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Dando Vuelta el Año: Seasonality, Neoliberalism, and Personhood in Chile's Aconcagua
Valley

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Jelena Radovic Fanta

December 2012

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Thomas Patterson, Chairperson

Dr. Juliet McMullin

Dr. Christina Schwenkel

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2012

The Dissertation of Jelena Radovic Fanta is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dando Vuelta el Año: Seasonality, Neoliberalism, and Personhood in
Chile's Aconcagua Valley

by

Jelena Radovic Fanta

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, December 2012
Dr. Thomas Patterson, Chairperson

This dissertation investigates how the aggressive implementation of neoliberal policies and practices in the agrarian sector of the Chilean economy from the late 1970s onwards has affected the ways in which female workers in the fruit industry “make do” and navigate a labor regime marked by instability, high seasonal unemployment during the winter months, and the structural constraints of the political and economic arenas in which they live and toil. Specifically, it is concerned with how female seasonal workers (temporeras), who constitute seventy percent of the agribusiness workforce, reconfigure their notions of personhood and create contested spaces as they enter and leave the fragmented agribusiness labor cycle in Chile's Aconcagua Valley. It explores the

articulations between the inherently unequal structures created by the neoliberal policies and practices of both the government and the agribusinesses of the Aconcagua Valley; the ways in which the state, agribusiness, and the workers themselves deploy notions of citizenship and responsibility to create, in Aihwa Ong's terms, "successive degrees in insecurity for low-skilled citizens who will have to look beyond the state for the safeguarding of their rights" (Ong 2006: 17); and the forms of negotiations employed by female workers as they forge social identities and quotidian practices during the fragmented labor cycle.

The dissertation approaches the analysis from three angles, with the understanding that the expressions of neoliberalism are both varied and contested. The first considers how the neoliberal policies and practices underpinning Chile's fruit export industry were implemented in the early 70s and reinforced after the transition to democracy in the early 90s. The second gives voice to the temporeras as they engage with the enabling and disabling attributes of flexibility, forging their personhood while confronting varying constructions of morality, sexuality, and citizenship in the work environment and national discourse. The third examines how female workers respond to disciplinary practices in the packing plants, employ technologies of self, and engage in strategies of making do throughout the winter months, frequently recurring to debt as a way of making ends meet.

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INTRODUCTION

Dando vuelta el año

“Y así di vuelta el año,” Hilda¹ told me as she placed the mugs, tea bags, and sugar on the flowered tablecloth in her cozy, small-sized kitchen. “Cuando se acabó la temporada en el Aconcagua Export, estuve trabajando partiendo nueces y ahora como nana. Ahora esperando nomás que comience la temporada nuevamente.” “And that’s how I turned the year around. When the season ended in Aconcagua Export, I worked cracking walnuts, and now as a nanny. Now I’m just waiting for the season to start once again.” It was a warm spring afternoon in September 2011. I was visiting Aconcagua Valley, Chile, for the first time since January 2011 when I left the country after carrying out two years of fieldwork with seasonal laborers in the fruit-export industry. During this follow-up trip I visited friends and temporeras, taking note on where they were working and observing whether their employment had changed, or if it was the same as when I had left.

To “dar vuelta el año” is a phrase used by workers when describing where they are working. It literally means to turn the year around. It points to not only the physical characteristics of seasonal labor: *where* a person is employed; but also the temporal and cyclical aspect: the *turning* of one year into the next. This phrase also alludes to “dar vuelta” or “turn around,” which means to roam or go around in circles searching for

something or waiting for an event to occur. This dissertation examines how women in the Aconcagua Valley turn the year around and what this means for their notions of self and constructions of personhoods in neoliberal Chile.

A majority of seasonal laborers like Hilda turned the year around by going from one job to another, with periods of unemployment in between the jobs. Others, like Marina (my campo sister) felt lucky enough to dar vuelta el año in a fruit packing plant that hired her for pruning and other winter-related jobs after the harvest season ended. These winter jobs are scarce because lower numbers of workers are needed and are in high demand because of unemployment, which increases dramatically in the winter. “Yo di vuelta el año en el packing Cortés,” Marina told me one evening that same month, as she flicked a cigarette with her fingers before returning it to her lips. “I turned the year around in the Cortés packing plant.” These are two examples of dando vuelta el año; others consist of migrating, making phone calls, waiting in line, washing clothes for a neighbor, selling goods in the informal market, and working as a nanny.

In an era where labor rights have become increasingly vulnerable and where “flexibility” is being aggressively lobbied for by businesses and companies, this study pays attention to the particularities of seasonal fruit labor in Chile’s Aconcagua Valley and also speaks to how insecurity is increasingly part of the processes of neoliberalism at the global level. This investigation explores the lives of temporeras, which are unique to the social, political, and economic particularities of Chile, and at the same time reflects the trends of neoliberalism that is unfolding around the world. It builds on anthropological studies of neoliberalism and uncertainty, looking specifically at the effect

of increasing instability on the daily lives of temporeras – female seasonal laborers – in the fruit-export industry. I observed quotidian activities, labor conditions, and strategies of making do throughout the year in neoliberal Chile. Exploring the lived experiences of this seasonal workforce is key in shedding light on how neoliberalism is embedded in every day life and how individuals negotiate flexibility and insecurity as they make a living.

Before continuing, I will clarify the difference between a seasonal and a temporary laborer. Although the word “temporera” that I use in the following chapters may most easily be translated to “temporary worker” in English, I encourage the reader to think of a temporera as a “seasonal worker” instead. In Spanish “temporada” means “season,” thus making seasonality the defining characteristic of a temporera’s labor. This seemingly subtle difference is quite significant. In addition to the short-term characteristic of the occupation, it is seasonal, making it a recurring job that begins each year in January and ends in mid-April. When using the term temporera or temporero², I refer specifically to seasonal employees in the fruit-export industry. As will be shown in the following paragraphs, there are “temporeros/as” in other sectors and industries.

In the governmental website of Chile’s Ministry of Labor, a temporero or temporera is defined as the following:

The agricultural temporary worker is he/she who carried out transitory or temporary tasks in activities such as cultivation of the earth, commercial or industrial activities derived from agriculture, or in sawmills and wood exploitation plants and related activities.”³

Although “temporera” in Chile most commonly refers to seasonal workers in the fruit-export sector, labor seasonality is also found in the forestry, fishing, and construction sectors. In addition, there is a trend in which workers on temporary contracts are replacing permanently hired workers. This has been occurring at an increasing rate not only in agriculture, but also in sectors that are not confined to agricultural or forestry, such as education, governmental jobs, tourism, and the service sector. I was in Santiago one day in December 2009 talking to a group of young feminist activists at a birthday of a childhood friend. As I was speaking about my research and answering their questions, a young woman who works in a community radio exclaimed, “I am a temporera! Today in Chile everyone is becoming a temporera; people have less and less permanent contracts.” A similar sentiment is echoed in the meeting almost two years later with my dissertation-writing group. These two reactions I received – from an academic colleague in the United States and an acquaintance in the radio industry in Chile – uncover the relevance of my research: how labor instability and neoliberal economic regimes are articulating across the continent and the globe. The stories and experiences of temporeras shed light on how individuals and communities are affected by these processes, and are also agents in shaping them.

This ethnography explores insecurity, instability, and notions of self in the daily lives of temporeras as they weave in and out of the harvest season. Every summer, between 400,000 and 600,000 temporeras work in the fresh fruit industry in the country. Between the months of January and mid-April, the seasonal workforce – which is roughly

70% female – picks, cleans, and packs grapes for export. Seasonality and precarious working conditions characterize the job, and increasing levels of fragmentation is observed with the deepening of neoliberalism in the country. Women employed in the fields and packing plants work long work hours – anywhere between nine to fourteen hours during the weekdays and at times on Saturdays – and at a fast pace in order to earn as much as they can during the season since they are paid by piece rate. While work hours are long and frequently have detrimental effect on the women’s health, the agribusiness is one of the only guaranteed employment option during the year. At the same time, insertion of women into waged seasonal labor has given them access to income and also to the decision-making process of how the income is to be allocated. This has caused profound shifts in gender roles and family relations as the women are now the breadwinners of the household and are contesting social mores and expectations.

This ethnography moves beyond the labor conditions of the fields and the fruit packing plants. Picking and packing grapes are activities which bind temporeras in one place for three and a half months, to which they return a year later. I follow them from the packing plants and the fields to the places and spaces they inhabit in the autumn, winter, and spring. This is an ethnography of seasonality, its layers, and how it repeats year after year in the lives of female seasonal laborers. However, the seemingly smooth continuation from one season to the other, in which vineyards swell with sweet grapes and then turn barren in the winter, is filled with ruptures, fragments, and contradictions in

the labor cycle, family life, and notions of self. Just as the ebb and flow of the tide conceals a strong undertow and sharp rocks, the transitions from one season to another mask cracked hands, hungry stomachs during the winter, pesticide intoxications, and chronic back pains. In this book I explore how neoliberalism is experienced in daily life, how temporeras tie and stitch gaps, holes, and fragments, and how in these ruptures they articulate their subjectivities in relation to uncertainty.

Neoliberalism

The growth of the fruit-export industry must be explored in context of neoliberalism and how the “Chilean miracle” has unfolded. In this section I examine Chile’s path to development, neoliberal democracy, and the birth of the agribusiness. I consider how the social, economic, and political processes have paved the way for the fruit-export industry. By tracing the birth of Chile’s market model under the military regime into the neoliberal democracy which is in place today, I argue that Chile’s development over the past decades consists of as many continuations as there are ruptures. I also look at Chile’s development in context of myth and magic, where the country’s acclaimed “sound development” obscures a stark income gap and a highly indebted population, and where neoliberal modes of production have become embedded in everyday life.

When discussing “neoliberalism,” I draw from Harvey’s definition of the term as a “theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and within an institutional

framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005: 2). Overarching characteristics of neoliberalism include: the opening of markets to foreign trade and investment, the lowering of trade tariffs and barriers, privatization of state enterprises, the shift of responsibility of citizens’ social welfare from the state to private entities and individuals. I particularly draw on Ong’s exploration of neoliberalism as a “new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions” (Ong 2006: 3). As states “have increasingly gotten out of the business of governing” in this new relationship, citizens are learning techniques of self and how to be a “good citizen” (Ferguson 2006: 39, Rose 2006). Questions I formulate are: how is this new relationship between citizens, government, and modes of production articulating in the daily lives of temporeras? How are women of the Aconcagua Valley taking on the “responsibility” of making a living in a labor calendar which is fraught with instabilities and precarity?

I am wary of the possibility of reifying such a term as a monolithic and uniform process with discrete and defining characteristics. Rather than seeing neoliberalism as an all-encompassing, homogenizing process, I draw on authors who make a call for a deep and more complex analysis of the processes that are unfolding, such as Comaroff and Comaroff (2001), Freeman (2000), Ong (2006), and Schwenkel and Leshkowich (2012). Comaroff and Comaroff point out that “what we call globalism is a vast ensemble of dialectical processes, processes that cannot occur without the grounded, socially embedded human beings from whom they draw value” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011:

14). The examination of how temporeras face challenges and how they contest them is key to arrive at the nuances and ambivalences of neoliberalism.

In Freeman's research with female informatics workers in Barbados, she asserts "a view of transnationalism that puts workers center stage amid global political economic forces" showing how women reconfigure their identities "in ways that draw upon and reinvent these competing ideals, producing both liberating and constraining effects for the new pink-collar workers" (Freeman 2000: 11). Schwenkel and Leshkovich argue that "neoliberalism is as much about partiality, incompleteness, and continuity with competing configurations and dynamics of power as it is about some grand rupture or the global proliferation of a particular logic of late capitalism" (Schwenkel and Leshkovich 2012: 380). My work is shaped by this focus on quotidian embeddedness and incompleteness. I argue that it is in observing daily life, relationships, and activities that we as social scientists can come to an understanding of neoliberalism. Temporeras engage with this complex, fragmented, and multi-layered process that is laden with tension, ambivalence, and desire.

Numerous authors have analyzed Chile as one of the first neoliberal experiments to be carried out in Latin America. The open market model in Chile was enforced as part of a bloody coup that began in 1973, in which the military junta headed by General Augusto Pinochet overthrew Socialist president Salvador Allende. Trained by Milton Friedman and economists from the University of Chicago, Chilean economists – called the Chicago Boys – implemented open market policies and carried out the privatization of sectors such as health, social security, education, agriculture, and basic services.

Persecution, torture, and repression were unleashed in the country against union members, students, workers, campesinos, and intellectuals.

The military coup d'etat and subsequent seventeen-year dictatorship marked a profound rupture with the country's historically democratic institutions and the previous left and center-left governments, which were carrying out an Agrarian Reform during the 60s and early 70s. The regime unleashed a counter-reform in the countryside: land that had been previously parceled and distributed under the reform was mostly placed on the market, while the rest was returned to previous owners. Interestingly enough, were it not for the previous land distribution under progressive governments, the privatization of lands and subsequent birth of the agribusiness would not have been possible. Land was once again transferred to private ownership, this time not only to national wealthy families, but particularly to foreign capital. "The austerity measures, especially during the period of extreme neoliberalism (1975-82) in the countryside returned peasant farmers to a position of economic dependency, only this time to external capital" (Murray 2006: 654). And it was in this political and economic climate that the agribusiness was born. Authors such as Collins and Lear, Murray, and Taylor point out how this "Chilean miracle" was in fact "forced" during the dictatorship and that there is a "glaring contradiction of employing a decidedly interventions – indeed authoritarian and repressive – government to enforce 'economic freedom'" (Collins and Lear 1995: 43).

The year 1990 marked the end of the seventeen-year dictatorship and the beginning of the transition to democracy – la Transición – where hopes were running high. Newly elected Christian-Democrat Patricio Aylwin faced the challenge of

maintaining steady economic growth rates that were achieved under dictatorship⁴ and at the same time, tackling the rampant poverty that went unchecked under the military regime. Despite the transition to democracy, however, the neoliberal economic model carried on into democracy, which has led social scientists and academics to point out the continuities and legacies of the dictatorship that remain in democratic Chile. Moulián, Taylor and Winn all point out that in the Concertación's attempt to "reformulate neoliberalism in a manner that combines economic efficiency with social justice," the coalition actually embodies a "paradoxical attempt to mediate the contradictions of neoliberalism without undermining the new institutional context established by neoliberal restructuring" (Taylor 2006: 8).

The past four governments in post-dictatorship era have made efforts in addressing poverty rates and the wide income gap with social projects and investment, which has been dubbed by the international community as the "Chilean way." Behind the "rapidly developing" and "stable" economy of Chile (one of the "strongest" in the region based on growth rates), uncertainty and insecurity permeates workers' daily lives, which alludes to the "magical" and "invisible" characteristics of seasonal labor. There have been various attempts by governments in the past years to regulate working conditions, such as enforcing the use of labor contract and having a maximum number of legal hours a week. Although there have been increasing laws and regulation targeting seasonal labor in an attempt to formalize a highly informal sector, one of the biggest shortcomings is the lack of enforcement – fiscalización – in making sure these legislations are followed by the

agribusinesses. What we have here is not a lack of laws, but rather a lack of enforcement of these laws.

Chile is today an oft-cited example of a strong and stable economy in Latin America, an example to be followed in the region in order to attain development. Closer examination of the “modernity” of the country’s economic growth and its agribusiness reveals growing income disparities, increasing labor flexibility, and a pressing need to address the needs of sectors of the population under the poverty line (Barrientos 1999, Collins and Lear 1995, Moulián 2002, Taylor 2006, Winn 2004). For the past two decades since the return to democracy, Chilean governments have been faced with the challenge of maintaining steady economic indicators while at the same time addressing social issues such as a large income gap and high poverty rates. There has been particular emphasis on programs of health and women under the presidency of Michelle Bachelet (2006 – 2010). Many claim, however, that most of the social programs and policies are a bandage solution to the ills of a country which in actuality needs deep structural reform and wealth distribution.

In Coronil’s study of the state and modernity in Venezuela, he examines the “ambivalent Latin American discourse of modernity” which rejects European domination and in turn internalizes its civilizing mission (Coronil 1997: 73). The experiences of seasonal workers in Chile reveals the ambivalence and tension of precarious livelihood in a country marked by “modernity,” “democracy,” and “successful economic growth.” Taylor points out how neoliberalism in Chile has essentially aimed to “restructure the relationships and institutions through which capital society is reproduced materially,

politically, and ideologically” in addition to “fundamentally depoliticize society” (Taylor 2006: 7). Moulián unpacks Chile’s “economic miracle” as a “myth” drawing the link between the country’s modernity and the birth of the “credit-card citizen” and his/her ability to consume (Moulián 1997).

I add, however, that consumption and the birth of this new “consumer-citizen” (Canclini 1995 and 2001, Moulián 1997) is also used by *temporeras* to make decisions and have access to consumer goods, revealing the tensions of consumption (Han 2012, Tinsman 2006). In an economic regime where the responsibilities of social security and everyday survival are placed on the shoulders of the citizens, *temporeras* (as well as numerous segments of the population) resort to debt and credit as a tool of making do. Rather than simply stating that easy access to credit – and consequently debt – is solely a source of worry and anxiety (which it prevalently is), I draw on Han’s research to reveal the double-edged sword that debt signifies to low-income populations (Han 2012).

I contribute to an array of investigations that offer a critical perspective to Chile’s “successful” economic growth. Tomás Moulián wrote a groundbreaking book titled *Chile Actual: Anatomía de un Mito* (Chile Today: Anatomy of a Myth), describing Chile’s “post-dictatorship transformation” and the threats to democracy that hide behind economic success (Moulián 1997). Collins and Lear (1995) offer an insightful examination in *Chile’s Free Market Miracle: A Second Look* of the unsustainable export-oriented industries and the high poverty rates to be found in post-dictatorship Chile. Other studies such as Peter Winn’s *Victims of the Chilean Miracle* (2004) and Marcus Taylor’s *From Pinochet to the ‘Third Way’* (2006) also question the “Chilean miracle,”

showing how it has been constructed at the expense of worker's rights, democracy, and inequalities. My research adds to this body of literature by showing how temporeras have been subsidizing twenty to thirty years of the fruit-export industry with their health and precarious livelihoods.

In addition to the insightful body of literature which focuses on Chile's political economy, there is also an array of studies which links Chile's agribusiness sector to neoliberal development (Bellisario 2007, Jarvis 1991, Kay 2002, Goldfrank 2005, Gómez and Echenique 1988, Kay and Silva 1992, and Murray 2006). The authors argue that the agribusiness was born in context of a counter-reform which was executed alongside political persecution, privatization of various sectors, and opening of the market. Others investigate specifically the birth of a seasonal workforce (Caro 2004, Díaz 1991, Valdés 1998 and 1991, and Venegas 1992), stating that the "success" of the fruit boom is at the cost of precarious working conditions and at the detriment of laborers' health.

What could be enhanced to this literature is an in-depth understanding of the articulations between political economy, agribusiness, and the daily lives of men and women who work in seasonal labor. Heidi Tinsman's research on Chile's agricultural development, gender, and seasonal labor investigates "how wage work impacted women's understandings of themselves, negotiating power with the family, or willingness to challenge labor exploitation or authoritarianism" (Tinsman 2004: 264). Drawing on studies that focus on notions of personhood, subjectivities, and agency, I explore how temporeras in Chile's Aconcagua Valley negotiate labor flexibility, everyday uncertainty, and the ambivalences of neoliberalism.

The analysis presented in this book goes beyond exposing Chile's neoliberal development as a myth that overshadows stark inequalities and precarious lives. I am examining and asking how do temporeras – part of the working class – make do in this unstable labor regime. I contribute to the understanding of neoliberalism as not just defined by open market policies and labor flexibility, but as a deep reorganizing and re-articulation of the relationships between citizens, the political economy, institutions, and daily life. Neoliberal market policies have been carried out in Chile for over three decades, both in dictatorship and in democracy. What does this mean for the vulnerable communities? How do female fruit workers go through the day-to-day, working in and out of seasons, and being part of a “successful” economic sector?

Analyzing these issues are particularly relevant in light of massive social protests and mobilizations during this past year in the country, the strongest being the student movement known in the world as the “Chilean winter.” When speaking to Chileans from my fieldsite, while taking public transportation, and when visiting family and friends during my follow-up trips in 2011, I was often told “es que la gente está harta” (“it’s that people have had enough”) “ha estado muy difícil la cosa ” (“things have been very hard”) and “todo nos pesa, uno está apenas” (“everything weighs on us, we’re barely making it”). An economist who worked many years Santiago in microfinance and social planning told me during an informal interview, “Do you notice when you walk in the streets, that no one looks happy? People are weighed down by their long work hours, by the threat of losing their jobs, and by being swamped in debt, which is the only way many people can make it through the year.”⁵

The looming threats of a possible lay-off, increasing labor flexibility, and the absence of unions have become a daily reality. The unsettling nature of neoliberalism has “settled” into everyday life; yet not without contestation or protest. Building on literature which analyzes the fracturing effects of privatization, I show how it is in precisely those spaces of quotidian activities that temporeras negotiate and give shape to those uncertainties, forging them into something more certain, more tangible, and even more humorous. A reprimand at the workplace is responded to with a mocking joke or a play on words; a woman resorts to her neighbor to assure that her child will have milk that day; and a segment of the monthly paycheck is used to buy a perfume advertised in the latest Avon magazine. Oftentimes temporeras use the flexibility or uncertainty as a response to their supervisors or employees, such as leaving work without prior notice (a common occurrence) if there is news that another packing plant pays ten cents more per box. Angustia (anguish) and fear is for many temporeras a daily feeling, however, and there are limits to what temporeras have control over. It is by looking at the everyday actions and interactions where we as researchers can have a better grasp on exactly how people make a living in a labor reality that is marked by periods of employment and of unemployment.

Technologies of self and daily life

The agribusiness has relied on female labor season after season, and over the past decade the workplace has become subject to even more insecurity due to increasing flexibility. Technologies of self are a useful lens through which the ramifications of

neoliberalism and governance become manifest in everyday life. Technologies of self are defined by Rose et al (2006) as the “ways in which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves within certain regimes of authority and knowledge, and by means of certain techniques directed to self-improvement” (Rose, O’Malley, Valverde 2006: 90). How do women giving meaning to their daily actions with expectations of self-improvement that come from the management and also from themselves? Instances of discipline are carried out on a daily basis both during the harvest season, when temporeras are taught to be “good,” “responsible,” and “hygienic” workers, and outside of it when the burden of being a breadwinner and a “good mother” is heavily felt. I also show that there are ways in which temporeras use those same neoliberal modes of reproduction and new relationships with the state, the workplace, and their families to their advantage.

An example of this is the mobility that workers have during the season, moving from one packing plant to another if they hear that the pay is better elsewhere, without giving notice to their supervisors. One morning in March 2009 when I was picking grapes with a group of workers, I noticed that David, a young man I was paired to work with, did not show up after the noon lunch break. After asking a friend about David’s absence, I was told that he left because “the grape was bad,” meaning that there was not an abundant quantity of ripe grapes which would assure a good day’s wage, since they were paid by piece rate. When I inquired if just leaving would cause any problems for David and if anyone can “just do that,” his friend responded, “Oh, he does that often. If it’s not worth for him to work hard and not make money, he just leaves.” Due to the

weak ties that exist between the employer and employees, workers oftentimes move from one field or packing plant to another, giving them a sense of “independence” and of “not being tied to anyone.”

Although this specific action is observed more frequently among young male workers who might not have dependants or are not responsible for them, it is not uncommon for temporeras to change jobs to where there might be a better pay, or not show up to work one day because “the fruit is bad” or because of a family event such as a birthday or funeral. The ability to do this, however, *does* depend on the degree of flexibility to be found at each agribusiness, which varies from packing plant to packing plant. Supervisors and owners of agribusinesses interpret the action of not showing up to work as proof of the workers’ “irresponsibility” and “laziness.” What is interesting is that it is precisely this flexibility of the workforce that the laborers use as a way of counteracting the unstable nature of the job itself.

I give this example above to show one way in which neoliberalism, modernity, and techniques of self articulate with each other. Exploring the intricacies and ways in which workers engage with flexible labor leads to a more critical and nuanced understanding of neoliberalism itself. Kay B. Warren proposes that ethnographers and researchers “focus on instability itself, on communities caught in contradictory transformations to pursue these current tensions and mismatches of neoliberal capitalism and democracy that are played out in the practice of local and national politics” (Warren 2002: 381). I argue that it is in the daily and lived experiences where we as social

scientists can best examine how people relate to, contest, or negotiate the workings of neoliberalism, establishing their identities as working women (Freeman 2000).

In his study of temporality and waiting in Argentina, Auyero cites Piven and Cloward to show that the concrete experiences of people “matter because the destitute in our work do not experience ‘neoliberalism’ or ‘globalization’ in a strict sense, but rather [in] shabby waiting rooms, uncomfortable lines, endless delays, and meager and random welfare benefits” (Auyero 2012: 11). Similarly, the ways in which *temporeras* “experience neoliberalism” is through the peso amount they receive each month on their paycheck, the lack or presence of a work contract, the pain of chronic tendonitis in their arms, and the access to consumer goods. How do *temporeras* negotiate instability, motherhood, and being a “good citizen” of a “successfully developing” country as they make a living in a fragmented labor regime? It is in these ruptures, overlaps, contradictions, and tensions that we can begin to unpack not only the characteristics of Chile’s neoliberal democracy, but even more importantly, how people – particularly the vulnerable segments of the population – shape their notions of self and negotiate ways of making do.

Various authors have explored the ways in which neoliberal reform “has restructured the most prominent public relationships that constitute *belonging*: politics, markets, work, and self-identity” (Greenhouse 2001: 2). In this ethnography I argue that Chile’s neoliberal democracy – with roots in a violent military regime – has not only effected changes in the workplace, labor conditions, economic policies, and labor organizing, but is also instrumental in a person’s formation of sense of self, belonging,

and interpersonal relationships. What are the sources of despair, joy, hope, disappointment, and comradeship that temporeras feel as they dar vuelta el año? As seasons come and go, how do women make do and generate income in a labor regime reigned by uncertainty? How does Hilda *feel* and make sense of not having social security or pension, while at the same time feeling immense pride in the work she carries out? Answering these questions goes beyond transmitting individual stories: “they are practical ambiguities that complicate and fragment the field of personal and collective choice in managing the everyday” which reveals to us how people manage the quotidian in light of flexibility and uncertainty (Greenhouse 2001: 5).

Organization

In Chapter 1 I delineate the rise of the Chilean fruit export industry. I trace the social, economic, and political processes which paved the way for the fruit boom. Key here is the neoliberal market model which was implemented under the authoritarian regime in Chile starting from 1973 and continuing beyond the transition to democracy in 1990. Contrary to the common assumption that neoliberalism is the absence of the state, literature shows that it is the active absence of the state which opened Chile’s doors to an open market economy. In this chapter I follow the birth of the country’s open market model of the military regime into the neoliberal democracy which is in place today. I argue that Chile’s development over the past decades consists of as many continuations as there are ruptures, which point out the ways in which neoliberal modes of production

are taking place in a democracy that underscores a combination of economic development and social equity. While “neoliberalism with a human face” is oftentimes criticized as a contradiction, others point out that it is a feasible path of development that attends to social needs while maintaining steady economy growth. Rather than arguing it is one or the other, these tensions shed light on the complexities of neoliberal development, which is imbued in an array of continuations and ruptures from previous economic and political systems.

Chapter 2 explores the seasonal labor force of Chile’s agribusiness which is employed year after year in the Aconcagua Valley. I show that it is a diverse group of women from a variety of backgrounds who, for lack of other opportunities, end up working in *la fruta* (the fruit) because it is the only/best job opportunity available. Drawing on literature of structural violence, political economy, gender, and the use of testimonies I argue how the insertion into waged seasonal labor, the access to consumer goods, and becoming a household head has allowed women to shape their subjectivities in new ways. This chapter explores the tension of being a *temporera*: while the seasonality of the job has remained the same (and has more elements of precariousness than in previous decades), the families’ dependence on this job has increased, as it has become the steadiest source of income employees have in a year.

In Chapter 3 I argue that the notions of personhood held by *temporeras* are multi-layered, complex, and simultaneously, sources of agency. I explore how *temporeras* view themselves and their job, as well as unpacking their image in the national landscape and how they feel they are viewed by the public, their supervisors/bosses, the media, and in

national discourse. There are disconnects between how women see themselves as temporeras and how they feel they are viewed by others. In exploring the multiple spaces temporeras inhabit as low-income, seasonal, and female laborers, the construction of morality, motherhood, and sexuality is revealed as a process that is constantly being redefined.

Chapter 4 centers on the packing plants and the fields where temporeras labor between January and the first two weeks of April. This is based on my first-hand experiences where I was employed in three packing plants in the Aconcagua Valley, both formally and informally. I explore the working conditions, security, labor relationships between the work hierarchies, notions of discipline and being a “good worker,” and how temporeras balance the responsibilities of home and work. There are magical, uncertain, and blurry characteristics of the physical workplace and of the nature of work itself, which exacerbates daily insecurities. Increasing labor flexibility and fragmentation is counterproductive towards the formation of solidarity amongst workers, and at the same time, permits spaces and moments that can be used to their advantage.

In Chapter 5 I analyze the uncertainties and insecurities that are magnified in the winter months when unemployment is the highest. I follow the workers I met in the summer in packing plants to the various income-generating activities they engage in, such as being employed as domestic workers, laboring in the informal market, working in ski resorts, migrating to northern valleys, cashing unemployment checks, and/or waiting and hoping for a job opportunity to arise. These activities are not discrete and oftentimes overlap, as temporeras engage in more than one activity at a time; other times, when they

are unemployed, they simply wait. Debt is a prevalent theme running throughout this chapter. Drawing on Han's research on debt in marginal Santiago (2011 and 2012), I explore how debt is gripping and a source of anguish, while at the same time a "resource" which temporeras draw from in order to dar vuelta el año from one season to another.

This research gives examines neoliberal transformation in the Aconcagua Valley and the gendered seasonal workforce of the agribusiness. It places temporeras, who have often been theoretically obscured, at the forefront. This research contributes to literature of labor, Latin America, and instability, exploring neoliberalism as a complex, nuanced, and tension-filled process. Instability and insecurity has increased as Chile undertook a neoliberal transformation, with its roots in a repressive military regime. It is no mystery that Chile's "economic miracle" (named as such by U.S. economist Milton Friedman) is no such miracle. This research builds on growing literature that questions the "miracle" that Chile's economic growth has been made out to be and its effect on the working classes⁶. While temporeras make ends meet both in and out the harvest season, they are confronted with expectations of being "good" citizens and mothers in a country that has received national and international accolade for being on a "successful" path to "modernity." One of the largest income gaps in the continent, high rates of indebtedness, and labor instability point to the urgency of the question: development for whom? I argue that seasonal fruit workers are subsidizing Chile's growth *and* its image with their labor, health, and family.

In addition to shedding light on how seasonal laborers have not benefited from the “fruit boom,” I examine with rich ethnographic accounts the ways in which temporeras make decisions, define their personhood, and confront everyday challenges. In the era of flexibility and neoliberal modes of production, seasonal labor (which twenty years ago was “additional income” to “help out” the household) has become permanent. And in the permanency of seasonal labor, temporeras find ways to not just make a living, but also form relationships and find sources of hope and pleasure. Neoliberalism has led to fragmented, unstable, volatile, magical, and fleeting relationships, which make it hard to have anything “for sure.” The only “secure” thing is the return of the season in the following summer. Yes, working in the fields and the packing plants is fraught with precarious working conditions and uncertainties regarding how long the season will last and how much the pay will be. But the season will arrive; in other words, temporality has become permanent. What is the effect of permanent impermanence on daily lives of temporeras and their personhoods? What strategies of making a living do the women and men of the valley engage in? This ethnography argues that it is in the ruptured and blurry spaces where women make do and define their personhood.

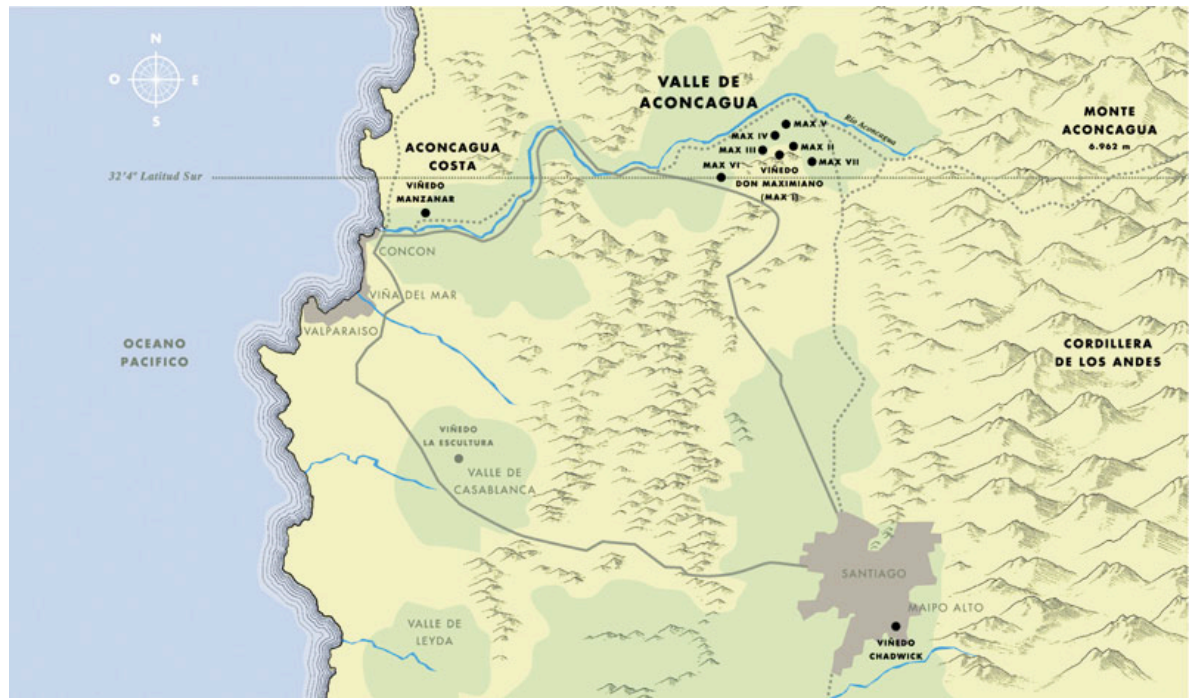
Organizing is at an all-time low in Chile. Workers do not complain of extra-legal work hours or unsafe labor conditions because of a generalized fear of being laid off or fired. There is also a lack of interest in organizing and a distrust that anything positive might come out of it. This does not, however, translate to passivity on behalf of the workers. What is labeled as resistance, empowerment, or agency is not to be found with protests, strikes, or forming a union, but rather in relationships, individual goals, and

motherhood. While showing how a fragmented labor regime affects health, stability, and family life, this investigation points out precisely the ruptured and blurry spaces where women finds ways to make a living and define their personhoods.

CHAPTER 1

Valle del Aconcagua

After one hour of heading northwest from Santiago de Chile on a bus, the Valle del Aconcagua (Aconcagua Valley) opens up before the eyes. It is a wide, fertile valley framed by the imposing Andes Mountains to the east, and the low coastal range to the west. The Aconcagua River cuts through this valley (also known as the Central Valley), flowing westward from the highest peaks in the Andes Mountains towards the Pacific Ocean, making the lands fertile for agriculture. It is here where Chile's boom de la fruta (fruit boom) took off in the early 80s and where the majority of the country's fresh grape is produced for export.



