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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

Of Virtuoso Cynics:  
Plays on Language, Sleights of Hand, and Moving with Music

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Spanish

by

Óscar Alain Ulloa

December 2019

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Alessandro Fornazzari, Chairperson  
Dr. Marta Hernández Salván  
Dr. Jonathan Ritter

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2019

The Dissertation of Óscar Alain Ulloa is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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More than acknowledging, I'll start by saying thanks: to *mi amá*, my *abuelita* María, and my *carnala* Almita, for being forever strong, beautiful, and kind; and the *fam* that went to *cumplir la manda*- life lifting pillars (Ariel, Nidia, *tía* Gela, *tía* Juanita y *todos*), I will ever always be grateful.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Of Virtuoso Cynics:  
Plays on Language, Sleights of Hand, and Moving with Music

by

Óscar Alain Ulloa

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish  
University of California, Riverside, December 2019  
Dr. Alessandro Fornazzari, Chairperson

*Of Virtuoso Cynics: Plays on Language, Sleights of Hand, & Moving with Music*

analyzes the ludic elements of colloquial language, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music in Latin America as a possibility of acknowledging collective experiences that offer alternatives to dominant cultural patterns and practices. This dissertation proposes to critique standards of language, football, and music that consider language as immaterial, football a mechanism for social discipline and gentlemanly conduct, and music being a higher art form not to be carried out in the street. By putting into dialogue the everyday of Henri Lefebvre and Julia Kristeva's poetic, I articulate the material elements of popular manifestations of language, football, and music in Latin America, to express the symbolic weight they carry in popular cultures. Popular peoples' inscriptions into the world are made through the knowledges of experiencing the actual conflicts of society. Drawing from Johan Huizinga's notion of sacred play, and Alenka Zupančič's short-circuit, I make

a move to say that true play involves an actual virtuosic handling of symbols in their materiality in the day to day as a praxis. The handling being informed by a cynical out view of life, understanding it as having multiple lenses of interpretation, and openly questioning the dominant one by signaling its faults. I articulate the value in playing with colloquial language by emphasizing the poetic as a praxis in Roberto Bolaño's *Los detectives salvajes*, where the poetic is found in the materiality of language. I look at Diego Maradona and *fútbol criollo* as expressing an alternate way of playing the world's sport that undermines the discriminatory standards that wish to universalize the sport. Later, I explore the participatory and agency creating communal music, *candombe*, and how that reading of the Afrouguayan musical tradition informs and gives a democratic perspective to Jorge Drexler's music application, "N". I wish to highlight the social and cultural functions of colloquial language, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music because as platforms of the commons in Latin America, they are widely felt, not only making them apt to express a collective grievance but also be an expressive force for existence in the world.

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“Sometimes, having nothing can be a real cool hand”

Cool Hand Luke

## INTRODUCTION

*Illicit Inscriptions: Laying out the Playing on the Field*

“*Of Virtuoso Cynics*” focuses on slang, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music in Latin America. More specifically, this dissertation is a study of the playful use of colloquial language in the novel *Los detectives salvajes* by Roberto Bolaño; the social imaginary of Diego Armando Maradona and the two goals he scored in the 1986 World Cup against England (*La mano de DIOS* and *El mejor gol del mundo*); and the participatory and agency creating articulation of communal music in *candombe* and the *aplicación*, “*n*” by singer/songwriter Jorge Drexler. The 1<sup>st</sup> deals with poetic and comic elements in language and their material practice in the narrative of *Los detectives salvajes* to offer a critique of discriminatory language practices, based on the history of language reverence in Western Society stemming from the notion of language being divine and immaterial. The 2<sup>nd</sup> covers a few minutes of Latin American history where Maradona scores two seemingly disparate goals against England that are representative of a style of football that is considered to be unprofessional, associated with what is referred to as *fútbol criollo*. Moreover, the historical circumstances surrounding said event give more credence to the style of play the two goals exemplify, a style that undermines FIFA’s, Fédération Internationale de Football Association, authority over the sport. The 3<sup>rd</sup> is an analysis consisting of a music application, “*n*” that invites the player to take on a pivotal role in the composition of the songs, playing an important part in the performance rather

than a targeted audience member and following in a tradition of Afro-Argentine *sobrevivencia*<sup>1</sup> in Uruguay expressed in *candombe*. What I seek to demonstrate is that everyday play with language, football, and music in Latin America are, due to their popular nature, prime platforms of contestation for sectors of the population that are typically targets of discrimination; people that are sexed, raced, and imposed a lower socioeconomic status, often times implied by the former descriptions.

This study works within a Cultural Studies framework while drawing on play and the material elements of everyday life in language, football, and music in Latin America, tracing them through the various media to address issues related to knowledges of popular cultures and how their expressions signal debilities in dominant cultural ideologies. Virtuoso cynics are popular peoples who have an antagonist relationship to structures of power and are capable of taking that/those experience(s) and playing with their empirical knowledge in such a way that offers incisive critiques of society's hegemonic structuring.<sup>2</sup> I'm understanding the everyday through Henri Lefebvre's description of it as a "condition stipulated for the legibility of forms, ordained by means of functions, inscribed within structures, the everyday constitutes the platform upon which the bureaucratic society of controlled consumerism is erected" (9). When I refer to popular peoples and cultures, I'm referring to manifestations of cultures without trying to look at them in a high or low binary yet still working within the iterations of cultures

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<sup>1</sup> A common term to utilize is resistance but I do not find it to be adequate in an analysis of playful elements. Play is a very protagonist matter, and manifestations of it do not resist dominance, and more than survive it, supra-live it.

<sup>2</sup> The term cynic here draws inspiration from Peter Sloterdijk's cynic in *Critique of Cynical Reason*, "The cynic, as a dialectical materialist, has to challenge the public sphere because it is the only space in which the overcoming of idealist arrogance can be meaningfully demonstrated. Spirited materialism is not satisfied with the words but proceeds to a material argumentation that rehabilitates the body" (105).

considered crass or at best folk culture by opulent sectors of Latin America. As William Rowe and Vivian Schelling explain in their book, *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America*: “It is not enough to say that the popular is opposed to the dominant”, because the dominant and the popular must by necessity interact with each other (2). This is not to say that the distinction between high or low does not exist in discriminatory notions of appreciation, this dissertation is after all about material knowledge- knowledge of sexed, racialized, and socioeconomically disadvantaged peoples outwitting discriminatory practices that consider them less in their everyday. Discriminatory binaries in that mindset are very evident there, but the classification is much more complex an issue than a mere differentiation of elevation, as Rowe and Schelling indicate. “Culture” in Raymond William’s *Keywords* makes note of the term’s usage as being linked with a general intellectual process that describes it as being both material and symbolic, a practice or a contemplation (76-82). Instead of being concerned with the contrasting views of what is a material practice and what is an intellectual process, I do not take those two realms as being divorced from each other. Thought processes are incapable of being severed completely from experiences, and experiences are not grasped without a reasoning process. Latin America’s basis for discrimination is inherited from Eurocentric appraisals of humanity, where (white male’s) humanity is associated with (divine) high culture and related to (immaterial) intellectual processes, while (raced and sexed) low or folk culture is associated with (less human) material practices. The material (practices) / immaterial (intellectual processes) conceptions of culture reinforce hegemonic control of the ruling groups associating *slang* as immoral

language, *fútbol criollo* as a corruption of FIFA's official "beautiful game", and communal music as less-than classical iterations of music.<sup>3</sup> There is then an implicit assignation of subpar aptitudes, values, and rights in society imposed on popular peoples' cultures and existence to then be considered improper, negative, illicit, fraudulent or evil, and all and always a-priori.

The problematics of looking at popular cultures through a polarizing lens creates a symmetrical opposition. The implication lends itself to thinking about the influence as unidirectional. To understand elements as dominant and dominated while not recognizing the agonistic qualities simplifies the matter and obviates the dynamic connections within the categorization. In that sense; the dominant dominates, and popular peoples receive passively, without a chance of saying anything otherwise. This is not the case, as Rowe and Schelling stipulate that the popular is "above all a space of resignification, in that the culture industry's products are received by people who are living the actual conflicts of society and who bring the strategies with which they handle those conflicts into the act of reception" (107). Then the virtuosic handling of playful elements of popular peoples are in that case interruptions of hegemonic society's reasoning processes signaling the discriminatory nature in the structuring of the apparatuses.<sup>4</sup> Within the fabric of society is woven the discourses, collective practices, and cultural forms where stereotypes are made and expressed, where the norms of conduct are established, and the parameters for

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<sup>3</sup> Thinking of Stuart Halls definition of hegemonic politics operating within society's apparatuses: "A hegemonic politics operates in the cultural apparatuses, the discourse of moral languages, in the economic struggle, in the political space (including electoral struggles as well as other forms)" (178).

<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin already said something similar in his essay, "What is Epic Theatre?"; "interruption is one the fundamental devices of all structuring" and signaling them helps educate the audience about the functions of the structuring (150-151).

agency are outlined. This is where cultural hegemony exercises its control. However, there is no way to contest its manifestations without engaging with them. Cultural confrontation and struggle entails negotiation. To negotiate is to accept the terms of the discussion, and it is not a choice so much as it is a moment of hegemony, it is what I would call, playing the champion by his rules. As Stuart Hall states: “You cannot enter into negotiation without knowing the ground you are working on and the possibilities and potential sites of victory, however small they may be” (188). There is no choice but to accept the language of the discussion. To understand the world, one must construct a framework of understanding. The framework then decides the perspective or placement by which or where one will observe and how the experience of the world will be understood. It is the jumping off point for contestation, as David Bleich asserts in his book, *The Materiality of Language*: “Popular culture (Folklore) is the daily point of access to symbolic materials for most people” (458). If a kind of language, type of football, and style of music can be considered to be ubiquitous in a region, it is because of the weight they have on the day-to-day life. These are the stages where negotiations will take place. The breaks in cultural hegemony occur in its weakest points, which just so happen to be the places where it appears to exercise its strongest influence on the most people. There is an appearance of full control because of the widespread impact. Nonetheless, its apparent saturation is actually where virtuoso cynics are most adept at battling.

The three ludic expressions of play in language, football and music are connected by the popular nature of their productions, thanks to the quotidian qualities of slang,

*fútbol criollo*, and communal music in Latin America and their lasting endurance as material manifestations that are embodied by popular sectors of society. I engage with the ludic elements in each respective cultural production where they contend to break or fracture, or signal both, established systems of oppression and discrimination. I'm working with the ludic using Johan Huizinga affirmations of play, in his book *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, being a cultural practice expressing interpretations of life and the world. The type of play I'm interested in is the kind that exists on the condition of collective experiences that are alternatives to dominant cultural patterns and practices, and as a result have gone and go actively unacknowledged or discriminated against. I call these popular play elements *illicit inscriptions*, where their existence in the material world is found in the everydayness of their expressions and informs virtuoso cynics' knowledge as a way of being. *Illicit inscriptions* are a stylized manner of popular peoples making their expressions matter. The popular here is in the sense of sectors of society that are in conflict with Latin America's inheritance of European transcendental universal symbols as a way of structuring it. These transcendental universal symbols are what Julia Kristeva calls "the rule of 1 (God, Law, Definitions)" (70) where social prohibition is found, and what Alenka Zupančič says is the heroes' higher calling, the universal symbolic function (31), the "imaginary Unity (or Oneness)" (77)...<sup>5</sup> they all deal with nonmaterial elements that society considers sacred, and popular peoples mark the faults in their revered observance, signaling realities that are incongruous to hegemonic power imposing its authority through universals in the

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<sup>5</sup> This will be analyzed more in Chapter 1 when showing how comedy signals the universal's incongruities.

structuring of society. *Illicit inscriptions* are not bound to dominant cultural knowledge and practice but instead motion different possibilities of being.

**“It’s not in the paper it’s on the wall”**

I began to think about playful popular cultural expressions as *illicit inscriptions* when contemplating why these practices are discriminated against while listening to the verses; “It’s not in the paper it’s on the wall”. The lyrics are to a Sublime song titled “April 29, 1992.” It is a common mistake to think that the song is called “April 26, 1992” because that date is the one sung in the opening verse, and was itself a calendrical mistake but kept for their band’s record. I hazard a guess that is was because of its phonetic appeal. The titled date corresponds to the Los Angeles Riots and the song is about the overall sentiment surrounding the event by the band based out of Long Beach, California, the Southern-most stretch of the transpired event. The paper “in” print refers to institutional information, and when reading the lyrics’ prepositional comparisons of “in” and “on”, the “in” corresponds to an acceptance- an enclosure within a system and an inclusion within the official discourse of the Rodney King trial and Los Angeles’s most marginal sectors of society’s reaction to it. Meanwhile the “on” lay on an exterior, and the comparison specifically forces the “on” to a marginal place in the city. Any time graffiti is marked on a wall, it undermines the structuring of the edifice, otherwise they would be endorsed murals. The tale told “on the wall” is what most concerns me; what the story is capable of relating, and how it must be told to be communicable.

*Illicit inscriptions’* recognition hinges on the general perception of what can be considered inside dominant discourses and what is outside of them. We are all constantly



inscribing ourselves into the world, whenever we talk, whenever we move around, in our body gestures- there are an infinite number of ways to go about the inscriptions and there are also different ways to read them, appraise them, and appreciate them, but it does not mean that our existence is necessarily recognized. As will be seen in Chapter 1, within the Western World there has been a tradition of hierarchy and discrimination based off of looking at language as a divine tool to logically rationalize, and so, how we inscribe ourselves into the world gets judged, and it gets judged harshly by that standard being associated with authority. This comes from what is deemed as not correct, and what isn't considered proper, and within Latin America, typically by Eurocentric uncontextualized universal standards of gender, race, and socioeconomic class privileges. If we agree with Hall about language being the primary symbolic system (59), then hegemony in language reinforces society's precepts in other forms of inscriptions as well. Under that mindset improper becomes a category for other forms of knowledges and gestures, other ways of operating in the world that aren't always acknowledged. This is why legibility is a general concern of mine, looking at our inscriptions of being where not everyone's existence is acknowledged within those circuits of communication, and much less has a voice to narrate themselves as a legitimate person, or even narrate themselves as a person outside society's appreciation of what that person should be and behave like. One need not think too far back and think of people who were enslaved not being considered full human beings, not everyone having the same rights as others because of sex or race, or people's existence being considered flat out illegal because of insufficient documentation.

