Yala, as well as a collaborator of the Global Center for Advanced Studies Latin America Collective.

**Matías Celedón** is a Chilean award-winning novelist, journalist, and screenwriter. The author of the novel *La Filial* (Alquimia Ediciones, 2012; Sudaquia Editores, 2014) translated by Samuel Rutter as *The Subsidiary* (Melville House, 2016), Celedón is also the author of the novels *Trama y urdimbre* (Mondadori, 2007; Hueders 2019); *Buscanidos* (Hueders, 2014); and *El Clan Braniff* (Hueders, 2018). Celedón has worked as a screenwriter for documentary and fiction projects in Chile and Argentina, and holds a BA in Communication Studies from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He lives in Santiago, Chile.

**colectiva somoslacélula** is a New York-based research and activist collective founded in 2019 by Amanda Lotspike, Ángeles Donoso Macaya, and César Barros A. As a tool for popular education, colectiva somoslacélula produces video-essays that interrogate founding notions of national and transnational hegemonic narratives. They also disseminate different forms of activism throughout Abya Yala. The audiovisual work by colectiva somoslacélula has been featured at the Film Anthology Archives and Maysles Documentary Center (NYC), as part of *The People's Revolt: A Showcase of New Chilean Experimental Cinema*, as well as at the Interference Archive (NYC), Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral (Santiago, Chile), and Khôra Gallery (Quito, Ecuador).

**Colectivo Últimaesperanza** is an artistic collective directed by Sandra Ulloa and Nataniel Alvarez, which was born in 2004. Using both analog and digital means, Últimaesperanza explores the particularities of the rurality of Tierra del Fuego/Patagonia and the subantarctic territory in terms of collective memory, history, and local identity. Ironically taking its name from the toponyms given to the territory as a gesture of resistance, the collective re-reads and makes visible community life in rural areas, rescuing the voices and memories of their inhabitants and the legacy of the first nations, which have been silenced by official history. In recent years, their work has consisted of undertaking expeditions to the maritime domain with artists, scientists, and historians and establishing a dialogue with the human and non-human beings that populate the territory. Establishing networks with artists from other parts of the country and abroad, since 2010 the collective has created the territorial exploration laboratory

“Liquenlab,” a space for reflection and thought, highlighting the South as a place from and in which to experience and rethink the territory.

**Carl Fischer** is Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Fordham University in the Bronx, New York, where he teaches courses on Latin American visual culture, film, and literature. He is the author of *Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965–2015* (2016) and co-editor (with Vania Barraza) of *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World* (2020). His writing has been published in *American Quarterly*, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, *Hispanic Review*, and *Comunicación y medios*, among other academic journals. Before getting his doctorate, he worked as a translator for the Chilean government. Currently, he is working on a new book project, tentatively titled *Cosmic Racisms: Fascism, Geopolitics, and Aesthetics in Latin America’s Southern Cone*.

**Mariairis Flores Leiva** is an independent researcher, critic, and curator. The cofounder of the newly inaugurated art gallery in Santiago, Espacio218, she is currently working on the research project “Bajo el signo mujer” and her work has been supported by the National Fund for the Development of Culture and the Arts (FONDART) and the Chilean Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage (Mincap). She writes for the art magazines *Artforum* and *Artshock*, and has co-authored with Sebastián Calfuqueo the book *Desbordar el territorio* (2016), and with Varinia Brodsky the volume, *Mujeres en las artes visuales en Chile 2010–2020* (2021). She has also worked on the digital projects “Mezza: Archivo liberado”; the website [www.carlosleppe.cl](http://www.carlosleppe.cl); the book *Arte y política 2005–2015 (fragmentos)*; and has collaborated with Museum of Fine Arts, Houston’s International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA). Mariairis holds a BA and MA in History and Theory of Art from Universidad de Chile.

**Gregorio Fontaine Correa** (a.k.a. Gregorio Fontén) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Arts Institute of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. A researcher and artist who works in poetry, music, and visual arts, his songs, which surface as the resonance between the body and its surroundings, explore the oscillation (*vacilación*) between listening and dancing. Fontén holds a PhD in Sonic Arts from Goldsmiths, University of London, and his work has been published in *Contemplación* (Libros de la Elipse, Santiago 2001), *FM* (Veer Books, London 2014), and *Transducción* (Sonhoras, Barcelona 2018), and presented at the Queen Elizabeth Hall (London), Center for New Music (San Francisco), Fundación Phonos (Barcelona), CMMAS (Morelia), and Teatro Municipal de Santiago (Santiago de Chile). Fontén is currently preparing a book that frames the artistic practice of *vacilar* as a South American sonic onto-fiction.