The fruit-export boom was born with the implementation of an open market economy under General Augusto Pinochet's regime from 1973 to 1989. Coming out of aggressive neoliberal policies in which barriers to trade were lowered, and private and foreign investment was promoted, Chile's fruit export industry forms part of the country's "successful" development. Today, a little over two decades since the return to democracy, economists and politicians laud Chile as an example of successful economic development - the "Chilean miracle." What is often overlooked, however, is the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, precarious working conditions, high turnover rates, and extremely low levels of union organizing.

Chile's image of an "economic miracle" hides one of the highest income gaps in Latin America (after Brazil and Colombia). It is a violence that is "built in the structures" (Galtung 1968: 173). Structural violence takes shape in the instability of employment, the lack of work contracts, hazardous labor conditions, unavailability of social services, and inability to organize. During the summer months (harvest season) labor instability is manifest with the frequent layoffs, subcontracting of labor, and deductions not being paid into workers' social security. The months following the harvest season become a scramble, as women search for jobs as domestic workers and in the informal market, or attempt to stretch out their income throughout the winter months, known as *los meses azules* (the blue months). In addition to an unsteady source of income, serious health ramifications due to agricultural work become manifest: back pains, bone aches, and ailments due to pesticide exposure are exacerbated during the harsh winter.⁸ It is here where the importance lies in looking at the daily lives of

temporeras in order to examine social policies that have been implemented in the past decades. “Despite gains from the time of military rule, rural incomes in fruit-producing areas – the most basic marker of temporeras’ (and temporeros’) well-being – remains at near poverty level” (Tinsman 2004: 286).

The birth of the agribusiness

Although today the Aconcagua Valley is the site of the fruit boom of the past three decades, the valley has historically been the traditional breadbasket of Chile, growing produce for regional and foreign markets. In the last decade of the 17th century Chile began exporting wheat to earthquake-damaged Lima until the first decades of the 18th century. In 1849 Chile began exporting wheat to California in its 1849 gold rush. The country continued exporting wheat to Argentina and England throughout the 1860’s (Chonchol 1996: 167).

What differentiates this fruit boom from previous periods of cereal production, however, lies in the accelerated growth rates of the agribusiness, the modernization of the agricultural sector, and the heavy investment in technology and infrastructure of the export industry. An “agrópolis”⁹ was born: an industrialized and modernized factory in the field, which drew workers from semi-rural and peripheral urban areas to the countryside, forming part of an interesting urban-rural migration during the summer. The opening of the market, lowering of trade barriers, and incentives offered to foreign and private businesses that took place under dictatorship paved the road for the development

of agribusiness. This fruit-export sector consists mostly of table grape - in addition to kiwi, citrus, apples, berries, and avocado – which is exported to the Northern Hemisphere, mainly the United States, the European Union, and Japan.

Between the summer months of January through early April temporeros and temporeras of the Aconcagua Valley move through rows of vines picking grapes and labor in plants where they clean and pack the table grape. The labor is characterized by its gendered nature (about 70% of workers in the packing plants and 45% of workers in the fields are women) and lasting three to four months. With major lobbying carried out by agribusinesses conglomerates for increasing labor flexibility and the deepening of the neoliberal model (in twenty years of democracy, Chile is still engaging in open market economic policies implemented under dictatorship), seasonal workers are facing increasing labor flexibility and precarious working conditions.

The rural sectors of Latin America have historically been characterized by having highly unequal land distribution, unproductive lands, and a stark income inequality between the socioeconomic classes, particularly prior to the land reforms that swept the region between the 1950s and 1970s. During colonial times and after independence was achieved in the early 19th century, the hacienda or latifundio, along with the plantation, were the economic, political, and social systems common throughout the continent, a legacy of Spanish colonization (Chonchol 1996 and Salazar 1986, 2006). The latifundio is a large rural estate owned by a wealthy family which recreated the agrarian social

system from Spain at the moment of conquest: extensive estates and indigenous forced labor (Chonchol 1996: 67). On the extensive property, indigenous and poor mestizo families were given a plot of land on which they grew their own crops for sustenance and were forced to give their labor of farm produce to the landowner. After Chile's independence from Spain in 1810, the plight of the tenant farmers (indigenous and increasingly poor mestizo workforce) barely changed. "The Spanish - Indian dichotomy was progressively replaced by the latifundista¹⁰ - peon, and the terms 'mestizo' and 'indio' were transformed to class-based rather than ethnic-based markers" (Chonchol 1996: 62).

During the 1950s and 1960s in Latin America there was a growing interest and push – together with pressure from the United States – for modernization in the rural sector and the implementation of agrarian reforms. Chile was not exempt from this. While socialist, progressive, and revolutionary groups of Latin America's Left propelled the reform, the United States also exerted pressure for this to take place through the Alliance for Progress, a program of economic and social aid signed by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and continued until 1970. The logic behind it was that if the stark poverty and inequality levels in Latin America were addressed with development programs and distribution of land, the ferment for change via revolutionary means would be quelled; in other words, the United States did not want another Cuba. Social unrest was fermenting throughout Latin America, strongly propelled by the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which the continent looked view as an example of a feasible path to development, independent of U.S. imperialism and military intervention. Dependency theory became widespread

amongst academics and intellectuals, and there was strong push for nationalization of productive sectors, industrialization, and import-substitution (Cardoso 1979, Gunder Frank 1967, Wallerstein 2005).

Although the fruit industry boomed under the seventeen-year military regime, it is necessary to point out that the ideas and first attempts to modernize the agricultural sector began at least a decade earlier. Starting from the decade of the 1940s, import substitution industrialization (ISI) became a priority for economic development in the Latin American continent. Under the ISI development model, countries aimed to invest in national industries as a way of decreasing dependency on foreign products. There was heavy state investment in technical programs, training, and studies carried out for increased productivity in the countryside. In 1968, under the presidency of Eduardo Frei (Christian Democrat), the Fruticulture Plan for Agricultural Management was published by the Corporación de Fomento de Producción (Corporation of Productivity, also known as the Ministry of Public Works), which was used to impulse nationalized fruit export successfully in the mid-seventies. Chilean authors Sergio Gómez and Jorge Echenique point out that because “of the process of the agrarian reform and other politics directed at the modernization of the sector, conditions were created for the modernization process to develop, which would express itself with strength in the period posterior to 1973” (Gómez and Echenique 1988).

In Chile the Agrarian Reform Law was signed in 1962 under the presidency of Jorge Alessandri. President Alessandri was a moderate conservative and his interest expressed in supporting the new reform was due to pressure received from the United States - there

were close to no expropriations or land redistributions that took place under his presidency. In 1964, the Christian Democrat (progressive center) candidate Eduardo Frei Montalva was elected President. Under his *Revolución en Libertad* (Revolution in Liberty) political platform, he began carrying out the land expropriations. On September of 1970 Socialist Salvador Allende was elected Present of Chile, the first democratically elected Socialist president in the world. Under his presidency 5,809 properties, which were close to 10 million hectares, were expropriated.

The main objectives of the Agrarian Reform were to give land to those who work it (“tierra para quien la trabaja”), improve the standards of living of the campesinos, and increase agricultural and soil productivity (Chonchol 1996). The main legacy and achievement of the Agrarian Reform, despite the neoliberal counter-reform that came later, was the dismantling of the latifundio system. Ironically, without the Agrarian Reform¹¹, the birth and subsequent take-off of the fruit-export industry would not have occurred. It was precisely because of the land re-distribution that private entities and entrepreneurs were able to buy and accumulate property for the development of the agribusiness, something which would not have been feasible with the large haciendas.

On September 11, 1973 Allende’s government was overthrown by a military junta¹², headed by General Augusto Pinochet. The coup d’etat was backed up by military training and funding from the United States, and marked the beginning of a profound rupture. During the first years of dictatorships, from 1973 and 1975, policies in the agricultural sector consisted mainly of repression aimed at campesino organizations and in property “regulation” favoring the private sector. This “normalization” carried out by

Pinochet and his government consisted of the restitution of market mechanisms and economic deregulation and privatization, accompanied by strong repression (Arteaga 2000: 80). By 1976 the process was considered to be complete and came to be known as the counter-reform or agrarian counter-revolution. “Up through July of 1976, 2,650,000 hectares were recovered by their previous owners” (Chonchol 1996: 301). Almost 30% of all expropriated lands were returned to their owners prior to the reform (1,636 properties were completely returned and 2,184 were partially returned).

As barriers to trade were lowered and free trade agreements were signed with the United States, the fresh fruit industry took off, becoming one of the strongest sectors in the country (after the copper and fish industries) and a shining proof of the soundness of the economic model (Gómez and Echenique 1988, Winn 2004). The agricultural land that was not restituted to the previous owners was opened to the market, and many of the beneficiaries of land from the agrarian reform were unable to maintain them, due to a lack of economic support and payment obligations. Thus, their only way out was to sell their lands for a very low price. “Después del golpe, había gente que yo conozco que vendió sus tierras a precio de huevo. Un hombre hasta intercambió sus tierras por una camioneta,” I was told by Enrique Oropeza¹³. “After the coup, there were people I know who sold their lands dirt cheap. One guy even traded it for a pick-up truck.”

Collins and Lear point out that “Chile’s fruit industry’s technology may be forward-looking, but its working conditions constitute a leap backwards” (Collins and Lear 1995:192). The plight of the campesinos is rarely discussed when the booming, modern, and technological agribusiness is referenced by foreign and national agronomists,

development specialists and politicians. While private companies were offered heavy incentives to invest in the agribusiness, small- and medium-scale farmers were left without any technology support or subsidies in face of trade liberalization. This led to the bankruptcy and loss of land of the majority of small farmers in their inability to compete with larger firms. “Many of these former peasants, men and women, became the labor pool for vegetable and fruit export production, one of the leading sources of foreign exchange for Chile” (Stephen 1997: 245). The campesinos who previously lived on their plots of lands on a latifundio were rapidly transformed into landless peasants and became the “reserve army of labor” for the agribusinesses (Marx 1990). A seasonal workforce was consequently born.

The temporary nature of the workers’ employment and insecurity for the laborers constitute the biggest change in Chile’s countryside (Bellisario 2007, Collins and Lear 1995, Kay and Silva 1992, Murray 2006). Jacques Chonchol¹⁴ wrote that “all policies developed by the military dictatorship was oriented first in annulling the agrarian reform, and second in constituting a capitalist agriculture which depended mostly in the area of exports (fruit and wood) in hands of large national and foreign conglomerates who have carried out a new land concentration.” (Chonchol 1996: 301-302). The rural workforce was transformed in “less than a generation from being workers steadily employed on large estates to being workers living outside a farm and getting employed only whenever and wherever there is work” (Collins and Lear 1995).

Many argue the proletarianization taking place in the agricultural sector can be labeled as semi- or neo-feudalism, because of the return to a system of heavy land concentration

and an impoverished working class. Warwick Murray states, however, that these trends do not represent the survival or a return to outdated feudal societal relations, but rather are perfectly compatible with the deepening of capitalism. Murray argues that the increasing differentiation amongst the peasantry and the growth of seasonal work as a form of employment point to the fact that the traditional campesinado (peasantry) is rapidly changing. The Aconcagua Valley was thus transformed from being a “traditional semi-substance and inward-looking sector to a notable fruit export ‘hotspot’ in a few short years” (Murray 2006: 659).

The agropolis in the Aconcagua Valley reveals that the dichotomy between the rural and the urban has become blurry. Temporeras travel from villages, towns, and peripheral zones of Santiago to the countryside to work in the agro-export industry, creating an interesting short-term pattern of movement towards the rural zones where the fields and packing plants are located. “What was the old latifundio-minifundio complex has transformed into modernized zones of a new system that can be denominated the agroindustrial complex” (Chonchol 354: 1994). The workforce that was inserted into this complex does not consider themselves to be rural workers. In contrast to the prior generations that worked on latifundios and haciendas, temporeras and temporeros do not identify as rural workers, rather employees of an agribusiness. In the packing plants and in the fields temporeras carry out a labor that is repeated over a period of ten, twelve, fourteen hours: cutting, cleaning, selecting, weighing, packing – a very different type of work that was carried out in the haciendas and on individual plots of land.

Neoliberal democracy

The implementation of free market policies in Latin America started in the early seventies, with Chile being one of the first countries where the Chicago Boys carried out the “neoliberal experiment”. The unfolding of neoliberalism has to be understood in the context of military violence, authoritarianism, and persecution and the ruptures in society that ensued. In Chile, open-market policies were forcefully implemented under a military regime that began on September 1973 and went hand-in-hand with the persecution and repression of anyone who opposed or presented a different viewpoint with the regime: left-wing politicians, peasants, intellectuals, union members, students, and intellectuals. Social institutions and programs were dismantled, water, electricity, health, pension, and education were privatized, and the social fabric which characterized Salvador Allende’s government and prior democratic governments was dissolved.

Marcus Taylor (2006) sets forth the argument that the military regime enacted profound changes which extended far beyond the realm of economic performance: “the essence of neoliberalism... is a fundamental attempt to restructure the relationships and institutions through which capital society is reproduced materially, politically, and ideologically” (Taylor 2006, Portes 1997). Neoliberalism is precisely this: a new *relationship* between the members of society, institutions, and market forces. Gledhill, in his analysis of neoliberalism (2004), points out that the free trade and the liberalization of the market “are not new”; rather it is “its elision of the distinction between a market *economy* and a market *society*, to the point where the latter seems to engulf life itself” (Gledhill 2004: 340).

Advocates of the open market oftentimes cast neoliberalism as depoliticized, rational, and ideology-free, where supply and demand free of government intervention set prices. The examples of countries around Latin America that have embraced neoliberal market policies as part of structural adjustment policies have shown, however, that it is by no means exempt of ideology or the presence of the state. It is in fact infused with concepts of individualism and unilinear evolution, while at the same time “depoliticiz[ing] everything it touches” (Ferguson 1990: xv). Chile’s case reveals “the glaring contradiction of employing a decidedly interventionist – indeed authoritarian and repressive – government to enforce ‘economic freedom.’” (Collins and Lear 1995: 43, Taylor 2006). Rather than the state “shrinking away” or being “rendered irrelevant by globalization, ... the nation-state becomes a critical site through which global economic and cultural flows are managed and deployed, an instrumental actor that maintains the conditions of capitalist profitability and ... an interpolation of local subjectivities” (Goldstein 2005: 392).

On October 5th, 1988 a referendum was carried out in Chile, in which the population voted Sí (Yes) or No (No) for the continuation of General Augusto Pinochet’s regime in the country. The triumph of “el No” marked the beginning of the transition (la Transición) from dictatorship to democracy, and on March 11th 1990, elected Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin began his presidency. President Aylwin was the candidate of the Concertación, a coalition of center-left political parties which joined to oppose Gen. Pinochet. Up until 2010 (the year that right-winged Sebastián Piñera was elected president), all governments since the return to democracy have been of the Concertación.

Fervor for the return to democracy and social change were running high with the end of the oppressive seventeen-year dictatorship. The transition, however, resembles more of a compromise between groups of power, rather than a full exercise of democracy on behalf of the country's citizens. "High hopes that fundamental structural and political changes in the economy would follow Pinochet's formal exit from power were almost immediately quelled by the compromises that Chile's new civilian leaders deemed necessary to undertaking a stable transition" (Tinsman 2004: 282). The armed forces retained much of the power they had under the regime, Gen. Pinochet remained as Commander-in-Chief of the military until March 1998, and today's Constitution is the same – excepting some amendments – one installed by Pinochet.

While Chile became the testing ground for unbridled neoliberalism that was carried out by the Chicago Boys under dictatorship, the governments under the new democracy had the challenge of addressing the wide income disparity between the rich and the poor and the same time maintaining steady rates of economic growth. What happened to the processes of neoliberalism, democracy, and development during this time? In the literature of Chile's neoliberalism and return to democracy, authors¹⁵ discuss how open market policies continuing after democracy was restored. "The Concertación could only succeed if the private sector – Chilean and foreign – invested in Chile" (Winn 2004: 53).

The basic tenets of a neoliberal economic model were left untouched (Tinsman 2004), while at the same time there was emphasis on social investment aimed at the needs of the poorest sector of the populations, combining the two pillars of economic growth with social justice. Many critics argue, however that "despite the restoration of democracy

and a decade of center-left governments, there was more continuity than change in economic policy and labor relations... In the end, the Concertación did more to legitimate and consolidate Pinochet's economic and social 'revolution' than to reverse it" (Winn 2002: 51). Although absolute poverty was reduced, addressing the income inequality gap would necessitate deep structural reforms requiring "intervention that would violate the limits of the model" (Winn 2004: xi).

There *were* changes carried out under the Concertación governments, such as increased social spending and programs for the poor, creating an environmental protection agency, an indigenous development commission, labor law reform, progress on human rights cases, and a national Ministry for women that promotes gender equity. Marcus Taylor debunks, however, the myth that Chilean policies have been effective in promoting social equity: "while significant praise has been given to the Concertación's attempt to reformulate neoliberalism in a manner that combines economic efficiency with social justice, the results of the Concertación's strategy have been profoundly uneven and far less beneficial for the majority of Chileans than the accompanying rhetoric suggests" (Taylor 2006: 8).

A clear example of this is the income disparity in Chile which in 2012 is still one of the highest in Latin America, in the most unequal continent in the world. Concertación governments have been subject to criticism that they are of the "center-left" and yet are governing with an open market economic model. Many have pointed out the irony of a progressive presidencies that govern in line with open market policies, a situation which has been labeled and marketed in Chile as "growth with equity" (Collins and Lear 1995),

attempting to reconcile economic growth with social equity. While for some this is a unique and positive characteristic of Chile's development and for others in an inherent contradiction, this tension reflects an area of analysis much discussed in Latin America's current governments.

It is precisely the Concertación governments between 1990 and 2010 "that [have] been promoted by the United States and international organizations as the model for other countries to emulate. Under the Concertación, not only did growth continue and foreign investment soar but both employment and poverty decreased" (Winn 2004: 4). Chile is one of numerous governments that declare to be building a "Third Way," a "modernized social democracy ... [that] not only advocate continuing provision of public goods, but subject market-based decisions to social and ethical criteria defined by a 'healthy' civil society" (Gledhill 2004: 334, Taylor 2006). Advocates of such "Third Way" claim it is not a variant of neoliberalism, but rather "the middle ground between free-market capitalism and traditional social democracy, one that could combine the capitalist dynamism heralded by the political right, with the social justice craved by the left" (Taylor 2006: 115). Critics, on the other hand, state that Third-Way politics "are simply a 'soft neoliberalism'" (Gledhill 2004: 334).

How does "Chile's way" articulate with the everyday lived experiences of temporeras? During the late 80s and early 90s there was a surge in interest of precarious labor; the plight of the temporeras was the object of numerous investigations and studies carried out by NGOs, government ministries (such as the Ministry of Labor and National Service of Women), and research institutions. Silvia Aliwenko, a temporera originally

from southern Chile who came to the Aconcagua Valley in the late 80s recalls those years that marked the end of the authoritarian regime. Silvia remembers when Patricio Aylwin was a presidential candidate and he visited the packing plants and vineyards to meet with seasonal workers and unions, making a commitment to improve the labor laws for the temporeras. “I remember that when President Aylwin assumed presidency we gave him a proposal to the government, so there would be a tripartite agreement between the State, the workers, and business. And it was never done.”

Silvia was referring to the 1990 Tripartite Agreements in which the Concertación met with the country’s central union (Central Única de Trabajadores – CUT), the business association (Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio – CPC) to sign the Framework (Marco) Agreement. It addressed “the need to build a transition to democracy, with support for an open export economy, union rights, democracy, and the combination of Growth and Equity” (Falabella 2008: 3). An ambitious project, to say the least. In his research Falabella shows how Tripartism has played a role in establishing an effective transition both economically and politically from dictatorship to democracy, with the successful implementation of “a liberal export economy led by private business and an inclusive social agenda termed growth with equity.” The limitation lies, however, in its low impact due to the weakened labor movements, stemming from a “permanently drawn government-opposition parliament which inhibits introducing labor and democratic reforms” (Falabella 2008: 14-15).

The year 2006 was a landmark in Chile. For this first time in the country’s history, a woman – Michelle Bachelet Jeria – was elected president of Chile. She came from a

nontraditional background, making her election even more surprising: member of the Socialist party since the age of fourteen, daughter of an Air Force officer who was tortured and who died under Pinochet's regime, imprisoned and exiled in Germany under dictatorship, openly identifies as agnostic, a pediatrician, and separated with children from two different marriages. Chile, a socially conservative society heavily influenced by the traditional sectors of the Catholic Church, seemed unlikely to elect a female candidate of her profile. Bachelet had also previously held the positions of Minister of Health and Minister of Defense (2000 and 2002, respectively), earning a lot of respect and popularity from the populace.

María Ríos Tobar from the United Nations Development Program analyzes the factors that explain Bachelet's nomination, pointing out the opening of "a window of opportunity for nontraditional political elites such as women ... and the slow but persistent pressure for gender equity" (Ríos Tobar 2008: 511). One of the platforms which Bachelet was running on was gender equity and increased social programs for the most vulnerable sectors of the population. "As a female candidate with a long political trajectory, but distant from the small group of male politicians who had governed Chile until then, Bachelet was able to build her campaign on the idea of bringing new winds of change to the Concertación's program" (Ríos Tobar 2008: 514).

Part of what led to Bachelet's election and subsequent popularity (ending her government with an 84% approval rate) is how she presented herself and was perceived as being "close to the people" ("cercana a la gente") and a good listener to citizens' needs. "This coincided perfectly with traditional cultural constructions of gender and in

Chile, where differences between women and men are taken for granted ... Thus, ironically, the most traditional constructions of gender in Chilean political culture (and not the most egalitarian or modernizing ones) helped to cement popular support for the Socialist candidate, who was seen to be incorruptible, interested more in the nation than in petty party concerns, and willing to promote a more horizontal way of doing politics” (Ríos Tobar 514).

Michelle Bachelet is one of the many presidents of the Left who have governed Latin America over the past ten years. The presidents who governed Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela, and Chile (up until 2010) were from Socialist or leftist parties /coalitions. This “new form” of Socialism combines entrance into the world market, economic growth, and a heavy investment in social programs, such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor, and Ministry of Women. It is worthwhile to note that Bachelet’s presidency and her social policies are positioned as part of the “turn to the Left” that is frequently referred to as taking place in Latin America. While Chile is cited as being one of the most privatized and neoliberal countries in South America, the recent government of Bachelet has implemented many social programs which target the most vulnerable populations. This is a significant line of inquiry in order to arrive at a more intricate analysis of neoliberal development unfolding in Chile and in Latin America. What does this “new Left” consist of? Even more importantly, what are the ways in which these social policies, aimed at promoting gender equity and decreasing inequalities, unfold in the lives of temporeras? How are they absent?

When I returned to Chile in December 2011, I visited Marina and her family in Santa María. I was excited to see them again, and meet Marina's newborn daughter Camila, whose baptism was scheduled for the 17th of that month. As I asked her about her labor and the process of giving birth, Marina told me that she walked away from the hospital with a "baby pack," a set of newborn related items that is given to each mother after giving birth in a public hospital. Included in the pack is a portable crib, liquid baby soap, baby cream, a pack of twenty diapers, baby clothes (for 0 – 3 months), and an educational book for the mother, among other materials.

I learned that this was part of the new program that had been approved in 2009 under Michelle Bachelet and was now starting to be implemented. The Programa de Apoyo al Recién Nacido (Program of Support to the Newborn) is part of the Health Ministry and which aims at offering support and promoting the role of the families in the integral care of their sons and daughters (Ministerio de Salud 2009). This is one example of the social programs – specifically to the presidency of Bachelet that underscored the importance of women's and children's health – that are carried out in the neoliberal democracy that temporeras are benefiting from. What needs to be explored in the future, nevertheless, are the effects of involvement in such social programs for temporeras in the medium or long term timeframe.

Another example of social policies that specifically target women and lower-income families is that of the bono (bonus) that was given to mothers in July 2009. This initiative gives women who are sixty-five years old or older, with children, and who will retire starting that year a bonus for each son/daughter born or adopted and raised. This is

independent of whether women have had deductions paid into their social security account or not, giving women who have never been formally employed a compensation for raising children.¹⁶ The amount of the bonus was approximately US \$570 dollars per child raised. Similarly in 2008 and 2009, with the objective of mitigating the effects of the economic crisis on lower-income families, a “bono de invierno” (“winter bonus”) was announced by then President Bachelet. This bonus consisted of a sum pay of roughly US \$80 dollars per dependent given to the most vulnerable families who have a monthly salary of US \$850 dollars or less and to families that are beneficiaries of State family program.¹⁷

What are the effects of these social policies on the daily lives of the temporeras? How or how do they not they affect women’s living conditions? It is difficult to say what the effects of these social policies, part of the “moral and social debt” from the Chilean government to its citizens, are on the temporeras in the medium to long run (Han 2011 and 2012). Critics claim that this is part of a superficial “fixing of a system” without carrying out deeply needed structural reforms that would more strongly regulate labor in the agribusiness. These bonuses, however, have made a difference in the present life of a temporera, if only for the short term. I have accompanied some of my temporera friends to cash their winter bonus and the bonus per child; it clearly *has* been beneficial, particularly in the winter months of scarce employments. They were used to buy groceries or medicine for the month or to pay off debt which accumulates in the winter. I did not witness a long-term change of these social policies on the advancement of the most vulnerable families of the Valley, it most likely too soon to evaluate.

These policies are part of the “growth with equity” slogan that was widely used by politicians, economists, and public policy planners during the transition to democracy. The language that has been used in previous governments and in the current presidency of Piñera is one of being on the path to development with the objective of being a “developed country” in 2018 and reaching the goal for “Chile [to] be the first country in Latin America who can say with pride that we have defeated the underdevelopment” (excerpt from President Piñera’s program “Chile, Developed Country”).¹⁸ While these attempts are aimed at promoting great equity amongst the social classes and do have an immediate effect on daily life, temporeras still “fix the system” on their own behalf.

Through their sacrifice and constant decision-making they go through as they attempt to make ends meet, it is *their* sacrifices and hard labor that “fixes” or attempts to partially absorb the detrimental effects of labor insecurity. It is therefore imperative to question what is this type of development that is being referenced? In light of (or despite) these social public policies, temporeras are *still* subsidizing a “successful” neoliberal growth with their health, working conditions, and labor instability. It is these spaces where social policies articulate with the daily realities of the seasonal workforce, where the “limits” and actual effectiveness of the programs become manifest.

An important area that deserves attention is the health coverage that temporeras and temporeras have under the seasonal contract. The Fondo Nacional de Salud (National Health Fund), also known as FONASA, is the national institution that provides public healthcare to Chilean citizens. In 2007 a program was implemented in which workers on a seasonal contract would have access to healthcare. In late January of 2012, the director

of FONASA announced the full implementation of the program which is named “extended affiliation.” This extends public health coverage to workers on a seasonal contract (agriculture, forestry, construction) who have accumulated either four months of monthly wage or – if they are paid per day worked – have accumulated sixty worked days. If seasonal laborers have fulfilled either of the two requirements, they are given healthcare benefits for the entire year. Upon signing a contract, workers have a deduction from their paycheck that is destined to two funds: the healthcare fund and social security for old age.

This is a big step in the direction of providing seasonal workers with health coverage, which otherwise, they would be unable to attain. There are shortcomings that need to be addressed, however, in order for temporeras and temporeras to have adequate access to the public health care system. To begin with, not all laborers sign work contracts. Although there have been improvements in the percentage of temporeras sign work contracts since the return to democracy, there are still high rates of informality in which employers and subcontractors arrive at verbal agreements on the pay with the workers. In addition, it is not uncommon for temporeras to choose to not have deductions taken from their paychecks and into their social security, precisely so they can have more cash in the immediate once they are paid. What some workers have experienced with time is that although this gives the worker more liquid cash for the month, it does have a detrimental effect with the years, particularly since it is with age that the harmful and painful physical ramifications of seasonal fruit labor on the body are to be felt.

Isidora Ochoa is a forty-nine year old temporera who has worked since she was a child harvesting crops in the valley. Today she suffers from chronic tendonitis in her forearms, a cancerous growth in her right left, and a recent discovery of a lump in her breast (only the throbbing pain in her arms are confirmed to have a direct correlation with working in the fruit). Isidora laments not having insisted on working under a contract and on having deductions paid into her social security account:

My entire life I've been temporera, but like I tell you, without insurance, I have very little social security. Where I worked in Frutix, it's the only place that I have [social security]. [Others] don't discount it, so that I [can] have my clean salary, so I can help at the house. So then I prefer to not be discounted. Of course, it was during those times. Now it weighs on me not having done that. Because with everything I have right now, I could have gotten affiliated to some insurance.

It is here that we see the constraints of a neoliberal market economy, in which workers make a decision that will have a detrimental effect on their health and social security in the future. On the one hand, there have been numerous efforts on behalf of congressmen and women of the Concertación to pass laws that would regulate the highly unregulated and informal sector of the agribusiness. However, the implementation of these laws are limited and not adequately enforced (as will be seen in later Chapters), there are a number of workers who still work informally without labor contracts, and there are situations in which workers have the money discounted by subcontractors, but not deposited into their social security account.

Tatiana, a temporera who migrated from Santiago to Santa María in search for work, told me in an interview about a situation she once went through. Tatiana worked for a

farm for about three weeks, where she had signed a contract in which deductions were made from her paycheck into her health insurance. When she checked her health insurance a few months later, however, there were gaps in her account that showed that the deductions had not been deposited. By that point Tatiana had changed jobs and the timeframe in which a worker could sue the subcontractor had expired. In this case, despite the fact that Tatiana had signed a contract, the subcontractor kept the money that was destined for her social security (not an uncommon occurrence).

Then there are the situations such as Isidora's, in which the worker chooses having to have slightly higher wages during the season over the mid-term or long-term benefits of health coverage. Here is where the link between structural violence and subjectivities can be examined: the constraints that poverty has on decision-making and the ramification this carries on into the future. Although at the time of our interview and conversations Isidora insisted that "young people should always remember to sign a contract and have their deductions paid into social security so they don't end up like me," in her youth, given the financial difficulties she was facing, the feasible action for her was to not insist on a contract.

The "Chilean Way" and Civil Society

On March 25, 1948, the World Bank made its first Latin American development loan to Chile for a power and irrigation project.¹⁹ Sixty-three years later, on January 11th, 2011, Chile became the first country in South America (second in Latin America after

Mexico) to sign its membership into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD is an international economic organization which promotes development, economic growth, and trade through democratic processes. Known for its smooth transition from dictatorship to democracy in 1990, stable institutions and relatively low levels of corruption, Chile has attracted not only foreign investment but also praise for its ability to engage in steady economic growth. The high rises in the upper-class financial Santiago neighborhood pretentiously dubbed Sanhattan, Starbucks cafés, well-kept highways, and strong institutionality are key markers of Chile's path to "modernity."

The OECD article published in the organization's website which refers to the country's new membership states that "the 'Chilean way' and its expertise will enrich the OECD on key policy issues" said Mr. Gurría during a signing ceremony in Santiago. 'Chile has been engaged in a continuous effort to reform its economy.'²⁰ Such reform includes a growth of over 5% a year for the last 20 years (under the Concertación), a "groundbreaking pension reforms in the early 1980s" (carried out under dictatorship), "prudent tax policies" which prevented the country from being hard-hit by the 2008 crisis, a "clear separation between the State and the board of copper mining company Codelco," and impressive progress in poverty reduction, "although more still needs to be done."²¹

The above examples of the "Chilean way" leads us to question what exactly is this "Chilean way" and what does it tell us of Chile's path to development? Arturo Escobar's groundbreaking work *Encountering Development* (1995) undertakes an extensive

analysis of development and the creation of the “third world.” The author not only claims that the category “third world” is a product of the “first world” and of international lending banks, but he problematizes and deconstructs the concept of development itself. Escobar points out that “economists do not see their science as a cultural discourse. In their long and illustrious realist tradition, their knowledge is taken to be a neutral representation of the world and a truth about it” (Escobar 1995: 58).

Chile’s fruit industry is cited not only as proof of the sound neoliberal market policies, but also as a marker of “modernity” and “development”. Chile is oftentimes grouped with New Zealand rather than with the rest of its regional neighbors, such as Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Guatemala which are often looked down upon as *repúblicas bananeras* (banana republics). The fresh-fruit industry created a niche for Chile in the world market of specialized agricultural products (table grapes, kiwis, apples, avocado, pears, and berries) exported to the United States, the European Union, and Japan. This fruit boom forms part of the country’s unprecedented economic growth which is often lauded by economists and politicians as the “Chilean miracle.” This ‘success story’ is cited both in the national and international spheres as an example of development to be followed in Latin America. “By 1987 Chile’s international fruit sales amounted to almost half a billion dollars and the *Wall Street Journal* hailed the fruit industry as proof of Chile’s economic miracle” (Winn 2000: 262).

While the fruit boom has received accolades in the international community and is used as a justification of “the Chilean Way” (Collins and Lear 1995), workers in the fruit industry navigate not only daily sources of insecurity, but also expectations of what it

means to be a “good citizen” and part of the growing discourse of civil society (*sociedad civil*). García Canclini and Yúdice both analyze the links between the market, citizenship, and the state, pointing out that NGOs are “helping buttress a public sector evacuated by the state, and at the same time making it possible for the state to steer clear of what was once seen as its responsibility” (Yúdice 2003: 106, Paley 2001). Gledhill argues that neoliberal modes of production is not only advanced by consumerism: “‘Deep neoliberalization’ is ... also promoted by new forms of governmentality embedded in the state and its relationships with its principal interlocutors in ‘civil society’” (Gledhill 2004: 340).

During the transition to democracy and throughout the nineties there was a strong emphasis in Chile on strengthening the participation of citizens and the third sector (the other two sectors being the public and the private sector). Paley argues that the term civil society used by the Chilean government to encourage citizen participation, takes away from its responsibility in addressing social needs (Paley 2001). “Making it” in society was directly linked to the individual’s effort and work ethic, without consideration given to structural constraints such as income level and education opportunities. Foucault’s groundbreaking work on governmentality explores technologies of self, which are defined as “ways in which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves within certain regimes of authority and knowledge, and by means of certain techniques directed to self-improvement” (Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde 2006: 90). As a result, not only is sickness, poverty, and illiteracy blamed on the sick, poor, and the illiterate, but citizens themselves make sure they act within these “regimes of authority and

knowledge.” These new technologies “mark a shift from power based on *redistribution* to a kind of power based on *self-regulation*” (Dunn 2004: 164). These are the technologies of self that temporeras employ to not only regulate their everyday activities, but also to construct their notions of self.