Notions of illegitimacy are based off of discriminatory appraisals expressed most often times in interpretations of the world and the preconceived perception of the way that is should supposedly be. That which is illegitimate is that which is not authorized by law, and when it becomes illegal, it is illicit to the point of being illegible, uncommunicable. Writing and being read, and speaking and being heard, and existing in spaces are positional privileges. The binary of in/out dominant cultural discourses, is too black and white for me, instead I prefer to think of such relationships as having multiple variances to the in/out dynamic where what is “on” is not “in” institutional discourses yet the action of inscription and its illicitness helps reach past the confines of segregated social structures of being and reminds those whom are supposedly “in” the discourse, that they are ineluctably shackled to what they judge is outside of it. Graffiti is a prime example of this, where what is “on” is not “in” institutional structures and the action of inscription and its illegality is etched into existence where otherwise it would not have been given ground in the political sphere because it lay outside of dominant ideologies.

The construction of the Hispanophone World goes hand in hand with the violent colonial history that established power through language. The famous adage by Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla says that “siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio” (Alatorre 241) and this is repeated in 1492 by Antonio de Nebrija in his *Gramática castellana*. The year coincides with the Spanish arrival in the Americas. According to Antonio de Alatorre in his study *Los 1,001 años de la lengua española*, there is anecdote about Nebrija’s book in relation to the Spanish Queen Isabella de Castilla when she was presented with *la Gramática*, she asked what it was good for, and according to Nebrija:

el mui reverendo obispo de Ávila me arrebató la respuesta, i respondiéndolo por mí dijo que después que Vuestra Alteza metiese debaxo de su iugo muchos pueblos bárbaros i naciones de peregrinas lenguas, i con el vencimiento aquéllos tenían necesidad de recibir las leyes que el vencedor pone al vencido i con ellas nuestra lengua, entonces por este mi Arte podrían venir en el conocimiento della. (241)

Alatorre assures that there was no need for *la Gramática* during the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule of the Americas. *La Gramática* was not necessary for the imposition of the Spanish customs, culture, and religion, but it was the Spanish language that was used to reinforce and establish them, and make parts of the Americas, Hispanophone. Rules and laws in the Spanish Speaking Americas were still codified by Spanish language in a colonizing context. Harking back to some of Spanish's first appearances in what was then Tenochtitlan, the Sublime verse shares the same sentiment with Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who in his *Relación* said:

Y como Cortés estaba en Coyocán y posaba en unos palacios que tenían blanqueados y encaladas las paredes, donde buenamente se podía escribir en ellas con carbones y otras tintas, amanecían cada mañana escritos muchos motes, algunos en prosa y otros en metro, algo maliciosas (...) y aun decían palabras que no son para poner en esta relación. (384)

Again, there is a censoring of what is put inside of an official document, in spite of it being written in prose or in rime. Now, what was written on those walls was not made explicit, but it represented discontent with Cortés and his authority, and mocked it in such a way that relating it in the *Relación* would itself be associating the unofficial inscriber

with the official writer and upsetting to the status quo. An action not in the writer's best interest, considering that Díaz del Castillo was directing his *Relación* to other powers that be in Spain. The exclusion of the "on" and the necessity of its charisma must be stressed here. Good storytelling and wit are key to their impact and survival. Díaz del Castillo further writes: "De cada día iban más desvergonzados los metros, hasta que Cortés escribió: "Pared blanca, papel de necios". Y amaneció escrito más adelante: "Y aun de sabios y verdades, y Su Majestad lo sabrá muy presto" (384). Cortés tries to take a sovereign stance when deciding what is in and out of validity, yet while engaging with the inscriptions he also signals how attached he is to them.

These *illicit inscriptions* are irrational, but irrational only in the consideration of Western Society's notions of what is within reason as forming part of legitimate cultural practices and knowledges. They are considered such because, as irrational, popular expressions may be continually appraised as illegitimate interpretations of reality and thus their existence invalidated. When societies' outlets of expression are not providing the necessary means nor the access to the populace to fully communicate in society, those who have not the access nor the means to express their concerns have no choice but to seek other stylized actions to express themselves. Part of the stylization is their performative aspect, as Diana Taylor finds is the ability "to reimagine and restage the social rules, codes, and conventions that prove most oppressive and damaging" (xiv). The performativity of the *illicit inscriptions* draws attention to the existence and plights of popular peoples where otherwise there wouldn't be. In the foreword of *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga very keenly observes Homo Sapien's auto-referencing itself as reasonable and

knowledgeable in the nomenclature. The loftiness of our species declaring itself knowledgeable or knowing was a self-aggrandizing one that facilitates a discourse of writing-off other knowledges or practices as nonknowledge, ergo human not in the hegemonic know are less human under that standard. Play, as Huizinga notes is “not bound to logic nor rational thinking”, going beyond the immediate needs of life, of capitalism, of state centered work, and of efficacy (140). That type of logic or rationality is part of a system that constantly discriminates against popular peoples’ existence yet forces its conscription within the day-to-day order established by dominant groups, where such rationality is normalized. The invalidation of popular peoples’ is unassailable from ideas of superior cultures or knowledges. I’m analyzing elements outside of that rationality of culture and its association with superior knowledge, because of its political implications. That knowledge hinges on the survival of popular peoples, whose places in marginal socioeconomic zones is meant to funnel an exploited existence, one that contributes to the status quo’s place as the status quo. Here is where play becomes involved, because as Roger Caillois finds, “play mocks at work” and in the mockery it offends the status quo by providing different perspectives and experiences of daily life that are signaling the faults in the structuring of society’s social game (145). With the definitions at hand, performative popular play then has a semiotic force to create new valuations in society.

### **True Play**

The spaces in which the tripartite productions take place are conducive to rebellious acts. *Illicit inscriptions* are true play. Not all play is true play, this cannot be

stressed enough. To sum it up succinctly, true play punches up- true play is critical and punctures the hegemonic apparatuses. Play with hegemonic apparatuses, just helps reinforce society's structuring, and is easy to do- it's easy to punch down. True play deals with the matter of life- its material elements. The matter which makes us human, and enlivens our human existence. *Illicit inscriptions* are positionally situated at thresholds of hegemonic structures that purposefully distance humanity from the material aspects that make it up. Thinking in terms of allocated margins of error, those who live on the thresholds of society represent figures whose existence implies a life lived in such a manner that does not leave room for them to make mistakes. I'm taking inspiration to define popular peoples' ability to maneuver these situations from Paolo Virno's *general intellect* of the multitude. Virno describes it in this fashion:

The *general intellect* manifests itself today, above all, as the communication, abstraction, self-reflection of living subjects. It seems legitimate to maintain that according to the very logic of economic development, it is necessary that a part of the *general intellect* not congeal as fixed capital but unfold in communicative interaction, under the guise of epistemic paradigms, dialogical performances, linguistic games. (2004:65)

Living a comfortable lifestyle has a connotation of a sense of security in a place that will not be dangerous to a specific person or group of people. This is why Virno describes the multitude as being "without a home" because as a result of their situation they,

have no choice but to behave like thinkers: not in order for them to learn something about biology or advanced mathematics, but because they turn to the

most essential categories of the abstract intellect in order to protect themselves from the blows of random chance, in order to take refuge from contingency and from the unforeseen. (2004:38)

This transmission of information and knowledge goes beyond language cues, filled with gestures and actions as communicative code, expressing meaningful indications that cannot always be commodified in the quarters of a classroom or inside a book. I do not continue using the term multitude because of its connotations as a grouping of a mass, even though it may be centrifugal to express individuality, as Virno explains. I find that such terminology homogenizes groups of people and detracts from them being people, and *illicit inscriptions* moves towards recognizing peoples' experiences of the world.<sup>6</sup>

The language of popular peoples, by default, that which has value in their communication through cultural manifestations will be considered crass or inconsequential to those who do not wish to understand them. There is a reason slang, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music are represented most by the largest, most populous demographic and offer the greatest influence on them. As cultural phenomena in Latin America; colloquial language, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music have the greatest impact on the most people because it is they who are the largest producers of them. Communication is a social exchange and the economy of symbols in social exchanges is the domain of meaning. There is no neutrality in any exchange, particularly of information. All information, or artefacts, have political valences that siphon value from socio-cultural activities. Therefore, that which is communicable to them and of them will

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<sup>6</sup> An example of this is instead of using the term "slaves" in Chapter 3, I opt for using people that were enslaved.

likewise follow suit, impacting the same audience in the transmission, circumventing the systems that wish to depreciate it. The issue that arises has more to do with its reception and fluency. In terms of majority, *illicit inscriptions* are a type of communication experienced in daily life, and those who do not wish to see it, openly ignore it due to undervaluation or open discrimination imposed on by the status quo or in hopes of maintaining it. This is a result of purposely esteeming jargon, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music as superficial cultural manifestations, but it is precisely that underappreciation that bestows upon *illicit inscriptions* power in each respective arena.

When the rules of a game or laws of society are universalized, which for this writer may be said to be the laws of the social game, they are not equitable. Everyone must accommodate to the laws, to whatever rules of the game being played. Popular peoples know this at a phenomenological level, which is why they are cynical.<sup>7</sup> The cynicism with *illicit inscriptions* comes from the popular place that Rowe and Schelling describe as living the actual conflicts of society. These conflicts arise because there are people that show the cracks in the universal symbolic structures that rule society. The cynic experiences this and the virtuosic handling of the situation by them as virtuoso cynics is realizing that there are different perspectives, ergo experiences, of interpreting reality. The rules of the game are unfair because there are sectors of the population that benefit from them if others are discriminated against by them. While the rules' benefactors or the laws' benefactors do not easily update or alter them for those

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<sup>7</sup> Sloterdijk says that classical cynicism is “a theory of consciousness with flesh and blood (and teeth)... to discover the living body as a sensor of the world is to secure a realistic foundation for philosophical knowledge of the world” (xxxix, xxxiii). The primal and material emphasis here contributes to the realness implied by the cynic, and the biting and incisive critiques implies by the “teeth”.



advantageous reasons, they are made by them for them, ergo under their logic of rule-makers the system is fair. All virtuoso cynics know that law is not a synonym for justice and that rules do not translate into fair play. To again subscribe to the adage of playing the champ by his rules, virtuoso cynics have to find the flexible points where hegemonic apparatuses will bend and the weak points where they will break in order to level the playing field. Moreover, according to Hall, laws existence counts on them being broken in order to punish those who do. He says “[o]nly through punishment does a society reaffirm its normative integration and the power of its normative structure. The very process of violating the norms helps integrate the social order” (58). Therein lies the undervalued power that virtuoso cynics command, the break signals the act of rebellion where it was expected to take place, however the manner in which it was done may become more meaningful than the ritual act of the punishment.

The social practice of daily life is where hegemonic control is founded, and to reinvent it, to reimagine the practice outside of its familiar context or frame is an act of intervention- like an unauthorized script, a new interpretation of reality, or a contestation of an official definition. Normalizations and standardizations are propagated as necessary for the functioning of society and language is used to transmit the thought processes, henceforth language is also presented as normalized and standardized, and so is behavior. *Illicit inscriptions* are stratagems for making the uncommunicable communicable- ideas and realities hegemonic apparatuses cannot bear to stomach. In *Speaking (La Parole)* by Georges Gusdorf, he says: “If words command access to being, if it is true that before and beyond words there is nothing, how is it that the word often appears suspect and

devalued? It is the currency of being, in theory, but all too often counterfeit.” (40).

Thought processes and actions are not separate from each other. And because they are not separate from each other, actions and beings that exist outside hegemonic thought processes are invalidated as being because of a supposed incapacity to think therefore exist. This doesn't even leave popular peoples the possibility to be misunderstood, they are a-priori wrong. Communication is access to being in the world. Diana Taylor already posed it as a question if taken seriously is an affirmation, “bodies (and not only books and documents) produce, store, and transfer knowledge” (221). Popular peoples' transmission of the knowledges and their receptions do not have a standardized medium. The enactment, the action itself is more while being embodied through practice. Knowledges of embodied behaviors are not limited to the texts or to bodies- they come to being in the action of communication. The performative aspect of *illicit inscriptions* is centered around the transmission, the insertion of a person's language, and by extension themselves into the world.

Playing on words and social situations is a type of thought that is the result of an unstandardized process through an empirical relationship to knowledge. The virtuosity of the *illicit inscriptions* exists by necessity of survival and is born out of a process formed quite on the fly. The voice and opinion of popular peoples is henceforth ingrained in their culture and their politics by a necessity of survival. Again, the stylization of these inscriptions just so happens to not be sanctioned or standardized. Structures of communication that are standardized and perpetuated do not allow room for variations. There are luxuries and privileges only allotted to some members of society, and the

standard structuring of society that regulates said society normalizes it for their benefit. How to talk, how to write, how to play a game, and how to carry out music all have implied valuations. Ordinary expectations are hegemonic expectations. Perceptual patterns are mental patterns, but to try to look at them differently provides the possibility of diversity. Meeting a standard is not an easy task when forced to operate outside of the means that provide the making of that standard. Slang, *fútbol criollo*, and communal music are interpretations of the world that do not coincide with hegemonic views on it because popular cultures' do not experience the same world as dominant cultures do. Standardizing something is a form of discrimination because there is no effort at looking at the way others live in the world. I'm not saying that there is just one standard, for something to be stylized it still needs to be communicated, but not giving room for variation or difference, or discriminating against the differences or variations is what detracts from those inscriptions in the world. Style is about the appreciation of differences. The imposition of standards is the monopolization of style, a uniformity, which is the absence of style. Style is born from contextual interactions with the world. Communities adapt to their surroundings and express their modes of living ad hoc. That space where they exist and cannot be spoken to, in terms of universal values, prestige, or power, because those appreciations are supposed to leave popular sectors of society in a vulnerable place, easily controlled. This unquantifiable space in which the communication of popular peoples resides can lead to regarding their conventions as savage, creole, or primitive in regard to the cultural practices of dominant ideologies. However, as mentioned earlier, it is precisely their position there that gives them their

possible advantage against institutionalized systems of oppression. That which is not valued or considered worthwhile in those systems is what popular peoples are most versed in.