**Marcelo Garzo Montalvo** (he/they) is a musician, dancer, and Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies at California State University, San Marcos. He is a first-generation Chilean-Canadian-American of Mapuche and Spanish descent. They hold a BA, MA, and PhD in Comparative Ethnic Studies from UC Berkeley. Their teaching and research focus on comparative and critical approaches to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Xicanx Studies as well as Dance and Performance



Studies. They have worked as a scholar-activist and published articles on abolition, decolonization, and social movements for food, healing, and ecological justice. Their current book project, *Armas Milagrosas/Miraculous Weapons*, is a study of embodied knowledge, cultural decolonization, and Xicanx Indigenities in the practice of Anahuacan ceremonial dance (Danza Azteca, Danza Mexica, Danza Chichimeca-Tolteca). They also served as the Co-coordinator of the Abiyala Working Group of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association for the 2021–2022 academic year.

**Astrid González** is a multi-media artist and researcher who explores the historical processes of communities of African descent in the Americas. Her work has been exhibited internationally in venues such as Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín; Galería Vigil Gonzáles in Cusco, Peru; and Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago, Chile. She was awarded the first place in Nuevos Talentos in 2021 by Cámara de Comercio de Medellín, Antioquia, and second place in the 8th Bienal de Comfenalco Arte Joven in Medellín. González is also the author of *Ombbligo cimarrón. Investigación creación* (2019, Editorial F.E.A., Santiago de Chile). She holds a BFA from the Fundación Universitaria Bellas Artes in Medellín.

**Milena Grass Kleiner** is Professor in the School of Theater at the Faculty of Arts, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. A translator and theater scholar, her fields of interest range from research methodologies in the arts; traumatic memory, postmemory, and theater in postconflict societies; and the analysis of performativity in social mobilizations as an expression of citizenship. Milena is the former Director of the Millennium Nucleus Art, Performativity and Activism, and Vicepresident of the International Federation for Theatre Research. Her Spanish translations of English, American, and French plays have been produced by leading Chilean directors, and have also been published along with various translations of books and papers on Chilean history, and theater studies.

**Sophie Halart** is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Aesthetics of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. She is the co-editor with Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra of *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America*, recently re-published by Bloomsbury (2022). Halart's research interests are feminism and maternity in the Southern Cone and, more recently, the articulation of new artistic methodologies in the face of climate change in contemporary Chile. She holds a PhD in Art History from University College London; an MA in Culture Industry from Goldsmiths College; and a BA in Art History and English Literature from the University of York.

**Bernardita Llanos M.** is Professor of Spanish and Women's and Gender Studies at Brooklyn College, CUNY. Her areas of research are Latin American women writers, documentary films, women's testimonies, and feminist activism. She has published the books *Passionate Subjects/Split Subjects in Twentieth Century Narrative in Chile. Brunet, Bombal and Eltit*; and *Redescubrimiento y Reconquista de América en la Ilustración Española*. Many of her articles have appeared in well-known American, Latin American, and European journals. She has co-authored and edited several books, among

them *Poner el cuerpo. Rescatar y visibilizar las marcas sexuales y de género de los archivos dictatoriales del Cono Sur; Fronteras de la memoria: cartografías de género en artes visuales, cine y literatura en las Américas y España; Paisajes de Chile Actual: Arte, Cine, Narrativa, Poesía y Teatro Contemporáneo; Letras y proclamas: la estética narrativa de Diamela Eltit; and Reinas de otro cielo. Modernidad y autoritarismo en la obra de Pedro Lemebel.*

**Nicole L'Huillier** is a transdisciplinary artist who works with sounds, vibrations, resonances, and multiple transductions to explore sound as a construction material that intertwines agencies from the micro to the cosmic, stimulating new imaginaries, sensitivities, and collectivities. Nicole holds a PhD in Media Arts & Sciences from Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab, and was awarded 1st Prize in the MIT 2020 Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts, a DAAD fellowship as part of the Transnational Sound Initiative (TSI) and the 2019 SIMETRIA prize to participate in a residency at CERN, Paranal, and ALMA Observatories. Recently, her work has been shown in Transmediale, the Venice Architecture Biennale, Ars Electronica, and Bienal de Artes Mediales Santiago, among others.