Structural violence and subjectivities

I draw from literature of social suffering and structural violence to explore the violence that is embedded in societal structures and that exerts constraints on the livelihood of marginalized populations (Briggs 2003, Das 2007, Farmer 2004, Galtung 1968). The origin of neoliberalism in Chile is fundamentally linked to violence, as the neoliberal economic model was implemented in the country under a repressive military regime during the 70s and 80s. Galtung defines structural violence as a violence that “is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.” (Galtung 1968: 171). Today Chile is clearly not under a dictatorship nor suffering from a military regime as it was three decades ago. People are not being systematically pulled from their homes at night, tortured, disappeared, and/or killed; the violence and terror of Pinochet’s regime has ended. Yet there is another type of aggression taking place, one which is silent, insidious, and that masks a misleading image of democracy, prosperity, and growth. “While the dictatorship may be gone, the transnational political and economic structures that are maintaining them are still in place and still inflicting their harm” (Farmer 2004: 311).

Speaking to temporeras, I perceived that they were perfectly aware of these regions and labor regimes. Just as the temporeras know that the empresariado²² is concealed behind the gated communities, new cars, and air-conditioned offices, they also know that owners blame the crisis and “la economía” as a way to elude the responsibility of paying the promised wage. This consists not of a lack of knowledge or awareness of the workers, but rather a difficulty in being able to point a finger at the injustice, particularly if the demand or accusation of the abusador (abuser) comes at the cost of being laid off. “Creen que somos tontas,” Marisela told me, “they think we are dumb.” “Pero cerramos la boca para mantener la pega” – “But we keep our mouth shut in order to keep our job.” At the same time, empresarios and agribusiness owners take pride in the industry and saying that “it is not like how it was before,” “we are now certified and all workers sign a contract,” and “we have come a long way” when speaking of the modernity and development of Chile, especially in contrast with the rest of the Latin American region. “Due in large part to its interpretation of twentieth-century Chilean history and the breakdown of democracy, the Chilean political elite has been quick to embrace an idea of sociopolitical and economic development whose two pillars are growth and equity” (Frank 2004: 114).

How do we speak of a violence which forces women workers to keep their mouth shut in order to not lose a job? While Tinsman explores the ways in which temporeras use their waged labor to make decisions in the household and to have access to consumer goods, the author states that “neoliberal capitalism has *not* been liberating for rural women, nor do women see it as such. It is not poverty jobs that give women more

bargaining power within their families, but women's access to work and wages *on a par with that of men*" (Tinsman 2004: 287, emphasis of the author). During my second harvest season of fieldwork (2010) I encountered women and men workers whom I was surprised to find in the same packing plant; they had previously told me that they were going to find a job elsewhere, leave the fruit, or return to their studies. Yet they returned to the fruit. They are part of this floating mass of laborers who are inserted in this seasonal work and have difficulties of finding employment in another sector. While some still hope of leaving the fruit, there are many who confided in me, "where else will I find a job?"

Das and Kleinman ask "how is the act of writing (on) violence to be conceptualized?" (Das and Kleinman 2000: 12). Specifically, how is the violence of everyday life to be written? In his chapter of the edited volume *Violence and Subjectivity* (2000), Kleinman delves into how structural violence affects people located throughout social classes. The author does "not contest that social force grinds most brutally on the poor. Yet the violent consequences of social power also affect other social groups in ways that are often not so visible, perhaps because they are also not so direct and also, not surprisingly, less likely to be labeled 'violence'" (Kleinman 2000: 228). Temporeras do not live in absolute misery, yet they are poor. They are part of a seasonal labor force that has become permanent and uncertainty permeates their everyday lives both in and out of the harvest season. While the sources of insecurity and precarity during the season consist of being laid off, a season ending early, exposure to pesticides, physical pains or not being

paid what was, in the wintertime it is manifest in unemployment, hunger, increase of physical pains, and struggling to making ends meet.

It is not a violence in which workers live in abject poverty nor work in a constantly repressive work environment. In addition, women have told me that despite working in the fruit because there is not other option, there are aspects of the job they enjoy, such as socializing with other workers and earning money. Temporeras who have signed contracts *do* have access to healthcare; however, this is as long as they have worked four months with signed contracts (which does not happen frequently). Legally, temporeras with children should have access to daycare centers provided by the employers if the number of workers employed is more than 20; a common practice on behalf of the employers is to “divide” the business amongst family members to as to not comply with the law (among other requisites). Laws have been passed stating that the work hours should not exceed forty-five hours in one week; however, I have worked in a packing more than twelve hours a day, and signed out that I only worked nine. I have observed how toilet paper and hand soap appear in the bathrooms the day before the Work Inspection comes to inspect the conditions of the workplace. It is this the violence I speak of when referring to structural violence, one which hides strong class divides, deep inequality, and little to no enforcement of laws that are written in paper.

It is through the examination of daily practices and “the *violences* of everyday life” (Kleinman 2000: 226; emphasis of the author) that I draw the link between the structural constraints of neoliberalism and insecurities in the everyday life of a female worker. Temporeras are affected by structural constraints and have to make daily decisions such

as where to search for employment, where to leave their children while they work, whether they should continue working with poor health, deciding to pull a cash advance, or what material goods should be purchased with a month's paycheck. Although possibilities of livelihood (there is little employment outside the fruit) are in actuality not that many and temporeras end up engaging in "whatever job is available," the consequences of a "misstep" can be vast and a temporera ends up being solely responsible for them. An example is a debt that Hilda incurred three years ago when both she and her son became sick and they were unable to pay rent and utilities for the home. To this day Hilda is attempting to pay the debt that has accrued, and she does not "dormir tranquila" ("sleep peacefully") at night, fearing that her few possessions might be taken away from her if she does not pay her debt.

Studies on subjectivity and notions of personhood oftentimes emphasize the "subtle, 'powerful and insidious' ways in which people are shaped by living in a social world" in the context of violence and socio-political change (Pine 2008: 12). "It is necessary both to understand what the political, economic, and cultural restraints on women's political mobilization are, and yet be equally committed to unraveling how women see themselves, how they experience and give meaning to structural context, [and] how they interpret what happens to them on a daily basis" (Stephen 1997: 7). In this book I outline how temporeras "are shaped by" the labor they are engaged in and even more importantly, how they shape their workplace, daily activities and how they give sense to their seasonal labor.

The unfolding of neoliberalism in Chile and its links to the growth of the agribusiness outlined in this chapter is filled with tensions. While on the one hand being employed on a seasonal basis signifies for women of the Aconcagua Valley a “trabajo muy sacrificado” (“very sacrificed job”) with long work hours, detrimental health effects, and precarious working conditions, it has at the same time given women an opportunity to earn a wage and make decisions in the household regarding the income allocation. An examination into the daily lives of female seasonal workers – both in and out of the season – allows us to arrive at a more complex and nuanced exploration of neoliberalism. Heidi Tinsman (2004, 2006) investigates how the insertion of women in the fruit labor force was both contradictory and complicated and must not be quickly translated into meaning “oppression”: “The relation between capitalism and gender is as contradictory for women as it is for men; female agency must not be confused with employer and regime intentions; and narratives that reinforce sexist paradigms defeat the purpose of challenging oppression” (Tinsman 2004: 266).

In investigating the notions of personhood shaped by temporeras in the Aconcagua Valley, I flesh out the ways in which women workers “talk back” and make do and also contribute to an anthropology in which consumption, pleasure, and desire are engaged with by the women workers. There is a “survival in a neoliberal economy” narrative, but there are also other narratives, which include leisure, make-up, dancing, and flirting. Carla Freeman ties “production and technology to consumption and image making of third world women workers,” challenging long-standing paradigms of “‘first world’ consumers versus ‘third world’ producers, and the ‘first world’ white-collage/mental

workers versus ‘third world’ blue-collar/manual workers” (Freeman 2000: 3). My research also aims at deconstructing this dichotomy in which mental, psychological, spiritual needs are of the “first world,” while basic survival is destined to the physical and material needs of the “third world.”

Temporeras I met would often express to me feeling stressed and the need to relax. During breaks we would rub each other’s backs, talk about where we would meet up for a show in the weekend, or flip through pages of Avon magazines that women would pull out from under the boxes. These lived experiences are interwoven with the urgent concerns arose as the harvest season wound down and women started looking for jobs, making phone calls, and dropping of CVs at offices and supermarkets. “These processes... invite us to rethink the relationships between discipline, agency, and pleasure” (Freeman 2000: 5).

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Behind the red, purple, or green plump, luscious grape sold in the sanitized and neatly labeled bags in supermarkets in the United States, precarious working conditions, high turnover rates, replacement of permanent workers with temporary workers, and insecurity are concealed. These conditions of social suffering are even more invisibilized by Chile’s “miracle growth” which overshadows the income inequality rates present in the country. The experiences of the temporeras and temporeros reveal to be disconnected from the national and international image of Chile in Latin America. At the same time,

however, there have been efforts of the past governments under democracy aimed at changing the country's inequalities and allowing the poor sectors greater access to social services.

It is an inequality which also hides deep discontent in the populace and that has been recently bubbling up to the surface. During the years of 2010 and 2011 there were social and political events that swept through the country. In 2010 an 8.8 earthquake devastated southern Chile, 33 miners were trapped 720 meters underneath the surface for seventy days after a cave-in, a devastating fire in a prison left 83 inmates dead, Mapuche communities in southern Chile and in Santiago erupted in protests and hunger strikes, and president Sebastián Piñera became president – the first time since the return to democracy that a candidate from the right is elected – after an 84% approval rating of Michelle Bachelet when she left office. It was a year of soul-searching for Chileans.

The following year continued with upheavals. May 2011 marked the beginning of what is called the Chilean winter, in which thousands of university and high school students occupied their schools and campuses (“tomas”) demanding a free and high quality education. Hundreds of thousands of protesters, students, professors, parents, labor unions, sexual minorities, indigenous and environmental groups joined the students in the marches across the country. The last time the country had experienced such a magnitude of strikes and protests was in the Pinochet era, when the return to democracy was clamored. The student protest continued throughout the year, and reassumed on March 15, 2012 with the beginning of the school year after summer vacations. I viewed these happening with surprise – so often had I complained of Chilean's complacency and

apathy, particularly amongst the youth. Now the discontent that has been brewing for many years finally began bursting through a cracked system.

This chapter shows how Chile's path to development and the growth of the fruit-export industry is filled with tension and contradictions. The growth of the agribusiness is deeply rooted in unfolding of neoliberalism throughout the seventies and eighties, and has established itself as a sector marked as a "success" of Chile's "miracle growth". During the two decades of a neoliberal democracy the objectives of the governments have been to sustain economic growth while targeting poverty. Emphasis has been placed on civil society, through which citizens are encouraged to participate and empower themselves individually, while open market policies continue to be enacted. The fragmentation and precarious nature of seasonal labor has a counterproductive effect on the "integration" and "civic participation" of temporeras. Quite the contrary is taking place: while the agribusiness flourishes both in economic terms and in inter/national reputation, seasonal laborers face increasing precarity, debt, and flexibility. Confronted by insecurities with the comings and goings of the seasons, temporeras enact technologies of self as they navigate an increasingly uncertain work regime.

CHAPTER 2

Who are the temporeras?

One late March night in the grape packing plant during a break at around 12:00 am, I sat down with a few workers on cement steps under a large tree that loomed over us. These steps were located on the outer edge of the packing and marked the beginning of a walkway that led to the restrooms at the other end of the facility. It was about two weeks after I began working at Corpex packing during March of 2009. By midnight most workers had put on their sweaters under their red delantales (working aprons), since the night chill settles in at about 10:00 pm. The official snack break, called colación (snack) had already taken place, held every day from 7:00 - 7:30 pm.

During this time all workers leave their workstations after hearing a shout from the supervisor and walk towards the small-sized cafeteria, located on the way to the restrooms. In the cafeteria, employees are given two sandwiches and are provided with tea bags and boiling water (each worker brings her or his cup). The sandwiches come with either a slice of cheese, ground pork sausage, paté or dulce de leche (a sweet condensed milk-based spread). Most times there is ground pork sausage inside the buns, something which many workers complain about since it is of the cheap and low quality kind. If work for the night continues into the early morning past 1:00 or 2:00 am (which depends on the number of crates that are processed that day), employees are given another break from 12:30 - 1:00 am.

That March night five workers (three women and two men) and I sat on the cement steps, waiting to find out if we were going to receive our colación. Despite the Prohibido Fumar (No Smoking) sign that hung close by, many workers lit their cigarettes with their backs toward the packing. When I asked them if they could get in trouble for smoking when it was clearly prohibited, most of them shrugged their shoulders nonchalantly, conveying an attitude of not caring and also of reassurance that they would not get caught by the supervisor. For the temporeras who smoked, this was one of the scarce moments of descanso (rest) they had in the long workday and they made sure they relaxed with a cigarette.

Mario Osagueda sat down next to me, smoking his cigarette, and we began joking and talking about work and politics. Campaigns for the presidential elections in December of that year were already underway, and posters and banners were starting to dot the city. Mario is a man in his early fifties from the capital city Santiago, where he had worked his entire life as a construction worker until 2008 when he got laid off. Men who were laid off from the declining construction industry because of the economic recession resorted to other sources of employment, such as the service sector, the informal sector, and the fruit industry in the outskirts of Santiago. Miguel moved to the Aconcagua Valley because he has family members living there, and soon began working in the agribusiness for the first time. His job is to load and unload the aerial conveyor belts with cardboard boxes and to make sure all employees have their working materials (boxes, insulating cardboard, plastic bags, and labels with the company's name). Since we first met, our conversations were about working in the fruit industry, politics, how abusadores

(abusers) the empresarios (corporate business owners) can be, and how temporeros put up with so much maltreatment, in contrast to the construction sector he was used to.

We chatted about the upcoming presidential elections and what I have been observing about working in the packing. Miguel looked at me and pointed the cigarette between his fingers at me. He told me, “Sabí lo que pensé cuando te vi acá trabajando por primera vez? Me pregunté qué desgracia le habrá pasado a la familia de la rucia para que esté trabajando acá.” “You know what I thought when I saw you working here the first time? I asked myself what disgrace must have befallen on blondie’s family for her to be working here.” We both laughed. What Miguel told me that chilly night clearly indicates the main reason for why a woman or man ends up being employed en la fruta” the fruit industry is a source of employment people resort to when nothing else is available. For many women I met it is a given that the fruit is where they will find a job, despite desires or yearnings to be working elsewhere. Whether it is because of a lack of other job opportunities in the valley, inability to finish school for financial reasons, a divorce, or a lay-off from a previous job, these are all reasons for why temporeras are working in a packing plant. Most times I am told “es lo que hay” (“it’s what there is”).

In addition on shedding light on the reasons women and men work as temporeras/os, Mario’s comment also reveals perceptions about *who* is expected to be working in a packing plant. Because a tall, fair and blonde physique is an indicator of an upper socioeconomic class, the only possible reason for me to be working there is that my family went through difficult economic times. In this chapter I take a close look at the seasonal waged labor that was formed as a result of the growth of the fruit-export

industry. Based on testimonios, I show how it is comprised by a diverse group of women who, for lack of other opportunities, begin working as seasonal laborers. Becoming a temporera is fraught with tensions, contradictions, and also sources of agency. As women in the Aconcagua Valley became breadwinners, they started taking control over their income, making decisions in the household, and having access to consumer goods.

“De todo hay”

The workforce of temporeras is very diverse. During a conversation with Silvia Aliwenko, she told me that amongst the temporeras, “de todo hay” – “there is of everything.” Silvia was referring to the diversity of people she has encountered since she began working in the fields and in the packing plants. Silvia described the variety of people she met: “I met a lot of young people, artisans, painters, writers, there’s a bit of everything. People who know how to do a lot of things and you are impressed.” In a packing plant, workers’ ages are of a wide range: between sixteen and sixty years old, sometimes older. Amongst them are head of households, students who work in the summer to pay for college, single mothers, recently separated or divorced mothers, women who were laid off from their previous job, and women who have worked most of all of their adult lives in the agricultural sector.

What they all have in common is that they are there because it is *the* job option they have where they can earn more than the monthly minimum wage. The other employment options in the valley are working as a domestic worker (maid), in the

services sector such as stores and commerce, and in the informal market. The minimum wage was raised in 2009 to \$172.000 Chilean pesos a month, which is roughly USD\$ 450 dollars a month. Based on interviews and conversations I carried out, workers earn between \$250,000 and \$300,000 pesos (between USD\$500 and USD\$600 dollars) monthly. One a few occasions, I have even met women who earn even up to \$400.000 pesos (roughly US\$850 dollars). This income, however, lasts three to four months and needs to be distributed throughout the year when work in the fruit ends (“estirado como chicle” - “stretched out like a chewing gum,” as Marina told me).²³

About 60% of the women I interviewed had been working in the fruit for most of their adult life. The rest were women who ended up en la fruta as a result of a divorce, a worsening economic situation in the family, or being laid off in their previous job. When asking women and men in my interviews and informal conversations “why are you working in the fruit industry?” the two most frequent answers I received were “es lo que hay” (“it’s what there is”) and “porque se gana dinero” (“because you earn money”). I even encountered a man who had his bachelor’s degree in business administration from the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, a prestigious Chilean university in the port city of Valparaíso. After his mining business went bankrupt, he asked his friends to find him any job possible, which is why he ended up stacking boxes in the packing plant. It is very uncommon to find a temporero or temporera with a business degree from the Universidad Católica working as a seasonal laborer. This shows, nevertheless, that it is a source of employment which people resort to when other job opportunities are scarce.

Studies carried out in Chile (Caro 2004, Cid 2001, Falabella 1990 and 1991, Valdés 1998 and 2007) estimate that there are between 400,000 and 600,000 seasonal agricultural workers in Chile on a given year. Arriving at a concrete number of seasonal agricultural workers is difficult, however, due to the fluctuating characteristics of the job itself. The number does not reflect, for example, how long the temporera works in the fruit during the year. Some workers labor for three months of the harvest season in the summer, while others continue working intermittently throughout the year in winter activities such as pruning, defoliating, cluster and leaf thinning, as well as in other agricultural products such as avocados, tangerines, cherries, pomegranates, kiwis, and walnuts. Even if a worker is employed eight or nine months of a year in the same packing, she is a temporera (and not a permanent worker) due to the contract which she signs, that begins and ends with each particular fruit or task.

The number of months in which a temporera works in the fruit also depends on the living situation and arrangement she has with their partner or family members. Francisca, for example, told me that she is in charge of generating income during the summer and spring months, while in the winter she is a stay-at-home mom and her family lives off the income generated by her husband. “During the winter we could manage... Christian, he would put in his part for the winter and I would dedicate myself to raising our children, while in the summer I would pack fruit.” While some women like Francisca may choose not to work in the winter harvest jobs, many others do not work not out of choice, but because they are unable to find a job from April through December. The number of workers needed for agricultural tasks plummets during April when the

harvest season ends. This makes the months of May through September the harshest months not only because of the rise of unemployment, but also because additional money is needed to spend on firewood and gas for heating the home in the winter months – commonly called los meses azules (the blue months).

Another reason for the difficulty in arriving at a concrete number of employees in the fruit-export industry is due to the high levels of informality, in which numerous laborers work without a signed contract or without having deductions paid into their social security and health insurance funds. During the transition to democracy in the early nineties there was a strong push on behalf of labor and institutions for the formalization of the labor. Two decades ago in the early 90s it was estimated that less than a third of temporeras and temporeros were employed with a signed contract.²⁴ According to the 2003 CASEN (National Survey of Socioeconomic Characterization) survey, 33% of agricultural workers are still without contract, a number which is estimated to be higher for seasonal employees. Today there is still a large percentage of workers who are employed informally, and even those who do have a contract are oftentimes hired and laid off numerous times during the season because of the fruit variety that is being processed.²⁵ Signing a contract does not necessarily translate to increased job security. It is also important to point out that many temporeras complement their work in the fruit with a pololo or pololito (literally boyfriend or little boyfriend, word given to an informal side job of short duration) with which they add to their income: washing clothes, cleaning homes once or twice a week, selling baked goods, knitting or sewing por encargo (by order).

Feminization of labor

The insertion of women workers in garment and electronics employment in Southeast Asia, Mexico, and Central America has been the subject of numerous investigations and ethnographic research.²⁶ This vast literature explores the relationship between gender and low-paying jobs, particularly in context of the expansion of neoliberal modes of production around the world. One of the earliest works on gender and factory work was carried out by Aihwa Ong in Malaysia with female factory workers, in which the author shows discourses and practices that are produced and reproduced as women work in urban factories as they confronted “new administrative and regulatory mechanisms” (Ong 1987: 183).

What were the discourses and practiced that were produced and contested by temporeras as they began working in the fruit-export sector? This new labor force was made up mostly of rural women who started working in order to offer “extra help” to their husbands and households in times of the nationwide economic recession in the early 80s. Under the military regime, “the junta fashioned an agrarian economy according to a radical neoliberal capitalist model based on market efficiency and temporary wage labor” (Tinsman 2002: 289). The counter-reform consisted of a “combination of Pinochet’s policy of economic liberalization,” in which almost three quarters of peasant farmers who achieved land ownership under the Agrarian Reform were forced to sell their land due to debt, lack of credit and technical support (Barrientos 1997: 72, Falabella 1991, Murray

2006, Tinsman 2002). A decline in income, “combined with the rural poor’s heightened dependence on cash wages and the fruit industry’s seasonal labor demands, pushed women into gender-specific jobs cleaning and weighing fruit in packing plants” (Tinsman 2002: 290).

In explaining the reasons for female insertion into fruit labor in Chile, Stephen states that the turn to cash crop production caused the channeling of women’s labor to “‘feminine tasks’ [such] as fruit of vegetable picking and packing” (Stephen 1997: 243; Arizpe and Aranda 1986; Nash 1989). Ximena Valdés points out the competitive edge that cheap female labor in Chile provided to the fruit export sector in comparison with other fruit-exporting countries such as Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand: “this lower rate can be accomplished by exploiting female laborers who are viewed as mere housewives working to help support their families” (Stephen 1997: 246, Valdés 1987).

Another explanation frequently cited by owners and by the workers themselves is a woman’s “natural” ability to handle the fruit gently and with care. Because grape is a fruit that is very sensitive to how it is handled and can be easily bruised or crushed, the “nimble fingers” of women are considered to be an asset for the optimal picking and packing of grapes. “Employing the same logic as electronics manufacturers in Latin America and Southeast Asia who cite women’s biological propensity for delicate tasks requiring patience, orderliness, and responsibility, the Chilean fruit growers cite women’s domestic talents as housewives and mothers in order to justify the work they do clipping trees, picking fruit, and carefully packing it in crates” (Stephen 1997: 246; Tinsman 2004). Tinsman warns in the studies of gender and work of the danger of reifying the

feminization of the workforce. “Thanks to enduring notions about female vulnerability and the desirability of a stable, well-paid force of *male* laborers, ‘suffering women workers’ have come to represent regime injustice in one of its most despicable forms. The problem isn’t that women did not suffer as *temporeras* – they did, and mightily. Rather, the problem is that this formulation has encouraged the collapsing of an understanding of ‘women’s work’ and ‘working women’s lives’ with the term ‘exploitation’” (Tinsman 2004: 264).

At the packing plant, while labor irregularities take place, such as deductions from the paycheck not being paid into social security, verbal abuse from the supervisors/bosses, unpaid overtime, and unsafe working conditions, there are also spaces and instances of laughter, joking, and pride in one’s work that is being carried out. Ong points out that research on gender and labor oftentimes “overlooks the self-formative activities of women which partially structure their identities and the immediate relationships within which they are enmeshed in daily life” (Ong 1987: 4). Consequently, what is left under-analyzed is “the dialectical relation between processes out of which constraints are developed and within which gender is culturally formed and transformed” (Ong 1987: 4). I emphasize that women build their personhood and carves spaces for themselves in the workplace, articulating in complex and tension-filled ways with the structure of the work in the fields and packing plants.

Salzinger points out in her research of maquilas in Mexico that the jobs “are indeed ‘feminized,’ but this does not mean they are occupied solely by women. To the contrary, feminization here emerges as a discursive process which operates on both female and

male bodies” (Salzinger 2003: 11). I add, too, that feminization does not simply “operate on” the women’s bodies, but it is the women themselves who formulate and take ownership of what this feminization means for them. During conversations and interviews in which I raised the question about gender inequality in the workplace, I rarely received an affirmative answer that there was gender discrimination. With one glance inside the packing plants I clearly saw the gender division of labor: women stood in the rows of workstations selecting, cleaning, and packing grapes into their boxes, while men unloaded boxes from the trucks, placed the crates onto conveyor belts, drove the lifting forks, or built the pallets. The women interviewed, however, did not feel men were being favored because of the existence of division of labor. Many of them even assured me with a smile that women are better suited and in more demand for the job, since men have the propensity to crush the grapes or handle the fruit “more roughly”.

Temporeras also expressed their feelings about the male presence in the packing plants. Until very recently, if a man was working in the packing, his manhood was questioned and was oftentimes teased and made fun of. The notion that “el trabajo de packing es trabajo de mujer” (“the packing job is a woman’s job”) is particularly strong the older generations. This, however, has been changing. Over the past five years male presence inside packing plants – particularly younger men – has slightly increased. “Men have now learned that if they work fast and hard, they can earn quite a bit, twice the minimum wage,” Josefina told me (much to the chagrin of women workers who feel that men should not be present in their work space nor taking away *their* job). Nevertheless,

work inside packing plants is still overwhelmingly female; it is viewed as a seasonal employment to which a woman can best accommodate to and to which they are best qualified.

I draw attention to how women themselves talk about their jobs in order to explore how feminization of labor is understood by the workers themselves, an example being the popular discourse that “a women is better suited for the job.” As researchers it is important to unpack how community members we work with define and give meaning to the realities we are investigating. With increasing presence of men in the workplace, will or does the amount of pesos paid for a box increase? Is the job low-paying because it is feminized or is it feminized because it is low-paying? Does the phrase “women are better suited for handling the delicate fruit than men” differ if it comes from the mouth of a temporera or from her husband the taxi driver? Answering these questions allows a more nuanced understanding of how women form their notions of self in relation to the job they are carrying out.

Changes in the household

The insertion of women into a waged labor market resulted in important cultural and material changes in the rural peasant households of the Valley. For the first time, women left the household and “entered agricultural employment as independent wage earners” (Barrientos 1997: 72). The majority of women were employed in packing plants, where the sorting, cleaning and packing of grapes takes place and is viewed as a “woman’s job”

(in contrast to working in the fields). The men who did find employment in the fruit industry were hired to pick grapes in the fields, drive tractors, load and unload pallets, and carry out maintenance work – traditionally viewed as male labor. A dramatic shift ensued in the household when comparing roles that existed before to the fruit boom.

Prior to the birth of the agribusiness, the main economic unit was that of the hacienda. In the hacienda, “seasonal labor constituted the entry point into the working world, the beginning of an ‘occupational career,’ which concluded in the inclusion through permanent *inquilinaje* or the exclusion that forced the worker to emigrate and incorporate into the urban proletariat” (Cid 2001: 7). In this system, peasant men worked on the lands of the *patrón* (fields, livestock, maintenance of the estate) while women stayed in the domestic sphere. Their labor consisted of unremunerated work carried out in and near the household, in which they were in charge of house chores, raising the children, caring for small livestock (Barrientos 1997). After the Agrarian Reform of the sixties and early seventies, there was an emphasis on the family and on the partnership that existed between a married couple. Despite the progressive nature of the Agrarian Reform, it was still a male-centered process in which men became owners of plots of land. While the progressive governments which pushed forth the reform “celebrated women’s capacity to contribute to social change, they carefully stressed that such energies would complement rather than compete with those of men” (Tinsman 2002: 133).

A number of researchers investigate how gender relationships have shifted as a result of women’s seasonal employment in the agroindustry (Caro 2004, Falabella 1991,

Tinsman 2002, 2004, and 2006, Valdés 1998 and 2007). Having access to cash caused profound changes in the household and did not go uncontested on behalf of her male partner. While the wife/partner of the household is earning an income, making new friendships, and exploring new social settings, the male is unemployed, causing a lower self-esteem and a questioning of his wife's outings. "Women fruit workers *did* spend more time with one another and enjoyed it" (Tinsman 2004: 273, emphasis of the author); as a result men felt their wives were abandoning both them and their household duties.

Silvia Aliwenko told me of a co-worker she had some years ago; every payday, her husband would be waiting for her outside the packing. Silvia claimed that it was good in a way, because walking home in the wee hours of morning when it was still dark could be dangerous for women. However, she believed that the husband also did this out of mistrust and control towards his wife. "Many husbands, Silvia told me, didn't believe that their wives were out working until 3:00, 4:00, or 5:00 am." Also, during the early 80s Chile underwent an economic crisis in which a large number of men became unemployed. They thus began depending on the women's labor in the fruit industry as the main source of income. The greater independence that women earned from working as *temporeras* and becoming the breadwinner came with a cost of tension and quarrels in the household.

There was a somewhat emasculating effect on the men: not only were they unable to be employed because of the economic crisis that was affecting the entire country, but now their women were the ones leaving the home, earning an income, and maintaining the household (Caro 2004, Tinsman 2004, Valdés 2007). When talking to Isidora about

the costs that being a temporera had to the family, she said that the negative aspect of it is that “you leave the household aside too much, the children, oftentimes I have lost my partner because of work, but thinking that I was doing it right. [The work] is a good thing for you,, but I don’t know why [it] would be that you lose everything. You lose even if you don’t want to, even if you say no, you lose your children, you lose everything.”²⁷ There is sacrifice and a sense of loss for Isidora that comes with working twelve to fourteen hours in the fruit industry. A sacrifice not only of time spent with the family and worsening relationships, but also of one’s health which is postponed and only to be taken care of when one is not working.²⁸

At the same time, Isidora also reflected on the positive aspect of being a temporeras. “The positive is that you have a good time. In the fields you forget your problems.... you know that you just have to produce, you know that the fruit you cut or the vegetable you cut, you have to cut it well... so you have your mind distracted. You have your entire mental capacity focused on work.” As reflected by Isidora’s words, the insertion of women in the fruit export business has ensued complex effects onto women’s daily lives. While there are clear physical, health, and family-related costs to being a temporera, women also leave behind their household worries, meet other co-workers, socialize, and bring home an income while they labor in the fields and in the packing plants.

Consumption

Having access to an income radically altered notions and practices of consumption for women who became temporeras in the valley. Heidi Tinsman (2006) challenges the longstanding assumption that the “consumerism” associated with Chile’s neoliberal economic model was overwhelmingly reactionary in its political consequences and debilitating for working-class communities. She argues that “consumption was also a site through which women fruit workers challenged family patriarchy and created new forms of community with each other” (Tinsman 2006). This is a prevalent theme that came up in my fieldwork time and time again when talking to women about what it meant for them to begin working in the fruit. For the first time, women were generating an income and did not have to ask their husbands for money. This money was allocated not only for food, clothes, medicine, and household items, but also for their leisure. Temporeras were now outside the house, working alongside other women, sharing stories and experiences, about family, sex, children, and shopping bargains.

It was in the daily practice where having access to wages became most significant and where the changes that ensued as a result were most visible: “the most political element of consumption was how it changed quotidian practice, rather than how it translated into open support or resistance to military policy” (Tinsman 2006: 9). Although the author refers specifically to consumption practices by temporeras under dictatorship (80s), the ways in which consumption changed quotidian practice can be seen to this day. Scholars and activists have written in detail about the working conditions of the temporeras and how they respond to the hardships they are exposed. Investigations by Sarah Bradshaw,

Carla Freeman, and Heidi Tinsman point out however, that this approach can be limited; while Tinsman recognizes the “tremendous value of studies on women’s labor in the fruit industry,... [she] also points out that existing scholarship views temporeras chiefly as victims” (Tinsman 2002: 263). Bradshaw notes that “neoliberalism in the Chilean countryside has both *forced*, through economic hardship, and *allowed* women to participate in the traditionally ‘male area’ of waged labor” (Bradshaw 1995: 195; emphasis of the author). Freeman reveals how entrepreneurial flexibility generates “both liberating and constraining effects, and in doing so [is] redefining ... the cultural meanings of neoliberalism itself” (Freeman 2007: 262).

“Me gusta tener plata” (“I like having money”), Tania told me when describing how she allocated the income for household necessities without asking her partner for money. She explained to me that each year she has a goal – one year it was a microwave, another year changing the mattresses of the children’s beds, and the next was to replace the dining room set in the family room. While men’s income is destined chiefly to food and paying the bills, women’s income remains in a tangible and physical form in household as a microwave or a mattress.²⁹ Temporeras now have an income, and not only to be allocated to the household expenses and the children, but also for themselves. Women buy consumption goods, such as creams, make-up, and go out with other temporeras without asking their husband/partner for money. Having access to cash gave many women the ability to override the need to even ask for permission. “Women fruit workers were the crucial players in this new consumer reality, and they actively used consumption in their negotiations within the rural family” (Tinsman 2004: 271).

“Buying school uniforms for the children or a pot for the kitchen with one’s own wages allowed women to affirm their importance to household maintenance in the monetary terms that were becoming increasingly valued in a market-driven consumer economy” (Tinsman 2004: 272). This, of course, by no means lightens the labor abuses that are common in the agribusiness, nor does it ameliorate the fact that temporeras are subsidizing the industry and Chile’s development with their labor, health, and family relations. Drawing on Carla Freeman (2007) I contend that it is key, however, to look at the articulations and the ways in which women workers engage with what is constraining and liberating, enabling and disabling of this work regime, taking us to a deeper analysis of neoliberalism and its particularities.

In the home I lived with Marina, her mother Graciela, and grandmother Sandra, we frequently had visitors from women selling Avon products door to door. The evenings were entertaining as we flipped through the magazines, ooh-ing and aah-ing over new fragrances that we scratched and smelled, or admiring the eye shadows and nail polish in the colored pages. Once the products arrived, Marina merrily sprayed some body fragrance on her ninety-two year old grandmother Sandra, who quietly smiled at the excitement going on around her. Being not much of a buyer of fragrances or make-up myself, Marina would make me choose a cream that would arrive within the next couple of weeks. “Tenís que arreglarte!” she would tell me. “You have to get primped up!” Going out at night with friends frequently involved Marina happily tossing clothes at me from her dresser, after giving a disapproving look at what I had put on. Other times when Marina and I went to the nearby town San Felipe to buy groceries, she would drag me

into stores with discounts and sales, where we would spend an hour trying on colorful tops (and later get scolded by Graciela for being late for lunch).

This research explores the connections and articulations between structures of neoliberalism and source of agency of the workers. In Chile, consumption is often viewed by academics and activists from the Left as “selling out”; Tinsman’s research, however, reveals the ways in which consumerism has also been a source of agency for female workers. Income earned from working in the fruit is for many women the steadiest source income gained throughout the year; thus, in deciding what to buy with the earned wage (whether it is food, new curtains, a microwave, make-up, or a magazine), *temporeras* are exerting control over their autonomy (Tinsman 2006).

On Friday after being paid at the Corpex plant, women and men would chat about where and at what time they would be getting together to head over to *Mundo Scalibur*, the largest local disco (club) in San Felipe. During my first week working there, one late night in the packing I heard the supervisor Cucho telling his friends that after getting home and showering, he would meet them at the disco. I was surprised that there would be dancing *after* a twelve-hour workday. Marina looked at me and said, “El Cucho goes religiously *every* Friday to Mundo Scalibur, no exception. He gets rid of stress that way.” On Fridays or Saturdays, I oftentimes accompanied Marina and some of our friends to Mundo Scalibur. The 8.8 earthquake which struck Chile on February 27th at 3:34 am found me in Mundo Scalibur with a number of our *temporera* friends from the packing plant after receiving our Friday pay. Buying fragrances, paying the bills, and going to the

discotheque after work are actions that women carry out that are wrought with tension, contradictions, and also sources of conflict, agency, and pleasure.