*Illicit inscriptions* are born from a sententially disadvantaged place. Popular peoples work with the matter of their situation, because their reality is a result of the imposition of standard ideals. Standards are uncontextualized and presented as all-encompassing, they are incapable of being applied to all situations. That is why raced and sexed peoples are so offensive to them. They reveal the “rule of 1 (God)”’s incapacity by making false society’s prohibition- displaying distinct modes of being and putting them at a junction where the differences found in the angles are presented to reveal those modes in a different light. Formal language is not context dependent, it’s impersonal dependent. The skill of the virtuoso goes beyond that which can be taught. Theirs is a matter of profound personal immersion into the activity at hand. A familiarity with the space implied and a flow through the action, through the performance. Their action, the performance of the spectacle is not an interpretation. The very ability to improvise beyond any script is the virtuosity of the cynic. One of its innate characteristics is it being an art that is appreciated in the action and not the finalized product. This Virno says is the act of a virtuoso:

First of all, theirs is an activity which finds its own fulfilment (that is, its own purpose) in itself, without objectifying in itself into an end product, without settling into a ‘finished product’, or into an object which would survive the

performance. Secondly, it is an activity which requires the presence of others, which exists only in the presence of an audience. (52)

Virtuoso cynics do (enact) what they know and what they know is not in the sense of knowing, but in the sense of having knowledge of (know-how) in its embodied state. The virtuoso knows intimately their action as being representative of themselves. What they do and how they do it speaks of them and what they are in volumes. There is no need to act it, nor is it a temporal occupation. It is not a profession that calls for a certain number of hours out of the week for a certain number of days and will yield an X amount of results. That is far too calculated and systematic to be able to work within a system that bases its discrimination on systematic calculations. The virtuoso is committed to their role so far as it is of them as they carry it out. This is what they are, it just so happens to be around the clock. It is a matter of having intimate knowledge, in non-sexual terms, of the task at hand, although the concept here of depth and immersion is precisely the carnal connotation that is intended to be conveyed because of how embodied the action is. There is a particular joy in the doing for virtuoso cynics. Losing in the overall picture is to them inevitable, they are after all by default cynical. This is why how language is expressed, what style football is played, and how music is made have so much importance. The style behind the virtuoso cynic's playing becomes part of the spectacle, part of the act. In the feeling behind their action lays their potentiality and its power. The action for the action's and the actor's own sake is done per form of the performance to speak to (embody) the

reality of the world that they live in. Virtuoso cynics do not play at being virtuoso cynics, they are virtuoso cynics, and they play.<sup>8</sup>

### **Wordplay, Gameplay, and Musicplay**

Fighting against cultural hegemony is not definite in its place nor objective because the virtuoso cynics' counter is incapable of falling completely outside of the cultural discourse. This is not to take value away from the counter, it is to signal its complexity. If it is countering it must take into account at which point it is doing so and how it is going about it. There are codes and strategies of survival and they exist because one must be able to meaningfully understand society's order, to come up with a valid stratagem to work against them. Ordering is not only structuring, it implies imperatives, and there is no way to exist within society without engaging with them. It is not merely about survival either. Virtuoso cynics do not hedge any bets to continue surviving in their place. There is no compromising with the task at hand, that is a privilege for those whom are bestowed with margins of error and benefit from the system that bequeaths them. *Illicit inscriptions* are played out in such a way because virtuoso cynics must compete by proving their worth, breaking away from a system that propagates procedural meritocracy: Where one must follow certain steps, adhere to the right protocols, and obey the rules so that the correct results will be yielded to the compliers. For them to compete they cannot just do well observing the rules of the games, because the rules were not meant to get them ahead. They must think and act outside of the standardization of the

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<sup>8</sup> Lefebvre's waiter comes to mind here: "The waiter in a café is not playing at being a waiter. He is one. And he is not one" (CEL 37). This also brings up a point to be made about what Zupančič says comedy has the capability of signaling in tautologies: "Man is only man" can be shown in comedy to unveil "man is never only man" (49). Virtuoso cynics revel in unveiling the veil.

rules because they are a conductor for a certain type of result that was never meant to benefit them. Everything is a game for popular peoples because they have no choice but to always play the social game. For popular peoples, observing the rules and following the standards will just make them fall in line to the systems that want them stay in their designated place. For virtuoso cynics, the only way to afford oneself with agency is to stand out, to break away from them conventions. So instead of following the rules and prescribed play, they actually play; in respect to Bolaño's novel, Maradona's goals, and Drexler's *aplicación*, they play with it with wordplay, gameplay, and musicplay.

*Los detectives salvajes* has a repeated theme throughout the novel, where the intention of *realismo visceral* is to show poetry as a praxis and what they do and say is always "mitad en serio y mitida en broma". As will be seen in Chapter 1, the poetic in Bolaño's novel will be harking back to what Julia Kristeva calls the "trans-logical elements" in language that poetry is able to bring to life, its sensuous properties. As she says, "[t]o rediscover the intonations, scansion, and jubilant rhythms preceding the signifier's position as language's position is to discover the voiced breadth that fastens us to an undifferentiated mother, to a mother who later, at the mirror stage, is altered into a maternal language" (195). Play with language goes beyond the words being played with, not in a divine, transcendental way, but the weight with which the words come with; their history, their connections, their style. Nothing is forever, but within the finitude there are infinite infinites, and it is impossible to explore all of them. Yet, recognizing those qualities in language, and still reaching for them is a joyous action. Poetry, as Huizinga finds, "in its original culture-making capacity, is born in and as play- sacred play, no

doubt, but always, even in its sanctity, verging on gay abandon, mirth and joviality” (122). He goes on to affirm that in Plato’s *Symposium*, Socrates says that the “the true poet... must be tragic and comic at once, and the whole of human life must be felt as a blend of tragedy and comedy” (145). *Illicit inscriptions* are true play, both tragic and comical. They do this by dealing with the matter of life, its material elements. Theories on comedy say that it is a mode of social correction,<sup>9</sup> or a way of avoiding displeasure and finding a position above reality.<sup>10</sup> Avoidance is not cynical, and making more hierarchies of interpretations nullifies the acceptance of others, the same faculty that allows virtuosic cynics to confront their reality. It is a fight for an interpretation of reality, which is to say a fight for being. Colloquial language has a direct referent to the materiality of language. The play is with the context, literally *con* the *texto* of the situation. And within each moment within each situation having multiple fabrics, multiple textures, and multiple layers, ready to be connected and intertwined to offer an incarnation of the context. Hegemonic apparatuses of language governing Western Society are then nullified by the incapacity of appreciating intertwined relationships. Communication is not a linearity and contact with other realities sullies the perfection presumed by the hegemonic apparatuses.

*MARADONA, La mano de DIOS, and El mejor gol del mundo* are transgressive expressions on the boundaries of what FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Association designates as the “beautiful game”. A game about which FIFA considers

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<sup>9</sup> See Henri Bergson’s *Laughter; an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.

<sup>10</sup> Freud continuously says throughout his essay, “Humour” that the compulsion for humor by the subject is to avoid suffering and to position oneself above reality.



itself the authority. In Chapter 2; *MARADONA, La mano de DIOS* and *El mejor gol del mundo* will be seen as popular expressions of football culture in Latin America where their subversive nature will be highlighted in the face of the dominant ideology that FIFA tries to perpetuate in its notion of “fair play”. FIFA pushes its official laws on the sport, stipulating that they promote equality in the game. However false it may be, FIFA perpetuates that discourse so much and repeats so many times to desensitize, makes it feel legitimate, and cause the percepticide. FIFA’s endeavors to make their understanding of football the lingua franca of the game and make their laws of the game a conductor for a universal style of playing it. FIFA’s propaganda of “beautiful game” and “fair play” perpetuates systemic inequalities and FIFA does not want fluency in *MARADONA* and all the symbolic value connoted with what the chapter will show he represents: the possibility of an alternative football, which is to say the possibility of alternative ways of playing and living. FIFA, the multibillion-dollar Swiss non-profit wants the culture of the game to be a commodity that they are the main benefactors of. *MARADONA*, the number 10 jersey, *DIOS*, cannot be controlled by FIFA, nor can his tempestuous nature, by the looks of it so far, ever be quelled. Putting his name on a jersey, a jersey with the number 10, is contentiously a reference to him, football commodities FIFA cannot control; *MARADONA*, *DIOS*, or his goals. *MARADONA* reveals the corruption in the game because of the manner in which he played it and with his drug addictions and outbursts continuously undermines the correct professional way to behave in relation towards it.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, *candombe* and “*n*” are seen to emphasize the participatory aspect of communal music. To give the context of music- the manner in which music is

engaged by people, is to inform its meaning. Musical meanings and conventions are made by human practice, music is not an essence in and of itself, but that of practices associated with their composing. *Candombe*'s history of expressing Afro-Argentinean community in Uruguay has a copious amount of symbolic import. So much so that the National day of *candombe* in Uruguay, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, is also the day that celebrates Afro-Argentinean culture and racial equity. International Women's day in Uruguay is also celebrated by women taking to the street in a performance of *candombe*. When music is communally taking to the street in a politically charged way in Uruguay, it is doing so as a performance of *candombe*. Chapter 3 seeks to analyze the function of the player in the 3 *aplicaciones* in "n": *n1*, *n2*, and *n3*; where the author, the app, and the player are all spliced into the performance, at once accomplices and collaborators in an updated type of agency for the songs being produced that are very much informed by *candombe*, the long-standing musical tradition of Afro-Argentinean *sobrevivencia*- working with the play element in music as being an action to have fun with and as being an interpretation of reality. While marginalized groups of people are having a good time, creating a celebratory event, and coming together in the process, they play with the reality that oppresses them, and make it their own, and those looking outside of that interpretation of reality discriminate against that play because it does not make sense to them. *Candombe* is a strategy of existence manifested in participants' inscriptions which are somatic extensions of themselves in a society that did not want to acknowledge them. In Thomas Turino's *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, he finds that authority "wants to associate with the divine, to have exclusive access to it, it can't bear

the thought of art being a day to day activity by those not considered human” (3).

*Candombe* and “*n*” are looking at the material scenes of music in everyday life through a different lens, offering a different perspective. Knowing how to interact with different instruments, different musical parts, and the world, signals adaptability. Systematization of experience is not play and borders on the lack of experience. It is a simulation of experience, not experience, and marks the difference between users and players.

Dominant groups are not players in the social game. The social game is a rigged game where the dominant groups are users of the structures and rules they themselves made and so repeat to follow their own formula. Repetition is not play. There are routines in public routed in scenic interactions conditioned by dominant ideologies meant to perpetuate the structuring of society within the mundane triviality. True play actually risks a positionality outside of the tried-and-true methods because virtuoso cynics want different results from the ones prescribed to them.

The playfulness of the narrative in *Los detectives salvajes*, like the two goals scored by Maradona against England, and the composition of the songs in “*n*” exist in unconventional spaces, breaking outside of normative hierarchies in each respective cultural field, interrupting constantly in their act and reminiscence. The forms encapsulated in the language, football, and musical gestures are the terms of the communication for virtuoso cynics. The language by which the three aforementioned cultural products communicate themselves is inviting to the action of their performance. The temporalities facilitate an association without vicariousness in the person reading, remembering, or composing. Form and content seem to find a fusion here where what is

being done is the same as how it is being done. There is meaning behind representations that are able to make acts intelligible, however there are some acts that when finalized are able to give new meanings based on their symbolic importance in what it is that is being articulated. For popular peoples, “it is not a question of ‘seizing power’, of constructing a new State or a new monopoly of political decision making; rather it has to do with defending plural experiences, forms of non-representative democracy, of non-governmental usages and customs” (Virno 43). In these three cultural instantiations we find a playful praxis of language so tied to time and space that it might never have an officious use, football plays so improvised that they can never be repeated and undermine the system that sets the rules for the game, and music that can never be played again but necessitates a presence in the present playing.<sup>11</sup> They act as articulations that offer a break away from hegemonic apparatuses, negating the formulation of standards, and the hierarchies that they may fall under if only to highlight the possibility of doing so.

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<sup>11</sup> To drive the point of ephemerality and the necessity of interaction in the present, “n” has not been updated and is currently no longer downloadable and playable.

“It is only the sacred things worth touching”

Oscar Wilde

## CHAPTER 1

Comic Critiques & Punch-line Relief: Plays on language in *Los detectives salvajes*

So, let us go ahead and start off with an anecdote about Roberto Bolaño, both contributing to the myth that was made around his life and also speaking to the charm in the same myth. All of the Bolaño fervor, although having to do with capitalizing the marketability of his death, was still born from an intriguing place, his life, or at least the manner in which his life was inscribed into his work. While trying to finish *2666* the last five years before his death, a book straddling one-thousand pages, considered by many his masterpiece published posthumously, Francisco Goldman is quoted saying this about him: “He’s in a race with Death, and it’s as if Death is cheering him on”.<sup>12</sup> The picture being painted there has courageous charm to it, but even more when taking into consideration Bolaño’s stance on death and defeat, taken here from an interview:

Yo soy de los que creen que el ser humano está condenado de antemano a la derrota, a la derrota sin apelaciones, pero que hay que salir y dar la pelea y darla además de la mejor forma posible, de cara y limpiamente, sin pedir cuartel (porque además no te la darán), e intentar caer como un valiente, y eso es nuestra victoria. (*Entre paréntesis* 101-102)

Aside from the obvious cynicism about life and the fatalistic nature regarding living, there is a strong undertone of bravery that undermines the unavoidable result implied in

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<sup>12</sup> “This Week in Fiction: The True Bolaño”, by Willing Davidson January 13, 2012, *The New Yorker*.

the earlier half of the statement, failure notwithstanding. A willingness to go down fighting and to play the game of life, wherein failure is inevitable, but in just the mere fact of playing to play well lays the gist of the whole thing. In his work, Bolaño was very willing to play with his characters and storytelling, being able to juggle storylines and their voices as a masterful raconteur. The literary universe he inscribed intertwines plots and characters in many of his novels and short stories, but for me, the most brilliant exposition of his capability as a writer is found in *Los detectives salvajes*.