**Carla Macchiavello Cornejo** is Associate Professor of Art History in the Department of Music and Art at The Borough of Manhattan Community College BMCC/CUNY. She has published on contemporary Latin American art, performative poetics and video art, solidarity networks and their woven meshes of resistance, art and education, and artistic practices aimed at social transformation. She co-edits the periodical *Más allá del fin/Beyond the End* for Ensayos, a collective research practice centered on the ecopolitics of Tierra del Fuego, and is co-editor of the book *Turba Tol Hol-Hol*, a compendium of ecocultural thought of Latin American authors, which is part of the Chilean pavilion at the 59<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale. She also has a forthcoming book on Chilean art and territoriality during the military dictatorship, which will be published by Ediciones Metales Pesados.

**Camila Marambio** is a curator based in Chile and the founder/Director of Ensayos. She is Postdoc Fellow of The Seedbox Program at The Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm. She holds a PhD in Curatorial Practice from Monash University in Melbourne; an MA in Modern Art and Curatorial Studies from Columbia University; and a Master's in Experiments in Art and Politics from Sciences Po School of Public Affairs in Paris. She is a letter-writing dancer who practices magic, delights in telling ancient circular stories, and is concerned with human/non-human health. She is also the curator of the Chilean pavilion at the 59<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale.

**María Luisa Murillo** is a Chilean curator and artist and the director of Art and Projects and the Art, Science, and Humanities residency program at the Casa-Museo Alberto Baeriswyl, in Tierra del Fuego. In the framework of this program, she has curated exhibitions of Chilean and Swiss artists at venues located in Chile, including the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Santiago de Chile), Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Cerrillos (Santiago de Chile), Centex (Valparaíso, Chile), and Museo Regional de Magallanes (Punta Arenas, Chile). As an artist, she is interested in the

intersections between photography, architecture, contemporary art, cultural heritage, and science, and makes work that explores the themes of memory and inhabitation. She has exhibited at venues in Chile and abroad, such as Centro Cultural Palacio de la Moneda (Santiago de Chile), Museo de Artes Visuales (Santiago de Chile), Centro de Cultura Contemporánea de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain), Kadist Art Foundation (Paris, France), and East Asia Contemporary Art (Shanghai, China), among others.

**José Pérez de Arce** is a Chilean musicologist and artist. Since receiving a PhD in Latin American Studies from Universidad de Chile in the 1980s, he has researched native music from the Andes. As a scholar, his publications and participation in conferences have explored issues related to Pre-Columbian, Indigenous, and *mestizo* traditions from that territory, musical instruments, and the spatial and temporal dimension of sonic exchanges. As an artist, he has collaborated with scientists in creating illustrations, has participated in bands, and created and edited sound and audiovisual installations. He is also a member of the band La Chimuchina, where he plays the traditional 25-string guitar from Central Chile. He has received awards for his work from the Fundación Pedro Montt, the Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Heritage, and Universidad de Chile.

**Florencia San Martín** is Assistant Professor of Art History at Lehigh University, where she teaches and writes about contemporary art in the Americas, decolonial methodologies, and the relationships between art, politics, and literature in the neoliberal present. Her work has appeared in academic journals and edited volumes in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, and her research has been supported by institutions including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Rutgers University, California State University, San Bernardino, Lehigh University, and CONICYT. The co-editor with Tatiana Flores and Charlene Villaseñor Black of the volume *The Routledge Companion to Decolonizing Art History* (Routledge, 2023), Florencia is currently working on her first academic monograph in which she reframes the art and thinking of Alfredo Jaar through a decolonial perspective.

**Demian Schopf** is a German-Chilean artist, writer, and university professor. He holds a BFA from Universidad Arcis; an MFA from Universidad de Chile; a PhD in Aesthetics and Art Theory also from Universidad de Chile; and a Post-doctorate on Cluster Analysis in Computer Science and Analytical Philosophy from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (2017). From 2002 to 2004, Schopf was a Fellow at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). In 2013, he completed an art residency at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe. He is the recipient of multiple awards, including the Juan Downey Prize at the XI Santiago Media Arts Biennial in 2013; the Altazor Prize in 2007; and VIDA: Arte e Inteligencia Artificial from Fundación Telefónica in Madrid in 2009. A regular contributor to academic journals, Schopf's work has been exhibited widely in Chile and abroad.

**Paula Solimano** is the Head of the Museography and Exhibitions Department at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile. Her research and curatorial practices explore theories of affect and belonging and methodologies of humor and play in Latin American contemporary art and culture. She has curated shows at venues including Centro Cultural Matucana 100 (Santiago, Chile), Parque Cultural de Valparaíso (Valparaíso, Chile), Sala Alcalá 31 (Madrid, Spain), and Leubsdorf Gallery (New York City). She has also led seminars and laboratories on Contemporary Curating and Art History at universities and independent art spaces. An MA in Art History from Hunter College, CUNY, and a BFA from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, her studies have been supported by Queen Sofía Spanish Institute and the David and Estrellita B. Brodsky Family Foundation.