Insertion into seasonal labor

Alejandra Matte

Well, [I started working] due to the sickness of my father and the situation of the divorce, the doctor [told me] I had a sharp depression, back then I was with a lot of medication. [It was] the situation itself of not having an income anymore and my daughter studying by herself in the university ... The opportunity came up of working the summer season. Because in the region there is no other source of work in the summer, and here there is no other movement, there is no other movement here. Because in the commercial stores they don't give you a summer job, unless you are young, a young woman, or doing an internship, or they hire you for sales and things like that. But at the age of a housewife, a woman of forty, fifty, sixty years, they don't hire you anymore. Because in this region, there is no other way of living that isn't the fruit.

Francisca Carbajal

[I began] when I was fourteen and it was out of rebellion. It turns out that my mom had a partner, I had a stepfather. And I didn't accept the things that he gave me. It was a situation that I more or less didn't accept, and I told them that the only way in which I would go to school in a presentable way was if they let me work and I would buy my things. And so that I wouldn't just be doing nothing, they let me. But it was because of rebellion. I wanted to buy my own things and not have him tell me "I'll give them to you." I felt like a rebel against him. So then I would buy my things, I paid for my school sweater, I was in high school at that time. I would buy my entire list [of school materials], mine and my brother's. I paid for all the school related things of the year, since I started working in December in the fields, and January, February, March, and April in the packing. I entered school in March, but I would ask permission at school, I was my own guardian since 9th grade - my mom no, she didn't worry too much about those things. So I told them that I needed - we would get out at 1:30 pm, I needed to be out at 12:30 pm, and they gave me authorization. And every day I would leave at 12.30 pm and I would go in my school uniform to work. I would change clothes there, had lunch at 5:00 pm - during snack break, that's when I had lunch, and I had the support of everyone in the packing, I was like the baby.

Hilda Santamaría

I was eighteen years old more or less. I had to start working because I got pregnant. [As a] single mother, and when one gets pregnant, the parents kind of reject you. And so I was pregnant, gave birth to Carlitos, and from there when Carlos became one year old, I had to go out and work, because it wasn't a joke that I would get pregnant and they would be giving me and my son to eat. So that's why I started working in the fruit.

Isidora Ochoa

[I began] to help out at home at a young age. I [began] when I was fourteen, I was a mom already... Then I was with my husband about twelve years, that was the only time that I didn't work. From there I got separated and started working... I began working because I was left alone... After that I got pregnant with my second son, because I met another partner, I got pregnant. And I had to work because that man left me alone with my boy. Actually, when he was two years old, just then he returned to recognize him. Ricardo is mine alone. I've always said it, I'm not ashamed to say so. My other older children, not them, they are from marriage. So then I had to fight (luchar) for my children, pay for them to be taken care of, I would come back at night, in the late evening I would come back, I would drink a little bit of water, I would give him breast, that's how I raised my children.

Silvia Aliwenko

Look, we were in the military government in the whole country, it was a very painful process, very hard for the majority of Chileans. And in the year 85, towards the end of 85, one of my brothers disappears in the south. And my calvary began. Unfortunately he was cruelly tortured and died on February 8 of '86. It was very painful and affected my health. My father had come to this region [Aconcagua Valley], so he asked my husband to send me. At that time I had the two younger ones, my son who was about ten years old, and my youngest son who was a year and eight months. So I came with them because the other kids were studying, some in the university and others in high school... When I arrived to this valley I brought with me a letter of Bishop Camilo Vial, bishop of the Aysén region. I got integrated to the Human Rights Commission. He put me in hands of good doctors, and I think thanks to that I was able to recover my mental health. I was in the Psychiatric of Putaendo about a year and eight months in treatment. It wasn't easy, it was very, hard. And on top of that, in the little time that I arrive here to be with my dad, he gets a sudden cancer and dies. So here I am with arms crossed, alone with my two younger sons, because my husband was in the region of Aysén. He didn't earn

much, he had been politically persecuted, so he didn't have an income and was searching for a job... So I said, okay, the pain needs to be put away in a pocket and I need to find a job. It was October, right when the season prior to the harvest in the fields was starting, but I didn't even know grapes. But yes I did know optimism, the willpower to salir adelante,³⁰ so I started working in the fields.

These stories shed light on why women began working as seasonal laborers in the fruit industry. Reasons are diverse: a divorce, depression, poverty, teenage pregnancy, a desire to earn her own income, and political persecution. The testimonies above uncover the processes through which women form part of a work regime characterized by uncertainty. They also reveal the importance of exploring the continuities from past ruptures and sources of violence. The individual stories of struggle and hardship are linked to the broader political, economic, and social climate of Chile both in the present and historically.

Isidora grew up in an impoverished family in the rural outskirts of San Felipe, living with her father and numerous siblings in a plastic shack in a squatter settlement at the bank of the Aconcagua River. Abandoned by her mother, Isidora began working at a tender age as a campesina, planting and harvesting fruits and vegetables. At eleven years old she was placed in a boarding school for children living in "vulnerable" situations (orphans, "neglected," or abused children). At the age of fourteen she became pregnant and married, entering a life of physical and verbal abuse. Growing up in pre-Agrarian Reform era, the opportunities of a young woman living in a squatter settlement were constrained to continue forming part of the rural poor, living as a tenant farmer and/or marrying to start her own family. "I didn't work when I was with my husband, he didn't

like me doing that,” Isidora told me. “It was after I got a divorce that I began working more frequently in the fields and started saving the little money I could.”

Isidora is currently living in a small home that she bought with a government housing subsidy – a widely used program stemming from public policies aimed at affordable housing in the late 90s – and is applying for another subsidy to expand her kitchen and add another room. “It is small, but it is mine” she told me with a smile. These housing subsidies created by the Concertación during the transition to democracy and strengthened by Bachelet, form a prominent part of the poverty-reduction social programs under the neoliberal democracy that Chile is espousing. Isidora’s recounting of working throughout the day to come home at night to breastfeed echoes the lives of many mothers – many of them single – who began working in the growing agribusiness in the valley as a way of making a living and raising their children.

Silvia’s testimony cannot be removed from the political violence that led her to flee persecution in the 70s to a region of relative safety. Repression and violence was exerted by the military, in collusion with the political and economic Right, which is the group of people who also spearheaded the privatization of Chile’s industries and social services. Silvia found refuge in a valley where the fruit-export industry was beginning to flourish as a result of the counter-reform, in which previously distributed lands were sold to foreign businesses or returned to wealthy landowners. Needing to nurse her mental health as a result of her brother’s torture and murder, father’s death, her husband’s and her own persecution, and having to raise young children by herself, Silvia did what so

many women and men at that time in Chile had to do: put “the pain away in a pocket” and finding the means to “salir adelante.”

The sources of uncertainty were different throughout the different stages in the lives of *temporeras*. The stories of Isidora and Silvia, for example, draw on the political and social contexts of extreme poverty and political violence. There is a common thread, however, that traces those sources of insecurity since the drastic transformation of Chilean society during the military dictatorship throughout the transition to neoliberal democracy which is still unfolding today. Scholars on neoliberalism point out that rather than making “broad general claims about the ‘newness’ of certain logics and practices that assume profound breaks with formed expressions,” attention has to be paid to “continuities, recurrences, intersections, crossfertilizations across the domains of public and private, state, nonstate, and transnational” (Schwenkel and Leshkovich 2012: 397, Ong 2006).

The structural violence of a seventeen-year military regime shifted to structural constraints that characterize Chile’s privatized economic model into everyday constraints. It is not the exceptional that is traumatic (Auyero 2012, Berlant 2011) but rather the quotidian; there is violence in the everyday. Fearing hunger with the end of every season and proximity of winter, living on the “what is to come,” and being forcibly persuaded by a doctor that the nausea and vomiting is the result of gastroenteritis rather than pesticide intoxication *is* violent; this becomes particularly aggressive in context of a supposed “successful” economic development.

Race and class

The majority of workers come from a poor rural background, low income or low-middle income economic status. While writing this dissertation in the United States, during conversations with colleagues and writing groups, I have recurrently been asked about the racial/ethnic make-up of the temporeras. From a perspective in which race is studied, especially in the United States, temporeras are considered to be mestiza women. During my fieldwork I did meet Mapuche women who had migrated from southern Chile to the Central Valley in search of work. However, the majority of women in the seasonal labor force in Aconcagua are low-income rural or semi-rural women who do not identify with a particular background other than “Chilean.”

Race is conceptualized very differently in Chile than in the United States. Although race and class relations have been fundamental in the country’s development since colonial times, today there is rarely talk or analysis of the legacy of race relations outside of academic or scholarly circles. When “race” is spoken of, it frequently refers specifically to the Mapuche populations in southern Chile and/or the Aymará of the north who are also in Bolivia and Perú. More often than these specific ethnic markers, however, a commonly used phrase is that of the “Chilean race,” which appears in the media, blogs, and daily conversation. There is a widespread and generally accepted idea that Chileans are a homogenized group of people resulting from the mix of Spanish,

German, British, Slavic, and indigenous cultures (mostly Mapuche), which now form the “raza chilena” (“Chilean race”).

Rather than race, class has been the main marker that is used not only in national discourse, but also as the parameter of analysis in academic and scholarly journals and investigations; when race is investigated, it is intertwined with class. This is not to say that race is not relevant in Chile; quite the contrary. If one were to arrange the population based on income and socio-economic class, race would clearly show up as an indicator. The upper classes by and large have lighter skin, hair, and eyes than the lower classes, which tend to be of darker complexion. I have personally experienced and observed how someone with darker skin is treated, approached, or looked at when entering a bank, restaurant, or store, in comparison to how I am treated, approached, or looked at. I remember what a community member I met and befriended in Santa María told me during my second year of fieldwork: “When I first saw you I thought you were a Mormon missionary. When you opened your mouth and I realized you were Chilean, I thought you were a rich snob.” A light complexion *does* have a correlation to privilege in Chile (as it does in most, if not all, of Latin America).

The Chilean populace, however, has fully embraced a vision in which there are no discrete races other than the indigenous “races” (a strong reflection of how “Othering” is manifest in Chile) and where the country does not have “racial problems” as neighboring countries in the region do. There are differences, of course, with Perú and Bolivia. What is now the country of Chile had a lower number of indigenous peoples living in the region upon the arrival of Spanish conquistadores, compared to civilizations that lived

towards the north. Many were ruthlessly massacred and forced to assimilate to the newly formed country.³¹ It is a well-known fact that large numbers of Mapuche people who migrated to capital Santiago in search of jobs in the twentieth century changed their last names so as to not face harassment and discrimination. In the 2002 census 4.6 percent of the Chilean population identified as indígena (indigenous), with eighty-seven percent of them pertaining to the Mapuche ethnic group, and the rest to Aymará, Atacameño, Quechua, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Colla, Alacalufe, and Yámana (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas 2002). The relationship between the Chilean state and Mapuche peoples has been one of constant tension, repression, denial of demands for autonomy and land rights, and human rights violations. Their protests are dismissed as “trouble-making” caused by groups of people who are an impediment to Chile’s development and the Chilean government prosecutes the Mapuche as terrorists under an anti-terrorism statute which was created under the military regime.³²

Recent undocumented Peruvian (and to a lesser extent Bolivian) migration into Chile from the northern border with Perú and Bolivia over the past five to ten years has shed light on racial and class tension in Chile. Over 60% of Peruvian migrants currently in Chile are female, most of them employed in the domestic labor sector (Doña and Levinson 2004, Stefoni Espinoza 2003), earning lower than minimum wage, working longer hours than legal, and with the threat of being deported if they complain about their working conditions. While middle and upper class employees prefer hiring Peruvian women as maids because they are “buenas y baratas” (“good and cheap”), there is at the same time strong anti-immigration sentiment against Peruvians who are “taking the jobs”

of Chileans and invading downtown areas of Santiago with their “dark,” “indigenous,” and “uneducated bodies.”

Part of the popular discourse includes racialized stereotypes that commonly target migrants from neighboring countries – the majority from Perú, and a smaller number from Bolivia. The anti-immigration discourse which Chile has begun formulating against its neighboring Andean migrants (not unlike anti-immigration language in the United States directed at Mexican and Latin American immigrants) is not just about “socio-cultural discrimination or racism, but also through a discourse anchored in the neoliberal success of Chile, which created a collective identity of ‘economic superiority’ in relation to [its] neighbors” (Gaune and Lara 2009).

“Chile is much more developed than its neighbors,” “cops in Chile aren’t corrupt,” “Chile has good roads,” “look at all those modern buildings in Santiago,” “it’s that Chileans are very European” are all phrases I have heard in my travels through South and Central America which reflect and attempt at explaining the country’s image as a modern and “European” nation. It is a discourse that is replicated even amongst those who are struggling economically. Both these examples of discrimination– against the Mapuche peoples and Peruvian migrants – clearly reveal that race is an issue in Chile. Racial analysis, however, differs from that which is spoken of and analyzed in the United States, where “race” permeates everyday life in conversation, articles, popular media, or the news.

Chileans who differentiate themselves from the Peruvian “Other” in a discriminatory fashion are to be found all across social classes. On one occasion I was speaking to a temporera at her home, and she was telling of a recent argument she had with her supervisor about the low pay workers were receiving per box. “Si no somos peruanos! le dije al jefe de packing, ‘cómo nos trata de esa manera?’” “‘We’re not Peruvians!’ I told the chief of packing, ‘how do you treat us that way?’” Her statement implies that low pay and labor abuse would be understandable if she were a Peruvian migrant in Chile.

Pride, awareness of abuso, and resentimiento social

I think that for me being a temporera is a woman of effort, a person of a lot of effort.... I am proud to be temporera. Even though I don’t have anything to be able to tell you, “*pucha*, I have health insurance, I have things, social security for my old age,” no. But I am proud because I think that the temporera woman is the most valuable. Because thanks to temporeros - man, woman, now children - it gets exported. And that’s something for the country, something for all of us. The fruit, wherever it is you go, *pucha*³³, from Chile... And they don’t know anything that Chile is made up mostly of all temporeros.³⁴

The triumphalism of “Chile’s model” was particularly high in the 90s, with a steadily growing economy and the reinstatement of democracy. Politicians, economists, and analysts nicknamed Chile the “Latin American tiger” (in reference to the Asian tigers) as it flourished under “neoliberalism with a human face” (Hojman 1995). Although a closer look clearly reveals the social and environmental costs that such model was incurring, the

aura of growth, development, and the example of growth it represents for the South American region is still present. And temporeras feel they are part of this too, in a liminal way. I remember being surprised when women expressed pride in the work they were carrying out, in which they were contributing to such an important export sector of the country – such as Hilda’s quote in the opening of this chapter reflects.

Teresa is a quiet fifty-year old woman whose workstation was located at the end of the row of tables. She came up to me one day while we were waiting for the conveyor belt to be repaired. Teresa peered into the notebook I was writing in and she asked “are you writing about us?” After explaining to her what my fieldnotes consisted of, Teresa started telling me about what the job meant for her and how she felt about being a temporera. “I feel proud that the work that I’m doing in cleaning the grape is going to represent Chile outside. That’s why I get angry with the women who are chanchas³⁵, they do the job really quickly without caring about the quality of the work they do. The supervisor should punish the people who do that, because in the end we all end up paying for it.” This ties into the opening quote for this chapter, in which Hilda states that for her there is a pride in saying she is a temporera, despite the lack of health insurance and social security. She knows that thanks to the sacrificed work that women, men, and children like her carry out, the fruit industry is successful.

At the same time, temporeras are very aware of the labor abuses that take place and the stark class differentials that exist between them and the employers. Towards the end of the summer 2009 during one of our interviews, Tatiana was expressing her irritation she felt towards employers who constantly complained about the worldwide economic

crisis, saying “how bad things are” and justifying the low wages because of the recession. “They use that excuse for everything now! I know that it is hard for them in times of crisis, but please. For them the crisis means not going on vacation to Europe or Miami, or having to sell their yacht. If they have a crisis, can you imagine how it is for us temporeras then?”

On another occasion, I was picking grapes in the fields of the Echeñique packing with Marina and Ronald. It was about 2:00 pm and the sun was beating down heavily onto the Valley. Rodrigo, the owner’s son and person in charge of the harvest, came to reprimand us that the grape we were picking was too green. “You have to look well, it’s simple, if the plum color completely covers the grape, you cut it!” Roberto commanded. “Of course,” Marina muttered after he turned around and walked away, “quite simple. Here he comes all rested from his nap, a nice shower, and lunch, which was served to him by his maid. He comes in for five minutes and gets irritated at how we’re doing the work. His eyes are fresh and rested, he hasn’t been here hours on end looking at the same fruit row after row, hour after hour.”

In Chile there is a fine line between critiquing injustices, social classes, the vast income gap, and not coming across as a “resentido” or “resentida social.” This is a term very particular to Chile and a few other Latin American countries. It literally means being “socially resentful” and is used to categorize people who express (justified or unjustified) bitterness about social classes, rich people, or poverty. It is hard to say where this term originated as it has not been studied or investigated academically. It is almost always used colloquially, in blogs, or in daily conversations, and interactions. The

accusation of being a *resentida social* comes predominantly from the right and from people who have “made it” in life, as a critique to those who give out empty and unjustifiable criticism. If someone is complaining about rich people or the inequities between social classes, a common response by someone might be to dismiss them as a “*resentido social*” who unjustifiably “blames the system” without putting enough personal effort to get ahead in life. However, even amongst people who are socially active or progressive/leftist, it is not desirable to be labeled as a *resentido social*.

The following is from an interview with Tatiana, originally from Santiago who is a *temporera* in Santa María and with a long history of labor activism. In the following segments Tatiana remembers working in a farm for a few days in 2009 with very poor working conditions and poor treatment from the owner and supervisors:

We went to work to a farm and suddenly ... I felt like a *resentida social*. I'm not a *resentida social*, but I felt – and that's where one starts asking all the questions asked and to be asked, why this, why that. And then you go realizing that people are so selfish and we are living in such a selfish world, with such bad people, so ambitious, and all they want is to have, have, have at whatever cost... That sensation I felt from that farm, I want to take it off of me because I don't want to be a *resentida social*. Because I have accepted that I am poor, that I was born in a poor family and that maybe I'll die being poor and working like this my whole life. But going to that farm left me feeling like a *resentida social*, because of how bad then treated us, they didn't follow the labor laws... they made me feel like the biggest fool that there could be.³⁶

This phrase also runs deeper than a mere dismissal of an empty criticism that blames the system. In a country where the upper tenth percentile earns twenty-seven times more than the lower tenth percentile and which is the most unequal country of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),³⁷ it would be hard for me to not

feel social resentment if I were poor. Yet it is undesirable in Chile to be labeled as such. I have encountered numerous situations during my fieldwork in which I find that resentment towards owners, supervisors, or landowners is justified (according to me), but that “resentimiento” has somehow been co-opted by the right, by middle and upper classes, and even by the working class to mean anger or resentment that is unjustifiable. Even workers who are very conscientious and politically involved in unions or progressive parties – Tatiana for example – state their disclaimer “but I’m not a resentida social.”

While being a resentida social is not desirable, neither is it to be someone who expects the government to solve his or her problems. “Me carga la gente que espera que todo se lo entreguen” – “I can’t stand it,” Marisol told me, “when people just expect that everything be given to them. Life is hard, and you have to work through it.” There is a sentiment of pride which I have encountered by a number temporeras in which they do not expect handouts from the government of the municipality. “Life is hard,” Laura told me one afternoon over tea and crackers, “but it is what it is. You just have to fight your way through it. No one’s going to do it for you.” Although temporeras are very aware of the injustices and exploitation that takes place in the agribusiness (and country in general) with the working classes, they also take pride in the fact that with their hard work they make a living for their families. “No tengo grandes cosas,” Hilda told me. “I don’t have grand things. But what I do have I achieved with my own sweat and tears.”

The undesirability of being a “resentida social” reflects general sentiments in the Chilean populace that “failing” is not only the responsibility of each individual, but also

that the individual should also not blame others for his or her “failures.” In other words, “your own failures should not be blamed on someone else.” The term *ressentiment* was used by both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and referred to as a “destructive envy that desires less to imitate the other than to see him brought down to one’s level” (Stivers 2004: 14). It is a phrase widely used in Latin America aimed at people who seem to “blame the system” without assuming any responsibility for the situation they are found in. This bears particular significance in contemporary Chile, where the surge of interest given to the “civil society” since the return to democracy has placed a burden on working class people to be held responsible for the situation they are living in, which an exploration of structural constraints.

In Chapter 1 I explore this shift that is placed on the citizen participation as part of the country’s neoliberal democracy. In this section I add to the general notion of civil society, showing the ways in which temporeras view themselves as part of the larger society and enact techniques of self. Tatiana has experienced labor abuses and speaks out against them when they occur, both to her supervisor, fellow colleagues, or me as an interviewer. At the same time, Tatiana is also very aware of how pointing out injustices can cause others to categorize her as bitter and “blaming others” for situations unfolding in her life, and tells me about a particular working situation with the disclaimer that “it’s not that I am a *resentida* social, but...” She states the disclaimer of not wanting to identify as a “*resentida*” since it would characterize her as “bitter” and even “envious” of others. Being a “*resentida*” is intimately opposed to the idea of making it on “one’s own”

without depending on the government for assistance, which has largely retired from providing social services to the population.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to trace the processes that women in the Aconcagua Valley went through as they began working as seasonal laborers during the decade of the 80s. Reasons for why they became temporeras are diverse. For Hilda it was because of a pregnancy; Alejandra was going through a depression; Francisca began working as a teenager because of rebellion and wanting to buy her own clothes; Isidora grew up in abject poverty and after the separation from her husband, began picking fruit; and for Silvia it was the only employment she could participate in after escaping political persecution in southern Chile. The lack of opportunities is the common factor in all of the women's stories. The processes of becoming a breadwinner are complex and diverse, allowing many women to contest traditional gender roles, and pay bills and consumer goods. Women became part of an army reserve of labor³⁸, a surplus of labor which is absorbed every summer harvest and left to float in the winter *meses azules* as they come up with strategies of survival (to be discussed in depth in Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3

Personhood: Sexuality, Morality, and Motherhood

Hace algún tiempo
vino del sur
Y en su mochila traía
Sueños de mejores días
La temporera dejó su hogar
Y ahí en su tierra lejana llora un niño
que la extraña

Temporera tienes que trabajar
Duro la tierra para cosechar
Ay temporera tienes que luchar
Pa' que mañana vuelvas al hogar

Junto a los tuyos, temporera
Que vayas lejos, temporera
Un niño pequeño espera
Su madre, la temporera
Que vuelve, pa' que le quiera.

A while ago
She came from the south
And in her backpack she was bringing
Dreams of better days
The temporera left her home
And there in her faraway home, a boy who
misses her cries

Temporera you have to work
Hard the earth to harvest
Ay temporera you have to *luchar*
So tomorrow you can return home

Together with yours, temporera
Who are faraway. temporera
A boy, young one waits
His mother, the temporera
That she return, so she can love him.

The above lyrics are of a song of the cumbia genre³⁹ written and performed by a Chilean group Hechizo, from southern Chile. The song shares the life of a hard-working temporera who leaves behind her son in the south to labor in the fruit industry. “Temporera,” which has become a hit amongst the temporeras/os and rural communities, draws on common themes that resonate with how the women speak of their lives as seasonal fruit workers: sacrifice, hard work, dreams of better days, and parental responsibilities of providing for the household.

In an interview with Viviana, she makes a reference to this song, saying the following:

There is a song that’s about ‘the temporera,’ she came from the south which is where they sing it, there are people that are super proud of that song. Well, the letter and what it says it’s beautiful. [Viviana starts singing the song] But what happens is that the song and the lyrics and all are nice, but at the end if you realize the lyrics are very sad. I mean, you leave behind a family and everything, to come and gain what? You leave everything for an effort that is going to be badly paid, ...and that is going to be badly appreciated, badly valued by your superiors, that they treat you [badly].

The themes present in this song form part of various divergent views in national discourse and the Chilean populace regarding seasonal laborers. Temporeras inhabit the imaginary of politicians, the media, policy planners, social workers, and citizens in ways that point to their hard work and sacrifice. At the same time, also taking place is the construction of the temporeras’ morality in which their sexuality is stereotypically characterized as “loose,” “permissive,” and at times, even as bad mothers because they leave their children behind while they work. I argue in this chapter that notions of

personhood held by temporeras are multi-layered and complex, and can simultaneously be sources of agency. In unpacking what being a “temporera” signifies for the women laborers in terms of temporality and in/exclusionary spaces, I explore how they view themselves and how they feel their labor and lifestyle is valorized (or not) by those who are not seasonal laborers. What stand out are the different spaces - oftentimes in tension with each other – which temporeras inhabit in the national mediated landscape and in the intimacy of their homes. They are mothers, workers, daughters, lovers, each with her own particular life story and with her longings and desires for her present and her future.

Being a temporera: instability and sacrificio

When asking in my interviews “what does it mean to be a seasonal fruit worker?” a number of workers replied that it meant exactly what the word temporera signifies: to work on a seasonal basis. Alejandra responded saying that “Temporera is precisely like how the word says: temporary, it is not continuous. It’s a season, a lapse of time. So it’s a season of grape or a season of something else, but it isn’t something that you have the whole year. It is not a stable job, it is seasonal.” Josefina Michimalonco, a twenty-nine year old Mapuche temporera who migrated from the south, identified a temporera as someone who labors seasonally. “For me temporera is what you call people who work in the season. For example, January, February, March, and April, that you work in the grape, those people specifically are called temporera.”

The seasonality, its short-term duration, and instability that are present both in and out of the summer months are the defining characteristics of this labor regime. Being a temporera is defined by a series of “entrances/exits/entrances to the labor market ... characterized by its recurrence throughout different ‘seasons’” which the temporera knows she will return to in the subsequent year (Canales 1998: 31). Even during the “off-season” when packing plants are empty and women in the Aconcagua Valley work in the informal market or as domestic workers, I have found that they do not stop being temporeras. That time and space in which they search for a job outside of the season defines what it means to be “a temporera,” just as strongly outside of the season as during it. The time of “non-activity do not imply an abandonment of *being* temporero... even these times of agricultural/agroindustrial inactivity, the worker *is* a temporero” (Canales 1998: 31).

Evelyn expresses this identification as a temporera even on the off-season. She is originally from Santiago and came as a young single mother to the Aconcagua Valley to be with her family, who told her she could easily find a job in the fruit. Although at the moment of the interview Evelyn had not been employed in the season for two years, she has a long history of working as a picker and packer, and is still very involved in participating in the labor rights movement and organizations formed by temporeras. Evelyn responded, “Yes” after I asked her whether she identifies as a temporera. I proceeded to ask, “What does it mean for you to be a temporera?” Evelyn responded the following: “In reality, I identify as a temporera because I can’t identify as a dueña de casa (homeowner). I mean, I am a dueña de casa, the temporeras are dueñas de casa, but

... if you ask me my profession or job, I am temporera. Because even the years that I was without a job, they would ask me ‘profesión u oficio’, hey, I am a temporera, even if at that moment I’m not working, I am a temporera.” This statement, which I frequently encountered, reveals the significance of this employment on how women identify, even during the winter months when they are not working in the fruit.

Employment in the fruit industry is marked by “instability, by its continuous interruption [in] a context of continuous re-insertion. In other words, it is defined by a pattern of insertion that combines active and inactive times, in a long-term sequence” (Canales 1998: 39). There is certainty felt by women that they will be reinserted into a packing plant or field during the following harvest season. This does not mean that workers do not long or wish or even try to find jobs outside of the agribusiness; a number of informants have expressed to me a desire to work elsewhere or complete an educational degree. However, the reality is defined by a return to the fields or packing houses the following year, particularly for the women. “If for the men it seems like seasonal work is only an employment option amongst an ample variety that the regional market offers them, for the women, on the other hand, working as a temporera most possibly represents the principle employment option at the regional level” (Canales 1998: 35).

What effect does knowing that one will return to work in the fruit the following season have on how the woman views her work? How does a temporera live on a daily basis knowing that her job will last roughly three months and that hard times will arrive during the winter months, before the green leaves start dotting the brown branches,

announcing the arrival of spring? How does this translate to materiality and formation of subjectivity of each temporera? Hilda gave the following reflection during a conversation we had in 2009.

Temporera means that you work exclusively in the summer and if there is [work], [you] work in the winters, that's what [being a] temporera means. Because stable work is when you have a contract and a contract for the year – let's suppose, I started working in January. In January it's been a year, 'oh, que rico (how nice), I have vacations.' But unfortunately for one, for me it hasn't been like that. I have worked in different parts and I have never said 'I've worked for one year, I'm going to go on vacations' ... I am forty-six years old and from the years I've been working, only once have I gone to the beach with my son and grandson, we went one weekend ... Still it's sad – sometimes I say *pucha*, here in this house now that they raised my son's salary, he earns 170.000, he says 'mamita, let's buy – not every month – let's buy chicken, let's make a roast chicken or meat.' You miss that because with my dad I used to eat meat or chicken every weekend. Sometimes we eat meat here, sometimes chicken, or if we go to a birthday or some party, we eat there. Or when there's money we buy soda and if there's no money, we just drink juice. That's the difference of so many things.

Being a temporera is frequently defined by what it is not: not a stable job, not having a contract, not taking vacations, not being able to afford meat on the weekends and eating it only at birthday parties or when the son has a raise. "That's the difference of so many things," Hilda pointed out. The difference of having – a job, meat, disposable income, vacations – and of not having. Ximena Valdés has written about the *no-espacio* (non-space) of the temporeras, referring to the vague space they inhabit, in which they are not recognized as having specific labor rights (Valdés 1998). Seasonal fruit labor is beset by high levels of informality in the workplace and irregularity with which deductions are paid into social security and healthcare accounts. As Hilda pointed out at the beginning of this section, being a temporera means *not* having things, such as a permanent contract,

paid vacations, or meat on weekends. At the same time, however, I believe in the importance of moving beyond the “non-spaces” into the spaces that are. Although this research clearly reveals the absences in quotidian life and the non-*some*things, I stress that temporeras *do* have their spaces and material objects, and that creativity and time is invested to what *is*. Women establish and demarcate *their* spaces (not just the ones they are afforded), within the framework of constraints they face on a daily basis.

I use the notion of subjectivity to reflect on ideas of personhood that the temporera has and how she perceives and values herself. In approaching this notion, I draw upon Elizabeth Dunn’s research with Polish factory workers (2004). Dunn defines personhood as “interpersonal connection and social embeddedness [which] challenge the objectifying and individualizing effects of marketing” (Dunn 2004: 87). Adrienne Pine, who conducts research on violence in Honduras (2008) offers another lens through which to study the formation of subjectivities. The author states that subjectivity “results from the subtle, ‘powerful and insidious’ ways in which people are shaped by living in a social world” (Pine 2008: 12). In this dissertation I explore how workers “are shaped by” the labor they engage in, but even more importantly, how they shape their workplace, daily activities, and how they give sense to everyday uncertainties (Pine 2008: 12).

The study of subjectivities reveals “the ways in which inner processes are reshaped amid economic and political reforms, violence, and social suffering” (Biehl 2007: 1). The examination of everyday life, work, and relationships are key arenas to investigate in order to explore how temporeras engage with neoliberal development that is unfolding. In his examination of Karl Marx’s anthropology, Thomas Patterson points out that

“sociality permeates all aspects of the individual’s life” (Patterson 2009: 47). The individual’s consciousness is shaped through his or her labor, connections with the natural world, and relations to other human beings. By examining language, gestures, and actions used on a daily basis and how temporeras speak about themselves and their labor, we can arrive at this articulation between political economy, notions of personhood, and “the connection between the human individual who is growing self-conscious of other persons and of things that are external” to her (Patterson 2009: 50).

The word sacrificio (sacrifice) comes up frequently in conversations with women as an explication that gives sense to the uncertainty, hard work, and short-term nature to the job they carry out. It is a “trabajo sacrificado” (sacrificed job), meaning that there are many aspects of their lives and things they have sacrificed because of the labor-intensive job they are working in - such as family relations, health, and leisure time. Not only does the sacrifice mean giving something up, but is rather an constant act of love that is being carried out. And with this sacrifice, there are also moments of laughter gained and relationships forged. Silvia Aliwenko is a sixty-seven year old temporera. Like Josefina, Silvia is Mapuche, and arrived as a young woman to the valley from the south, escaping political persecution under dictatorship during the 80s. She began working in the fields because “it was the only job that there was.” I asked Silvia what being a temporera means for her and she answered the following:

Look, being a temporera for me... [is being] an obrera (of the working class) working woman that struggles and fights, sacrifices a lot of effort, but also has achievements in her family more than anything, in her things, in herself as a person. As I was telling you, despite the pain, you also have a good time. You laugh with your compañeras, you forget your sadness, you

don't realize how fast the day passes. I always remember Marta Fernandez, a woman of age like me, who would get angry when the grape was bad. I always remember Marta who would say "sad is life, Venancio" ... that's the phrase of a poem of El Temucano, a popular Chilean poet. "Sad is life, Venancio." Like the life of Venancio was so hard, it was so hard, so she – I felt – was wanting to express the impotence that the grape was so bad and you would take so long in trying to clean it. You are a working woman and you have to be there machucándose (bruising yourself - working hard and beating yourself) and cleaning that porquería (crap). Oh she would make me laugh when I would hear Marta say "sad is life, Venancio." I mean you laugh, of your own pain you laugh.

For Silvia, being a temporera means both pain, hard work, and also laughter, laughing even at your own pain. Despite the sacrificios, being with other women and working hard also allows you to "forget your sadness." There is also an addictive quality to working in a packing plant that some women have expressed. Alejandra told me that despite the bad pay, the long work hours, the unemployment of the months following the season, "you are still tempted to go to the grape, because you get used to it. In the end, it's like a vice. Because the work rhythm is very accelerated, suddenly it's exciting, suddenly there are arguments, and you form companions and [form] a group." Just as fruit employment is marked by intermittent entrances and exits, it also represents an area that women go to when they leave the house, both physically and mentally. "You forget your problems you have in the family, in the house. In the packing you just focus on cleaning, cleaning, cleaning or packing, packing, packing, and nothing else," Tatiana told me. "Having your mind only working fast and producing makes you forget your other worries."

What does it feel like to not know where next month's income is coming from?

Alejandra Matte – “I sometimes really don't know what to do”

It's very anguishing. For example, sometimes there are nights that I don't sleep. There are nights I don't sleep thinking that the coming month - besides that, I mean I am divorced and all, a *mugre* (dirt, crap) of pension but at least I have those 100.000 [approximately 200 dollars] to pay electricity, water, buy gas and something from the market, something like that. But imagine that no, I sometimes really don't know what to do.

Hilda Santamaría – “You need to sustentarte”

It's like [thoughtful pause], at least I don't sleep at peace. If I didn't have any debts, I would sleep well and say ‘well okay, at least I can go wash or go iron, I am going to have with what to eat because I don't have debts.’ But when the person has debts, you don't sleep at peace because you think that they're going to bang on the door with an order of *embargue*. All my life I've thought that because I owe, they're going to come banging, and will say ‘Señora, you have to pay with jail. Because you are not up to date with your payments.’ And they explained to me that no, they can't imprison me because of a debt. The only they can do is come and take my things away, nothing else... And I say, I've sacrificed myself so many years, for any person to come and tell me, ‘You know señora, I

have to take these things.’ And that’s why one has to, doesn’t matter that there’s no stable job, but you have to work in what comes. Washing, ironing and make the money you need to make tu *sustentarte* (sustain yourself). And if I don’t have a job, my son buys groceries, pays electricity, water, gas.”