The title, *Los detectives salvajes* indicates that the novel will be about detectives. Those whose occupation involves investigating and solving crimes. This begs the question, what type of crimes are they sleuthing after? To look into the title a little more, we have savage as a qualifier for the detective. Then what is it that is savage here? There is a famous phrase by Bolaño that indicates that there are only two professions that a man can have; “asesino o detective: no hay otra elección para un hombre” (2011:109). The use of “hombre” here should not be taken to mean the umbrellaing of all people under one gender the way the use of the word “mankind” does. In other moments when Bolaño talks about people in general, he is very conscious of his language and word choice, like any great writer, and he says “el ser humano”, understanding human existence as not a one gender experience. Very superficial readings of his texts claim that his writing is very manly, attributing his popularity to that aspect. I do not think that is the case, particularly because of his depiction of the feminicides in his novel *2666* and with his critique of the way women are treated in *Los detectives salvajes*. The novel, *Los detectives salvajes*, in large is about poetry, and the concern throughout most of it is the pursuit of a poet who is

a woman, Cesárea Tinajero. According to Julia Kristeva, poetry is the vehicle that harks back to the original crime, the suppression of the pre- and trans-logical elements of language that poetry works with, addresses, uses, and brings to light (25). With poetic language the logic implied with the use of the sign in language is not taken as the only element to be concerned with in the use of language. These elements are associated with the first significant communication between two people; the mother and the child. The force in language that retains this matter, signals, moves it, and originally orients us- the heartbeat, the mother's voice, the violence of birth, and the cry -that which is primal, harks on being uncivilized, primitive, savage, fierce, violent, or uncontrolled. This is why Kristeva says this about poets and society, referencing Plato's *Republic*: "consequently we have this platonistic acknowledgment... a (any) society may be stabilized only if it excludes poetic language" (31). Cesárea Tinajero, the mother of *realismo visceral*, the poetic movement that the main characters of the novel (Arturo Belano, Ulises Lima, and Juan García Madero) wish to continue, by her name references birth, but that of a cesarean section, where the viscera are taken out and so is the baby. The detective work in the novel is tracing back the components of poetry, the forsaking of the matter, the murder of the motherly elements with the slaying of the rhythm, beat, cry, of the pre- and trans-logical. The suppression of those components, their hiding, obviating, by the logical ordering of language, are what *realismo visceral*, as practitioners of poetry are trying to work with. The stance the *viscerrealistas* take throughout the novel about what they do and what they say is, as they repeat throughout the book: "mitad en serio" and "mitad en broma". While they are trying to hark back to the pre- and trans-logical elements of

language through poetry, the avenue which they choose to do so is through humor. This chapter will focus on wordplay in the novel *Los detectives salvajes*, where references by the *viccerrealistas* to what is “mitad en serio” and “mitad en broma” call into question discriminatory language practices within the society depicted in the novel by contesting apparatuses meant to be considered solemn and putting a playfully humorous twist on them to highlight their arbitrariness and fragility. This duplicitous nature will be analyzed to stress the strength of playful colloquial language, its virtuosic capabilities, and how it contests discriminatory language practices. Plays of multiple-meanings on language affect it symbolically, sometimes playing with the phonetic nature and sometimes playing with the semantics, where what the intricacies of the implied multiplicities yield are the possibility of tiny rebellions in language and brief triumphs for those speakers and their audience from oppressive and discriminatory states of being.

### **Situating *Los detectives salvajes***

Roberto Bolaño is one of the most influential Latin American writers of the past decades, an observation also made by Edmundo Paz Soldán and Gustavo Faverón Patriau in their *Presentación in Bolaño Salvaje* (9). The novel that first helped catapult him to such stature was *Los detectives salvajes*. The book takes place between 1975 and 1996, but the multivocal stories and narrations that are told do not limit themselves to that timeline, also encompassing earlier Latin American History through the accounts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; from the Mexican Revolution to the overthrow of the Salvador Allende Government in Chile in 1973. Those twenty-one years are very much marked by the horrors that led up to that time period. The historical context of Roberto Bolaño's



literature is Latin American dictatorships and their trauma.<sup>13</sup> All of Bolaño's oeuvre situates itself within that time period and he was plain about to whom it was addressed to. This is why it is important to talk about the historical moment in Latin America during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These are more or less the years where the central characters in Bolaño's oeuvre grow up and live out their lives, just as he himself does. Bolaño says in his Caracas address while receiving the Romulo Gallegos prize for *Los detectives salvajes*, that his whole body of work is a love letter or a goodbye letter to his generation. "Todo lo que he escrito es una carta de amor o despedida a mi generación, los que nacimos en la década del cincuenta y los que escogimos en un momento dado el ejercicio de la milicia, en este caso sería más correcto decir la militancia..." (*Entre paréntesis* 37). The generation that he is speaking to is the same one that in Latin America felt that they had the possibility of changing the world because of the hope inspired by both the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and then the election of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970. In Juliet Lynd's essay, "*Latin America is Sown with the Bones of These Forgotten Youths: Revolution Dictatorship, and Roberto Bolaño*", she states that "Bolaño and his contemporaries are scarred by battles, ideological and physical, between leftist utopian revolutionary movements in Latin America throughout the twentieth century and their brutal repression by right-wing military regimes that assumed power in the 1970's and 1980's" (33). As a result of feeling that revolution was at arm's length, the violence of the later right-wing dictatorships was much more of an agonizing defeat for that generation. This was compounded by the overriding feelings of insolvency for

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<sup>13</sup> Paula Aguilar makes this assertion in her essay in *Bolaño Salvaje*: "'Pobre memoria la mía". Literatura y melancolía en el context de la postdictadura chilena (*Nocturno de Chile* de Roberto Bolaño)"

having to live through those years the sense of the horrors being internalized day after day after day. Therefore, the love letter is a recognition of compassion to his generation, and if the letter has any signs of romanticism it is a particular kind of romanticism found in Bolaño's writings, that speaks to the same generation.

In *Bolaño Salvaje*, there is a great essay by Roberto Fresán titled "El samurái romántico", painting Roberto Bolaño in a romantic and swordsman light. Fresán says, "Bolaño es uno de los escritores más románticos en el mejor sentido de la palabra" (294). Based off of the qualification of "el mejor sentido de la palabra" he is not the lonely tortured romantic standing at the precipice of a cliff overlooking clouds, he is on the other hand a different sort of romantic.<sup>14</sup> The contrast here is that the romantic is not the aforementioned dandy tortured over the incapability of uttering the ineffable, but Fresán does talk about other ideals being realizable in Bolaño's work, utopias, and that is where I differ from Fresán. Bolaño's work is not utopic, although because of the romantic overtones, his work falsely seems like it is. There is on the other hand an intention, about which I very much agree with Fresán here about Bolaño's texts: "que la tinta sea igual de importante que la sangre" (*Letras Libres*). Fresán refers back to an affirmation made by Bolaño in an interview, where he equates literature being a fight between a samurai and a monster, and the samurai knows he cannot win, and states: "La literatura se parece mucho a la pelea de los samuráis, pero un samurái no pelea contra otro samurái: pelea contra un monstruo. Generalmente sabe, además, que va a ser derrotado. Tener el valor, sabiendo previamente que vas a ser derrotado, y salir a pelear: eso es la literatura" (2011:13). The

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<sup>14</sup> This is a direct reference to the painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* by the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich

imagery is beautiful and falls along the lines of many passages in Bolaño's narratives and interviews where defeat is inevitable but the combat must still take place. Failure is a recurring theme in Bolaño's work and the romanticizing notion of it I believe is very apt because of the popular nature of his writings. It is not a defeatist attitude, so much as a cynical insolence, and steadfast one.

Romanticism in Latin America had a distanced outlook on the popular in society, akin to a nostalgic appreciation for something that was not experienced. According to Rowe and Schelling, the popular in romanticism gives products like magical realism and glorifies peasants and indigenous communities in an utopian manner. Making their ways of life unviable because they exist in a realm that is idealized and, because of the idealization, cannot be conceived of as existing in the real world. This type of romantic view of the popular is myopic and unable to appreciate the popular aspects of Latin American society. The popular is full of beliefs that do not take much of a distance from considerations deemed impossible by Western notions of appreciation. Popular considerations take into account inherited beliefs and customs that were not considered part of the modernizing project in Latin America. At best some were romanticized as a pure way of peasant life; at worst, seen as backwards and harshly discriminated against, claiming that they could not survive modernizing projects. Either way, the popular is more complex than that. To refer to popular considerations or esteem them as magical without fully considering the gravity of that which is taking place completely apart from any modernizing project whatsoever- be it a ritual, a myth, a belief, that is completely unfeasible. Popular practice's survival is under constant threat by modernizing projects

and the popular subjects that practice them constantly figure out ways to contest and negotiate their own survival. The magical has no place in the modern conception of what is possible under Western notions of ontology. However, the popular has no problem with what the West terms magical because it has an inherited memory and inherited practices outside of dominant Western ideologies, that deal with modernization projects all around them and evolve with them. The magical is a part of the popular as a practice and way of life.<sup>15</sup> Under romantic notions, the magical is only folklorized, not experienced, there in lying the many problematics of the popular as the unattainable notion of a romantic or the ineffable notion of the romantic.

*Los detectives salvajes* is immensely romantic and popular, much of it having to do with the way language is presented in the novel through its so-called *realismo visceral*. The novel's structure is set in three parts: the first and third correspond with the diaries of Juan García Madero, an aspiring poet, *real visceralista*, and the reader's window into the search for the founding member of *realismo visceral*. The second section comprises the main bulk of the book and is composed of a set of interviews with many narrators talking about their connections to *realismo visceral*, mainly Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima. What we get to know and are introduced to as readers is presented in the novel by either a diary or a set of various interviews where what is being read has a marked orality to it. The discursive nature of *Los detectives salvajes* makes the reading approachable and accessible. Within the Hispanophone world some of the most ubiquitous texts, like *Don Quixote* and *Martín Fierro*, were able to reach such a wide

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<sup>15</sup> Henri Lefebvre takes note of this as well under the section "The law of the transformation of the irrational" (137) in *Critique of Everyday Life* of Chapter 1.

level of dispersion because of their oral nature. Historically, wealth seems to have always been monopolized and as a result lower socio-economic classes have made up the larger part of the population and have lacked a formal education; this is why orality has always played such a big role in passing down information from person to person and generation to generation.<sup>16</sup> To this day, orality in writing still carries much weight, and I believe this is also why *Los detectives salvajes* has been so widely read. The diary and the interviews in the novel come off as confessional, and the information feels very word-of-mouth. Writing is just one iteration of the manner in which a language is spoken and, despite the fact that *realismo visceral* as a poetic movement, including Cesárea Tinajero, Ulises Lima, and Arturo Belano, does not present the reader with many opportunities to read poems associated with the movement, the poetic is still not lacking in the novel's storytelling. This at first glance might appear to be problematic, if an entire novel's central theme is the production of poetry. However, I do not see it as such. Poetry as praxis, as a way of life, is I believe one of the main stances that the novel takes. If this is the case, poetry is being materialized in the day-to-day and so is the colloquial usage of language, which is in itself revolutionary in the Western World's notion of language and highly contentious to the status quo.

### **Institutionalization of Language or “All scripture is God-breathed”**

In the Western tradition of language, the written word has been a presentation of omniscience, where power is not only to be in the know but also has to do with how to know. David Bleich, in *The Materiality of Language*, analyzes language in the conditions

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<sup>16</sup> Samuel G. Armistead has the same stance for his prologue in Maxmiano Trapero's *El libro de la décima*

in which it exercises authority, showing that since the medieval ages, custodians of language have held a systematic monopoly by commanding clout through knowledge based on language being representative of universal ideas or meanings via the veneration of texts. As a result of Western knowledge being shaped by a long history of Christianity's influence in education, especially at the level of universities, ideas and meanings in their immateriality were purported to be eternal and by abstraction, holy. Therefore, language has long been considered a conduit as opposed to something in and of itself. Perhaps more akin to a holy vessel for something greater than itself, as it were. It was not just the theologians exercising this power; royalty followed suit, then aristocracy, heads of state did not lag too far behind afterwards, and as of now multinational corporations are doing the same. The problems that result here lay in the presentation of grandiose ideas meant to be worshipped: God, holy ordination or appointment, the nation, democracy, capitalism, war, industry, the free-market, technology... all containing within themselves various dimensions of meaning and umbrellaing a plethora of ideals and morals, so much so that breaking them apart to understand the dynamic mechanisms put into place to have the whole of it functioning seems like an impossibility. While they overwhelm as being universal symbolic functions being presented as being perpetually incontrovertible; a huge monstrous blob that swallows up all arguments presented to it and takes the consumption as an act that reaffirms its correctness, into incontrovertibility. The issue is that those concepts are not enacted in any particular human epistemology by any one thing but are constructed by an endless number of people during innumerable contexts consisting of unquantifiable interactions. However, the all-knowing or the all-

encompassing to-be-revered takes precedence because of the supposed simplicity of a single grandiose thing explaining everything. When the written word represents that which is sacred, interpretations that might call into question the validity of the texts and highlight their materiality in the everyday become sacrilegious.

Making a language sacred leaves those who have access to that language, use it, and can understand it at a positional advantage in the application of language managing to exert social control to those who are denied access to that language, therefore do not use it, and are not allowed to interpret it. Henceforth, it is in the best interest of those who have authority over texts to keep the meaning limited and encased in whatever truths they boast, supposedly saying neither more nor less than what is implied but yet still trying to imply everything in the universal. As a result, truths are taken to be universals, texts that support them are then meant to be venerated, and those officially literate are that much more powerful. Following Bleich's move towards understanding language as "inherently bodily, gestural, social, and graphic" (17), every use of it then has political valences impressed upon social relations. Considering language as being material is then "grounds for desacralizing texts" (12), leaving space for them to be contested and called into question. This is one of the main reasons Juan García Madero's would-be profession at the outset of *Los detectives salvajes* was as a lawyer. When the diary commences, García Madero is a 17-year-old first semester law student at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He quickly abandons his jurisprudential future and recollects that he chose that career path because of his uncle's insistence, and then proceeds to spend the rest of the night crying in his room (13). His lachrymal situation lamented not studying *Letras*,

instead being forced to study *Derecho*, falling back into one of the most primal calls for help as a cry. That was what he wanted to do, but his uncle, the paternal figure in his orphaned life was forcing him in another direction by imposing on him the study of law. His passion for poetry is pitted against law and expresses a counterpoint to bureaucratic institutions that were going to validate him as a lawyer.

The Day of the Dead, which is celebrated over two days, not one, is used in the novel to announce life in the would-be lawyer and signal his departure from a present propelling him into a future he did not want. *Realismo visceral* resuscitates the passion he had to lament in his prior choice of studies. The transition from death to life comes through with the Day of the Dead because death within the tradition of *Día de muertos* inherited from Mesoamerican societies is a celebration of life. It does not need to tie itself to Western Christian moral traditions of death, whose same moral traditions are the ones that venerate texts and the written word and present knowledge as a universal and language as immaterial. The day or the days for *Día de muertos* go so far in the novel as to break with Western traditions of interpretations of time.