**Catherine Spencer** is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews. Her research and teaching focus on performance art in Europe and the Americas, and publications in this area include essays in the journals *Art History*, *Art Journal*, *ARTMargins*, *Tate Papers*, *Parallax*, and *Oxford Art Journal*. Her book *Beyond the Happening: Performance Art and the Politics of Communication* was published by Manchester University Press in their Rethinking Art's Histories series in 2020. With Jo Applin and Amy Tobin, she is the co-editor of *London Art Worlds: Mobile, Contingent and Ephemeral Networks, 1960–80* (Penn State University Press, 2018). Her art criticism has appeared in venues including *Artforum*, *Art Monthly*, and *Burlington Contemporary*.

**Ignacio Szmulewicz** is a PhD student of Architecture and Urban Studies at PUC Santiago, a lecturer in art history at PUC Temuco, and an independent critic and curator based in Santiago. He has curated exhibitions such as *Coma, 2/3 Special Issue for the Conventional Election* (Gretta Rust Editorial House, Valdivia-Berlín, 2020), *Chinese Whispers* (U10 Gallery, Belgrade, 2017), and *Ciudad H* (Centro Cultural Matucana 100, Santiago de Chile, 2015). More recently, alongside María Verónica San Martín he curated *Collective Roadmap*, an artist book project created by 15 international artists inspired by the process of writing a new Chilean Constitution. A regular contributor to the magazine *La Panera*, Szmulewicz has published the books *Fuera del cubo blanco. Lecturas sobre arte público contemporáneo* (Metales Pesados, 2012), and *Arte, Ciudad y Esfera Pública en Chile* (Metales Pesados, 2015). He was the Director of the Documentary Center for Visual Arts at the National Center for Contemporary Arts from 2017 to 2020. He holds a BA in History and Theory of Art from Universidad de Chile, and an MA in Architecture from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

**Verónica Tello** is a Senior Lecturer of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, Australia. A Chilean-Australian art historian, her work is dedicated to engaging and animating queer and diasporic archives in/across Australia and Chile. She is currently finalizing a manuscript on the exhibition history of *Art in Chile: An Audio-Visual Documentation* (1986, co-curated by Juan Dávila and Nelly Richard) and the accompanying catalog/book *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973* (with Sebastián Valenzuela-Valdivia).

**Cristian Vargas Paillahueque** is a PhD candidate in Latin American Studies at Universidad de Chile. He holds an MA in Art History and Theory and an MA in Latin American Studies from the same institution. His area of research centers on the relationships between images and the Mapuche world across media and languages, including contemporary art, photography, theater, film, and craft. As an independent researcher and curator, he has worked on the Mapuche collection at Universidad de Chile's Museo de Arte Popular Americano, and has organized exhibitions alongside artists Sebastián Calfuqueo and Paula Baeza Pailamilla for venues such as Galería Metropolitana, Centro Cultural de España, and Universidad Católica de Temuco's Sala de Arte. He is currently Coordinator of "Artes Visuales de los Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes" (Visual Arts from Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples), a project supported by the National Fund for the Development of Culture and the Arts (FONDART).

**Cecilia Vicuña** is an artist whose practice includes poetry, performance, Conceptualism, and textile craft in response to pressing concerns of the modern world, including ecological destruction, human rights, and cultural homogenization. Born and raised in Santiago, she was exiled during the early 1970s after the violent military coup against President Salvador Allende. The resulting sense of impermanence, and a desire to preserve and pay tribute to the Indigenous history and culture of Chile, have characterized her work throughout her career. Vicuña received her MFA from the University of Chile and continued with postgraduate studies at University College London. Solo exhibitions of her work have been recently organized at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; Museo Banco de la República in Bogotá, Colombia; Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M) in Madrid; and Lehmann Maupin in Seoul. Vicuña has received several awards, including the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

**Sebastián Vidal** is Assistant Professor of Art History at Universidad Alberto Hurtado. He is the author of the book *En el principio: Arte, archivos y tecnologías durante la dictadura en Chile* (Metales Pesados 2013), and has published articles and exhibition catalog essays on conceptual art, video, and art documentation. He has curated exhibitions for institutions such as the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile; Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, Austria; and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He also curated the exhibition *Festival Franco Chileno de Video Arte: 40 años*, at the Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo in 2022, and is currently working on a research project on video art in Latin America supported by the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (FONDECYT). Vidal holds a BA and MA in Art History and Theory from Universidad de Chile; and a PhD in Art History from The University of Texas at Austin, which he pursued as a Fulbright Fellow.