Isidora Ochoa – “First the belly, later we’ll see”

Sometimes you feel uncomfortable. For example, this time that I’ve been sick, I’ve had two months with and without electricity, sometimes the water. The gas. El viejo (old man) the little and nothing that he works, I would tell him ‘first the belly and later we’ll see.’ We were without light, a lot of things happened to us, but thanks to God that now we have been more united. We’ve been more united now, because we were very bad. I always say, I have never needed anything. I have come to ask, ask in other places, I was sick last year, seeing my dad who doesn’t have a stable job, nothing. And then with the kids, the kids ask, and you know where to go, you understand? I had surgery, my sister took me to the municipality for them to give me mercadería (merchandise). I don’t deny it, I am registered, if you want you can go and see [my name] there... In fact I get along well with Jaime Amar [the mayor of San Felipe]. He has helped me very, very much... That the medicine, because I am taking some drops that have morphine for the pain in my leg. I went many places to knock on doors and thank God me fue bien (it went well). And as I told you father René, even if he was giving mass, I would go, and he would have something for me. He would put his hand in his pocket, he who has never

owned anything. So that's why that when there's something [evento, actividad], I always have to be there. Me and the other girls, we have to salir adelante (get ahead), even singing at the cost of looking ridiculous, even if I don't even sing in the shower, I sing, I can do anything.

Viviana Ibañez – “We always live in the ‘we’ll see’”

Insecurity, you live... [short pause] you live as if you're on standby. You're left there, waiting for what you do next. In other words, in a way you don't live in tranquility, not like other people who can spend money at peace, they can go at in peace.”
“We always live in the we’ll see, we’ll see. What happens, we’ll see, we’ll see.”

Juliana Campos – “You just have to wait to see what happens”

It's more secure to keep a steady job, it's more secure, because you already had a job with a steady contract. But here, if they lay you off you're going to have to wait until they call you or you go and see if they're receiving people, but you just have to wait to see what happens.”

Temporera spaces and (in)visibility

One late winter afternoon I visited the Pastoral del Temporero, which is a ministry that depends on the Catholic Church and works with seasonal laborers of the valley. This

Ministry was formed in 1991; its main objective is to accompany the seasonal laborers, represent them in their fight for better working conditions and dignity in the workplace, and carry out the Church's mission of preferential option for the poor. They conduct workshops about leadership, Comprando Juntos (Buying Together) which is a winter cooperative formed where women can buy merchandise in bulk and thus at a cheaper price, and carry out accompaniment. It is also a space where temporeras convene, have activities, and social gatherings. During one of my visits to the Pastoral I had a long conversation with Mafalda, a temporera and worker in the Pastoral, about the situation of temporeras and the role of the Pastoral. Mafalda explained to me that one of the main challenges is that there are a lot of governmental programs and projects destined for a number of vulnerable populations: for being a women, for being under the poverty line, for being indigenous/Mapuche, etc. There is no program, however, that specifically targets temporeras/os.

Beatriz Cid (2001) states that in doing an analysis of public policies implemented by the Concertación governments, "there have not been public policies oriented towards the particular situation of agricultural temporeros... On the contrary, the programs in which they are attended, directly or indirectly, approach their situation in function of precarious situations that are associated with them: poor temporeros, women temporeros, unprotected temporeros" (Cid 2001: 30). Cid argues that the structural dimensions of their situations are not targeted and that "the policies directed to this group seem to be more of a compensatory social policy than a social policy of structural approach" (Cid 2001: 30).

On a warm spring September afternoon, I had a conversation with Fernando, who works in the Municipality of the village of Santa María in the Department of Social Development. One of the programs they run is the Programa de la Mujer (Program of Women), which receives funding from the Ministry of Women. They have workshops where enrolled women receive a diploma which certifies them to be able to care for elderly, handle food in restaurants, and work as guards and security officers. I asked him if there were any programs that specifically target female temporeras. Fernando looked at me and said, “The thing is Jelena,” he told me, “*every* woman here is a temporera. How can we have a program for every woman here in Santa María? We would love to help everyone, but it would be impossible. We don’t have the resources nor the infrastructure.” In a village where virtually all women are employed in fruit-related activity, it is not feasible for there to be a program that specifically targets temporeras.

Discussing a path that would advance the rights of seasonal agricultural laborers in Chile brings up the themes of visibility, invisibility, and what spaces they inhabit in the collective national imaginary. I argue that there is both an *invisibility* of their hard work and the labor conditions they work under and also a *misrepresentation* of who they are as seasonal female workers. Peter Benson wrote an article “El Campo: Faciality and Structural Violence in Farm Labor Camps” (2008) about labor camps in which Mexican migrant workers live in as the labor the California fields. Benson draws on Paul Farmer, who suggests that “structural violence is often perpetuated on the basis of visibility,” encouraging anthropologists to “scrutinize dominant frames of perception that remove

historical and societal forces from an account of how structural violence, attendant inequalities, and responses are constituted” (Benson 2008: 593).

Benson explores the negative stereotypes that immigrants are subject to and how they are seen as someone who “does not belong to the fabric of ‘who is here with us’” (Benson 2008: 594) and someone who is matter out of place (Douglas 2002). They belong to the poor rural working class of Chile, and are constantly reminded so in a country that is deeply entrenched in classism and where remnants of strong social divisions of low class mobility exists. I had a long three-hour interview with Tatiana Leiva, a petite, attractive, and very sharp woman. She is an outspoken temporera, who always speaks out and defend her rights in the workplace, which has gotten her in trouble more than once. I asked her how she felt the business class saw her and about the strong class division in her daily life.

The empresarios see you as a thing... I don't know if they see it as a bad thing to be temporero. I don't *think* that they would see it badly, because thanks to us they become millionaires. If so, they would be in grave error. But they see us as a thing that serves a purpose for them. Nothing more. Not as people, we aren't people. And because of that, we go back to the same theme, they are not interested in our health. Because they know that if one of us gets sick, there comes another one that is younger, that is healthier, and the one that is older, bye. They can't use her anymore and that's it. Obviously they don't care about our health, they don't care about our well-being. It's something that *you* have to care about, because they won't.

Tatiana's words reflect her feeling that she is a thing to be used by the company and the owners. And when she no longer fulfills that purpose, she can be replaced. Melissa Wright (2001) explores the paradox of flexibility and the construction of Mexican men and women as skilled and unskilled, respectively, in a textile maquila. Female workers

are conceptualized as prosthetics, where they carry out mechanic labor as an extension to the male's flexible supervisory mind. "The flexible supervisory acquires shape only if we accept the static construction of the Mexican woman as unskilled ... the paradox here is that she is really both dear and nonexpendable, which is why Mexican men are so pressed to have unskilled women perform skilled work in the new, flexible maquila" (Wright 2001: 370).

Diane Nelson (2001) conceptualizes the *mujer maya* as a prosthetic entity onto which "the imagined and lived body of the bleeding nation" is gendered (Nelson 1999, Nelson 2001: 342). The body of the Maya woman is used by the government, tourists, indigenous activists and other citizens as the site where tradition and the Guatemalan nation-state play out. Yet the Maya female is also the site of exploitation, sexism, classism, and racism. This paradox is manifest in the situation of *temporeras* in their being subject to high turnover rate, threatened with being fired or laid off, yet are in fact indispensable to the productivity of the fruit export business. However, this idea of the female as a site of exploitation, despite some parallels with the Maya woman, also has its contestations and complications. In the case of *temporeras*, their bodies are used by the country; it is their bodies that move forth a billion-dollar industry. However, tradition hasn't neatly played out on their body; in fact, their bodies have broken the tradition in leaving the domestic sphere to work, and being thus labeled as women of loose morality because of that departure.

Tatiana adds that the belittling that takes place towards the *temporeras* is not even just from the higher classes: "the stigma, I think, is also within the same community, from the

community itself. From the people who sometimes have a more stable job, who sometimes look down at you over the shoulder because you go out to work in the season.” Although Tatiana herself doesn’t feel ashamed of the work she carries out, she makes a succinct analysis of how she feels she is viewed. If the businessmen see temporeras as things to be used, neighbors with a slightly more stable job look down on them, and then the government “no nos pesca.” Literally meaning “they don’t fish us,” this popularly used phrase means “they don’t pay attention to us.” Tatiana says, “we don’t exist for them.”

Not only does Tatiana feel that she does not exist for the owner of the fruit-export company, who sees her as a mere tool, but temporeras also point out that a disconnect exists between their reality as seasonal laborers and the image of the country as successful exporter of high-quality grape. “Miracle” is the word often attached to Chile’s economic development. The country has an international image of homogeneity, progress, and development when compared to its Latin American neighbors. Fernando Coronil (1997), David Hojman (1995b), Tomás Moulián (2002), Michael Taussig (1997), and Peter Winn (2004) analyze the “success” of a nation-state as a misnomer in their research. Coronil and Taussig both explore how the magical characteristic of the state was produced. Coronil, in his analysis of oil production and politics in Venezuela shows how “the state became a powerful site for the performance of illusions and the illusion of performance, a magical theatre where the symbols of civilized life ... were transformed into potent tokens that could be purchased or copied” (Coronil 1997: 230).

How is Chile's image of an economic success mythical and what illusions are being reproduced and recreated? Are the actors in the Chilean socioeconomic and political stage "readily seduced by the spell of their own performance" (Coronil 1997: 230)? In her analysis of violence, trauma, and performance in Argentina during the Dirty War, Diana Taylor renders visible that which is not meant to be seen and that which is not allowed to be seen; that which, upon being seen, becomes the site of "dangerous seeing" (Taylor 2003). Not only should we ask what are these sites of "dangerous seeing," but also why is it that these sites become dangerous? In the observation of government policies and the increasing flexibility in the workplace, temporeras are very aware of the glaring disjunction and rupture between Chile's image and their reality. In words of Viviana, "El país sale adelante, pero una se queda ahí mismo" – "The country moves on ahead, but you stay right there." Viviana feels stuck, while the country moves forward without her.

"Mujer de packing" and construction of sexual mores

In addition to themes of sacrifice, sadness, hard work, and laughter there are conflicting feelings that arise when women speak of how they feel they are viewed from the "outside" by people who are not temporeras. I asked Josefina how she felt that the seasonal fruit labor was seen from outside and if there is any stereotype or stigma attached to being a temporera. At first she responded "no, here no, because there are so many." She continued to say, "but okay, for example I go home and I say 'I work as a

temporera,' it's a thing that for my mom is 'but how, as temporera?' For her it's like... it's the lowest that there can be.”

Similar sentiments were repeated when talking about the stigmatization of seasonal labor. Viviana is a forty-seven year old youthful, dark-haired woman I befriended in Corpex. She is from the town of Quilpué (three hours away towards the coast), has studied a degree in tourism, and previously worked as a tourist agent in Viña del Mar (a large coastal city and well-known tourist destination). The reason she is a temporera – and has been one for the last five years – is because she suffered from depression and was told by doctors that she needed to be in the outdoors. She then traveled to San Felipe where her sister lives, and eventually found a job in “the only thing that is offered here,” which is the fruit. It is also beneficial for her mental health because she is close to the earth, fields, and grapes and not inside an office or building. In the packing plant the facility is not enclosed, fresh air blows through the mesh walls, and in stepping outside there is a view of neighboring fields and the backdrop of the imposing Andes Mountains.

Although Viviana does identify as a seasonal fruit worker, she also shared her sentiments of shame and of feeling “poca cosa” – literally “little thing,” referring to feeling not worth much and with low self-esteem.

Yes, I have to say [I identify as a temporera] because it is my reality, I am not ashamed, but I feel that I provoke shame in other people. Them seeing me like that makes them feel embarrassment, as if I was worthless ... And I always feel belittled for the same, because I feel - for example, if I purchase brand name sneakers or a jacket [that] it is expensive and I liked it, if I see a person that is of a high social status wearing [the same one], I feel bad. As if I'm invading their... [*trails off*] that's how I feel. That's how I see myself since I entered this world to work, that's how I feel. One day I went to

Ripley (*department store*) and my sister bought me a jacket, it had been a while that I wanted to own it and I said told her, ‘can you imagine that my bosses or someone from Aconcagua Export would see me and say ‘oh, she’s a temporera and look at her dressing like that.’ ... That’s the extent to what you start thinking, that they see you like “Oh, that *rota*, please, the tennis shoes that she has, or that jacket.”

Viviana continued with the following reflection:

Pucha, but they don’t realize that behind us there is a person that feels, that wants, and that also has her education. Maybe the delantal (working apron/coat you wear) hasn’t allowed her to project herself more in many things, or there can be a white delantal (white apron: supervisor and bosses. workers have other color, red, blue, etc) who is a persona maleducada (rude person), who treats you badly. So... I feel belittled, that’s the truth, what do you want me to say, I feel belittled. But I am also proud of my compañeras... I say to myself, ‘why should I feel shame?’ And at times I feel it. I have my cousins who are university students, others that work as accountants, I don’t get together with them - even with them I feel worthless. My cousin tells me ‘I’ll go pick you up in the car,’ I don’t even have a bicycle... Because I don’t know if she, when we are amongst our friends, if we were to enter a club, they ask my cousin, ‘what does she work in?’ ‘She’s temporera,’ *chuta*, you don’t know what goes through the mind of the other person. That’s how I am *de perseguida*. But then I say ‘no *po*, what I am doing, I’m not bothering anyone, I’m not stealing, I am earning my money. I am producing for the country, even if the country doesn’t acknowledge it. Or even if those who are giving us the job don’t acknowledge it, but we are giving back something even with something. Even if we are badly seen and badly paid.

In the last four sentences Viviana sums up a number of conflicting sentiments that go through the minds and feelings of a temporera. Feeling belittled, reminding herself not to do so, knowing she is producing for the country, feeling pride in doing so despite not being acknowledged by the country or employers, feeling a sense of comradery with co-

workers “we’re going through this together,” and feeling a sense of pride when seeing the hard work carried out by her co-workers.

Miriam is an attractive dark-skinned and heavysset woman I met working at Aconcagua Export. As we sat down for our 11:00 pm snack, we conversed about the stigma attached to being a temporera. “When you get on a bus, you can feel how people look and act towards you. They don’t sit next to you because you smell like sulphur and have twigs in your hair. They prefer sitting next to a drunk instead of a temporera!” Miriam told me how she felt people treated her as “poca cosa” when they saw her soiled hands and dirty fingernails. During our long work days prior to the conversation, I had observed Miriam as a proud and no-nonsense woman, and had mustered up some courage before talking to her. Those sentiments of pride and self-respect were corroborated during that long conversation by her poise and steady voice; and yet, I couldn’t help but notice what I interpreted as pain or hurt in her eyes as she told me about people avoiding sitting next to her on the bus.

After typing in “La Temporera” in Youtube to find the song, I noticed another song showing up in the search with the same title followed by “maggmamix.” After clicking on, I was surprised (shocked? disgusted?) to find out that it was a song with lyrics of a dialogue between a temporera and a man she meets. The temporera in this song has a high-pitched voice imitating the accent of a young girl from a low socio-economic status, most likely from rural background. The dialogue portrayed the temporera as naïve, young, dumb, and “easy,” while the man spoke in a deep, confident, masculine voice. Throughout the extended song, the masculine voice asked the temporera where she was

from, what she was doing there, and asked (commanded?) her to take her clothes off while in the background sounds of moaning could be heard.

This song alludes to another stigma that is attached to being a temporera which pertains to their sexuality and of being a morally “loose” woman. In a conversation I had with both Viviana and her roommate Juliana (who also works in Corpex), Viviana explained to me how the job “changes the people a lot, [they become] bad, bickering, insidious.” “Mujer de packing,” interjected Juliana. “A stereotype?” I asked. “Yes,” they both responded. When I asked what that stereotype of a “packing woman” meant, Viviana responded “It’s like the woman, excuse the expression that’s very Chilean, she likes el hueveo (screwing around), she likes getting involved with this guy, that guy, she goes around tonteado (fooling around) and is an easy woman. You go to a packing plant, you can get whichever you want –” And Juliana interjected once more “Not all are like that.”

This idea of a temporera being a woman with loose mores was prevalent particularly during the 80s and 90s, which is when rural women first began leaving the household to earn an income, becoming “dangerous” matter out of place. Mary Douglas discusses “matter out of place” in her book *Purity and Danger*. She states that “these are people who are somehow left out in the patterning of society, who are placeless. They may be doing nothing morally wrong, but their status is undefinable” (Douglas 2002: 118). Once again, it is not that temporeras are “place-less”, but that the place (waged seasonal labor) they have been pushed to, and which they went towards, is one that was not previously

defined for them. It didn't exist. As Douglas stated, they are doing nothing morally wrong, but now inhabit a place that gives them an undefinable status.

How did the stereotype of a *temporera* as a “loose woman” come to be? For the first time, women started earning a salary. They had access to cash independent of their partners or family members, and could make their own decisions of where and how to allocate the income, whether it was food, school supplies for the children, or creams and fragrances for their own personal consumption. Women did not have to ask their partner's permission for what to buy or if they could go out with friends to dance or have a drink. *Temporeras* interacted with coworkers, conversed about topics such as sexuality and family affairs with other women, and expanded their social circle. “The sheer *possibility* that women might seek male company outside the family gaze suggested to many rural people, male and female, that most women did. Distinctions between the positions and desires of married women and those of single women tended to blur, and all *temporeras* were seen as potentially sexually deviant. This image reflected new fears about the weakened ability of parents and husbands to regulate women's sexual lives” (Tinsman 2004: 274).

“There were many women,” Silvia told me, “that their husbands would not believe that they were working until 4:00 am, and that instead had gone out partying with their friends or were messing around with other guys.” Marina joked to me one day that *temporeras* are “*viudas de verano*” – summer widows. That in the summer, “they become

widows so they can have their romances.” Clearly, not all women I worked with or met were having romances or affairs; but it did happen. Romances de packing (packing romances), whether real or invented, became the source of gossip and hushed conversations amongst the women during the breaks or as they took cigarette breaks.⁴⁰ Although some women did go out dancing with their friends on weekends or after Friday payday, this was not the majority. Nevertheless, the stereotype of a *mujer de packing* as a loose woman who likes fooling around stuck. Viviana and Juliana told me that in the north⁴¹ *temporeras* from San Felipe were considered to be the “loosest of them all” and “the easiest” women to get involved with.

Una necesita tener a alguien por quien luchar

When asking women about their *proyecciones* – projections for the future – various *temporeras* have told me “at this point in my life I don’t have projections for my future. But what I do now is for my children, so they don’t have to be humiliated and have such a sacrificed life as *temporeros*.” The situation today in Chile regarding organizing is very bleak – levels of union organizing have been steadily declining in comparison with twenty years ago during the return to democracy. There is a fear of losing one’s employment if one organizes, particularly in the private industry. In the fruit industry there are also few gains to be obtained if organized and many women see it as a waste of time. This does not mean, however, that there aren’t other issues around which women organize and rally around.

Motherhood is one of them. Towards the end of January 2011 Marina got in touch with me via facebook (I had already returned to California to start writing the dissertation), telling me in the happy news of her pregnancy. I was overjoyed; I had accompanied her to the doctor's office when she had an ovarian cancer scare (turned out to be ovarian cysts) and was told that she had little chance of becoming pregnant. The news was not only devastating to her, but also to her mother who lamented in tears that "Marina will now stay all alone." It was then that I understood the importance of motherhood; I observed Graciela being devastated at the possibility of her daughter never being able to give birth to a child.

In September 2011 I returned to Chile and visited Marina and her family. I hugged her, excited to see her large bulging belly. When I asked her how she felt and if she was excited or nervous, Marina answered "Happy, super happy. It's what I've always wanted." "Are you nervous at all?" "No, es que uno necesita tener a alguien por quien luchar" – "One needs someone for whom to fight for." I had often heard this phrase when women speak of being a mother and even in situations of unwanted pregnancies among young teenagers. Motherhood gives women a reason to get up each morning, and rather than being a source of worry, pointing fingers, or "what will I do," it is something positive and even "sets your life straight."

This relates to a revealing book written by Edin and Kefalas titled *Promises I Can Keep* (2005), which explores how and why low-income women place motherhood before marriage in the United States. There is a widespread and misconstrued image of young poor mothers as irresponsible and needing to be educated so they do not mess up their

lives with babies (“how can they raise a kid if they can’t even take care of themselves?”) “To most middle-class observers... a poor woman with children but no husband, diploma, or job is either a victim of her circumstances or undeniable proof that ... society is coming apart at the seams. But in the social world inhabited by poor women, a baby born into such conditions represents an *opportunity to prove one’s worth*” (Edin and Kefalas 2005: 6; emphasis mine). The authors point out that while the poor delay marriage, they do not delay motherhood (Edin and Kefalas 2005).

The father of Marina’s daughter Camila (who is now seven months old) is a man she met at a rodeo who was already in another relationship. After a brief romance, Marina found out about her pregnancy. By the time Camila was born, their relationship had unraveled and Marina is currently in the process of reaching a legal agreement in order to obtain monetary support through a family court. Marina has no intention of marrying, however, nor has she ever. Her ninety-six year old grandmother would always warn me “casarse es cagarse,” literally translated to “getting married is getting shitted upon.”⁴² With her finger raised, Sandra advised me to wait until I’m thirty, and if I don’t have a child by then to get pregnant “so I won’t stay alone.” Similarly, Graciela told me “nooooo, don’t marry a guy. It’s like becoming a slave. Live with him, if it doesn’t work out, leave him, there’s nothing tying you to him. Don’t cut your wings, m’hijita, don’t cut your wings” (“No se corte las alas”). Based on their personal and family experiences, these three generations of women had clarity on the fact that a marriage was not to be desired.

In face of uncertainty, what remains as a constant in the life of the temporera? In the winter which is characterized by insecurities and throughout a fragmented year, how do temporeras establish continuity for themselves from one day to the next? How is precarity lived in the day to day? Berlant explores this in *Cruel Optimism*, stating that “precarious bodies... are not merely demonstrating a shift in the social contract, but in ordinary affective states” (Berlant 2011: 197). The author defines cruel optimism taking place when “something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (Berlant 2011: 1). In the daily life of a temporera hopes, desire, and dreams oftentimes become distant and at times unattainable. In the face of constant labor instability throughout the year, tremendous efforts must be made to plan for even the immediate future. In fact, temporeras are constantly trying to “catch up” with debts from previous winter, attending to demands from the job, needs of their family and children, all while navigating and confronting challenges to their sense of self and of being a woman.

Spaces, gaps, and holes which temporeras tie and stitch on a quotidian basis, reconfiguring notions of what it means to be a worker, a mother, and a woman in a fragmented labor cycle. And it is in these spaces, as fragmented as they may be, where temporeras not only respond to instability and insecurity in their lives, but also make sense of their identity as female seasonal workers. Having control over the income allocation, access to spending money, and being able to purchase their children’s school supplies, are situations that give meaning to the sacrificio that is carried out. These same hands that cut, clean, pack, knead, and sew throughout the year, are the constant factor in a sea of instability, and they are precisely what will ensure a survival to the next season.

CHAPTER 4

En el Packing: Discipline, Technologies of Self, and Being “Good” Workers

A weekday in the life of Paula, March 2009

9:00 - 10:30 am: Paula wakes up to the alarm on her cell phone, showers, gets dressed, and prepares breakfast for her husband and two children, waking them up with to eat. She washes the dishes when finished, sends her children out to play in the backyard, and kisses her husband goodbye as he goes to the auto repair workshop where he is employed. Paula then cooks lunch, which she leaves in a pot ready to be warmed up on the stove for lunchtime, leaving the table set for her children and her mother who will arrive before 11:00 am to care for them (Paula’s mother lives next door). While she cooks, Paula sips on her tea and bites into her bread with ham.

10:30 - 11:00 am: Paula sweeps the floor, does the beds, opens the door for her mother, and feeds the dogs which are outside in the garden.

11:00 - 1:00 pm: Paula leaves her house and walks two blocks to the bus stop, where she takes the bus to the closest town in order to pay the phone bill, buy her mother’s monthly medicine, and purchase a three dollar power drink for her to take to work that day.

1:00 - 1:20 pm: Paula opens the door of her house with plastic bags hanging from her elbows and her mother’s medicine in her purse. There was a sale in the supermarket

where she bought the power drink and decided to buy dried goods and cleaning supplies. Paula warms up the stewed chicken and rice, serves it on the table, chops lettuce and tomato for the salad, and calls to her children and mother “lunch is ready!” In the bathroom she brushes her hair and her teeth, sprays on a cologne, applies a touch of gloss on her lips (lipstick is not allowed at her job), and neatly arranges her cap with the company logo on her head.

1:20 pm: She hugs her children and mother goodbye and places the power drink in her shoulder bag. Paula walks over to the cabinet to pull out a package of cookies, since she ran out of time to eat lunch. A van honks outside the door. With the blue apron (which she had ironed the night before) draped across her arm and shouting “chao!” Paula rushes out of her house into the van that will take her to the packing plant twenty minutes away.

2:00 pm: In the packing plant, Paula signs her name next to the sign-in notebook on a table at the entrance office and goes to her workstation to start working.

2:30 am: Paula signs out, grabs her bag from the locker room, and heads out to where the van is waiting to take all the workers home.

3:15 am: Paula opens the door to her house, changes into her sleeping clothes in the bathroom, and crawls into bed.

The above description of Paula’s day during the summer harvest season is a composite based on daily life with Marina’s family and the lives numerous women I met and interacted with in the Aconcagua Valley. Paula is one of the roughly 500,000

workers who are employed in the fruit export industry in Chile. The summer harvest lasts for roughly three and a half months, though the exact timeframe varies each year depending on whether the harvest is “good” or “bad,” or on other factors such as unexpected weather conditions. The details of employment, such as how much the temporera earns every week or month, or how long the work hours will be are also uncertain and can vary even within a season, influenced by factors such as supply/demand, productivity goals set by the agribusiness, or the state of the world economy. The uncertainty of these issues make it difficult for a worker to predict “how the season will be” in terms of income earned; however, one thing is certain: a woman looks to the arrival of the harvest season with anticipation and with the knowledge that she will be working hard in order to make it through another year.

This chapter focuses on the summer harvest months; they are based on my first-hand experiences of being employed in three agribusinesses in the Aconcagua Valley and on my interviews and conversations with community members of Santa María and San Felipe. I explore the precarious working conditions, labor fragmentation, the relationships between work hierarchies, technologies of self, and ways in which “responsible” and “clean” workers are disciplined. There are magical, uncertain, and blurry characteristics of the physical workplace and of the nature of seasonal labor itself, which exacerbate daily insecurities. Increasing labor flexibility is counterproductive to the creation of solidarity between workers and at the same time it also allows gaps and moments which are used for the advantage of workers.

This chapter delves into what occurs inside a packing plant, which is where I worked most of time as a temporera, in comparison to the fields. The shop floor resembles that of a factory with the conveyor belts, rows of workers, rumbling noise, and loud voices. Although the movements of machines, forklifts, boxes, and arms snipping and packing seem to be continuous, closer examination reveals that this machinery does not run as smoothly. Conveyor belts oftentimes break down, trucks that bring the fruit are delayed, and supervisors shout out to the temporeras to gather and show them a job well/badly done; there are frequent moments of friction, contestation, flexibility, and ambiguity in which women create their own dynamics of confrontation, laughter, and mockery.

The interactions and engagement between the various layers of employers and employees in a packing plant are marked by a certain degree of flexibility and “room to play.” Visits to the bathroom, for example, are not strictly regulated or limited because a woman is paid by how many boxes she packs a day; earphones and cell phones are visible in the hands and ears of workers and even supervisors, despite being prohibited; and workers frequently pick grapes and pop them in their mouths, regardless of a sign that says workers are not allowed to do so. Although these actions occur with frequency, however, this does not mean that regulation or disciplinary action does not take place. Employers know that workers are apt to make their bathroom visits brief, since temporeras are paid by piece rate want to earn the most they can during a workday. If the owner is stops by for an unannounced visit, women whisper from one workstation to another, and quickly remove the earphones and place them in their pockets so as to not be reprimanded. The eating of grapes from the box of fruit being cleaned or of cookies

hidden in a woman's apron pocket occurs only when the supervisor has walked down the row of tables or has turned his/her back.

In doing so, a temporera is enacting a "technique of the self," which is first defined by Foucault and analyzed by Rose and Valverde as "an exercise of inhibition of the self by the self, a kind of despotism of the self by the self" (Rose 1999: 43; Foucault 1988, Valverde 1996). These techniques of self and technologies of government are assemblages of "practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority ... traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed" (Rose 1999: 53).

The temporera and the supervisor both know that employment dwindles in the winter, thus the harvest season is *the* time of the year in which the rhythm of work accelerates. There is no need for a worker to not be allowed to go to the bathroom. The knowledge – that the daily wage will diminish with frequent bathroom breaks – is deterrent enough. A bathroom break is thus a temporera's "choice" and "responsibility," instead of a restriction from above. This is one example of many in which workers "are *active* in making choices in order to further their own interests and those of their families" (Rose 1999: 142; emphasis by the author). Further discussion will reveal, however, the constraints of these "choices" behind the illusion of choice and self-fulfillment.

Magic, uncertainty, and laughter in the workplace

Paula's job in a packing plant is one of the two jobs a woman typically has as a temporera. The first consists of harvesting the grape in the fields (parrón), where workers generally labor between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. The second job is that of the packing plant where over 80% of workers are female; this is the physical location where the fruit is cleaned, sorted, and packed for export. The entry time at the packing plant varies by agribusiness and is generally between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm, which is when trucks are ready to bring in the grapes that were picked earlier in the day. The packing plant I was employed in the longest began work at 2:00 pm every Monday through Friday, and occasionally ran on Saturdays if there was a high volume of grape to be processed.

The exit time was never fixed and depended on the number of boxes that were brought in from the fields to be processed that day. An early night was considered to be anywhere between midnight and 1:00 am, while other nights we worked until 4:00 or 5:00 am. As Carmen told me one day, "We know the arrival time, but we never know at what time we'll finish each night." Uncertainty and a feeling of "not knowing" permeated the packing plant since workers did not the time that work will conclude each day, how much will be paid per box, nor what day or week the season will end. As we got close to midnight, our heads would look up expectantly at the sound of trucks that rumbled towards the plant, wondering if trucks were going to bring more fruit to be processed. This was the first of many instances throughout the season in which I learned of the pervasiveness of uncertainty and a not knowing.

Regardless of the time we left the packing plant to go home, we all signed our names in a notebook next to where 12:30 am was written for us in ink. This is the legal time when all workers should leave the plant, based on the labor laws. The other extra hours (legal overtime was already accounted for in the 2:00 pm -12:30 am workday) or illegal hours were written down in a separate spiral notebook by an employee of the company who also wrote down attendance as she went up and down between the work lines. This notebook – or *cuaderno brujo* (bewitched notebook) as some workers called it – disappeared with the appearance of the Work Inspection at the packing. These magical, superstitious, and uncertain qualities of the objects and of the work hours are also extended to other aspects of the workplace, such as number of boxes packed or physical objects. Despite the fact that the hours were written down by an employee, most women kept a tally of their work hours, as well as the number of boxes they processed on their own notepad or piece of paper. It was not uncommon for workers to be shortchanged for the number of the labored hours or packed boxes, reflected in the paycheck at the end of the month.

The job inside the plant was fast: the grapes passed by in crates on the conveyor belt on their left side, women pulled one out onto their table, cleaned the fruit, placed the cleaned grape into a cardboard box, and threw that box onto another conveyor on their right, which was taken down to the packing stations. The work rhythm fluctuated, at times slowing down or coming to a halt because the conveyor belt broke down or because the truck which brings the grape from the fields was delayed. When this occurred, women took time to go to the bathroom, smoke a cigarette outside, gather around a table

to talk and laugh. Some women ate sweets they had in their pockets, sharing with others, while others turned crates upside down to sit on and doze off for a few minutes. During these moments, which could span from fifteen minutes to over an hour, the women asked me questions about the United States, about my impressions about working in a packing plant, and whether I had a boyfriend or not. Other times I would ask them questions about work, their families, and the winter months, jotting down answers in my field notebook.



Figure 1 Image of Aconcagua Export during the daytime.

Once the belt started moving again, women ran to their spots to continue cleaning and packing. Despite the fast pace with which the women filled their boxes, shouts, laughter, and whistling were frequently heard. Fabiola told me, “we work as beasts, but boy do we know how to have fun.” – “Nos sacamos la remugrienta trabajando pero pucha que

sabemos pasarla bien.” This phrase came up often in my conversations with women. Workers got reenergized by going to the bathroom, smoking a cigarette behind the pathway that leads to the bathroom, eating cookies when no one is watching, whistling to a male agronomist when he enters to check on the fruit quality, listening to music with their walkmans and ipods (prohibited but not strictly enforced), joking, and throwing grapes at each other behind the supervisor’s back.



Figure 2 The rows of work stations in Aconcagua Export.

When the boxes were supervised on the conveyor belt after being cleaned and on its way to being packed, the person in charge of Quality Control would recall the ones that were not adequately cleaned. He or she would call out the number that was written on a slip of paper and placed inside the box to identify the cleaner (each worker was assigned a number). When this happened, the woman whose number was called out would have to walk to the belt, pick up her box, take it to her station, clean it correctly, and return it. It

happened one day that “Number forty-six!” was frequently shouted out by the quality control employee, who recalled boxes of grapes and scolded the temporera for a job poorly done.⁴³ As the quality control turned around and continued revising other boxes, “number forty-six” looked at me, and with a wink simply plopped the box back on the conveyor belt without redoing the cleaning.

Supervisors constantly reprimanded “las chiquillas” (“the girls” as the workers are called) in their line to “clean well” and to “revise your boxes before you put them on the belt.” The temporeras, however, would also call out or respond to our supervisor Bárbara when they felt that she was being too harsh or strict. One morning in which there was a lot of recalls on behalf of the quality control, Bárbara gathered all the women and explained to them how to thoroughly clean the grape⁴⁴: “Girls, if you do the job well, we won’t have any problems!” A temporera interrupted and burst out “It’s that we *do* do it well, señora Bárbara! The problem is that you find everything wrong.” On another occasion a cleaner brought her box of cleaned grapes to the belt, as she warned Bárbara, “don’t call my number”.

James Scott is the author of influential and much-discussed works on resistance and “weapons of the weak” (1985, 1990) where he explores “those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript” (Scott 1990: 5). There is extensive debate about whether these actions can be labeled as “resistance” or not, and critics point out that the dichotomies between public/hidden transcripts and mental/physical power are in actuality much more blurry and complex. Moving beyond a conversation on how effective these actions are in

changing the political or labor arenas, these examples are actions, movements, and gestures in which women take possession over the workspace as women, as workers, and as human beings. At times, “these gestures might seem too slight – too muted – to count as agency... And yet they are affirmations of subjectivity in a political register”

(Greenhouse 2010: 8). The look that the worker gave Bárbara as she told her to not recall her box was a gesture in which she spoke back. Did the recalls stop? Maybe they did for that hour, only to probably resume later in the day; but she was able to convey to her superior how she wanted to or did not want to be addressed. The temporeras transform their work area into a playful space, a space that is *theirs*; these are instances that can be called of resistance, agency, or simply a way to pass the hours in a more pleasant and less oppressive way.