*Los detectives salvajes* begins on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, when Juan García Madero states that he has been cordially invited to form part of *realismo visceral*. Although it is not until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November that García Madero begins to narrate what had happened beforehand and detail his invitation to the group. What is presented immediately from the outset, and later on seen when García Madero begins to learn from the *viscerrealistas*, is the instability of the written word via the chronological ambiguity of his own text. The two dates do not correspond to the narration but instead hold a past and present in the



story that immediately begins to oscillate between when and what occurred. The 2<sup>nd</sup> of November announces his invitation, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> talks about what lead up to the 2<sup>nd</sup>. His first diary entry for 1976 takes more account of this movement in more detail:

**1 de enero**

Hoy me di cuenta de que lo que escribí ayer en realidad lo escribí hoy: todo lo del treintaiuno de diciembre lo escribí el uno de enero, es decir hoy, y lo que escribí el treinta de diciembre lo escribí el treintaiuno, es decir ayer. Lo que escribo hoy en realidad lo escribo mañana, que para mí será hoy y ayer, y también de alguna manera mañana: un día invisible. Pero sin exagerar. (557)

The actual date does not calendrically position the transpired events but instead acts as a flexible holding place for the storytelling, facilitating a fluid transition in timeframes not restricted by diurnal limits. The written word does not have to be/have a cemented meaning. Language custodians wish to present boxed-in meanings of words, leaving the text confined, no longer able to have live interpretations. This is the result of the written word's sacredness and requiring veneration wheresoever it has been sepulchered. Death is about those who interpret it, the survivors, and written texts need not be dead letters, for language is always in the contexts of the living. Past utterances in the social memory are inscribed in past experiences to inform the present contexts. Forgetting is death; universal uncontextualized language is dead. One word cannot mean something forever. There is never a perfect congruence between an utterance and referent or language and reality. Social relations and the individuals that make them up require room to interpret each other, where one utterance might not work, other words need to be exchanged to

reach a common ground. Truth is not a universal, is the trust between people communicating with one another.

All social practices fall by necessity into a domain of meaning. Language is the primary symbolic system, and as a result, it is one of the first places to have a grade of prestige in variants to be able to articulate discrimination against others. Historically, in the Hispanophone world, the prestige variant of Spanish was determined by that which was most courtly and peninsular, later cemented by *La real academia española*. Originally, it implied that the speaker did not have to earn a living from manual labor. There is then a direct correlation between the language variants being employed and the socioeconomic sectors employing them. If one can assume that language is alive and always evolving, its most transitory and animated nature is not found where it is most officially written down. The act of officiated writing commits words to pages where their contexts and definitions will be cemented, and the standards will be set and followed. The more restricted the definition is the more constrained the language must be. In reality, the choice of what a word means and what it cannot mean is an arbitrary one, but pretending to have an authoritative right over the decision is made by the institutional powers-that-be according to whatever the royal academy of letters wishes.

Thinking of the cityscape functioning through Ángel Rama's conceptualization of *La ciudad letrada*: Where power and authority in Latin America have been since colonial times historically cemented by the institutions of administration and bureaucracy of the rigid written letter, the structuring of space and the wielding of power through language then becomes violence against certain people, and they, like their language, are pushed to

the margins of society.<sup>17</sup> Metropolis require a concentration wherein peoples' lives will cross paths and have to interact. Disciplined thought's function is to organize. This does not limit itself to ideas and symbols but also through the managing of a metropolis wherein people are most concentrated in. The city best characterizes the attempt to organize a political landscape requiring people to adhere to the structured order implemented by law and culture because of its centripetal nature. Through that organization an order is established, and laws are set to establish order and hold power. This rational ordering legitimizes its thought process through bureaucratic institutions. The administration of which is based on the centripetal nature of the city. To get people to play this social game requires a presupposition of agonistic equity through procedural meritocracy. The individual is then always solely responsible for their standing in society. Although the supposed competition within the social game is presumed fair, the aleatory nature of birth and inheritance are highly determining factors at play. The paths for these certain steps are not always allowed to be followed, at times denying entry. Depending completely on inheritance, access or allowance to the protocols is limited, and law is purposely not colloquially legible. Society's laws are presented as universals, yet criminality is circumstantial. Observance requires a motion to observe that in turn turns seeing and interpreting into a notion of tangibility. There is a sense of cruel optimism within the structural foundation of this social game because it presents the possibility of success for the sectors of society with the players that were never meant to win. These

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<sup>17</sup> Ángel Rama also has the same opinion about poets being excluded from the city; “miembros menos asiduos de la *cuidad letrada* han sido y son los poetas y que aun incorporados a la órbita del poder, siempre resultaron desubicados e incongruentes” (101).

politics deny equity by declaring universal equality time and time again until the saturation of the discourse drowns out any opposing opinions. The social game is not a competition, and is at most a game that is rigged, because fixing the game or winning at all costs is not agonistic; it is avarice bereft of play, moving only to hold a monopoly over power. Monopoly eliminates the possibility of competition by fixing all the games.

The notion of only being able to concentrate the city's makeup in an order and create a need for a general will, or something to worship around, in one certain way is the same idolatrous philosophy doing everything it can to hide its false-idolness by presenting a universal. Knowledge is restricted to the formal apparatuses designed for their own formation. Society is set up in such a way to institutionalize individuals such that they perpetuate the power of the status quo in their participation within the social order. Normalization and standardization are propagated as necessary for the functioning of society and language is used to transmit the thought processes; henceforth, language is also presented as normalized and standardized. Unauthorized usages, or inscriptions are appreciated as sedition. Taking language and playing with it is only allowed by a poetic license, which is to say it is only permitted by those given the permission to use it as such. Although, said license is also a restriction on those not permitted to have it. Moreover, a license implies legality through a juridical process or permission from a formal or official authority to do or carry something out, and that is not poetic. It is an authorization to deviate from conventions, but that authorization is a calculated one, served to function much like an Aristotelian catharsis, where the permitted deviance is allotted a momentary place only to quell sentiments of insubordination.

García Madero's drive to pursue poetry led him to such an authority figure at the poet Alamo's literary workshop. There he witnessed the arbitrariness of the powers that be to judge what is considered good or bad poetry, which he observed was decided by the patriarch of the *taller*. Depending on his mood, Alamo would either praise or demean someone's poem, or have the frequenters critique themselves (13). This, García Madero observes, was the perfect method to create enmity between the participants: "El método era el idóneo para que nadie fuera amigo de nadie o para que las amistades se cimentaran en la enfermedad y el rencor" (13-14). There is no possibility of creating community in that type of environment. Instead of signaling a workshop where poetry is being created and practiced by a group of people, Alamo's *taller* is instead workshoping the perpetuation of the practice of nepotism. This is seen various times throughout the novel where poetry is doing nothing more than forming part of the status quo and propagating its existence. In Hugo Montero's narrative where the *literatos mexicanos* were invited to go to Nicaragua in a show of solidarity with their revolution, those invited as representatives of the *literatos mexicanos* were invited based on the following criteria: "Álamo invitó personalmente sus cuatachos... lambiscones más queridos" (332). *Cuate* is a mexicanism to indicate a twin, but also used to signal close friendships, and in this respect one might go so far as to say Alamo's literary replicas were invited, writers replicating the literary formulas of the status quo. Montero saw it fit to invite Ulises Lima on the trip because of some vacancies. It was not a coincidence that he was later lamenting his lack of employment opportunities and made it explicit as to that being due to initially inviting Lima. Xóchitl García shared a similar fate in her attempts to publish

her poetry and presents it in this manner: “Me preguntaron cosas de mi vida, qué leía, qué había publicado hasta la fecha, en qué talleres había estado, qué estudios universitarios tenía” (369). There was never any mention of her being published solely based on her poems. Her being published had more to do with the association's she had, which also did not work in her favor. When Xóchitl García mentions whom she had associated with, she received this response: “decían, ‘así que tú fuiste real visceralista, ¿eh?, y después me decían que lo sentían, pero que no podían publicar ni uno solo de mis poemas” (370). To publish it was best not to mention the *real visceralistas* and not to be one. To ask for permission in expression is then not actual freedom, as if it requires granting. Unlicensed poetic liberties, ergo poetry coming from unrecognized literary groups, then become unpublishable. The opinions and styles of the *real visceralistas* are being kept out of the literary scene by prohibition.

The social norms that reign in García Madero's thought process are the same that consider language immaterial. When García Madero meets the *real visceralistas* for the first time in Álamo's *taller*, they observe the same critical system in the *taller* and critique it for what it is, in the same way García Madero did (15). An argument ensues and Álamo calls on Lima to read one of his poems. At that time the seventeen-year-old believes that there are moments to recite poetry, and others to throw punches. He thought that Lima should have been more of a pugilist than a poet in that moment and what he learns is that poetry can also strike quite the blow as well. Instead of throwing a punch, Lima proceeds in the following manner: “sacó de un bolsillo de la chamarra unos papeles sucios y arrugados... Y finalmente oí su voz que leía el mejor poema que yo jamás había

escuchado” (16). Where supposedly letters cannot cross between pugilists and poets, Lima was able to prove García Madero’s take on the subject to be erroneous. There is a very material aspect to the whole scene. The moments leading up to the recitation were tumultuous, where Alamo and his disciples were voraciously arguing with Lima, Belano, and García Madero. The scene was a crescendo of sorts to which the reading aloud of the poetry was a climatic riposte. Poetry organically came off as a duel because of the context. That is to say that there was nothing official about the reading. The paper where the poem was written was crumpled up and dirty, highlighting something mundane about the scenario; poetry as a praxis in the day-to-day, wherein the paper and the poem have been accompanying Lima and been written with him while he’s been out and about for however long. The recitation marks the end of the scene. The reader knows absolutely nothing about the content of the poem, only the material aspects of it; where it was written, how the paper looks, and its recitation, meant to be in the place of a punch. If a scene ends with a punch being thrown, the execution and the power of the punches are not called into question: their quality are inferred. In this case, a poem was read, and the scene was finalized... boom!

### **Language Materialized**

In the novel, it is one of his first lessons in the materiality of language and its manifestations. Later when García Madero reads “El vampiro” by Efrén Rebolledo, the text becomes much more than an intellectual process, restricted to the borders of officially bound pages, and is materialized in his repeated masturbation and recitation. An action he repeats over and over again during his recitations (21-22). The transformational

aspect here should also be highlighted, signaling the multiple states of material the reading suggests, and the primal nature of the sex drive, making García Madero's penis go from flaccid to erect to ejaculating multiple times. García Madero's belief that language, or in this case poetry, is incapable of having an impact on reality outside of its literary sense is quickly taken aback by the two motions mentioned above. These are the first examples that take the notion out of him that language is immaterial, and the lesson comes in two different, very primal spheres- the desire to fight when attacked and the urge for sex. In both cases poetry has a direct material impact upon a situation and contests his prior notions that put a limit on the immateriality of language and consider it to merely be a vessel for ideas, fixed in their meaning, and not dynamically contextual. This will soon be analyzed to see why the *real visceralistas* were such an affront to the literary community comprised of in the novel. When Manuel Maples Arce talks about the *real visceralistas*, he does so in this fashion: "Todos los poetas, incluso los más vanguardistas, necesitan un padre. Pero éstos eran huérfanos de vocación" (177).<sup>18</sup> In his mindset, the only leading or parental figure that can conceivably be of use for a poet is a paternal figure, and because they did not have one, they were orphaned in his mindset without ever really considering the possibility of a maternal figure taking the lead. This is why the search for Cesárea Tinajero is one of the central themes of the book. The *real visceralistas* were never really orphaned because they had a mother figure whom they considered to be the founder of their movement. Heteropatrino-maternal visions of society could not conceive of that possibility. Cesárea Tinajero is the mother of *realismo visceral*

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<sup>18</sup> Manuel Maples Arce is a character in the novel and also a real person. He was a poet, a lawyer, a diplomate and founder of Estridentismo in Mexico in 1921.



and for a large chunk of the book, all the readers know about her is her name. It is no accident that it is just as telling as the movement's name. One of Roberto Bolaño's English translators, Chris Andrews, says that names in the author's work are charged, with heavy connotations behind them (*Bolaño Salvaje* 61). In this case, for Cesárea Tinajero, during a cesarean section, all of the viscera must be pulled out before the newborn can be taken out. The visceral, that which is so necessary to life and also that which is not seen, is what needs to be taken into consideration in the storyline of *Los detectives salvajes*. Much like how Arturo Belano tells Laura Jáuregui how he will be traveling through different cities in Europe; he says, "no pienso *verlos*, pienso *vivir en ellos*" (211). The context here being emphasized in the distinction between seeing and living. Belano wants to actually experience the life of the cities, not merely gloss over them. The viscera, the guts of the matter, taken on to be materialized by the maternal figure, appear as poetic language using the most internal parts of life being referenced by the viscera.<sup>19</sup> This poetic-language-guts make the understanding of language a material, biological digestive process based off of the experience and the action of living.

Poetry has the capability of breaking down the limiting barriers of language's custodians because true play with language emphasizes the material aspects of language that break it away from the fixed, universal conventions that institutions endeavor to instill. Making evident that language use is contextual and inherently social completely severs its ties from language custodians. As a result of that, unfortunately in *Los*

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<sup>19</sup> A thought very much influenced by Kristeva's take on it: "The "actor" subject, "poet" banished from the Republic because he has shot through his maternal pedestal, abides in the margins of society be wavering between the cult of the mother and the playful, laughing, stripping away of its mystery... he eludes all codes..." (192).

*detectives salvajes*, there is a lack of recognition for the *real visceralistas*, as observed by Laura Jáuregui in the novel: “La universidad era real, la Facultad de Biología era real, mis profesores eran reales, mis compañeros eran reales, quiero decir tangibles, con objetivos más o menos claros, con planes más o menos claros. Ellos no.” (169). Reality, in this sense, is the presentation of institutions and officiations that validate themselves through bureaucratic systems. For Jáuregui, because the *real visceralistas* did not have official status through any institution their existence is obfuscated in her imaginary of the world. The *real visceralistas* obviously exist in the narrative, but her insistence on them not being real refutes it. Julio Martínez Morales, when talking about his success as a poet and a writer, for about 2 pages in the novel, has a very calculated outlook on his formula for success. He lists erroneous multiplication figures; “ $7 \times 3 = 22\dots 7 \times 1 = 8\dots 31 \times 31 = 962\dots$ ” to say that what he has left behind in order to be successful was “ $3 \times 3 = 9$ ”, and after having obtained success, he can now lie without the slightest possibility of repercussions, explicitly stating “nosotros podemos recitar con total impunidad: 8, 5, 9, 8, 4, 15, 7.” (487). The pseudo-mathematics need not be concerned with being correct if the powers judging the equations declare them correct. Literary success appeared to be tied to being willing to propagate the system dealing out false functions. The most telling part of the interview with Julio Martínez Morales states this about writers: “Un escritor, hemos establecido, no debe parecer un escritor. Debe parecer un banquero, un hijo de papá que envejece sin demasiados temblores, un profesor de matemáticas, un funcionario de prisiones” (486). The *real visceralistas* use language to play at a literary game that did not want them to be players, one set up so that they could not succeed. As a result of

making their opposition to mainstream poets like Octavio Paz and Pablo Neruda known and blatantly saying that they wanted to change Latin American poetry, they were not fulfilling the indicated steps for success (30). They were outlying and were therefore outlawed from participating by publishing their poetry.