Other times, “misbehaving” or not carrying out a job as instructed is used to not only convey something to the supervisor, but also have an effect on the job itself. In January 2009 I was picking grapes with a cuadrilla⁴⁵ which was led by my friend Ronald. Although we had been given instructions by Roberto (the owner) to pick in a specific sector of the field, we were not filling many boxes since the fruit had not completely matured. Ronald then told the group of workers, which consisted of two cousins, a nephew, Marina, and I to “cut the green grape.” Unsure of his instructions and afraid to do a bad job, I asked him “you want us to cut the grape that’s green?” His cousin, who was wary of the owner’s bad temper asked, “are you sure?” “Yes, Ronald said, “cut them green. That way Roberto comes here, sees the crappy grape we’re supposed to cut, and

sends us to another field to work. If not, we'll be here all day without cutting anything and losing time and money.”

Hierarchies and social cohesion

The hierarchical positions that are found in a packing plant are multi-layered and shed light to the complex class and social relations. On the “lowest rung” are the temporeras and temporeros. These are the cleaners, packers, weighers, and the men who are in charge of driving the tractors, unloading the fruit crates from the trucks, and binding up the packed grapes into pallets. Above this rank is that of the line supervisors (supervisoras). There is a supervisor for each line of cleaners and packers. In Corpex there were four lines (líneas) of cleaners (limpiadores) with about eight to twelve workers per line. Supervisors often began as temporeros themselves and who displayed a sharp mind, ability to work quickly and to know what the boss wanted. Oftentimes the supervisors were women, though occasionally I have seen men.

Above the supervisor is the jefe de packing (chief of packing), the person in charge of the smooth running of the packing. Generally the person employed in this position is a male. Above the chief of packing comes the chief of plant (jefe de planta) who is in charge of the entire plant, not just the packing area. Then comes the administrative employees who are in the offices overseeing the arrival of trucks, calculating the number crates that have been processed that day, and in charge of the finances. In between these layers of hierarchy, there are a number of professionals who are hired for specific tasks: a

person in charge of quality control⁴⁶, the representative of the exporting company (which is frequently a separate business from the growers), and an employee who is in charge of overseeing risk prevention.⁴⁷ The women who work in the cleaning workstations are in constant interaction with the line supervisors, which often leads to back-and-forth banter and even expressions of irritation and discontent. It is also “safer” for workers to express their dissatisfaction with the superior directly above them, than to take it to the administration, chief of packing, or the owner. At the same time, there are moments of joking and teasing with the line supervisors which do not take place with people higher up in the work hierarchy.

Something else occurs between the cleaners/packers and the higher-ranking bosses. I was surprised when I did not encounter outward expressions of hostility nor negative feelings towards the owners and chiefs of the packing, which was my erroneous preconception prior to arriving to the field.⁴⁸ Oftentimes, quite the contrary took place, in which workers would wish wellbeing to the chief of packing on the day of his saint, birthday, or other holidays. This does not mean that there was “false consciousness” nor that the women workers were not aware of the power relations that were articulating at the packing plant. They were very aware of their position as subordinates, subject to labor abuses, and mistreatment. Not confronting the employer and not participating in strikes, however, was what ensured that they didn’t end up jobless, since the packing chief is the primary decision-maker in the hiring process.

I am not stating that wishing the jefe de packing a happy birthday was a calculated action, they *did* mean him well on his day. But there is also a generalized sentiment that

in being of the elite and land-owning class, the owners are *supposed* to have more money and wealth; it was something that was not seriously questioned. There is also a sense of criticism towards supervisors are too demanding of the workers and give off “airs” of superiority towards the workers. Viviana told me during a midnight break what she thought of the supervisor we had: “she forgot where she came from, she started just like us.” There is even a notion that “the people who became wealthy without being born with it are more exploitative than those who were born with it.”⁴⁹

While employers look for specific characteristics in the temporeras they hire, such as being a hard worker, obedient, and not being conflictive, the workers themselves have a list of qualities they search for in the places of employment. Tatiana, for example, says she has a “black list” of packing plants and fields she would never work in due to exploitative work experiences she has had in the past. This is a clear reference and parallel to the blacklisting that is said to be carried out by agribusinesses with temporeras who form part of unions, organize their co-workers, and/or participate in strikes. “What I do is that *I* have my own blacklist and share it with my compañeras” Tatiana said. “That way they know where to go for work and where not to. News of bad employers spreads quickly, and hopefully they will have a hard time finding workers.”

Patricio Ribenetti is what I would call a “benevolent patrón”: he prides himself in the fact that all of his workers have their contracts signed, benefits paid, and legal work hours respected. Around early or mid-April he hosts a barbeque de fin de temporada (end of season barbeque), which begins in the early afternoon and carries on late into the night. He provides the meat, drinks, and salads, barbequing the meat himself; Hilda told

me as we were putting food on our plates, “Look at him, such a gentleman, doing the cooking and serving us the food.” Ribenetti also prides himself in his close relationship he claims to have with his workers, taking time to talk to them during his visits to the packing, asking how their families are, and getting updates on any health issues of their family members that he was aware of. Benson talks about a similar tobacco grower he got to know during his research, saying that he “is proud to comply with the law and complains that growers who do not comply benefit from an unfair economic advantage” (Benson 2008: 57).

There is also a need to point out the constraints that the growers and exporters themselves face. As Echánove Huacuja (2001) and Miriam J. Wells (1996) have explored in their research with the Mexican frozen vegetable agroindustry and the strawberry agriculture in California, the growers and owners of agribusinesses are also faced with structural constraints of being part of a commodity chain. There are a number of variables which supervisors, administrators, or agribusinesses owners have no control over, such as the weather or economic boom and bust cycles. “Yield and quality are variables that depend on, among other things, the weather. As a result, contract growers are not always able to optimize results... Besides weather-related issues, growers are affected by two additional elements: pricing and quality standards” (Echánove Huacuja 2001: 19). Exporters in Chile are also not paid until the winter following the summer harvest season, after the importing country has received the shipment and assessed the quality of the fruit received.

There is as much diversity amongst the temporera workforce as there is between packings. Drawing from research with tobacco farms and migrant labor in North Carolina, Peter Benson discusses the demands that contracting places on the farmers, pointing out that “it has helped push small farms where the labor conditions and relations are likely to be of a higher quality out of business, thereby contributing to the race to the bottom in farm wages and working and living conditions” (Benson 2008: 58). In Chile it is actually the smaller packings and fruit businesses that are less compliant with labor laws and regulations, precisely because of the high costs involved in the implementation and certification of adequate working conditions. Also, the Work Inspection has a harder time reaching these smaller family-owned packings since they are less visible and accessible. Ribenetti pointed out to me that the majority of costs faced by growers goes to the labor force. Expenditure relating to machinery, tools, technology, pesticides and fertilizers are fixed costs; as a result, growers attempt to save money on the workforce and it is precisely the temporeras who face increasing vulnerability in times of crisis or a bad harvest season. Benson noted in a conversation he had with a union organizer the tobacco workers, that the growers “without question privilege profit concerns over concerns about labor conditions” (Benson 2010: 64).

Labor fragmentation, flexibility, and (lack of) organizing

Chile finds itself in a neoliberal economic model which privileges the opening and increasing flexibility of the market. After two decades since the return to democracy, the

economic model continues favoring private investment, though emphasis has been made on investment in social programs and welfare (see Chapter 1). Increasing labor flexibility – a highly coveted goal for the Chilean private sector – is reflected in the use of subcontractors, the penalization of temporeras if they adhere to a union, the use of multiple contracts even if working for the same company, and the high turnover rate of workers. In the search of labor flexibility, writes Catalina Arteaga, businesses search for “internal mobility, elasticity of the workday, and liberties to carry out technological and organizational changes” (Arteaga 2000: 45). These “liberties” that companies seek are to “subcontract, hire, or lay off workers, carry out changes in the personnel every time it is esteemed to be convenient” – which translates to a precarious and unprotected working conditions for the workers.

Flexibility and fragmentation are key concepts in the analysis of the interrelations between the agribusinesses, the workers, and the state. While Fordism refers to a mechanized mode of production, assembly lines, and a strong division of labor, flexibility refers to the ability of corporations to move abroad in search of lower costs of production, weaker labor unions, and an increasing hiring of subcontracted workers (Harvey 1990: 142). Flexibility tends to place workers at a disadvantage: “while some individual laborers may undoubtedly benefit from [flexibility] ... the general outcome is lower wages, increasing job insecurity, and loss of job benefits and of job protections” (Harvey 2005: 75-76). Taylor points out that the change in modes of production “enhances the flexibility of firms to hire and fire workers and to set the conditions of labor,” making the

term labor flexibility misleading since it is the corporations, not the labor, that benefit from it (Taylor 2006: 152).

A clear example of increasing labor flexibility can be seen in the labor contract. Over ten years to fifteen years ago, the temporeras have been fighting to have a guaranteed work contract. Today the panorama is not the same: most temporeras and temporeros have signed contracts. However, instead of signing a contract for the length of the harvest season (three or four months), they are signed for the variety of grape that is being processed. In other words, each time the packing plant processes a new grape variety (Thompson, Princess, Red Globe, Crimson, Autumn Royal, etc), the workers are laid off and are given a new contract to sign. As a result, workers can have for example, six separate contracts within a three-month period, working for the *same* company.

Another practice I have witnessed is that workers are laid off on September 16th (two days before national independence holiday) and are rehired again on the 20th of September. The conclusion all workers make is that this is done so the owners don't have to pay their workers paid vacations. These practices increase labor uncertainty that is felt on an every day basis by the temporeras, who do not know if they have to come in to work the next week, or even the next day. In the packing plant I worked at we were given a carta de aviso (letter of notice) the same day that we were being laid off, and we signed the finiquito (termination of contract) that afternoon. Those who were told that they were still hired for the next variety of grape sometimes had to return four days later when the grape would be ripe enough to be picked and processed. This meant four days without an income.

For the temporeras who were definitely laid off and were not called again in the next days or week, it meant the end of their job. In words of Viviana, a female temporera from San Felipe, “It’s just a thing of saving money, that’s all. It’s very comfortable for all the companies to have us like that now. Get hired and get laid off, and ‘let’s hire more people and let’s lay off some more.’ They laid us off during the kiwis, they’re drawing up another contract with the tangerines, and now different tangerines are going to be arriving. For one variety, for another, for one product, for another. In that sense, I’m telling you quite honestly, I feel unprotected and trampled upon.”

In an interview I carried out with the chief of a processing plant, I asked him “Why, if you have almost the same employees working for three months, do you give them contracts for each variety of grape? Why not just give them one contract for the whole season that they work in the packing?” The man answered clearly: “In the end, it is to de-link ourselves from the workers, in order to not be so linked and also to not have any problems with the Work Inspection. Let’s say I hire 50 cleaners. Two of them turn out to be lazy at work or conflictive. What do I do then? Instead of being stuck with them for the three months, I lay them off when the variety ends, and I hire two more. If they go to the Work Inspection to sue the company, I show them the termination of contract that they signed, and then we have no problem with the Inspection, they don’t fine us.”

This situation described by the chief of packing explains the high turnover rate in the agribusiness. It is also common for temporeras to change from one packing to another. For example, a worker is told by her neighbor that in Company X the amount paid per box is higher than where they are currently working and they both change jobs. Another

reason they go from one packing to another is because they are not receiving what they were originally told they would receive when they began working. I have encountered women who are working in a packing plant where they were promised 90 pesos per box, but “because of the grape harvest was bad” or “because of the bad economy” they are paid 10 pesos less. Hence, they find a job at another packing or simply stay where they are if they have nowhere better to go. Generally, temporeras know of other job opportunities through a friend, neighbor, or family member. Places where they share this information is when they encounter each other on a bus, in the market, or when they visit each other on the weekends. The community radio is also an important venue through which information gets aired. A supervisor or owner, for example, oftentimes goes to the radio to advertise that his or her company is searching for twenty cleaners or fifteen packers.

Owners of agribusinesses and members of the land-owning elite have consistently lobbied for increasing flexibility. From their perspective, the government has gone “too far” in passing labor laws that limit the flexibility available to empresarios. While “the readjustment of labor market ... has resulted in an ever-growing periphery including part-timers, subcontract labor, temporary workers, and casuals which fit in with the notion of ‘informal’ workers” (Stephen 1997: 9), owners and growers claim that labor laws are not flexible enough. Erwin Schuetz, a wealthy businessman in the agro-export industry told me the following in an interview: “We tell Chile of the Concertación and also of Piñera, hey, you’ve gone to the other extreme with labor laws. You become each time more rigid, when the thing to do is to be more flexible. Now in Chile when you speak of

flexibility, ‘oh, they want to abuse the workers.’ But that’s not the issue, the issue is that if you need workers for five days, and you can pay those five days, have them work.”

When I asked Eduardo about the possibility of having higher cases of labor irregularities as a result of increasing flexibility, he responded “everywhere you’re always going to find a businessman who in some way... will try to take advantage of the situation, but that’s the exception. It doesn’t mean that things need to be so, so rigid, because it affects the majority.”

Schuetz is also a firm believer that Chile has greatly advanced over the past decades, due to increasing conscience on behalf of the employers regarding workers’ rights. “It’s easier to create conscience than to have laws. Because with a law you will always try to find how to put it on your side, or have it your way. But conscience, I think there is conscience – Chile is not the Chile of fifty years ago – the world has changed.” His views reflect that of the *empresariado*: a firm believer that Chile has advanced, that the labor regulations need to allow more room for flexibility and less rigidity, that law does not change people’s actions, but it is their awareness that does.

This latest point is contradicted by the reality in which many of the changes in the fruit sector – such as health insurance for *temporeros*, risk prevention workshops, adequate gear and tools such as sunscreen, and the formalization of work through contracts – have taken place because of pressure of the European Union (consumers’ demands), labor unions, and the passing of labor laws, *not* out of the initiative of the owners’ or the private sector. There are numerous deficiencies in the system (as shown in this dissertation) in which the law is not enforced, not followed through, or not

implemented by owners and growers. And it is precisely in this fuzzy area in which the unfolding of neoliberal democracy is best investigated: laws are written, but are very poorly implemented.

In stating that “creating conscience” is more effective and that labor abuses are only “an exception,” the company owner simply justifies the status quo which permits labor abuses and irregularities to take place, and leaves it to the “goodness” of the owner to regulate the treatment of workers – something that history has clearly shown is not effective. Schuetz himself said that people will try to get away with following the law, yet also states that Chile is “advanced enough” and “not like it was fifty years ago,” therefore not needing the rigid regulation. He is clearly contradicting himself and this mentality is quite prevalent amongst the land and plant owners.

The extremely low levels of unionizing and high rates of labor fragmentation in the Chilean agricultural sector has been widely recorded (Arteaga 2000, Caro 2004, Falabella 1990, Tinsman 2004, Valdés 1998). The notion of fragmentation has wider applications than the simply the lack of social cohesion amongst temporeras, and also pertains to the fragmented labor calendar in which there is no continuity throughout the year. This fragmentation lies not only in the fact that temporeras change from one job to another after the harvest season ends, but also shift from one company to another during the season. Another reason that explains the low unionizing is the long work day: temporeras oftentimes work more than twelve hours daily. They return to their homes at the end of the day to continue working in the house and to spend time with their children the following morning. Juana told me “I arrive dead tired to my house, I barely have

time to see my children, do you think I would want to go to a two-hour meeting? Also, it's a meeting where we don't even know what the results will be, and on top of that, where I can get fired if my boss knows I am organized." It is important to point out that although seasonal workers in Chile can form unions, they do not have a right to collective bargaining.

This is reflected in Peter Benson's research carried out with migrant Mexican workers on tobacco farms in North Carolina. He describes how workers reacted to the arrival of two student interns from an institution working with labor rights of farmers. "Some workers rolled their eyes when the interns arrived. Migrants commonly describe the work of labor organizers and their affiliates as sometimes annoying, 'una molestia.'" (Benson 2008: 54-55). Similarly, some *temporeras* – when I asked them about organizing or talking with union representatives – would even criticize the union representatives and union movements as something "of the past" that would not have any effect in labor conditions today. Although President Lagos amended the Labor Code in 2001 in which seasonal workers have legal rights to form unions, their demands of unimpeded right to strike and to bargain collectively were not granted (Collins 2006: 168).

Gordillo and his research with the Toba in the Chaco shows how attitude of cane workers of not striking "was not simply the result of their 'lack of consciousness' ... On the contrary, most Toba were well aware of the ingenio's fields of power and their subordinate position as *Aborígenes* within it, as an underclass submitted to such conditions" (Gordillo 2004: 163). *Temporeras* are very aware of the power of the

empresarios to make decisions such as laying workers off, by-pass labor laws, and treat them as second-class citizens. And although there is practically no organizing, this does not mean that there are no strikes or mobilizations in the agribusiness; there are.

For example, a group of workers in a packing plant can decide to go on a strike at a certain time because the pay they receive per box is too low. A common response from the owner is for him or her to say, “You don’t like it? Whoever wants to leave can leave right now, the bus is waiting outside. There are twenty more people at the door waiting for your job.” In the case that the owner does decide to raise the pay, it is a triumph for the season. However, this success is punctual and does not have continuity into the next season. The following year, the owner can decide to pay the same quantity per box as the previous year, or even lower (as was the case in 2009 because of “la crisis”). Due to the fragmented characteristic of work in the fruit industry, it is very difficult to win a strike that has continuity or longevity.

Mistrust and envidia

Weak ties between employers and employees are characteristic of the agribusinesses. Distrust abounds: employers and bosses (under this category I include chiefs of packing, supervisors, agribusinessmen, and owners) do not trust the workers, thinking that they will do the job hastily and not poorly in order to complete more boxes, and thus earn more. On behalf of the workers, there is mistrust towards the bosses and owners. Temporeras generally believe that the employers will pay as low as they can and save some pesos in the snack they are given, bathroom hygiene, overtime, and overall pay.

There is also mistrust between the workers themselves. This is explained by the structure itself of the agroindustry. Temporeras are paid by piece rate during the harvest season, which means they are paid per box picked, cleaned, or packed. The faster they work, the more they earn that day. As a result, temporeras hurry to complete the most number of boxes they can, creating an atmosphere of competitiveness amongst them. Many temporeras tell me of envy that is felt towards other co-workers, either because she is the fastest worker, the prettiest, or has the attention of the boss.

There are fights over boxes that take place. Each woman cannot have more than two empty boxes at her workstation. Some, however, accumulate more than two, so when they are filling the boxes they do not have to stop halfway to get more boxes. I have heard women shout across the conveyor belt to another line of workstations telling other workers to stop hoarding their boxes, otherwise there will not be enough for everyone. Due to the pressing working rhythm demanded by the supervisors and the chiefs of packing, and the workers themselves, temporeras are focused on carrying out their work the fastest possible, competing with the rapidity of the coworker close to her.

In order to better understand this elusive yet constant presence of envidia, spells, and superstition, one hot Saturday morning I brought up my questions about these issues. With Marina we had already done the beds, mopped the floors, and were sitting down waiting for the washing machine to finish spinning. As we sat on the outside bench under the shade, Marina's mother Graciela joined us from the outside kitchen where she was preparing lunch for that day. As I asked Marina about whether I should be wary or not of other's people bad vibes, she warned me "you can never know what type of magic

they can do to you,” and she gave me an advice that I should always follow. “When someone gives you something in the packing plant,” she told me, “anything, it could be a marmalade or a sweet bread, never eat it. You can accept it, bring it home, but then throw it away. Don’t eat it because you never know what it can do to you.”

I showed my surprise with a smile until I noticed Marina’s look in her eyes and realized she was very serious. “Yes m’hijita,” Graciela added, “you have to be very careful because there is a lot of envidia.” I remembered Bernarda’s words “here in the packing you can never completely trust anyone, you always have to be watching out because people talk a lot behind your back.” At one level of analysis, envy is attributed to the capitalistic and neoliberal arrangement of the workplace. In the packing workers are pitted against each other, being paid by piece rate which leads to high levels to competitiveness. For example, at the end of each month, a large spreadsheet is taped onto the wall in which the number of boxes completed by each worker is written next to their name and displayed on a wall for all to see.

It is also important to recognize the strong influence of folklore, mythology, and superstition has existed in rural Chile for centuries; work relations exacerbate these traditions of myth and folklore of the Chilean countryside. In a conversation I had with Graciela over tea and bread, she was telling me about a well-known family of the community, the owners of the local disco we would go to some weekends, of an Olympic-sized pool, and of a motel which was being constructed adjacent to the disco. They live in large two-story homes with extensive gardens, protected by tall electric walls, and guarded by rottweilers. “M’hijita,” Graciela told me with a knowing look,

“Everyone knows that they made a pact with the devil. There is no way they could become so wealthy overnight without selling their souls to the devil.” In this case, pointing that someone made a pact with the devil was used to level the a small community, so no one rose above the other.

“There is a vast store of mythology in both Western and South American cultures concerning the man who sets himself apart from the community to sell his soul to the devil for wealth that is not only useless but the harbinger of despair, destruction, and death.” Taussig argues that more than the struggle of good and evil, innocence of the poor and evil of wealth, the devil contract “is an indictment of an economy system which forces men to bare their souls for the destructive power of commodities” (Taussig 1980: xii). Gordillo explores the devil in the Argentine region of El Chaco, where in contrast to the devil pacts analyzed by Taussig, “it was not the workers but the patrón who made pacts with the devil, a notion also widespread in other regions of Latin America (Gould 1990: 30, Edelman 1994)” (Gordillo 2004: 133).

While envidia was oftentimes exacerbated in the workplace, superstition, curses, and spirits permeated our everyday lives in Santa María. On Tuesdays and Fridays, which were days of the witches (brujas) and spells, we had to have our guard up so as to not fall prey to them. Marina and I would visit Felipe, a tarot reader about every month or two; Fridays were the best days to go. One warm September morning Marina asked a bruja friend of hers named Karin to come cleanse the house from negative spirits and vibes. During her visit Karin gave us instructions of what herbs and colored candles to burn in each room of the house. As she bid farewell, she said, “I’ll come again in the evening.”

She never returned. The next morning I pointed out to Marina that Karin never returned. “Oh yes, she did! She flew through,” Marina responded matter-of-factly. “What do you mean ‘she flew’?” I asked with a puzzled look on my face. Marina looked at me, realizing I was clueless and responded deliberately, “you know, she *flew*. She came through in the night when we were sleeping and finished the house cleansing.” “Ahhhh,” I responded. And then I got it.

Subcontractors and swallows

An important development that has unfolded over the past eight to ten years, worsening the existing labor conditions, is the entering into the scene of contractors and subcontractors. The agribusinesses employ the services of subcontractors for them to be in charge of hiring workers, signing the contracts, arranging transportation, scheduling payments, and carrying out deductions for health insurance and social security. This allows the empresarios to detach themselves from such responsibilities and not having to deal with the “hassle” that comes with employing a large number of men and women. It is not clear whether agribusiness owners gain or lose money with the hiring the services of subcontractors – I have seen both situations taking place on different occasions.

It is beneficial for the owner to not have to be involved with all the paperwork. At the same time, the quality of the work carried out can vary significantly from one subcontractor to another, leaving the owner or supervisor feeling that he or she has little control over how the work is being done. Some employers prefer to not work through a

subcontractor, even if this means spending more money in order to ensure that a higher quality of the work is carried out. Patricio Ribenetti, a successful grape grower, exporter, and owner of the third packing plant I worked in (Aconcagua Export) told me that he prefers to hire the workers directly. “Although on the short and medium-term hiring a subcontractor makes things easier and can be cheaper, you end up paying for it in the long run. He brings workers I don’t know, who oftentimes are young workers and only interested in making money and not doing a job well done. I prefer quality over quantity, even if it means more work for me to take care of.”⁵⁰ The use of subcontractors has increased the precarious nature of employment in the fruit-export industry, adding to the insecurity that already existed. Because subcontractors receive a profit from their work, most temporeros earn less when hired by a subcontractor than when employed directly by the company. If labor abuses or irregularities occur, the temporera cannot direct her complaint to the company or employer; instead, she must do so to the subcontractor, who doesn’t always take responsibility of the abuse that occurred.

Oftentimes, deductions are made from the workers’ paycheck without being paid into the workers’ social security or health insurance fund. It is not uncommon for temporeras to have gaps in their pension once they retire as a result of this. Another factor that leads to more vulnerability in the workplace is the high level of informality. Many workers do not know the complete name of work information of the subcontractor; several know him or her only by the nickname they have. When payday comes and the subcontractor does not arrive to give out the salaries, or if the workers are paid less than they were promised, they have no way to get to the subcontractor to demand what they are owed. This does

not mean that there are no subcontractors who pay what corresponds, pay the deductions into social security and health insurance, or defend the labor rights of his or her workers. However, based on my observations, conversations, and interviews, they represent the minority of the subcontractors.

In 2006 the Subcontracting Law was approved, with the objective of regulating the process of subcontracting, which is a practice that has spread to most industries and productive sectors of the country. It is now a law that if the subcontractor does not pay the worker as corresponds, the employer is held responsible for what is owed to the worker; this is called solidarity responsibility. This law also requires that subcontractors register in the national registry of subcontractor, have their contact information available to the public and employees, carry out all the payments to the temporeras, amongst others. Despite the law, however, the number of subcontractors that have registered is minimal. At the same time, many people are not familiarized with the law and legal requirements demanded of subcontractors or workers' rights. In addition, the fear of losing one's job prevents many workers from demanding their rights or going to the Work Inspection.

How does flexibility play out in the relationship between temporeras, the firms, and the state? The state has facilitated and offered subsidies to foreign businesses investing in Chilean agribusinesses. Although jobs have been offered to the local populations, the principle objective of companies and businesses is to cut costs and increase profits.

Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes' article "Work Contracts and Earning Inequality: the Case of Chile" addresses increased income inequality of the second half of the 1990s, relating it

to the higher rates of seasonal, fixed-term, and informal wage. Her findings “unveil the potential role of employment flexibility – captured by a variety of low-cost contingent and informal labor wage arrangements – as an institutional feature of worldwide labor markets contributing to recent trends in inequality” (Amuedo-Dorantes 2005: 607).

The fragmentation that is present in the agribusiness is not just the atomization of the workforce and of the labor calendar, but also includes the structure of the packing itself. Although we might imagine a packing as a tangible and very material structure, it is also prone to mobility and invisibility. In April 2010 Marina was hired in a packing that was located a ten-minute drive from our house at the end of a bumpy dirt road that branched off from the main paved avenue. I visited her with Ronald during her break late one night and Marina showed us around the facility. Marina was wearing a cap with the name of the packing “Doña Luisa.” I then observed that the name on the boxes was Corpex, and grew even more confused since I knew that they were processing grape from the fields Aconcagua Export. At that point I understood what Eduardo León Lazcano, a council member of Santa María, told me in one of the stimulating conversations we had.

Eduardo stressed the mobile and ephemeral nature of packing plants. “There is a new social actor,” he told me, “that is not the figure of the subcontractor that we have become familiarized with over the past five to ten years. This actor goes beyond that. He assembles packing plants and when the season is over, he disassembles them. You wouldn’t even know that there was a structure with people working there over the summer.” Post-Fordism on steroids, I thought to myself. With three names of businesses in one physical workplace as in Marina’s case (one is the owner of the packing plant, the

second the owner of the grapes being processed, and the third the name of exporting company), no wonder temporeras are frequently unaware of who they are working for. They only have contact with the subcontractor or this new figure of a subcontractor who is in charge of all the interaction with the employees. This person is working with “swallow capital” – referring to the birds that are rapid flyers and migrate every season. “This guy does *everything*,” Eduardo emphasized, “it’s not the person who asks someone for ten packers and another for the machinery, he is in charge of everything himself.”

What language do we use to speak of this diffuse, invisible, and surreal packing plant that appears and disappears throughout the year? It is clearly embedded in the analyses of flexible accumulation in a post-Fordist work regime (Harvey 1989). Rose points out that the division between work and life which was predominant, “has not only become blurred at the level of reality, [but] it has also become permeable at the level of images and strategies” (Rose 1999: 158). The norm for the new work regime has become saturated with “perpetual insecurity” and “work itself has become a vulnerable zone” (Rose 1999: 158). Ong points out that in examining the articulations between the global economic forces and local communities, an opposition is oftentimes construed “whereby the global is macro-political economic and the local is situated, culturally creative, and resistant” (Ong 1999: 4). The author challenges researches to capture the “*horizontal and relational* nature” of these socio-economic and cultural processes, as well as their “*embeddedness* in differently configured regimes of power” (Ong 1999: 4, emphasis of the author).

How are “human practices and cultural logics [placed] at the center of discussions on globalization”, and not confined to the arena of “talking back” or “responding” to these larger forces? (Ong 1999: 4). Just as a packing plant picks up flight at the end of a harvest season, temporeras and temporeros are also swallows as they leave one packing to go to another one if the pay is better. Carlos, the twenty-three year old brother-in-law of Josefina Michimalonco, told me that when he was fed up with work, he would leave without giving his supervisor prior notice: “just as they use me, I use them.” I do not say this as a disregard to structural imbalances and power differentials between the employer and the employees which clearly do exist. Also, “just leaving” is a luxury that cannot be taken by all workers, particularly if they have children that need to be fed and clothed. However, I argue for the need to place temporeras and temporeros in the center of these social, political, and economic processes, not just as someone who “is being affected by” them. “People continuously create cultural knowledge in practice” (Durrenberger and Martí 2006: 2) and if Teresa feels that she is making a statement by disregarding the supervisor’s order of cleaning her box of grapes again, it is this action that we need to pay attention to through ethnographic research.

Health, hygiene, and responsibility over the body



Figure 3 Washing hands with Marina in the bathroom of Echeñique Packing.

Figure 4 A view of the toilet section in the women's bathroom of Echeñique Packing.

Hygiene and health is an important area that is also subject to the (in)visibility of material objects and the carrying out of discipline and responsibility. In the women's bathroom pictured above, there were no rolls of toilet paper or paper towels in the bathroom. This was the case for all three packing plants I worked in, except for the third plant which stocked the bathroom with toilet paper prior to the arrival of the Work Inspection. Each worker is responsible for bringing toilet or tissue paper, although legally, it had to be provided by the company. Only when the Work Inspection was scheduled for a visit (they always notify ahead of time, defeating the purpose of seeing the working conditions as they are throughout the season) or a plant certification had to take place, did the soap, fire extinguisher, and toilet paper appear.

In figures 3 and 4 we can observe signs above the sinks that are instructions for the washing of hands, sweeping of the bathroom, and the maintenance of personal hygiene of each employee. The first states “Wash your hands,” the second “Keep clean,” and the third “You should not touch your hair, nose, ears, and other parts of your body while you are working. Use short hair or gathered in a bun, and covered with a cap.” These instructions lie in sharp contrast to the hygienic conditions of the bathroom stalls, the lack of toilet paper or paper towels, and the shower without a curtain that probably dissuades workers from showering in it at the end of the day. While the temporera is expected to be clean and held responsible for a contaminated fruit, this same accountability is not demanded (nor even expected) for the employer to espouse in his or her workplace. As stated earlier, there is a legal requirement for the workplace to have functional toilets, sinks, and showers supplied with their respective toilet paper, soap, and paper towels. This is rarely followed. In addition, when the Dirección del Trabajo, the governmental agency responsible for regulating and enforcing sanitation and risk prevention, does carry out its job, it is done neither efficiently nor effectively.

On December 22, 2011 I came across the news on an online source (not in a major newspaper) that seventy temporeras had to be taken to health centers due to massive pesticide intoxications in the Maule region of southern Chile. Although there are no accurate databases that register intoxications caused by exposure to pesticides, it is not uncommon to hear on the radio or read towards the end of a newspaper of a case in which one or several agricultural workers were intoxicated. Although these cases are presented and oftentimes dismissed as isolated situations, they expose a more endemic panorama

faced by seasonal agricultural laborers. María Elena Rozas of the Network of Action of Pesticides and its Alternatives (Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas) states that in addition to punctual cases of intoxication there is also a “chronic intoxication that does not appear in the news nor elsewhere, and is even more grave” due to its year-long permanency over an extended period of time.⁵¹

During my time working at the Echeñique packing, one day Ronald’s cousin (with whom I had picked grapes with the previous week) was taken to urgent care in the city of San Felipe due to harvesting grapes in a field that had been recently sprayed with pesticides. Through word of mouth from Ronald, I was told that after the field was sprayed, no flag was raised to indicate to the harvesters that they should stay away from the field because of the pesticides. The cousin thus worked in that field during the morning and had to be taken in the early afternoon to an emergency room with acute stomach pains and nausea. The incident did not transcend beyond that particular day. Even Ronald and his cousin, whom I spoke to later that week, did not give place too much importance to what occurred and treated it as “something that happens” (“cosas que pasan”). I was surprised by the apparent lightness that Ronald and fellow workers addressed the pesticide intoxication.

The following is an excerpt from an interview I had with Evelyn Marín. I asked her about her experience of intoxication with methyl bromide, which is used to disinfect the grape after being harvested and before it reaches the cleaning stations:

I remember the first time they took me [to emergency], they took me from the packing because I was intoxicated. I was throwing up, how

strange, I have always been a very healthy person. “You ate something that gave you food poisoning,” the boss started right away with his speech. “No, I didn’t eat anything that made me sick.” Sometimes I didn’t even have lunch, I wasn’t sick because of that. And he tells me “No, you ate something that – ” “No.” “You know what, go to the IST.⁵² I’ll give you the paper.” They give you the paper and send you to the IST. You get to the IST, the paramedic sees you – because you don’t get seen by the doctor... And he starts examining you, takes your pressure, etc. And he says “ah, you have gastroenteritis.” “And where does that come from?” “From something you ate,” he says. And so I say, “how strange, today I didn’t have lunch. I can’t have gastroenteritis.” “No, you do have gastroenteritis.” “But it can’t be.” I used to fight even for that... “It’s that it doesn’t necessarily have to be from today.” And they write out the paper and send you back to work and it says you have gastroenteritis. You remember I left fighting with the paramedic, I told him “I’m taking this paper with me but it doesn’t say the truth. Here you are inventing something that I got and it’s not what it is.” “Señora, that’s what it is.”

Evelyn’s encounter with health officials draws on the themes of the precarious nature of seasonal fruit labor and also the responsibility of that is attributed to each *temporeras*. With health I refer first of all to the physical ailments that are linked to the work carried out in the fruit industry, such as body pains, pesticide intoxication, chronic inflammations, and accidents on the workplace. Secondly, there is the discourse of health and the body that is used in the agribusiness environment by the workers, supervisors/bosses, and the Instituto de Seguridad del Trabajador,⁵³ known as IST for short. Common ailments are chronic tendonitis, varicose veins, and cervical vertebrae/lower back pains. These result from the repetitive movements of cleaning and packing the grape hour after hour. Because workers are paid by piece rate, a large number of women and men delay visiting the doctor so as to not lose a day’s wage. It is

common for temporeras to go to the doctor towards the end of March or beginning of April, when the season is coming to an end and the workdays are shorter.

What takes place here is the sacrificing of the health in order to not lose money that could be earned. “Studies of biocommodities and biomarkets index the processes by which those who are well off trade in their long-term health for short-term gain” (Nyugen and Peschard 2003: 447). The most common word that is used by women to describe their work in the fruit is “sacrificado” – “sacrificing”. Women sacrifice time with their children, their mental and physical health, and they sacrifice their bodies. And because it is necessary for the women (oftentimes breadwinners) to look for their short-term gain (because there is no “waiting time”), their health is the most common sacrifice, which includes not only the body pains and ailments they have while working in the season, but also those aches which continue to affect their bodies many years after.

Ethnographic example A

At around 11:00 pm on April 9, 2010, I was visiting with our friend Ronald the packing plant where Marina had just gotten hired as a line supervisor. After a ten-minute drive from my house, we arrived to the packing. Marina was taking her break, so we chatted outside leaning against the packing wall in the chilly night, as she shared a cigarette with Ronald. I noticed a young male, probably around eighteen or nineteen years old with a cast on his right leg, extending up to his mid-calf from his foot. Marina told me his name was Francisco; as it turns out, he was the boyfriend of Ronald’s younger cousin. Francisco was working, driving a small forklift tractor (called a “Yale”

because the brand name), moving crates from one end of the packing to another, jumping on and off the yale.

After ten minutes he came to where we were standing and lit a cigarette. We started talking and I asked him why he was working if he had a cast on his leg. It turned out that Francisco had badly sprained his ankle in a soccer match over the weekend. I asked him, “Didn’t they give you medical leave for some time? How could you be working with a cast?” Francisco looked at me and said, “Hay que trabajar” – “you have to work.” “They need people to work, I need the money, so they pay me while I continue working.” Francisco went on to explain that while he was on medical leave, he gets paid “informally” by his boss in cash. “And if the work inspection comes?” I asked. “I go away and hide until they leave.”

I pondered this encounter. What might seem to some as an irresponsible act in which Francisco is endangering the healing of his leg, sheds light on the decision-making process that Francisco made in face of monetary constraints. Numerous seasonal laborers make this decision. Although readers and outside actors might believe that Francisco should heed the doctor’s orders and stay at his house to heal his ankle, this was not an option for him. A sacrificio of his health was carried out by him in order to make ends meet for that month.

Ethnographic example B

Marina returned one workday from the packing with a sprain in her right wrist. It was a work accident: as she tried holding up a pile of boxes filled with avocados that

were about to topple over, she sprained her wrist. After we left work, I accompanied her to the IST, where she was told that she sprained her wrist and received a medical license for a couple of days. Marina told me as we waited for the bus to take us home, “let’s see what Jorge Martinez [packing supervisor] tells me tomorrow, he will probably get pissed off and send me a la punta del cerro.”⁵⁴ Marina’s reflected preoccupation, even though the injury occurred at the workplace and while she was trying to save the avocados from getting bruised and thus saving the company money.

This preoccupation and fear of getting laid off because of the days off from work she was given by the doctor reflect market privatization and the effect that this has in what is most intimate: health. The temporeras understand – have *been forced* to understand – that the responsibility of getting injured is theirs and theirs alone, even when the accident occurs at the workplace and they are not the ones who caused it.

Ethnographic example C

Viviana told me the following: “There was a gas leakage, but they told us it wasn’t dangerous. There was a meeting, we were told that security shoes aren’t important, that the fire extinguishers aren’t important... In the end, it is you who plays the role of risk prevention; you have to see what can be done. Everything that happens is your fault. Because I’ve seen fire extinguishers blocked by pallets,⁵⁵ emergency exits blocked by pallets. It shouldn’t be. [Also] machinery that has its chains hanging out. These are insecure conditions. If your hand gets caught in the chain, you are the stupid one, you are the one who wasn’t paying attention.”

Clarke, et al that “health itself and proper management of chronic illnesses are becoming individual moral responsibilities to be fulfilled through improved access to knowledge, self-surveillance, prevention, risk assessment, the treatment of risk, and the consumption of appropriate self-help and biomedical goods and services” (Clarke, et al 2010: 48). This is precisely what Viviana pointed out in her example about security in the work floor. Although there have been increasing regulations about risk prevention and appropriate work gear in the agribusiness (most as a result of pressure from the European Union and consuming nations), the responsibility of injury, accidents, and ailments have fallen onto the worker.

Ethnographic example D

In July 2009 Karla, a woman whose mother and sixteen-year old daughter both worked in the packing with her, got her hand caught in the conveyor belt that sorted avocados by size. It caused a commotion since her hand was badly burned and cut; she had to be taken to emergency and the avocado machine was temporarily stopped. I was not present that day, but was told by Viviana about it when I visited her home. Viviana recounted what happened that day, and then reflected on the security and responsibility that gets laid on each individual worker. “They [administration] treated her very bad, blaming her for getting her hand caught in the machine, almost insinuating that she did it on purpose. It’s as if the machine is saying ‘here, here, stick your hand in here!’ As if we would want to get our hands all mangled up in the machines!” Here we see how the blame of job accident is laid on the worker.

On March 17th, 2009 in Corpex we received a visit from two men working in the Risk Prevention office of the IST (Instituto de Seguridad del Trabajador). The IST visits packings and the fields when a specific company has had incidences of injury or accidents, and carries out an hour to 2-hour talk/workshop about injury prevention. Mario, a social psychologist gave the talk with the use of power point presentations and short videos with testimonies of workers who had gone through serious injuries in the workplace (construction, mining, and service sector – no example of a temporera was given). Mario began by asking the 250-person audience “Why are you here?” After a silent pause, a woman raised her hand and responded “to work.” “Precisely,” said Mario, “you are here to work. To make money for your family, to care for your family.” Some workers nodded their heads, while most listened in silence. His next question was “how can an accident change a family?” “They disintegrate,” volunteered a woman in the audience. Another added, “depends on the family.” “Yes, depends on the family,” Mario responded. And continued to say, “we don’t know how each family responds. So let’s try not to get to that point.” Mario then gave a speech about the importance of being healthy and not having workplace accidents, not only for the money that can be incurred by surgery or rehabilitation, but especially because of the effect it can have on the family. “An accident doesn’t just affect you, it affects your whole family.”

Mario showed video testimonies of workers who lost not only an arm or a leg (these examples were all from construction sector), but also lost their family because of

the loss of their 'role' in their families as breadwinners. The last video was moving, showing a man who lost his ability to walk correctly, he got depressed, became angry with his family, the relationships with his wife and children went downhill, he had a breakdown, and lost everything that was important to him. I reflected on the examples given and the language that was used throughout the presentation. The talk and Powerpoint presentation appealed to the family, to the role of temporeras as breadwinners, and the responsibility women (and men) have in fulfilling the parental roles. If a worker lost her arm, leg, or vision, it was her responsibility and the main motivation in preventing such an injury was the family.

There was *no* mention of the physical structure of the packing in meeting all the safety requirements instructed by the law (which many packings do not meet), *no* mention of the importance of formal contracts and having deductions paid into social security (which numerous subcontractors and employees do not carry out), *no* mention of the numerous packing plants which have been shown to not implement the safety regulations, and *no* mention at all of the increased risks that *come with* working in sectors such as agribusiness and construction. The message was clear: the responsibility of the body and injuries associated with it, and also the plight of the entire family which depends on the income of seasonal labor, is the sole responsibility of the woman worker. "In other words, within biomedicine and within capitalist social formations generally, health inequalities are often characterized as an outcome of individuals' essential natures rather than an issue of structurally imposed unequal access to resources and spaces that facilitate health." (McMullin 2010: 14).

Language used during the presentation was neither reprimanding nor accusatory, but was sugar-coated and sprinkled with words and phrases like “family,” “not being there for them,” “treasuring your body,” and “being a good mother and provider.” The video clips were moving to the point of tears, and I imagine the images of their own unprovided for families running through the minds of each viewer – it was definitely going through mine. Mario then concluded with the following question: “what would it feel like to not have vision? Close your eyes for a moment and imagine not being able to see.” We closed our eyes and imagined a world full of darkness. “Then imagine not being able to walk.” We then imagined how our lives would be without mobility. “These are your treasures. Remember to cherish them.”

CHAPTER 5

A Mí No Me Han Cortado Las Manos



Isidora was ahead of me as we walked between the leafless vines that chilly July morning (Figure 6, above). She pointed out to me the bare, brown branches, which matched the brown earth below, a stark contrast to the green, leafy vines that were brimming with plump grapes in the summer. As we walked between the rows of vines, Isidora would show me how pruning takes place and which part of the vine needs to be cut off in preparation for the following harvest season. It was winter, a cold and sunny morning at 10:30 am in the outskirts of the village Nuevo Algarrobal, located twenty minutes from the county capital of San Felipe. The brown branches were a reflection of

the barren winter months, in which unemployment sharply increases and temporeras scramble to make ends meet. As the cold air settles into the valley with the arrival of autumn, so does the anxiety and feeling of uncertainty among the women who were employed in the summer harvest.

We reached the end of the field and jumped across the canal to return to her house. I noticed that as we walked, Isidora would bend over every time she came across a good-sized branch or an empty aluminum can and would pick them up (see picture in previous page). By the time we arrived to the house, we had collected about ten crumpled cans and six branches. “Para el fuego” - for the fire - she said as she lifted the branches in one hand. “And this is for my daddy, who collects rubbish and then sells it,” lifting up her other hand with the cans. “Todo sirve” - everything can be used, Isidora told me, explaining that her 90-year old father collects old cans, pieces of metal, cardboard, and practically anything that people discard as useless. He then sells them for some pesos which he gives to Isidora for her to buy food for the house and pay part of the bills.

This is one example of strategies or ways of making do taken on by temporeras to make ends meet in the fall, winter, and early spring months. These months outside of the harvest season are marked by unemployment, debt, and living the day-to-day in uncertainty. Women engage in various income-generating activities as they embark on turning the year around, such as domestic work in private homes, informal market, service sector, migration, while searching for jobs, waiting to hear back, and cashing unemployment checks. While temporeras face the challenges of making ends meet and stretching out the summer wages into the winter, debt becomes a daily reality. While

debt is a gripping source of anguish, it is at the same time a resource that temporeras depend on to make ends meet in the winter months.

As the women “turn the year around” (*dar vuelta el año*), the theme of debt becomes prevalent not only in the context of cash advances and paying bills on credit, but also in other areas of their lives. Mothers feel guilty about the long work hours and being absent from the home both during the winter and the summer months. While the harvest season consists of long work hours in one physical space (the packing plant), the winter season finds the temporeras expanding the physical labor spaces they inhabit; between May and November temporeras are employed as domestic workers in private homes, carrying out short-term winter tasks, and migrating to northern valleys with that have an earlier harvest season. There is a tension in which winter unemployment pushes women to situations of indebtedness, while at the same time there is an underlying sentiment that hard work and sacrifice will pay off. This “hard work that pays off” rests on temporeras’ shoulders and is oftentimes a source of optimism; it simultaneously reverberates the predominant idea in neoliberal Chile that “making it” depends on the effort of each individual.

This chapter is titled “A Mí No Me Han Cortado Las Manos,” which means “no one has cut off my hands.” This is a phrase I frequently heard throughout my two years of fieldwork. It first came up in early April 2009 when Marina was expressing to me her dissatisfaction at work with all the pressure and harsh reprimands she received from her boss. She was reaching a breaking point and told me that if this continues happening at work, she will quit. When I asked her where she would go work if she quits, especially

now that the season is ending, she responded with a shrug “a mí no me han cortado las manos.” A few months in July later I ran into my friend Miguel at the bus stop, a young man I first met working in Corpex who had dreams of returning to school, but was never able to because he was helping his family with his income. Miguel had quit his winter employment at the packing where they were processing avocado because of the low pay and the bus expenses he had to pay to go to work each day⁵⁶. When I asked him if he was worried about being unemployed, Miguel responded assertively “no, a mí no me han cortado las manos.” What Marina and Miguel were telling me with this sentence (and many other people I have heard) is that “come what may, I still have my hands, and with them, I can find a job. That possibility has not been taken away from me, despite being laid off or despite being unemployed.” I have heard it stated with assurance and even defiance. In other words, “I will not let this (this = the system, unemployment, work dissatisfaction, labor irregularities, life hardships) get the best of me, because I still have my hands. And with my hands I will find a job.”

Numerous studies published by Oxfam, CEDEM⁵⁷, SERNAM⁵⁸, ILO⁵⁹ have shown how the precarious nature of temporeras’ daily lives dramatically increases in the winter months, when they resort to other sources of employment. “In the majority of the analyzed cases, the economic income generated by women during the winter through work carried out by themselves are extremely precarious; for example, they come from washing clothes, cleaning, sowing, selling food products, amongst others” (Caro and de la Cruz 2004: 137). What is lacking in most of the literature, however, is not a description of what winter employment consists of, but specifically what relationships,

networks, and strategies are developed and employed by the women to engage in these activities. In addition, few authors and studies explore what the effect of quotidian instability is on the formation of subjectivities of the women. How does a woman worker make sense of having to find a way to generate income every month, couple of weeks, or even days? What networks and relationships does she construct and rely on for living the day to day?

The underlying question guiding this chapter is: how do temporeras make a living in the winter after the leaves turn yellow and branches become bare? How do debt and uncertainty shape the materiality of everyday life? In working through these questions I explore not only *what* women do to make a living, but also more importantly *how* women negotiate these activities and how they feel about them. Due to the mobility and insecurity that permeate the home, workplaces, and public spaces, particular attention is paid to conversations, social interactions, and the daily living. I move with the women through time from the summer to the winter months, and also follow their labor throughout the expanding physical spaces that they now inhabit: to the domestic homes they are employed in, to the public streets where they sell baked goods and trinkets, into their homes where they crack sacks of walnuts or wait for the telephone to ring, and to other valleys and cities to where they migrate in search of jobs.

Uncertainty is exacerbated in the winter not just in the realms of (un)employment and personal anguish of not having an income. Relationships between family and friends are strained when the neighbor's electricity (which feeds adjacent homes) is cut off, when a promised work recommendation was unfulfilled, or what is owed to the local mini-

market is demanded. “Moving with people in time reveals not only the work of time on relations but also the varying intensities they may take” (Han 2012: 232). The winter months are also times in which families depend more than ever on their neighbors and kin, revealing the importance of social/familial ties and affect. In this chapter I explore the ways in which these hands keep on working in order to make a living. I look at the relationships, livelihoods, and ways of making do and what happens to this almost invisibilized seasonal workforce when their hands are no longer needed to pick, clean, or pack grapes.

Anticipation and Passing August

Pasar agosto – to pass August – is the aim of families, the sick, and the elderly of the valley. “Hay que pasar agosto,” Graciela told me, “We have to pass August,” referring to a popular Chilean phrase of making it through the harsh winter. It means enduring the cold weather, the bouts of bronchopneumonia, and the high levels of unemployment that characterize the winter months, also called los meses azules (the blue months) by temporeras.⁶⁰ In April the activity in the fields and packing plants dwindle, marking the beginning of months of insecurity and anticipation. The month of May is the definite halt of the harvest season and considered to be a “mes muerto” - a dead month.

How is possibility created in a month that is defined as being “dead”? How do women and breadwinners anticipate and create some sense of security? Han explores this notion of waiting and of what is “possible” in her research with debt and urban poverty in

Santiago, Chile. The author points out that the “active waiting and patience ... is more laterally oriented than forward moving, allowing different, but unpredictable, aspects of others to emerge” (Han 2011: 8). The possibility of making do and “salir adelante” (“getting ahead” or “moving forward,” referring to accomplishing goals in life, improving living situation, and not just “surviving”) becomes thwarted in the winter. The temporeras extend out to family, neighbors, previous employers/supervisors for information of a job opening, and cash advances in order to make living in the present possible. Although workers do have goals for the future (such as buying a microwave, replacing the curtains, buying a new sofa), these projects are possible only in the summer, when an income – or at least a more steady one – is present.

In addition to few prospects of “moving forward” that exist in the winter, the process *itself* of applying for a job, waiting to hear back, and working is uncertain and unclear. This exacerbates feelings of insecurity because it is precisely in the winter months where precarity is highest. Making a choice, such as deciding to continue waiting for a coveted job versus accepting an offer where the pay is low, becomes imperative and can have distressing consequences. Although the harvest season ends in May, some temporeras continue to be employed by the agribusinesses in winter tasks, such as shoot pruning, cluster thinning, leaf pruning, and training. These jobs, however, last a few weeks at a time and require a much lower number of workers. While demand for this work is high, only a small percentage of previously employed temporeras are needed for these fall, winter, and spring jobs. In addition to these winter tasks of vine maintenance, some agribusinesses in the Valley process other fruits, such as kiwi, avocado, tangerine,

walnut, pomegranate and cherry. These fruits (the majority of them stone fruit) require different machinery and larger infrastructure, and as a result, only a few large packing plants such as Corpex engage in processing these fruits during the winter months.

Anticipation runs high as *temporeras* wait to find out if they were hired for the winter jobs. The process of being hired for the winter crops is neither transparent nor predictable. In late March, those in charge of employment in Corpex packing plant ask workers to place their names on a list if they are interested in a winter job. Once the grapes finish being processed, all workers sign a *finiquito* (termination of contract). This does not offer reassurance, however, that a worker will be employed. Once their name is on a list and the grape season is over, women are told to wait until they are called to start working in kiwi season. In analyzing what occurs here I draw on Auyero's research on waiting in welfare offices in Buenos Aires Argentina. The author argues that the poor learn to be patients of the state during these interactions that are characterized by mystification, misinformation, and uncertainty. Auyero points out that time is "an important locus of both conflict and acquiescence" and where waiting is stratified and comes with a "sense of powerlessness" (Auyero 2012: 27).

While women wait for a period of time that can run between a couple of days to a couple of weeks, they attempt to stretch out the income from their last paycheck or search for other jobs. *Temporeras* call their social networks asking if they know of a packing plant that is hiring and/or photocopy their resumes and drop them off at processing plants in the valley. Once they apply for a job, they are told to wait for a phone call, "or you can come and check at the plant." In order to make sure that a phone call was not forgotten

or an early start to the kiwi season not advised, many temporeras travel to the packing plants, because “you never know.” This is costly, however, because of the photocopy and transportation expenses, and having to leave the household responsibilities of caring for children or elderly relatives for someone else; many women thus desist from doing this.

Other examples of how information is changed or postponed are if payday is delayed, days off are canceled, temporeras are asked to work on a Saturday or the kiwi season that was scheduled to start in mid-May starts two weeks late. Auyero points out in his research that in context of extreme depersonalization, “the computer system is presented as the one responsible for scheduling the payments. No human actor is deemed accountable for delays or suspensions” (Auyero 2012: 115). If a complaint is raised by employees, the response is commonly “that’s how it is” or responsibility is placed on factors independent to the management and administration of the packing plant. Lower wages are a result of the “economic recession,” working on a Saturday is due to “the international demand of our fruit,” and an unannounced laying off of workers is because “bad weather” decreased the volume of grapes to be processed. It may well be that unpredictable rains spoiled the crop or that the international demand for grape has increased. What I argue, however, is that employers and owners frequently resort to these practices of obscuring information as a way of exerting control over the workforce.

In Aconcagua Export, the owner instructed the manager to let the workers out early on Thursday of the Easter holiday. The manager told me that he was “not to tell them until after lunch.” When I asked why, the manager told me “that way they don’t get too

excited and stop working, or start lazing around.” The author draws on Bourdieu to point out the importance of paying attention to these behaviors “associated with the exercise of power over other people’s time,” such as “adjourning, deferring, delaying, or conversely rushing, taking by surprise” (Auyero 2012: 27; Bourdieu 2000). In this case, delaying the information of a shortened workday was used as a way of enforcing (I could not verify whether it had the intended effect of preventing “lazy work”) that workers would not get “too excited” with half a day off. I would add, too, that there was also an element of “taking by surprise” in which the owner would be deemed to be a “considerate” and law-abiding employer that respects national holidays.

The process by which the workforce size is whittled down at the end of the summer harvest is also one without clear guidelines. Once a worker applies to continue working in the kiwi season (and of subsequent fruits), it is a matter of guessing and checking in at the plant to learn of an appointment and of the starting date. There is a general unspoken understanding, nonetheless, that employees hired for the winter crops are those who have worked in the packing plant the longest and are known for being “good workers.” Having to downsize the number of seasonal employees is a chance for the employers to select those who “good workers” and not “problematic.” Being a “good worker” in the agribusiness, according to the supervisor or employer, means not being “lazy” or “conflictive.”

A “lazy” worker is for the employer someone who is slow (whether purposefully or not) and does not carry out the complete task, such as not cleaning the grapes as fast as they should nor rushing in order to make more boxes. “Conflictive” refers to anyone who

complains, asks too many questions, or refuses to do the work. This can include a worker complaining that the supervisor is being unreasonable with his/her instructions or demanding that the company supply the bathroom with toilet paper or give them security gloves for cutting grapes. Basically, anyone who would slow down the “smooth” functioning of a packing plant is problematic. Employees also tend to keep the workers who have a longer working relation with the company, privileging seniority. Although there is generalized mistrust between supervisors/bosses and workers, this does not mean that amenable relationships do not exist between employees of different ranks. Workers oftentimes put effort into being on good terms with those above, particular the jefe de packing, and – if possible – with the owner.

There is constant anticipation, speculation, and juggling carried out in the face of uncertainty. Authors Adams, Murphy and Clark argue that “anticipatory modes enable the production of possible futures that are *lived and felt* as inevitable in the present, rendering hope and fear as important political vectors” (Adams, et al 2009: 248; emphasis by the authors). It is not only the immediate or intermediate future that is uncertain, but also the present. The range of options and choices to be made are constrained because of the unknown future; yet there is constant navigation and decision-making that has to be carried out in the present. Does Rosa accept the job she is offered as a domestic worker for less than minimum wage or does she wait to hear from Corpex for the kiwi employment, which might never occur? The winter months consist of day-to-day living, at times week-to-week, and rarely, month-to-month.

For some temporeras this decision-making consists of traveling to nearby cities or migrating to northern valleys that also grow grapes for export and at slightly different seasons. The Copiapó Valley is located fifteen driving hours north of the Aconcagua Valley and is a prominent table-grape exporting region. Agribusinesses in Copiapó were created about a decade later after those of Chile's central valley; thus, the high demand for seasonal laborers drew many women from Aconcagua to this area. Because Copiapó is located in more northern latitude with respect to Aconcagua, the grape harvest begins two months prior to the season in Aconcagua (early October). Irene and Paula Fernandez are sisters who have established a yearly schedule they have been following for the past ten years. Irene and Paula harvest grapes between October and December in Copiapó Valley.

In January they return to Aconcagua to begin harvesting, and once April ends, they “descansar” - rest (I have rarely heard the word *cesante* - unemployed - being used; instead women are taking a rest or even a vacation, as they say jokingly). Irene and Paula then wait for the winter season to begin (end of June, beginning of July) where they work as waitresses in Portillo, a nearby ski resort in the Andes Mountains. Once the ski season ends in August, the sisters find work for a month or two in the *deshoje* in the fields - which is the thinning and leaf removal in preparation for the harvest season. Then there is another “rest” that lasts between a few weeks and a month before heading back north. I asked Irene, “does this cycle get tiring? What keeps you going?” With a twinkle in her eye, she told me “no me han cortado las manos.”

Oftentimes the Fernandez sisters crack walnuts to earn an income while they wait for the ski season to begin. Irene told me of the winter of 2010, when she made a decision that turned out to not be the best one. Irene was expecting the first snows to fall around mid-June, which is when it normally occurred the previous years, marking the beginning of the ski season. In 2010 the snows were delayed for at least a month. Irene expressed her regret of not taking a job in June in cracking walnuts; instead, she trusted that the ski season would begin when it regularly did. When this did not occur, Irene used up all her savings.

Adams (et al) state that “Anticipatory regimes offer a future that may or may not arrive, is always uncertain and yet is necessarily coming and so therefore always demanding a response... Anticipation is not just betting on the future; it is a moral economy in which the future sets the conditions of possibility for action in the present, in which the future is inhabited in the present” (Adams 2009: 249). One decision, such as Irene not cracking walnuts and trusting that the ski season would begin when it did the previous years, can have serious ramifications. Irene regretted this, and made a note to herself to not make the same mistake for the winter of the following year. “The unknown, for which no claims have yet been made, plays an integral role in producing action” (Adams, et al 2009: 2490). Even if the decisive factor in her not being employed was the climate, global warming, or economic recession, Irene felt it was her responsibility to take all caution possible in preparation of the unknown.

Although working during the winter at the kiwi season, and later that of citrus, avocados, and cherries might portray some sort of continuity, it is in fact very fragmented

and uncertain. Each time a new fruit or a new variety of the same fruit is processed, a new contract is signed. The time between the end of one fruit and the beginning of another can span from a couple days to a couple of weeks in which temporeras are at home waiting for a phone call. Oftentimes workers are laid off if a lower volume of the new fruit has to be processed. Nothing is guaranteed. In words of Viviana:

It's just a thing of saving money, that's all. It's very comfortable for all the companies to have us like that now. Get hired and get laid off, and 'let's hire more people and let's lay off some more.' They laid us off during the kiwis, they're drawing up another contract with the tangerines, and now different tangerines are going to be arriving. For one variety, for another, for one product, for another. In that sense, I'm telling you quite honestly, I feel unprotected and trampled upon.



Figures 7 and 8 Working in the cherries in Corpex. Cherry season lasts three weeks in late October, early November.

Las nanas

I met forty-eight year old Hilda Santamaría working in Aconcagua Export in April 2009. She was in her own words “happy” with the remuneration that she received from her employer, being able to pay some of her debts and buy non-perishable goods for the winter months. When the packing season ended in mid-April, Hilda found a job cracking walnuts in another company. However, on the third day of work she was fired because she did not fill an entire sack of walnuts a day. Not having signed a contract, she told me she “couldn’t do anything about it.” Hilda was unemployed for over a month, searching for a job while her anguish and uncertainty grew with the arrival of winter. She found a job as a domestic worker in a private home, receiving a monthly pay of \$120,000 Chilean pesos (minimum wage is \$172,000 pesos, roughly about US\$ 350), working Monday through Friday between 8:00 am – 3:00 pm. Hilda worked in the same home throughout the winter, spring, and arrival of the following summer. In January, when the harvest was soon to begin, Hilda came to an agreement with her employer in which she would leave at 2:00 pm from the house in order to start her 3:00 pm job at the packing (same packing as previous year).

Working as a maid in the domestic service is a common employment that women take up during the winter months. They are called nanas (nannies), and this refers to some or all of the following tasks: cleaning, ironing, cooking, and caring for children/elderly. Compared to working as a temporera in the agribusiness, being a nana is much less desirable, for a number of reasons. Women almost always work by themselves in the home (unless they share the domestic chores with another women, which is uncommon

and happens only in the very wealthy homes); their salary is very low (hovering around minimum wage, oftentimes lower); and it is not considered to be fun since there aren't other women with whom to socialize and take a break with. Labor abuses in the domestic service are not only common, yet there are very few resources they can turn to immediately for support or help. Also, there it is not uncommon for sexual abuse to take place against the domestic worker in behalf of male members in the family.

The words of Graciela Fernández echo similar feelings when comparing work in the fruit industry to the work in domestic service. When she was in her late teens, Graciela went from the rural village of Santa María to work in the capital city Santiago to be employed by families as a live-in maid. “Depende del patrón⁶¹ m'hijita,” Graciela told me “depends on your employer”. She went on to tell me that she has had very good patrones as well as very bad ones. Graciela told me of when she was a young adult working as a live-in maid in Santiago with one particular family. At nights, before sleeping she would lock the door to her room, because at times the father of the family would come home drunk after going out with his friends and would pound on her door wanting to be let in.

Sexual harassment and abuse at the workplace from the male employer towards female nanas are not uncommon occurrences, and are a reflection of historically unequal power relations between the female employee (of a lower social class) and the male employer (from a wealthy class). This was particularly common in the past centuries, as recently female employees in the domestic service and elsewhere have become more vocal about defending their rights – along with hours worked, wage received, etc. Over

the past three months, the situation of nanas in Chile, particularly in Santiago, has been sweeping across the media after a couple of incidents shed light on discrimination they face.

In December 23rd, 2011, news broke out that the Club de Golf las Brisas de Chicureo, the country club of exclusive gated community Chicureo in the outskirts of Santiago, sent a letter to its members reminding them of the Article N. 21, that “in case of utilizing exterior spaces accompanied by nanas or niñeras⁶² ... they should be dressed with their uniform or outfit that identifies them as such.”⁶³ Shortly after, the case of Felicita Pinto came to be known in the media. According to regulations in the same luxurious gated community Chicureo, employees in the homes such as nanas and gardeners, upon entry into the gates have to ride a minibus that drops them off at the house they are employed at. The rules of the condominium state that they are not allowed to walk on the sidewalks; although reasons behind this are not stated, it is assumed that this is so “unwanted” people might not be meandering through the gated community, possible delinquents looking for houses to break into. Felicita was often harassed by the guards who forced her to board the bus instead of walking, and taunted by statements “who do you think you are?” Although at first she remained silent out of fear of losing her job, Felicita eventually told her employer, who then complained to authorities of neighborhood about the unfairness of this rule. Since he did not receive an answer, he then ceded part of his land to Felicita, so she could be a “property owner.”

In 2009 the Chilean movie “La Nana” (“The Maid”) was directed by Sebastián Silva, which gave the audience an intimate portrayal of the story of a live-in maid who worked

in the home of an upper-middle class family from Santiago. The movie explored the daily life of a woman who is considered to be “part of the family” – receiving birthday gifts on her birthday, for example – yet who will never be completely “part of the family.” ANECAP (Asociación Nacional de Empleadas de Casa Particular), the National Association of Employees of Private Homes is an organization which aims at organizing maids. The empleadas that form part of this organization state time and time again that they do not want to be considered to part of the family, but rather seen as employees who are hired to carry out the services of washing, cooking, caring for children, and ironing.

These recent situations shone a spotlight on a relationship between employers and domestic workers that is deeply entrenched in Chilean society, historically unjust, and which oftentimes is uncomfortable, particularly to the more liberal/progressive middle and upper class in Chile. “Indeed, progressive members of these classes know that there is something wrong with this relationship – that it still reeks of their colonial and seigniorial past – but that they are themselves stuck in it. It has by now become so culturally expected and naturalized that they cannot begin to think about giving it up, which is why they have had to come up with explanations for why it is a necessary evil: that there is an abundance of labor, and therefore labor is cheap, and therefore they are doing a good thing by helping the employment situation in their country” (Goldstein 2009: 75). Over the past months Chileans have been forced to do some soul-searching, which writers and critics have even pointed out as hypocritical, due to the fact that labor exploitation is a “secreto a voces,” (a known secret) and only when it comes out in the media, do Chileans point start point their fingers and shaking their heads.

Of course, not all maids face labor abuse by their employees (Graciela spoke very highly of the last patrón she had before she stopped working as a maid, for example), but these public and private events and how people react to them shed light on these tensions. It is hard to say how many of the homes that hire a domestic worker infringe and break labor laws or treat their employees with humiliation or verbal/physical abuse. It is precisely the very private nature of this job that leaves the question unanswered and the possibility for this to carry on without regulation. The job carried out takes place in a private sphere, unless the maid goes out to do grocery shopping or go to the park with the children, in which she is wearing the marker of being a maid because of the uniform that the overwhelming majority of nanas wear. It is hard for fiscalización (work inspection) to take place, for there needs to be a witness of an incident if the employee is sued by the employer, which there rarely is when labor abuse is carried out. In addition, it is often the case that employees would rather “not say anything,” out of fear of losing their jobs.

Evelyn, a middle-aged temporera with long history of organizing and working in unions, told me in an interview how women work as maids during the winter, and when the summer comes, they leave to go work in the fields or in the packings.

So when the season arrives, that nanny leaves the woman botada (thrown out, abandoned) and she leaves to go work in the packing, because the abuse in the winter is very high. So then, without an appeal and without compassion she leaves the vieja botada (old woman abandoned) because she’s abusive. And I think she has all the right to do so. I would also do it. I wouldn’t give any explanation, I would just go. And then if she asks me why, [I’d say] ‘well, look at what you’re paying me.’ She doesn’t even deserve me to tell her, ‘señora, you know what, I’m going off to work [in the fruit] because I’m going to earn more, and later if I want to, I’ll return.’ Because I wouldn’t return to her either.

While Evelyn feels she has the right to leave her employment without prior notice because of the high levels of abuses, this same action portrays the women's "irresponsible" and "unprofessional" attitudes towards their employers and the job they have. Silvana is a fifty-year old agronomist and wife of Patricio Ribenetti, whose family owns a wealthy table grape producing and exporting agribusiness. During an interview, she explained the difficulties that many of her friends have at the beginning of summer, when they are left without help⁶⁴ because their nanas abandon their jobs to head out to the fields and packing plants. Many of these mothers and wives have children and are unable to carry on with their activities or jobs because of the time spent searching for a new maid or doing those chores previously carried out by their maid.

It is interesting to point out how temporeras are considered to be irresponsible in "leaving behind" the household duties they "owe" the families that employ them. At the same time, temporeras face the pressure of not living up to being a "good mother," because they "leave their children behind" due to work responsibilities. Working as a temporera or maid oftentimes comes with feelings of guilt, in which they are not "caring enough" for their own families because of their employment obligations in other households. The themes of debt and what is "owed" run through these relationships. Hondagneu-Sotelo points out in her research of domestic work in the United States that "the work performed by Latina, Caribbean, and Filipina immigrant women today subsidizes the work of more privileged women, freeing the latter to join the productive

labor force..., or perhaps enabling wealthier women to become more active consumers and volunteers” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001: 23).

Although labor irregularities do occur in the private homes, there are employees who are aware of the exploitation taking place and make sure that they are “good employees”. I visited the packing of Silvana and her husband Roberto (who comes from a wealthy family and owns one of the largest national fruit-exporting agribusinesses). On the way out, Silvana commented to me how she wanted to make a list of workers who are going to be looking for a winter job as maids once the packing season ends, since she knew many women who are looking for help at home. This way, Silvana felt she was helping in providing labor continuity in the lives of the temporeras and alleviating the uncertainties that always come with the end of the season. She told me “but I don’t know if I’d want them working for my friends.” I thought to myself, “Silvana does not believe the women are ‘good’ workers.” I was surprised when she continued on to say “It’s just that I don’t trust my friends, I’ve seen how they treat the nanas and how little they pay them.” In this case, Silvana had an awareness of abuses that took place with domestic workers (but did little, if anything, to remedy it).

The service sector

In August 2010 I went to visit the Corpex packing for an interview with a member of management. Outside the gate there were about fifty women and a few men crowding around the main entrance. They came that day to add their names on a list for the possibility of being hired for the following fruit to be processed. I saw some familiar faces, and greeted them with hugs, asking how they had been. Laura approached me, and after asking each other how we were, she told me that she sent in an application to the Tottus, a new “hipermercado”⁶⁵ store that was being built a few blocks away from the packing towards the town of San Felipe. It was a big event when the community received news that the large supermarket was to be built in the city. The latest buzz was that it was going to offer a number of jobs, ranging from construction, security guards, salespeople, cashiers, janitorial, waiters/waitresses, and administration. Laura continued to tell me that she still hadn’t heard back, but that she wasn’t too hopeful since she knew of people who had already been offered a job.