When García Madero was asked to join the *real visceralistas*, he was asked if he wanted to be a part of a “pandilla” (17). The group is open about their disposition. To say *pandilla* was not to indicate a literary movement or a literary group- it was a gang. The *real visceralistas* made their stance manifest and did not hide their agonistic nature, but instead openly embraced it for what it is: an open dispute for their own existence in a system that was not recognizing them and considered their modes of being illegitimate. Therefore, calling themselves a *pandilla*, in spite of all of the outlaw associations, is still a banding together of people with a purpose, that knew that their existence was criminal in the eyes of the literary establishment. Criminality makes authorized power feel insecure. Power is a form of securing someone’s existence in the world. The more power someone wields the more their existence is reinforced with the potency; a recognition of the inscription and the clout it demands. In a conversation that Luis Sebastián Rosado has with Piel Divina, Rosado describes the *real visceralista* literary position to any power they might have had in this manner:

Los real viscerealistas no estaban en ninguno de los bandos, ni con los neopriistas ni con la otredad, ni con los neoestalinistas ni con los exquisitos, ni con los que vivían en el erario público ni con los que vivían de la Universidad, ni con los que se vendían ni con los que compraban, ni con los que estaban en la

tradición ni con los que convertían la ignorancia en arrogancia, ni con los blancos ni con los negros, ni con los latinoamericanistas ni con los cosmopolitas. (352)

The constant negation of allies within the literary establishment makes their existence that much more contestatory and seditious. Changing the literary scene of poetry would imply breaking the norms and upsetting the status quo of the literary establishment. Their using terminology that would otherwise be associated with a derogatory term and an unlawful activity of association, *pandilla*, is an appropriate stance because they openly wished to change the literary establishment. Octavio Paz was one of the mainstream poets who, as a joke, the group constantly declared they would kidnap, having narrowed in on him being an enemy. In an interview with Octavio Paz's secretary Clara Cabeza, she recalls Octavio Paz roaring that he will not even be assaulted by the president of Mexico: "don Octavio me miró y me dijo con una voz que salía del corazón de un lobo: a mí no me asalta ni el presidente de la República" (506). A completely serious statement that later, in the same telling by Clara Cabeza would take a comedic turn when Octavio Paz meets with Ulises Lima at el Parque Hundido. After the meeting takes places and Lima leaves, Cabeza makes the following note: "Los vagabundos que había visto en los matorrales y que ahora eran tres se acercaban a nosotros. Vámonos, Clarita, oí que me decía don Octavio." (510). After reading Octavio Paz's wolf-like roaring that not even the powerful figure of the president could endanger him, seeing that a vagrant would be another story signals how ingrained Octavio Paz was in the literary system and its connections to political power. Moreover, the scene also signals the danger that the *real*

*visceralists* as a *pandilla*, as outliers, as vagrants, presented to the most revered poet in Mexico and to the literary establishment.

### **Humor or The Break with the Universal Symbolic Function**

The universality of the social game of life that Western Society presumes is disguised as fair play without actually having any of it, for there to be a contest there must be equal footing. The uniformed invisibility of the social order lacks equity within the standardization of the rules and is a conductor for disciplined formation and its perpetuation. The action of power pushing for an observance of norms, standards, regulations, and laws gives itself away in the act, because it is exactly that, an act. To level the playing field true play must free itself from the limits set by the rules, thinking and acting outside of them. Play goes beyond the immediate needs of life and effaces its structuring. The structure is presented as a firm foundational truth where there is a sense of establishing norms and customs as existing since a time immemorial, making them appear uncontestable and transcendental; one might call it the Truth, the Essence, or God. Nonetheless, every norm, every custom born from any ideology had at some point in time been an expression of a culture's interpretation; it came from imagining the world as whosoever were in power deemed fit, which is a requirement for any subject's indoctrination into society. The language of any individual can only be such in the relation to the social. There must be a consensus of a classification to allow for communication. All play on reality requires imagination, which is a way to perceive reality and also to take that perception and imagine building on the prior imagination, the first one it is playing with. The manner in which the second imagination is played with is

itself an understanding of the first process and could be seen as a critique of the former. Poetry is a play on words, confronting the logical aspects of language trying to limit it, and when worked with through humor is a type of reasoning that becomes punch-line critical of the supposed rational judgement.

Society makes it appropriate through institutions to push certain sectors of society, let us say, up against a wall, or to a corner, via a discriminatory thought process. Bolaño's characters, and this is shown especially in *Los detectives salvajes*, are typically at these margins. As Ignacio López-Vicuña finds, "For Bolaño, barbarism becomes an aesthetic trope that connotes living and writing outside of established literary and cultural institutions: words like *savage* in "savage detectives," *visceral* in "visceral realism," *barbaric* in "Barbaric Writers," all connote living in the open ("a la intemperie") (Critical Insights 108). Dominant cultures reify these sentiments over and over again. A way to contest this violence is to present a comic contrast to them through jokes; as Freud said; "[a] joke is a playful judgment... playful contemplation of things... This playful judgment gives wit and wit gives freedom" (3). Qualifying something as a joke immediately undervalues its seriousness, creating for itself a space where offense is less likely to be taken and hostility perhaps more tolerated. The satisfaction that comes with laughing excuses the accusatory nature of very biting jokes. For humor's sake, limits of propriety are allowed to be pushed back. As a result, comedy opens a space for itself to be critical of society without being perceived of as violent nor threatening, saving itself a heavy-handed backlash, to use a euphemism. Comedic discourse then resides in an allotted place where what is said is supposed to be playful. Although genuine comedy,

comedy that is revealing must have a keen critique behind it, playing with the symbols implicit in reality and most seriously representative of it.

Not all jokes and not all humor are genuine, although the more assertive the joke is, the greater effect it carries. Humor, like poetry, have as their material the universal symbols of cultures, those which are considered sacred. What they work with is at drawing out the material aspects to them. In Alenka Zupančič's book, *The Odd One In: On Comedy*, she finds comedy to be in the action of breaking with the universal symbolic Oneness; "replacing the imaginary One – not with a multiple, but with a short circuit between two constitutively exclusive sides of reality, that is to say, with an impossible (and substantial) link between them" (78). There is an expectation and then a violation, a set-up, a structuring, and then the break with it. A veering, an unexpected turn that uses the expectation to turn. Very serious discourse may then be taken as a joke, and the more humorous it is the more telling it is as well. The nexus between things that seemed unbridgeable is the part that causes amusement, it entertains, and there is humor in it because it is the realist of critiques. There is humor that serves status quo discourses, this is not true play with the universal symbols. That type of comedy is easy, it follows the same beaten path hegemony has structured around the ruling class and those that pander to it. As Zupančič affirms about comedy, it "likes to transgress the rules and demands of respect. It also likes to unveil the veils, tear down the folding screens, and open the closets." (209). There is no humor in oppressive or discriminatory comedy, working with the universal symbols structuring discrimination (social hierarchy) in society does not

involve play with the materials at hand, it just involves repeating the structures already in place.

The concentration of power's impulse to establish itself requires a social hierarchy within institutionalized order; whether or not one is literate enough and abides by the law or not, one is forced to occupy a place in it. What concerns me is the marginalized place wherein the *real visceralists* find themselves in. To contest violence from a lower socioeconomic and cultural position without acting out in physical violence is to negotiate; whether that implies accepting the terms or not, it is necessary to initiate a dialogue. Western rationality presumes a dexterity of thought, and it is due to its very makeup that it cannot compete or play at being so lithe as wit in jokes and pith in colloquial language. Therefore, the *real visceralista's* position of taking everything as half-serious and half-jokingly recognizes the seriousness of the what is at hand and gravely calls attention to what would otherwise be overlooked. As a literary group, they use humor to take the symbolic sacredness of letters only to revert it and show its essence as a physical. They do this because, as Zupančič states: "In the epic, the subject narrates the universal, the essential, the absolute; in tragedy, the subject enacts or stages the universal, the essential, the absolute; in comedy, the subject is (or becomes) the universal, the essential, the absolute" (39). This is why the *vicerrealistas* use humor as a stance to confront the literary establishment. For example, as was mentioned earlier, the threat of kidnapping of Octavio Paz, while seen as something to be taken very seriously because of all of his clout, also pokes fun at that same clout because the *real visceralistas* have none. So, if taken seriously, it is also a joke, but a joke mocking official limitations on



authority. Thinking outside of the boxed ideas prescribed by institutions would be the only weapon to wield in this case, and jokes mock authority because true plays on language are not bound to normalized logic or rational thinking, yet must construct sound enough bridges between ideas and concepts that reference the normalization and rationality while upending them to, as Freud famously said, to make sense out of nonsense. It makes sense that such a renowned figure as Octavio Paz would be a target for kidnapping- but taking seriously the threat of kidnap by a poetic *pandilla* that is not asking for any ransom nor saying what their intentions are doesn't, necessarily, make sense. Which is that much more startling. Moreover, the kidnap of a literary figure, someone whose supposed ties and influence are not outside of the literary world, exposes this nexus to the political realm where the president cannot touch him. The threat brings to the forefront, at the very least, a contemplation of politics, letters, and institutions all being intrinsically tied together. This is the same contemplation of Amadeo Salvatierra: “a veces me da por pensar que los poetas y los políticos, sobre todo en México, son una y la misma cosa, al menos yo diría que abrevan en la misma fuente” (355). If an official subject does not have the possibility of threatening a literary figure, how can illicit subjects be threatening? The appearance of logic provides a semblance of being correct. It does not mean that it is. The motion of fitting the “nonsense” with the “sense” of supposed logic is an affront to it. When that action is accomplished it is irreverent to the fixed univocal semantic of the official written word, henceforth questioning rational

thought's legitimacy as a claim on power and signaling the arbitrariness of judgments and the frailty of the hegemonic structuring of society.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Pícaro* Incisions**

I consider the *real visceralistas'* position in *Los detectives salvajes* as akin to that of popular peoples that are in such a perpetually precarious state of risk that being a *pícaro*, although not necessarily the figure but the virtuosity associated with it, is a day-to-day survival strategy. I do not stay faithful to the figure because of their gendered connotations. That virtuosity, as it is seen in the novel, wishes to break away from the patriarchal view of rebellion being masculine. Following with Roger Callois's interpretation of play, it is through it that society expresses itself and its interpretations of life and the world, and a result of these playful expressions by *pícaros* through jokes, wit, and pith that serve as subterfuge to oppressive systems, laws, and hierarchies, popular subjects are able to oppose discrimination, albeit momentarily. The *pícaro*, according to O.F Best, who through Corominas and Covarrubias works through the noun's connotations, concludes that it is applied to a person from a low social position with questionable morals (353). These morals and social standings are determined by a 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Christian Spain, where employment relegation stemming from ethnic discrimination came to inform what a *pícaro* was. Behaving in the astute manner necessary for a *pícaro* to get by doing the jobs privileged sectors of society would not

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<sup>20</sup> Italo Calvino takes a similar position in his book, *The Uses of Literature*: "What I look for in the comic or ironic or grotesque or absurd transformation of things is a way to escape from the limitations and one-sidedness of ever representation and every judgement. A thing can be said in more than one way. There is one way in which whoever is saying it wants to say precisely that thing and no other, and another way in which he also wants to say that, certainly, but at the same time wants to point out that the world is far more complicated and cast and contradictory." (63)

was then a question of survival by marginalized peoples. Then the now traditional irreverent and jocose manner of comportment tied to the *pícaro* might have been a conduct to undermine constant discrimination. In Victoriano Roncero López's book, *De bufones y pícaros: la risa en la novela picaresca*, he traces out Western thought on humor and laughter from classical Greek philosophy to Christianity in the Middle ages, finding that laughter is highly discriminated against and urged to be practiced in silence and in moderation by the higher socioeconomic classes.<sup>21</sup> Chuckling and laughing out loud were thought to be for marginalized peoples; slaves, serfs, ethnic minorities, and after the consolidation of Christianity, non-Christians (16). If being laugh-out-loud funny and playing on words could be seen then as a manner of destabilizing the status quo, it is that way because in the Western tradition it has been a behavior rejected by those in power, deeming it immoral.<sup>22</sup> Playing on irony, words and social situations that contests universals is a type of thought that is the result of an improvisational process through an empirical relationship to knowledge. This wit exists by necessity of survival and is born out of a living ad hoc process. Popular peoples plights are embedded in their culture and their politics.

Every individual's experience is different, every register of a word in that individual's memory had a different affect and logic attached to it. Ambiguity in language does not have to have negative connotations. There is no way two people have an identical register of a referent, but they just need to be close enough to find a common

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<sup>21</sup> Terry Eaglton draws the same conclusion in his book *Humour*.

<sup>22</sup> Freud in *Jokes*: "Morality is only the selfish ordinance of the rich and powerful few who are able to satisfy their wishes without postponement at any time." (105)

ground within the referential. Society is formed by language within the social imaginary, each word has connotations attached to it from past usages alongside vestiges recontextualized with the new use. All of them matter, and just as they all came to mean something specifically in that one instant, for that one person, they could again disperse and work in distinct ways for another instance. The scale of values is constructed by presupposed postures and positions regarding certain aspects of words.<sup>23</sup> They do not all transfer over to occupy all contexts and therefore must be reimagined time and time again in each utterance. No language ever really portrays a universal truth, but that does not mean it cannot be appropriate for a certain situation. Language is situationally driven- the context matters and best informs the expression. How language is used and how things are, and say, more than merely what the intended meaning conveys, says a lot about the environment and the people interacting. There are criteria in word choices, usages, and syntaxes that speak bounds beyond dictionary definitions.<sup>24</sup>

I relate this *virtuoso cynicism* with the conceptualization of the *pícaro* from the Hispanophone world whose tendencies are closely tied to said comportment, especially with the wielding of language. The knowledge and the know-how manifested by the *pícaros* has to be negated or written off as unserious; yet in the face of the negation, it exists nonetheless. To negate dignifies what is said, with at the least, a response, and in doing so positions their expression on the margins. How, then, does one contest violence?

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<sup>23</sup> Freud comes to the same conclusion in his analysis of jokes to find them both material and contextually driven; “words are malleable material, allowing all kinds of things to be done to them. There are words which, used in a certain way, have lost their original full meaning, though in another context they still enjoy it” (25)

<sup>24</sup> Kristeva says; “each word (text) is the intersection of a word (texts) were at least one other word (text) can be read” (66).

For the inscription of popular peoples into society to survive, good storytelling is key. For this; wit, timing, humor, and pith must coalesce and be approved at a majority level by the people that interact with/in that space. The approval does not mean all are okay with the messages coming across, but when considering something as playful, admitting defeat is only part of a game. In order for the larger hegemonic fixed game to continue, its allowance must be permitted, albeit begrudgingly, often times classified as an ill of society. These perceptions are classified as such to make the people's practices feel flawed, because they signal hegemony's own inconsistencies. For if not, it would be quickly detracted from by a comment and/or erased. In a heteropatrnormative society, non-hetero, non-male subjects are the ones most at risk, and it is their experience, their language that would have the greatest possibility of subverting the status quo.

As is declared of the *real visceralistas* time and time again in the *Los detectives salvajes*: "El nombre del grupo de alguna manera es una broma y de alguna manera es algo completamente en serio" (17). The mix of humor and seriousness are a constant theme, with the use of language throughout the novel flush with examples. At the expense of the solemnity taken with language in the literary world, the *real visceralistas* are constantly affronting the patriarchal state, much like the person who they claim founded the movement, Cesárea Tinajero. For poetry to be breaking away from the constraints of status quo discourses, that is to say that it is freeing itself from discriminatory fetters that have language locked down in heteropatrnormative gestures and expressions, it must be moving away from those gestures and expressions. Those gestures do not appreciate expressions considered to be colloquial nor feminine. By

colloquial I mean language not considered to be part of the proper institutional standards, institutions largely dominated by males. So, if poetry were really to be on the vanguard of expression, its expression would not be being accepted willingly. For its transgression to stick it would by necessity be impactful and stunning, a sort of sleight of words working within hegemonic discourse yet affronting it in the turn of phrase. Language is learned by being able to keep a record of referents to which each referent used has a logical and emotional attachment based off of every contextual use. From there, a person is able to reuse words and express themselves to others when these referents overlap with each other in common usage. The first records registered begin with the caregivers, where in heteropatrnormative societies is a task gendered as woman, and the formative foundation laid for expression is also with the caregivers. There is a reason a person's language is referred to as a mother tongue. While language begins to be ingrained within the individual, it is impossible to divorce the bodily aspects of gestures, negations, approbations, tongue positioning, lip mimicking, body positioning, and so on. It is not until later that the heteropatrnormative standards of language begins to discriminate against the mother part of the mother tongue, the matter, and the individuals' interpretations of language in social contexts begins to have to abide by standards of decorum. This decorum, this stylization of something, how something is done and said matters immensely, but is decided by male dominated politics and abides by them. This is where style makes a big play in terms of contesting the status quo and why breaking the universal symbolic function with humor is the method of choice by the *real visceralistas*.

The perception of the *real visceralistas* as orphans is stated many times in the novel but is stated by those that cannot conceive of a woman poet being the founding figure of a movement. They are poets without a father, so ergo are without a founder or leader- although why they are orphaned is never actually discussed. For them to be revolutionary, they cannot be fully accepted by the heteropatrnormative institution of letters. The destabilization of the literary world and what that means to society is articulated with *real visceralistas* as representatives of sectors of society that do not typically take hold of such literary positions. The *real visceralistas* had a mother, and the gesture speaks bounds to a culture in the suffocating depths of machismo. Cesárea, her *real visceralistas*, and her poetry are actually at the thresholds of society, and because of it are at the thresholds of language, crossing the limits of signs and playing with the limitless supply of symbolic meanings.<sup>25</sup> The semiotic foundation of mother for the *real visceralistas* is pitted versus the male coded gestures found over and over again in *Los detectives salvajes*. The female figures in the book are not cast in the best of light by many male perspectives. Even when men like Amadeo Salvatierra do not consider themselves to be behaving in a discriminatory fashion they are still unable to unroot themselves from the machismo. When Amadeo Salvatierra talks about Cesárea's friend Encarnación, he does so in this fashion: "Encarnación era triste y se vestía feo, lo cual la hacía fea", and if she expressed opinions she was responded to with comments like: "Si no sabe que no hable" (273). Her validation as a woman could only come from her physical and submissive aspect. She had the physical capability to appear lovely, yet she

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<sup>25</sup> Kristeva asserts: "The poetic word, polyvalent and multi-dimensional, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture." (65)

would not stay quiet, and would not dress the part of a damsel. Her emotional state also goes unaddressed. Why she was sad is unknown and only commented on in passing by Salvatierra. There was no actual concern for her emotional or mental state, only bewilderment as to why she was not doing her best to appear to be attractive.

In Salvatierra's mindset, that was the type of comportment Encarnación should have had, because a woman, as an occupation, has to be continuously fashioning herself according to what he considered to be womanly in all aspects, and this mindset transferred over to the practice of poetry. To say that a woman is carrying out an occupation signals a concern for the gender of the occupation more than the occupation, and is discriminatory. When referring to Encarnación and Cesárea while talking to Ulises Lima, Arturo Belano, and Felipe Müeller, Salvatierra calls them by the moniker of *poetisa*:

Ellos me miraron y se sonrieron, los dos al mismo tiempo, pinches muchachos, como si estuvieran conectados, no sé si me explico, nos extrañó, dijeron, parecía la única mujer, las referencias eran abundantes, decían que era una buena poeta. ¿Una buena poetisa?, dije yo, ¿dónde han leído algo de ella? No hemos leído nada de ella, dijeron, en ninguna parte, y eso nos atrajo. ¿Los atrajo de que manera, muchachos, a ver explíquense? Todo el mundo hablaba muy bien de ella o muy mal de ella, y sin embargo nadie la publicó. (162)

So, there is a substantial amount indications signaling Salvatierra's thoughts on poetry as a profession. First, we should mention the suffix *-isa* attached to *poeta*. It should be made known that this, as it is said in the book, "suena gacho" (31). It does in fact, sound fucked



up. I attribute Salvatierra's inability to not understand nor read Tinajero's poem "Sión" to that fact. His male coded literacy does not register it. This is also another explanation as to why she was never published. The trio are not surprised she was never published but feel certain that she was a good poet because of what they had heard people say about her. They feel sure of her as a poet because of word-of-mouth transmission, not limited to having read a poem of hers, but knowing she was a poet and having heard about how she lived was evidence enough for them to justify finding out more about her.

Much of Bolaños literature is interconnected and his characters repeat. *Los Detectives Salvajes* alludes to the femicides in his posthumous book 2666. A heteropatrnormative society drowned in machismo in the past leads to the future femicides of Santa Teresa, obviously Bolaños literary pseudonym for Ciudad Juárez. Chris Andrews says that Bolaño's writing has highly masculine appeal, and attributes Bolaños success to that fact (Roberto Bolaños Fiction: An Expanding Universe 24). Bolaño is one of the most influential Latin American writers of our times (Paz Soldán 9). One of the reasons behind the large influence is the works' accessibility. His reading is not difficult, but the content is not necessarily easy. Perhaps on a superficial level, Bolaños writing seems to appeal to a masculine audience because of heteropatrnormative assumptions about violence, sex, and courageousness being considered gender-based practices. But this violence and sex and courageousness does not necessarily come across in his male characters. He does not write for men, he writes with woman in mind. Making Cesárea Tinajero a major figure in his book and alluding to what he would be writing later in 2666 against the backdrop of femicides and denouncing the type of society that

permits that horror speaks bounds about his work not being for men but a critique of them. For poetry to be breaking away from the constraints of status quo discourses, it is to say again that it is freeing itself from discriminatory fetters. This prejudiced language, as has already begun to be seen, is heteropatriarcal in its gestures. These gestures do not value expressions considered to be feminine, nor colloquial. If poetry were really to be on the vanguard of expression, its expressions would cause a certain sense of discomfort, working outside of hegemonic phrasing, and so appearing odd or out of place.

The readers first look into *realismo visceral* comes from the eyes of García Madero, someone who is not sure himself what the movement consists of. As he writes or as he is beginning to find things out, we find them out with him, through his diary. As readers, we learn as García Madero is learning and he is a neophyte of sorts, being surprised that he was accepted into the group without anyone ever having read any of his poems. However, his acceptance came from the way he behaved in Alamo's *taller* the first time he met Lima and Belano. Within the dispute he took a side- with his actions he sided with what the *real visceralistas* were playing at. Andrea Cobas Carral and Verónica Garibotto find that the poetics of the *real visceralistas* is sustained by the way in which they comport themselves. Their ethics and their aesthetics coalesce to be on the same plane and that is their subversive play at the praxis of poetry (Bolaño Salvaje 169). There is plenty that Juan García Madero does not understand nor see. Many times, he appears lost about what's going on around him. During conversations between María Font and Lupe, everything goes over his head. From page 44 to page 48 in the novel there is an

exclusive conversation between María and Lupe where García Madero can only comment during a few instances and is for the most part just ignored. The novel progresses as he learns more and more. He says that there was never an initiation ceremony for his joining the *real visceralistas*, but that has more to do with the celebratory nature of institutions and their the gratification through officiation. His inception into the *pandilla* is his experience with them in the times and places they occupy. It is completely contextual to his relationship with the group. Being a poet, a *real visceralista* is a day-to-day activity, a series of ceremonies tied to the behavior and action of being a *viscerrealista*. García Madero takes note of there being no ceremony for his entry into the group. The ceremonial part of an initiation ceremony implies a fixed time frame for celebration, exuberance, performance... etcetera. He has to actually be invested in being a *real visceralista* to be one and the performance of the ceremony is throughout, not merely at the initiation.

Just as Garcia Madero did not understand the material aspects of language, he is also misogynistic in many of his assessments of situations. This is why there is so much he does not understand or comprehend in the book. The first time the maid at the Font's house is mentioned in the story, she is known as "la sirvienta" (62). After claiming to feel bad about forgetting the maid's name, García Madero never remembers her name or bothers to ask for it and continues to mention her as "la sirvienta" through his narration. (68). Within it, neither the name nor the introduction ever took place. When thinking about it he says: "Cuyo nombre ignoro o he olvidado, algo que me parece imperdonable" (67), becomes nothing more than an empty gesture of empathy where ignoring a person is

the same as forgetting them. He does the same when referring to poets who happen to be women.

-¿Hay muchas poetisas?

-Decirles poetisas queda un poco gacho -dijo Pancho.

-Se les dice poetas -dijo Barrios.

-¿Pero hay muchas?

-Como nunca antes en la historia de México -dijo Pancho-. Levantas una piedra y encuentras a una chava escribiendo de sus cositas.

-¿Y cómo Lima fue capaz de financiar él solo *Lee Harvey Oswald*? -pregunté.

(31)

The point being made by Pancho and Barrios goes over García Madero's head. His concern remains in the existence of many women poets. Although the question comes off more as a factual inquiry because instead of continuing to ask more about the existence of woman poets, he quickly asks about the financial situation regarding the magazine. Moreover, after being told that is it fucked up to say "poetisa" he continues to say it: "Laura Damian era una poetisa que murió antes de cumplir los veinte años" (34), he calls Angelica Font "la poetisa lauriada" (35), and when talking about another poet says "una poetisa a la que no conocía, llamada Silvia Moreno" (60). Just the mere question of asking if there are many woman poets says much about someone who has so many poetic devices memorized, wants to study literature, and wants to be a poet. The repetition of the noun in three more instances means that he was not actually able to understand what Barrios and Pancho were telling him. When talking about how Ulises Lima was able to

publish a magazine, García Madero cannot conceive of how he would be able to do it without him having family financing, asking: “¿Su familia tiene dinero? Pregunté” (30). It does not occur to him, an almost law student, how he would be able to do it otherwise. The possibility of criminal activity is not an option for him, this is why finding out that Ulises Lima sells marijuana to finance the magazine is such a surprise to him. García Madero’s growth in understanding different aspects of the world that he previously ignored represents a big part of the reader’s experience with the book. The character’s ignorance adds to the reader’s detectivesque qualities, because in the first and last part of the book we only see through his eyes and are limited by his framing. Him being able to break outside that frame constructed around him, the same one that wished him to be a lawyer, is pivotal in understanding the last part of the novel and speaks to the reader’s job of reading past the framing of his narration. But before we get to that, we should get back to the woman making this reading possible, Cesárea Tinajero.

As a figure, Cesárea Tinajero is an enigmatic one for most of the novel, with few accounts of her having existed and very few vestiges of the places she had been or worked. This stems from the fact that most of the perspectives on the transpired events, especially in the middle part of the book occur, from a male’s point of view on the literary world they are submersed in. That literary world is not at all divorced from the custodians of language that continue to perpetuate the same discriminatory notions of language that keep the status quo, as Amadeo Salvatierra stated about poets and politicians in Mexico (355). As long as language is coming from a patriarchal point of view, the understanding and logic that is created by the language’s formation will

continue to be embedded in its gestural, discriminatory politics. Cesárea is a woman that does not fill the role society expects of her. As a poet, a woman working with language, Cesárea created for herself a position in which she enjoys her freedom from men while at the same time being critical of them. She commands respect from the Colonel Diego Carvajal and in writing his speeches is at once his voice (167). The male officer, commander of other men, has his voice of authority come from Cesárea who writes his speeches. Moreover, she was never prefixed nor suffixed by “la mujer de...”. Tinajero enjoyed the freedom provided by her vocation as a writer. She would go to dance halls by herself, something that was looked ill upon at the time, and given her temperament, there were always going to be forces not approving of her independent behavior as a woman (295). As a result of that behavior, as Salvatierra observes, “la pobre Cesárea se hubiera visto obligada a peregrinar por los subterráneos más siniestros del DF” (354), signaling the cost of freedom for a woman in that society, and the options allotted to her to exist.