Working in a supermarket is just one example of jobs in the service sector that temporeras are employed in during the winter. Temporeras work as cashiers, waitresses, clerks, or salesladies in stores, restaurants, and mini-markets in San Felipe or Los Andes (the two largest cities in the Valley). As a general unspoken rule, these jobs hire younger women, who are attractive and “presentable” – which means having a good appearance, being educated, mild-mannered, and simpática. This presents an interesting counterpart to working in the fruit. When asking temporeras as to why they prefer working in the fruit (or not) in contrast to being a saleslady, the answers often vary based on

generational differences. The younger women I interviewed and conversed with oftentimes prefer having a job as a bank clerk or saleslady even if it barely pays the minimum. This job means wearing a neat uniform, pantyhose, skirt, and nametag. Women put on make-up and paint their nails, without worrying about the heat, exposure to the sun, smelling like sulphur, having leaves and twigs in their hair, cracked and soiled hands, or getting dirt under their fingernails – all an outcome of performing manual labor. The desire that Laura expressed in being hired at Tottus is part “modernizing” appeal of working in the services sector, despite the fact that the pay can be barely minimum wage and with exploitative labor conditions.

While some women find pleasure in working as a cashier or saleslady because of its modernizing characteristics, it is precisely for the opposite characteristics that other women choose to work in the fruit during the summer. One day in mid-July of 2009 I interviewed Alicia, a woman in her mid-forties and mother of four, at her home in the close city of Los Andes. Alicia told me how she enjoyed working in the packing plant, to which I asked why? To my surprise she said “porque es democrático” – “because it is democratic.” Puzzled, I asked her to explain this. A democratic institution was far from the image of packing plants I held in my head. “It’s democratic,” Alicia said, “because here they accept all sorts of women. You could be old, you, pretty, fat or ugly, with no high school degree, and you can get a job here. They just care that you work. Where else would I get a job at my age?”

Beyond the discussion of how or whether a packing plant is or is not “democratic,” it is important to pay attention to how Alicia speaks of employment possibilities (or lack of)

she has and the ranking that these job options have. Working in a packing appeals to her because the administration hires middle-aged women, with little or no education, and whose only pre-requisite is to be able to clean and pack grapes. Of course, this directly speaks to the job's characteristics as employing a low-skilled labor force and having a high turnover rate. At the same time, for women who are looking for a job in the Valley it is precisely these qualities that allow them to become employed, albeit temporarily.

Freeman's article "The 'reputation' of neoliberalism" (2007) explores the idea of flexibility, respectability, and reputation in Barbados. In it, Freeman discusses the articulation between local actors and neoliberalism, and the ways in which characteristics of neoliberalism are used to the advantage of women. Using the notion of "reputation," the study shows that "there is no 'absolute reign' of flexibility disengaged from the particularities of culture" and that both the liberating and constraining effects of entrepreneurial flexibility are "redefining the dialectics of reputation-respectability in Barbados and the cultural meanings of neoliberalism itself" (Freeman 2007: 262). Similarly, cultural meanings are assigned to a job and the value that it has in the Aconcagua Valley. There is a "plus" to working in an office or store, out of reach from the sun's rays, not carrying out manual labor, and wearing a uniform with a nametag, even if the pay is lower to what is earned as a seasonal laborer.

However, not all people consider this to be a positive thing to aspire to and this viewpoint is frequently attached to being of a higher socioeconomic class. Eduardo Schuetz, a wealthy business administrator in Corpex, discussed in an interview why people in the valley are starting to choose other jobs over employment in the

agribusiness. “There is a theme that is the status,” he stated in an interview. He continued on to describe an encounter with an elder campesino Panchito who was previously employed by him. When asking Panchito how his daughters were and where they are working, the elder man responded that one is working in Tottus and the other in Líder (both are large chain supermarkets). Schuetz asked if the pay was good, to which Panchito responded “No, they don’t pay them well, but they have nice uniforms and are working in the city.” Schuetz narrated this encounter in a tone that sounded both unbelieving and patronizing. He continued to share the following: “People are always paid crap in retail... But people like it and they go out in their uniform. You see them walking around at lunchtime wearing their uniforms, all the same color and the label says ‘Tottus.’ And it’s like ‘Hey, check me out, look who I am.’ So there is a strong issue of status that is complicating us more each day. The rural worker is looked down upon. And they themselves look down on each other.”

Although Eduardo is probably accurate in his statement that status has a lot to do with an individual choosing to work in retail over a packing plant, his analysis is imbued with ideas of what he thinks is best for working class people. His tone of voice was also one of critique towards the women who walk around downtown in their uniforms and nametags letting others know what a “great” job they have, when in reality the pay is very low. What goes without saying is the reality that it is not beneficial for Schuetz, administrator of a very successful packing plant, for women to choose working in retail over working in the agribusiness. Lastly, in no moment does Schuetz offer a reflexive comment acknowledging that people of all social classes have objects, symbols, and

lifestyles that give them status. It seems contradictory for him to criticize a woman in desiring these signifiers of “modernity,” when Schuetz himself drives a Mercedes Benz, has lunch in fancy restaurants, and has a maid working in his household. This discussion is not meant to be a critique to the lifestyle of Schuetz (and many others), but rather to further conversation on the ways in which the wealthier echelons of Chilean society view lower-class women and men. These views oftentimes consist of pointing out the irresponsibility of having cable instead of saving money, the decisions they make in allocating their income, or where they are working.

Freeman points out that “the perpetual quest for ‘respect; amid the ‘corrosion of character’ wrought by the flexibility of the new capitalism, according to Richard Sennett (1998, 2003), has a particular pathos in the neoliberal context” (Freeman 2007: 262). The encounter between Schuetz and Panchito reveal that there are numerous layers and (mis)understandings of what it means to be a worker who generates income, particularly among low-income groups. While Schuetz does not understand why Panchito’s daughters decided to work for Tottus, a closer look reveals that notions of respect, status, and desirability hold different values and are of importance. Given the degrees of uncertainty and precarity in the daily life of a low-income Aconcaguina, opting for a job that provides a uniform, name tag, and the opportunity to have manicured nails, *does* offer some sort of standing even if the income earned is low.

Gaps, debt, and in-between spaces

I visited Hilda's small two-bedroom apartment on a Saturday afternoon in the first week of April, where she lives with her son Christian and eight-year old grandson. Walking up to the second story, I heard cumbia music playing loudly as families swept the hallways and hung clothes to dry on the clotheslines. I met Hilda the previous month in one of the grape packing plants⁶⁶ that I visited and informally worked at. Hilda invited me to her house to drink tea, and over hot tea, bread, and homemade marmalade we conversed about her family, how she became a seasonal worker in the fruit industry, and what her plans were now that the season was coming to an end.

Hilda told me that she already started looking for a job and hoped that this winter would be better than the previous one. Worry and concern crept into her voice as she expressed her fears about the unemployment that sharply rises in the autumn and winter months (May – August). “The winter here is terrible,” she told me, “I don't want to go hungry like I did last year.” In order to make sure hunger was not going to be a reality this year, Hilda spent most of her March salary on non-perishable items. She stood up from the couches we were sitting on and walked over to a wooden cabinet at the end of the room. “See?” Hilda told me, the tone in her voice now switching over to relief as she opened the cabinet doors, showing me what was inside. The shelves were filled with goods she had bought at the supermarket that were meant to last throughout the winter: pasta, rice, tomato sauce, flour, sugar, oil, and powdered juice. “This time I'm prepared,” Hilda told me with reassurance.

The winter is laden with in-between spaces of unemployment, uncertainty, anticipation, and the constant worry of empty pantries. One of the ways in which temporeras prepare for the winter months ahead, is to make sure that the household is stocked with enough nonperishable items. Hilda is one of many temporeras I met who channels the last harvest salary of March for this purpose. Alejandra Matta, who sells homemade empanadas during the lunch break at Aconcagua Export, told me the following: “Let me break it down for you. What you earn in the first month of January goes to paying all your debt. February’s salary goes to buying school supplies, materials, uniforms, and shoes for when your children start school in March. And the salary of March is stretched out the most you can, hopefully getting you through winter.” I thought of Marina who would often tell me “hay que estirar el dinero como chicle, hay que hacer milagro!” – “you have to stretch out the money like gum, you have to make miracles!”

The waiting period can last from one or two days to a couple of weeks, even a month or two. During this time, temporeras wait at home for a phone call, visit plants, stores, and commerce dropping off their CVs in hopes for a job opening, visit family, or simply take the time to *descansar* (rest) if they can afford to or have no other option. In winter 2009 I visited Viviana who was taking a *descanso*. I asked her if resting was what she wanted after an intense and hardworking season of kiwi packing. She told me, “A few days are good, so your body can recover, but it shouldn’t take longer than that, otherwise you start worrying!”

It is in these moments that mothers pull out cash advances from local supermarkets or pharmacies, adding to pre-existing debt, or pawn their jewelry like Hilda did. It is also here in these periods of waiting where family relationships prove to be essential to the passing of another winter: the borrowing milk or flour from the neighbor, caring for the grandchildren while the daughters works packing avocados, or lending large pots for the upcoming cousin's birthday. At times a relatively wealthier neighbor or sister might drop off a bag of walnuts, a crate of kiwi, or bag of groceries. These are all networks and relations that facilitate making do. Han states that "exploring the moral texture of these acts of borrowing and buying allows us to appreciate subtle transactions of care between neighbors and kin that are taking place every day" (Han 2011: 15). These are the spaces and relationships that shed light on how the gaps that are left behind by the fragmentation of precarious labor are stitched together. Familial relations are not free from tension, however, and it is in these precarious winter months where they are most strained or strengthened.

Debt is a reality that many temporeras are faced with and that goes hand in hand with finding the means to survive. I have often read in studies and reports, and heard from temporeras themselves, that they work hard in the summer to save for the winter. Evelyn Marín (the temporera who narrated her pesticide intoxication experience in Chapter 4) told me the following:

I've heard a lot that 'I work in the season because I save for the winter.' That was always a lie. It never was true. [It's] to pay the debts that you have. And from there on, maybe there's some left over. If you finished [working] in April, there was a little left for May. Not enough to live in the winter with that... And I would be often talking [and asking]

‘but, between us, do you save for winter?’ ‘Nooo, when? From where? I have three kids, I have a lazy husband’ or ‘I don’t have a husband.’ It’s never been true.

Clara Han studies the consumer credit system and family relations in the urban poverty of Santiago. Han points out that “a focus on new consumer desires may deflect attention from how the ... poor use credit as a resource within the context of eroding and unstable wages and the privatization of public services. Political scientist Verónica Schild points, among the poor, ‘covering basic necessities such as health insurance, education fees and basic services through credit has become ubiquitous’ (Schild 2007: 192).” Over half of the temporeras I met throughout my fieldwork are in debt (these are the ones who acknowledged that they have a debt – because of the “shame” associated with it, the number is probably higher); department stores, pharmacies, and supermarkets have banks and offer credit cards and cash advances.

Marina has a debt with the pharmacy for the purchase of diapers for her elderly grandmother and with a local department stores for winter shoes she had bought her mother. In her research, Han explores the double-edged credit economy. “This economy produces both perpetual indebtedness alongside the material resources for livelihoods amid unstable labor... Although families confront the temporal demands of the credit system through their work to maintain the image, they also make use of the very temporality of credit to make time, and time again, a waiting that draws its hope from ‘the possible’” (Han 2011: 25). “You don’t know,” Marina told me, “how important it is that my mom has good shoes. She can’t go on with the ones she has; I can’t remember the last time she had new ones.”

How does resorting to debt become an enabling and at the same time, a disabling modus operandi for making do? What are the implications of surviving another winter with debt and how does this affect the possibility to plan and hope? How does it thwart it? The challenges of making do strain a labor regime that is already filled with uncertainties and sources of insecurity. When Marina, Miguel, and Irene tell me with confidence that no one has cut their hands off, and when Christian tells me “just as they use me, I use them” (referring to him feeling no remorse leaving work without any notification to the administration of the plant once he has earned the money he set out to earn for the month), they are employing those same features of flexibility that also enables the administration to lay them off from one day to the next, lower the wages, and assign blame to a temporera during a work accident. What other strategies or devices can temporeras employ or is the level of fragmentation so deep that it has fractured most possibilities of improving livelihoods for the long haul?

Here I refer back to Lauren Berlant’s concept of cruel optimism: optimism is cruel “when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving” (Berlant 2011: 2). It becomes cruel when the object or situation around which optimism arises is never fulfilled, yet the hope for it to occur is still there. I pose the question, however, how much optimism is there in actuality if a woman *knows* that the hope/dream/desire will never be fulfilled. Alejandra told me the first year I met her that she was planning on not returning to the fruit the following season because she wanted to open a bakery. Miguel expressed to me the desire of returning to college and pick up his studies where

he left off four years prior. Yet the following season, both Alejandra and Miguel were in their workstations packing grapes. Is there more cruelty in knowing that the plan to bake or to study will not be fulfilled? Or is there something about that hope which might even offer solace during a long workday spent packing one box of grape after another?

The winter months in the Aconcagua Valley exposes these gaps and tensions that temporeras are faced with. Women resort to various employments as ways of anticipating the harsh winter: working as domestic workers, in the informal market, ski resorts, migrating to northern valleys, cashing unemployment checks, and/or relying on family relations and cash advances in order to pass august into the following harvest season. These activities are not discrete and oftentimes overlap, as temporeras engage in more than one way of making do. Debt is a prevalent theme running throughout this chapter and is filled with tension as the cash advances allow them to turn the year around, yet straps them to being in debt. The interweaving of debt, optimism, and making it through the challenging winter months reveal the tension and that is wrought by the fragmentation of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

I have twice returned to the Aconcagua Valley since concluding fieldwork, in September and December of 2011. I stayed with Marina and Graciela in their home, visited by the packing plants Corpex and Aconcagua Export, and met various temporeras in their homes or streets of downtown San Felipe. About half the women I worked with in Corpex were still there, although there was growing dissatisfaction because they are now employed through a subcontractor, receiving less pay. Hilda moved to the nearby town of San Esteban with her son and grandson, because of cheaper rent and closer proximity to her son's workplace. Despite having given me positive remarks about Patricio Ribenetti, the owner of Aconcagua Export, she expressed disappointment in his decision to use a subcontractor for the latest harvest season and was not sure if she was to going to return the following year. Josefina decided to stop working at Corpex and stay at home to care for her three-year old while her husband also left Corpex to work in a lingerie store in downtown San Felipe. The pay was barely minimum wage, but it was steady and lasted throughout the year.

In December 2011 Marina welcomed me with beautiful two-month old Camila in her arms. Since giving birth in October, she was on maternity leave and later on medical leave: her knee had suffered at a worksite injury where the wooden pallet she was standing on cracked and broke. Marina told me that the doctor was a "nice guy" ("buen tipo") and would give her a medical leave as long as she needed it. Due to the latest labor

laws, her employer could not fire her or lay her off without the risk of being sued or a heavy fine. I expressed pleasant surprise and relief that this would not most likely not occur to Marina; she agreed that it was a good thing, but went on to share how she felt “stuck” and wanted to find a better-paying job that offered more security. She continued on to tell me, her hazel eyes flashing in anger, how her daughter’s father was not paying any of her child support nor helping with finances of their newborn. “But,” Marina said, “no one has cut my hands off. I have my daughter who’s the most important to me right now, and I will find a job and make sure I get ahead (salir adelante).”

Throughout this book I have explored the articulations and tensions between neoliberal modes of production, seasonality, and daily life of *temporeras* in Chile’s Aconcagua Valley. This dissertation examines the seasonal workforce in the valley that was formed with the emergence of a new industrialized agribusiness sector, resulting from aggressive neoliberal policies implemented under dictatorship in the early seventies. Although the country transitioned to democracy twenty years ago (after a seventeen-year dictatorship), neoliberal policies have become deeply rooted and today’s market democracy – one of the most privatized in Latin America – has witnessed stark income inequality, increasing labor fragmentation and insecurity, and increasing wealth concentration, contrasting with Chile’s steady economic growth and its image as a successfully developing country in the region. This investigation shows how labor instability, short-term work contracts, and flexible working hours are becoming the norm. At the same time, the Chilean state encourages individuals to take responsibility for their

own wellbeing through civic participation, becoming active consumer citizens, and expanding projects aimed at impoverished sectors of society.

I argue that the insertion into seasonal labor has allowed women in rural Aconcagua Valley to establish new social relationships, shape notions of personhood, and change how they view themselves as a result of becoming the breadwinners and decision-makers of their households. At the same time, possibilities for change in their quotidian livelihood, socioeconomic status, and hopes for the future are limited and constrained. The temporera workforce has become permanent, with women resorting to seasonal labor every harvest season and struggling to make ends meet during the winter months of unemployment. Despite increasing labor legislation in the past five to ten years, its implementation is severely lacking, and the economic and political influence of the *empresariado* along with the unwillingness and inability for the state to carry out deep reforms, result in increasing instability (such as the rise of subcontractors) for the working classes – particularly the temporary and seasonal labor force.

Although possibilities for long-term and deep structural change in the agroindustrial sector are severely limited, the massive social mobilizations that have erupted in Chile over the past year (such as the widely covered student movement, environmental protests, indigenous land and cultural rights, and miner strikes) point out to the deeply seated disillusionment and discontent with the neoliberal democracy and to the possibilities of organizing and protest. It is known, however, that the private sector (particularly in rural areas with strong vestiges of the latifundio system) is the least swept by protests in a country with an already historical low of unionization: the very

fragmented nature of seasonal labor works against the possibility of strikes having continuity or impact. I do believe, nevertheless, that just as the organic mobilizations are sweeping various sectors in Chilean society (something not foreseen five years ago), there are possibilities of this taking place in the agribusiness by temporeras. In the meantime, it is in the daily and the quotidian where women do see changes or are able to engage with the liberating aspects of being a breadwinner and having access to disposable income. This comes at a cost, though, of physical and mental health, family disintegration, and everyday uncertainty, which ultimately end up subsidizing this “successful” fruit-export industry.

This research places the precarious work regimes temporeras inhabit in juxtaposition to Chile’s “modern” and “successful” neoliberal democracy; and analyzing the formation of personhood and technologies of self that women workers employ. Each chapter builds to show how the development of the fruit-export industry articulates in complex ways with the lives of women in the Aconcagua Valley. Chapter 1 traces the rise of the fruit-export industry in Chile and neoliberal modes of production in both dictatorship and democracy, highlighting both the ruptures and continuations. In Chapter 2 I explore the effects that insertion into seasonal labor has had on women of the Aconcagua Valley, arguing that becoming a seasonal worker is a process filled with tension and that has also allowed women to contest gender roles. Chapter 3 contends that temporeras construct multiple spaces of subjectivities as mothers, women, and laborers, also confronting notions of morality, motherhood, and responsibility in the national imaginary that are at odds with how they view themselves. In Chapter 4 I draw from

ethnographic research carried out in various packing plants and fields of the Aconcagua Valley, revealing that seasonal labor is characterized by magic and uncertainty, while workers are faced with the disciplinary demands of being a “good” and “responsible” worker. Chapter 5 follows women into the winter months of unemployment as they disperse throughout the valley and neighboring regions in search of jobs. Debt, family ties, and strategizing allow women to turn the year around into the following harvest season.

Chile proves to be an important window through which neoliberal development and its unfolding can be explored in the region of Latin America. Being one of the first experiments of neoliberalism in the region which was enforced under dictatorship in the early 70s to later 80s, it has since entered a stage of neoliberal democracy frequently touted as an “economic miracle” and a “success” by financial analysts and development institutions. The return to democracy was undertaken with heavy investment in social programs aimed at reducing poverty rates, improving women’s health, and expanding affordable housing, while privatization of social services and free market policies were strengthened; this was thus hailed as the “Chilean Way.” Closer examination by social scientists and research institutes, however, reveal large income inequalities, weakening of the public sector, and extremely low levels of unionizing.

This study builds on and contributes to literature on neoliberalism that examines these processes as nuanced, multi-layered, and filled with tension. This analysis clearly points to the increasing vulnerability in the workplace and the constraints that this exerts on the daily lives of female workers. Chile’s fruit boom has produced a floating mass of

workers who sell their labor and resort to various income-generating tactics as they move from one season to another. In addition to the widely documented disabling effects of fragmentation on health and labor conditions, it has simultaneously enabled the development of social relationships and allowed women to contest and re-shape traditional gender roles and form their personhood.

Concepts of motherhood, sexuality, and social norms are challenged, as temporeras have become breadwinners of their household and have formed new relationships with co-workers. Temporeras simultaneously confront stereotypes of having “loose” sexual mores and also face expectations of being a “responsible” and “disciplined” worker, and an active member of “civil society.” The emphasis on citizenship and participation underscored by government programs as a way of “strengthening democracy,” in actuality “subsidize and fortify neoliberal economic reforms” (Paley 2001: 6). Temporeras also enact technologies of self as they face demands at the workplace to be a diligent, not “conflictive,” and “clean” laborer who is held responsible for her wellbeing, hygiene, and for the efficient and smooth processing of grapes.

This study considers the aspects of neoliberal work regimes that laborers use to their advantage, such as “abandoning” the workplace without prior notice to administration. Relationships formed have resulted in networks of job information and material and emotional support. Insertion into remunerated labor enables women to buy material goods such as washing machines, microwaves, or school supplies. These purchases are expressed as alleviation to the burden of quotidian activities and as

improvements in families' daily standards of living. I argue, however, that they are a "patching up" of the spaces and gaps left by a fragmented work cycle. Most importantly, it alters neither the structural constraints of seasonal labor cycle nor the feelings of uncertainty or anguish that have become part of the everyday. The very nature of a seasonal and fragmented labor engenders a climate of living in anticipation, in the "we'll see", and works against the ability of a temporera to plan on the long term.

As part of the conclusion, a question that needs to be addressed is what paths can be followed for the improvement of working conditions in the fruit industry? Beatriz Cid suggests the building of "a space of rural production capable of offering employment and integration," not only during the months of intense packing activity, but also throughout the rest of the year (Cid 2001: 29). Alejandra Matte, a temporera from the city of Los Andes, pointed out that there is a lack of synchronization between all actors involved in the fruit industry and in the local communities.

There isn't a coordination between a packing, and organization that is municipal or governmental, or with the Work Inspection... Links, for example, between this packing, and the other packing that is starting the kiwi. For example, this man Ribenetti who hires us in the summers, we finish working, [can] have a society or some incentive among owners to transport the personnel. So for example, you were saying that in Aconcagua Export are now starting the kiwi, okay have a group of workers who were chosen because they are good for working, responsible, have them go to the kiwi. And then the kiwi ends, here we have the tangerines. For one, it is a big relief to know that they will give you continuity ... That idea of creating an organism that links you between one business and another is very necessary. If not with the kiwis, then they can take you all up to the mountains for the winter season to [work in] a restaurant.

Patricio Ribenetti echoed similar thoughts in a conversation I had with him about the structure of the agribusiness. "There is so much more that can be done," he said, with a

slightly apologetic tone to his voice. “We should write down the name of all the workers and have them on file. So when a new road is being built, or a job needs to be done, we say, okay, here’s the list of men and women who can be employed.” Cid also points out the need for public policies to address the specific group of seasonal labors and the structural instability faced by the workforce. I add, too, that improvement of workers’ conditions lies not only in public policies and laws, but more importantly, the implementation and enforcement of such regulations. As this dissertation has explored, there are numerous laws that have been passed, yet are not enforced; it is here where I underscore the important role that the government still has to fulfill.

In a labor cycle that is filled with ruptures and uncertainties, it is essential to ask what remains as a constant in the life of the temporera. In an employment which is characterized by fragmentation and living in the “not knowing” and “we’ll see,” how do temporeras establish continuity for themselves from one day to the next? Material objects remain – such as a washing machine that was bought one year or the curtains that were replaced the next. Relationships remain from one year to the next; some are broken, others are created, and social networks absorb the stress, tensions, and anxiety that are caused by insecurities. Motherhood remains as the chief area in which women place their hopes and motivations for the future. Viviana, who herself does not have children told me the following in an interview:

I tell the mothers, my work compañeras, if you have children, educate them. so they don’t work in this. Because if they are going to live the same as you, it’s a vicious circle. And where they see that there are a lot of people, [the businessmen] will never want to change things with us. Why? Because there are always going to be people who will have to come

to work here for whatever it is they're paying, and only when they need people, will they react. When they see that outside there aren't 200 people waiting, but only ten, and they need 200, only then will things start to change. When supply and demand start playing out differently.⁶⁷

The lived experiences of temporeras reveal that there are both disabling and enabling characteristics of a neoliberal work regime. This study shows how seasonal labor has allowed for the creation of new social relationships and independence from partners or other family members. The liberating effects of being employed in seasonal fruit labor, however, are weighed down by uncertainty that comes at the end of every harvest season and beginning of winter. Simultaneously, there is a constant challenge for women living precarious lives to make ends meet and at the same time respond to varying and oftentimes conflicting expectations of being a mother, worker, and citizen. Examining the quotidian sheds light precisely on how individuals and communities enact technologies of self and shape their personhood in face of instability and precariousness of a neoliberal democracy.

In today's era of unprecedented flexibility, accelerated movement of capital, technology, and material goods, there is a call for research to be precise about how struggles, labor, and daily practices are being reconceptualized. What are the nuances of flexible labor in which temporeras make their lives sustainable? How are notions of personhood shaped when instability and temporality become permanent? In addressing these questions, this study offers critical understanding of how workers in precarious labor regimes engage with neoliberal policies and practices; contributes to a growing body of literature that examines neoliberal development as a process that is neither

homogenous nor all-encompassing, moving past dichotomies towards its tensions and complexities; and adds the voices of temporeras to the dialogue of the “underbelly” of neoliberalism.

Endnotes

¹ All names of individuals and fruit-export businesses have been changed to protect the privacy of participants.

² The majority of seasonal laborers in Chile's fruit-export industry are female; thus I will be using the term *temporeras* throughout this ethnography. This does not mean there are no male seasonal laborers in the industry.

³ <http://www.dt.gob.cl/1601/w3-article-94028.html>, Ministry of Labor, Chile.

⁴ The internationally recognized "economic boom" that took place under dictatorship has been subject of numerous studies and investigations, which shows that the "Chilean miracle" is actually a misnomer. See Collins and Lear 1995, Taylor 2006 Y OTROS

⁵ Conversation held in May 2009. Santiago, Chile.

⁶ See Collins and Lear 1995, Gómez and Echenique 1998, Hojman 1995, Kay and Silva 1992, Moulián 2002, Murray 2006, Taylor 2006, Tinsman 2004, Winn 2004

⁷ Map taken from <http://www.errazuriz.com/errazuriz/espanol/vinas.html>

⁸ Chapter 4 offers a more in-depth discussion of health of the seasonal agricultural workers.

⁹ Conversation with Jorge Razeto, Anthropology professor at Universidad de Chile and executive director of Ciem Aconcagua NGO. April 2010.

¹⁰ *Latifundista*: name given to the owner, generally a male patriarch, of the *latifundio*.

¹¹ An overwhelming majority of the right-winged, conservative, and wealthy elite still sees the Agrarian Reform as a large mistake and a blatant infringement on their rights to private property.

¹² *Junta*: word used in Latin America to refer to a group of military officers who overthrow a government, marking the beginning of a military regime.

¹³ Enrique Oropeza is Marina's uncle, a 75 year old campesino who grew up on a *latifundio*, lived through the Agrarian Reform, and was heavily involved in campesino cooperatives and Christian-based communities prior to the coup d'état in 1973.

¹⁴ Chilean politician and Minister of Agriculture under Salvador Allende's presidency, who carried out the Agrarian Reform.

¹⁵ See Chonchol 1996, Cid 2001, Claude 1997, Collins and Lear 1995, Murray 2006, Paley 2001, Stillerman 2004, Taylor 2006, Tinsman 2004, Winn 2004.

¹⁶ <http://www.lanacion.cl/noticias/site/artic/20090701/pags/20090701130311.html>

¹⁷ http://latercera.com/contenido/674_129419_9.shtml

¹⁸ <http://www.coha.org/chile-la-desigualdad-tras-la-prosperidad/>

¹⁹ www.worldbank.org

²⁰ http://www.oecd.org/document/1/0,3746,en_21571361_44315115_44365210_1_1_1_1_00.html

²¹ http://www.oecd.org/document/1/0,3746,en_21571361_44315115_44365210_1_1_1_1_00.html

²² *Empresariado*: conglomerate of *empresarios*.

²³ Chapter 4 explores the income allocation and strategies of making a living during the winter months of unemployment.

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- ²⁴ Personal communication with Pamela Caro, September 2009.
- ²⁵ More on instability and fragmentation in the harvest season in Chapter 3.
- ²⁶ E.g. Collins 2003, Fernández-Kelly 1983, Ong 1987, Salzinger 2003
- ²⁷ Interview. Nuevo Algarrobal, September 2009.
- ²⁸ Most women put off seeing a doctor for pains or aches until after the season is over. Ironically, in the winter is when there is less coverage for health insurance. More on work effects on health in Chapter 4.
- ²⁹ Personal communication with Pamela Caro. Santiago, July 2009.
- ³⁰ A commonly used colloquial term referring to advancing and moving forward in professional, economic, and personal goals in life.
- ³¹ Mapuche communities faced more repression and persecution after Chile achieved its independence from Spain in 1810, than they did during colonial times. For more information on the Mapuche nation José Bengoa has written extensively.
- ³² For more information on Mapuche peoples and the conflict, see Bengoa 2000; Bialostozky 2007; Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009; Correa, Molina, and Yáñez 2005; Richards 2004.
- ³³ Pucha: Chilean slang that is often used loosely translated to “shucks” or “shoot.”
- ³⁴ Interview with Hilda Santamaría, April 2009.
- ³⁵ Chancha literally means pig. A “chancha” is someone who does a poor job in cleaning the grape: carrying out the task quickly in order to earn more money without caring for the quality. Generally means being a cheat.
- ³⁶ Interview. Santa María, December 2009.
- ³⁷ <http://radio.uchile.cl/noticias/132792/>
- ³⁸ Marx 1977.
- ³⁹ Cumbia is a music genre that originated in Colombia and has spread throughout Latin America, particularly in the Southern Cone and Andean region, leading to different variants of the genre. In Chile it is very popular particularly amongst lower socio-economic classes. Associated with lower class, bad taste and a “guilty pleasure” of richer people. At a wedding I was invited to, the DJ specifically was told by the bride to not play any “*Sound*” (a particular Chilean variation of cumbia) nor reggaeton.
- ⁴⁰ When a representative (who was a psychologist) of the Institute of Worker’s Security came to give a talk for risk prevention in the packing place, I approached him after his presentation to ask for his business card for a future interview. Not fifteen minutes had passed after the man had left, when a coworker asked me as we resumed work “I saw you talking to that man, he’s cute, right? What were you talking about?” Laughter and teasing ensued as I tried telling the women that the reason I asked him for his card was for a research-related interview.
- ⁴¹ “El norte” refers to the Copiapó Valley, a valley which many women and men from San Elipe migrate to, in order to work in the season which beings a couple months earlier. Because the grape industry in Copiapó began about fifteen years posterior to the boom in Aconcagua Valley, large numbers of temporeros from Aconcagua went to work there because of their experience in working in the fruit.
- ⁴² Another translation would be “getting married is getting screwed.”

⁴³ Women oftentimes complained that the supervisors would not learn their names and call them simply by a number.

⁴⁴ Cleaning the grape entails using sharp scissors to snip the grapes that are rotten, misshapen, or not the adequate size.

⁴⁵ A group of about 5-6 temporeros who work together and are hired as a group, generally relatives or close friends. There is one “leader” who negotiates the pay with the employer.

⁴⁶ Quality control (control de calidad) assures that the grape is being processed under the required and legislated cleanliness and quality standards. This includes making sure all women have their hair neatly tucked under a hairnet and cap, have their nails clipped, no jewelry or make-up on.

⁴⁷ Risk prevention (prevención de riesgo) makes sure that all the safety conditions are met – such as the sweeping of loose grapes on the floor, presence of fire extinguisher, cleared emergency exits, etc.

⁴⁸ Risk prevention (prevención de riesgo) makes sure that all the safety conditions are met – such as the sweeping of loose grapes on the floor, presence of fire extinguisher, cleared emergency exits, etc.

⁴⁹ Conversation with Hilda Santamaría, July 2009.

⁵⁰ Conversation with Patricio Ribenetti. Los Andes, February 2010..

⁵¹ <http://radio.uchile.cl/noticias/135140/>

⁵² Institute of Workers’ Security, the health facility that treats workers on the public health insurance.

⁵³ The Worker’s Insurance Institute, the publicly funded organization that is in charge of health insuring and of providing health coverage relating to accidents and injuries at the workplace.

⁵⁴ Slang term that literally means “send someone to the top of the mountain.” Very close to expression in English “send someone to hell,” somewhere far away as a result of being angry with them.

⁵⁵ A pallet is a unit of boxes, piled, tied, and labeled, ready to be loaded onto a truck, driven to the port, and loaded on a ship to be exported.

⁵⁶ The Labor code states that if there are more than three kilometers between the home of the worker and the place of employment, and no public transportation, the employer has to provide transportation for the workers. In Miguel’s case, he both lived more than three kilometers from the packing, and by the time work ended, there was no public bus he could take. Most times, Miguel would leave work a couple of hours before it ended so he could catch the latest bus him (which meant losing income he could earn by staying more), or arranging to have a friend pick him (and paying for gasoline). Either way, Miguel ended up subsidizing something which should be provided by the employer.

⁵⁷ Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo de la Mujer – Center of Studies for the Development of Women, a Chilean NGO which carries out investigations and projects relating to gender studies, civil participation, critical debate, labor, and poverty.

⁵⁸ Servicio Nacional de la Mujer – National Service of Women. The gender and women’s ministry of the Chilean government.

⁵⁹ International Labor Organization – an agency part of the United Nations which promotes labor rights and social justice.

⁶⁰ “Passing August” is a term used in all of Chile: it is commented on in the newspapers and the radio, and community centers organize activities and socials around this event with the elderly and neighbors on the first days of September (my grandmother has been to quite a few of these events). It is spoken of with some relief, excitement, and humor – “we made it” is the general sentiment.

⁶¹ A word used by employees to refer to their employers. “Patrón” is imbued with class markers and is commonly used by workers of lower socio-economic class to refer to their employers of a higher class. This word has been dropped from common language, because of its connotation of a past in which highly unequal relationships existed between employee and employer; for example, that between a landowner owner and peasants that worked on his lands. It also connotes a sense of “ownership” that the landowner/mine owner/employer had over the people he/she hired. This word is still used in rural areas and, to a lesser degree, in the cities referring to people who hire you to carry out domestic services or other manual labor.

⁶² Niñeras: babysitters

⁶³ http://www.golfchicureo.cl/home/quienes_reglamento.html

⁶⁴ Employing a nana is commonly referred to as having “help” in the house (similar to “the help” in the United States).

⁶⁵ Literally a hypermarket, larger than a supermarket.

⁶⁶ A packing plant is know as a packing plant in the United States. It is the physical structure where grape and other fruits are selected by size, cleaned, and packed before being loaded and taken to the port city of Valparaíso. I will refer to packing plants simply as “packings” (or “packing” if it is a single one), which is how they are spoken of in Chile by workers, supervisors, and owners.

⁶⁷ Interview. San Felipe, June 2009.

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