Lupe lives in the visceral part of Mexico City and represents a counterpoint to Juan. A very pivotal counterpoint. Her occupation as a prostitute signals an illegality to her being while she practices her profession. Her work fits into a machista social imaginary where she fulfills a role as pleasure to be bought and as a figure to be scapegoated. Her circumstances and lack of opportunities force her to be there. Meanwhile Juan was supposed to be a lawyer, an interpreter of the law and an arbitrator of it. The lawful is put into contrast with the unlawful as these two human beings together emphasize the divide in language between the two. Juan needs rigid spellings and definitions in order to understand the world around him, down to his understanding of

poetry. While looking for Cesárea, he has a hard time accepting any variance of her name as a possibility of her being her:

además una cosa es Cesárea Tinajero y otra cosa es Cesárea Tinaja, algo que mis amigos pasan por alto achacándolo a una errata, o una mala transcripción o una mala audición por parte del periodista e incluso a un error intencionado por parte de Cesárea Tinajero, decir mal su apellido, una broma, una forma humilde de tapar una pista humilde. (571)

This is also something he did not notice about *real visceralismo*, he only noted it at the beginning of the novel without actually taking the time to consider the possible connotations; “conocí a los real visceralistas o viscerrealistas e incluso vicerrealistas como a veces gustan llamarse” (5). Lupe doesn’t have that issue. There is a scene where this contestation takes place between Juan García Madero, the once law student, now would-be poet who has memorized a substantial number of poetic devices, and Lupe, a prostitute very much familiar with colloquial expressions.<sup>26</sup> To pass the time in a car García Madero begins to ask Lupe, Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima for definitions of poetic devices such as, “tetrástico... zéjel... saturnio... quiasmo... epanalepsis... catacrexis...” (557-560). The other characters are only able to respond accurately to a few of the definitions provided by García Madero, while being completely dumbfounded by the rest. He self-deprecates by saying that it is just a matter of memorization. At one point, Lupe fastidiously responds with her own type of knowledge and asks for definitions of her own: “A ver sabelotodo, ¿Sabes tú qué es un prix... carranza...

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<sup>26</sup> I use the word prostitute here and not sex-worker because of the difference in agency involved in it; a sex-worker being the owner of their work.

jincho... la grandiosa... la macha chaca... dar labiada... un chavo giratorio...un coprero..." (562-564). Belano and Lima were able to respond to a few of the definitions, assuming that it is because of their way of life. Meanwhile, García Madero was not able to respond to any of the questions. In contrast to García Madero's information regarding poetic devices, colloquial meanings are not definitions but connotations that are represented at a very democratic level. They are not official because they are transitory inscriptions. What they mean can only mean that for as long as the people are incorporating them into their speech and are accepting it as such. It is not one single arbitrary decision officiated by any one person's part; it has to be accepted by all, and the possibility of this hangs on the hinges of its cleverness and its appeal. Its nature must be agreeable to the community, it cannot be an imposition sanctioned by any one academy. If it were, part of its appeal as playfully representing a community through language, that sense of semantic autonomy, and incendiary novelty would quickly disappear.

Institutions of this sort hold a monopoly on decision making. Choices are sanctioned by these establishments, by the authority and the right they bestow upon themselves in the name of others, which is a gesture far removed from what popular people accept as being representative of it. Language most resonates within the largest populous demographic, where their expressions, whether through narration, action, or composition, are antiauthoritarian in nature, and act as a form of emancipatory politics whose very manifestation is liberating from institutional fetters. What they bring to light are what is typically left in the dark or purposely forgotten by institutions that act as language regulators. While they might qualify words coined at higher socioeconomic levels as



neologisms within that lexicon, they will qualify expressions born from lower socioeconomic levels as slang within their own argot.

Bolaño's texts are often said to have abrupt endings, or inconclusive ones. His writing is not born from a teleologically minded place; utopias in his generation not only failed but were crushed. To work away from definitive endings is to work away from dogmatic interpretations of the world. Cesárea Tinajero's poem "Sión" is composed of three images that, with the help of the *real visceralistas*, Amadeo Salvatierra is finally able to understand as a poem that he has not known what to do with: "un barco en un mar en calma, un barco en un mar movido y un barco en tormenta" (401). Prior to their explanation, Amadeo Salvatierra cannot read Tinajero's poem, as he says, "yo llevo más de cuarenta años mirándolo y nunca he entendido una chingada" (376). Now, I'd like to break down this conversation a bit to emphasize the latter part of it. Salvatierra was illiterate to the poem. The *real visceralistas* explain the poem to him in a rather simple fashion: "sión" is from "navegación"; the rect line means tranquility, the undulated line signifies an alteration of that calm, and the jagged line is a complete break from it. Salvatierra ruminates on the various implications of it, varying from Quetzalcoatl's boat to Einstein's impossible triangle (401). The *real visceralistas* affirm that the poem is a joke and very easily understood. "Añádale a cada rectángulo de cada corte una vela, así" (400). They had no qualms adulterating the only actual text of "their" movement, that which would be the most sacred to them, and should be revered in Western traditions of texts. They were very willing to express their readings of the text and intervene in it. Save the title, the poem does not have any words and Spanish does not have that suffix. To

drive home the point of multiple semantics and vocality, one of the last scenes with Salvatierra in it emphasizes the extensive range language can go to express ideas, in this case one negation: “Y el que estaba dormido dijo no, Amadeo, o tal vez dijo nicho, Amadeo, o tal vez dijo nel o nelson o nelazo, o tal vez dijo ni madre o niguas o ni maíz paloma, o tal vez dijo nones.” (553). The use of another ten ways to negate someone “no.. nicho... nel.. nelson... nelazo... ni madres... niguas... ni maíz paloma... nones”, specifically by Salvatierra, emphasizes the vividness of language uttering distinct words revolving around one concept yet stylizing the movement of denial with ten variations on the language spectrum of negation. Language is free play, forever without closure.

By using symbols in the last entries of his diary and the last part of the book, García Madero is breaking the tacit laws of literary institutions, invoking the Mexicans with sombreros (574-575), and Cesárea Tinajero’s poem. García Madero’s poem can be understood in the same manner as Cesárea Tinajero’s. It is also composed of three images; however, without the *real visceralistas* help to figure it out, Juan leaves a question for each figure; “¿Qué hay detrás de la ventana?” and one response to all but the third, opening up a space for the reader to have the last say in the poem and novel. The question and responses say that there is a rectangle which is a window, and behind the first one there is a star; “Una Estrella” and behind the second window there is an extended bedsheet; “Una sábana”. Associating stars with bedsheets denotes sleep, or more specifically, dreams. If one can assume that the window is the same window, or at least using the previous windows as direct references a means to interpret this one, the presentation of the window is inverted, and now what is behind the window is the reader.

One of the most famous poetic inquiries in Hispanic Letters is by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer rhetorically asking “¿Qué es poesía?” The response is “Poesía... eres tú.” The broken-up lines serve to signal another side of the frame and also to present that on that particular side, that particular angle of interpreting it presents boundaries as not uncrossable limits, standards, or norms, instead appraises them as porous and incapable of being bounded. “¿Qué hay detrás de la Ventana?” (609), based off of the Bécquer line, I would hazard the guess that one of the answers is “Un tú”, full of all of the multiplicities that the indefinite article implies that the reader can dream up.

The law of the concrete jungle is an adherence to the letter of the law and its social order. Resistance and struggle against this social order are not definite in their place nor objective because the counter is incapable of falling completely outside of the cultural discourse. This is not to take value away value from the contestation; it is to signal its complexity. If it is countering it must take into account at which point it is doing so and how it is going about it. There are codes and strategies of survival and they exist because one must be able to meaningfully understand the semantics of hegemonic apparatuses in order to come up with a valid stratagem to work against them. There is no way to exist within society without engaging with it. The positionality of a joke in the end is marked by victory, but when breaking with the universal symbol, the Oneness, this win hopefully makes others laugh and inspires critical thought around the institution it might put into question. The goal is to have multiple uses of the same material with words that yield several interpretations. This requires a fluidity of thought and meanings, leading to a displacement of the train of thought and its imposition, departing from

normative or normal thinking. In order for comedy to be funny it must fulfill a sense of irony, striking a chord on what would otherwise not have resonated at all. The true play on words must be unexpected and using or looking at colloquial content in an unanticipated manner, and manner that signals the actual matter of the situation. However, a connection has to still be able to be made, otherwise a jest that requires an explanation loses its comedic value. The humor lies in the interpretation of the elements comprised of in the joke. It is a question of semantics and pragmatics, where the meaning of the words and as a consequence of the sentence are being employed in ways that lay outside of normative language and hegemonic culture. For a joke doesn't need to hold to any One logic, it has to burst out in laughter and irreverently interrupt. Otherwise, a mechanical interpretation of the law and letters can only leave us a robotic sense of justice and monotonous meaning, devoid of the humanity in interpretation, and no room to discuss, dialogue, play, or laugh.

## CHAPTER 2

Sleights of Ungodly Hands: *La mano de DIOS & El mejor gol del mundo*

*MARADONA*, one word - all caps, four syllables - all claps... *MARADONA*.<sup>27</sup>

The word, the name, the noun, the footballer, the drug addict, the person; at the mere mention of *MARADONA*, the utterance invokes so much in Latin America, in Latin American History, and in Latin American Cultural production. All of the things connoted, all of the people connoted, all of the events connoted, stretch far beyond just the one word. Diego Armando Maradona is only part of the articulation *MARADONA*. When *MARADONA* is mentioned, written down, photographed, graffitied... every inscription of *MARADONA* has a previous contextual connotation, carrying the weight of all of them into the new situation, never being limited to one person nor one event, and all of them contributing to a one and a many; *MA-RA-DO-NA*.<sup>28</sup> Within the compilation of what *MARADONA* is, and this author does not pretend to exhaust this list, are the following: Diego Armando Maradona, Diegol, Maradó, Pelusa, Argentina, *La mano de DIOS*, *El gol del siglo*, Las Malvinas, México 86, El 10, *El pibe de oro*, and D10S. Diego Armando Maradona is one of the most popular football players of all time and the author of two of the most famous goals in football history. Those two goals were scored during

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<sup>27</sup> This is a direct quote from QUITAPENAS, a tropical Afro-Latin band from Riverside, CA, describing themselves with the phrase “one word - all caps, four syllables - all claps”. This author takes inspiration from that to describe the rhythmic weight carried over with *MARADONA*, understanding it as having the same characteristics as Kristeva’s polyogue; “the polylogue’s first prerequisite: cause rhythm to emerge, hasten it, have it remove the symbolic surface” (178).

<sup>28</sup> Kristeva’s talks about Soller’s *H* as a polylogue, describing it as “not a sentence but no less than a sentence.” (167)

one quarterfinal game in the 1986 World Cup, on the 22nd of June, when the symbolic force of what *MARADONA* would be is founded on an international level for all to appreciate. The two competing teams were Argentina and England, and the player who scored those two goals for the Argentine side was Diego Armando Maradona. That quarter final game of that World Cup takes symbolic precedence over Argentina's subsequent wins versus Belgium in the semifinal and West Germany in the final. As the captain of the Argentine National Team, Diego Armando Maradona had a brilliant game, scoring those two emblematic goals charged with so much significance behind them that they have names of their own; *La mano de DIOS* and *El mejor gol del mundo*. *El mejor gol de mundo* goes by even more monikers: *El gol del siglo*, *el gol a los ingleses*, *la jugada de todos los tiempos*, *el mejor gol en la historia de la Copa Mundial de fútbol*. The first goal, *La mano de DIOS* is a sleight of hand. Maradona jumps for a ball in contest between himself and the English goalkeeper Peter Shilton, and with his left forearm is able to ever so slightly punch it over the keeper. The guile stems from him feigning a header and raising his arms in such a way that made it seem like it was a natural movement. In the goal, the rules of the game were completely broken, but it was done in such a manner that those who could make a sanction against it were powerless. This type of action is characteristic of somebody being wily on the pitch; a *pícaro*, an *encarador*, a *potrero*, a *gambetero*, a *pibe*, a *burlador*, intending a sleight over others, which is often times appreciated in amateur and improvised pitches as a jovial action, being less of an offense the more adroit it is, while still being applaudable. This type of goal forms part of the audience's experience of the game and so therefore falls under the

people's scrutiny. Football, is, after all, a popular sport of many peoples as Bill Murray explains in his book, *The World's Sport*;

Soccer... is the simplest game and from all points of view the most democratic. It is known as the "people's game," played mainly before the less-privileged sections of society, often by participants from poor backgrounds whose skills might elevate them to otherwise unattainable financial security and social esteem.

(xviii)

Football does not need to abide to just one style of play nor appreciation, especially with so many people playing it. *La mano de DIOS* is a goal reminiscent of amateur and informal football cunningness and wiliness. The more believable a goal is in that environment, no matter the guile, the more impressive and the more it entertains. And it is very entertaining to see the representatives of the once British Empire, the economic world power that is England, be beaten at their own game. The second goal, *El mejor gol del mundo* is often likened to a work of art because of its mastery. The ability to dribble past seven players in the quarter final game of a world cup over half of the field and score a goal seemingly based off of individuality goes against a collective discipline and common effort style of play that the English football players practice and tried spreading throughout the world during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and is what they disliked about the style of the local Argentine populace playing the sport in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The goal and the style of play associated with it, is too playful and not serious enough to guarantee consistent victories over opponents which demands the constant sacrifice of the individual team members for the team as a whole. For that there must be a tactic to

follow, which is what the local styles, or in Argentina's case, *fútbol criollo* breaks and broke with. I look at *MARADONA*, *La mano de DIOS*, and *El mejor gol del mundo* as being transgressive expressions on the boundaries of what FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Association designates as the "beautiful game". A game that FIFA considers itself to be the authority of. I interpret *MARADONA*, *La mano de DIOS* and *El mejor gol del mundo* as being popular expressions of culture in Latin America and I wish to highlight their subversive nature in the face of the dominant ideology that FIFA tries to perpetuate in its notion of "fair play", and the goals' ability at articulating different types of realities, an interpretation of which is expressed by sectors of Latin American population that live out the discriminatory conflicts of their societies. FIFA's endeavors to make their understanding of football as the lingua franca of the game, they do not want fluency in *MARADONA* and all the symbolic value connoted with what he represents; the possibility of an alternative football, which is to say the possibility of alternative ways of playing and living.

*La mano de Dios* and *El mejor gol del mundo* are arguably the two most famous goals ever scored in FIFA World Cup History. There are other goals, absolutely beautiful goals, however, the relevance of the aforementioned goals is such because of the National teams' history to each other. The Argentina vs England 1986 Quarter final game was not just another game in a FIFA World Cup. In Goldblatt's seminal book on the history and significance of football, *The Ball is Round: the Global History of Football*, he finds that: "Reducing the experience of football to a single match underestimates the degree to which whole seasons, long historical traditions, derbies and grudge matches generate



their own accumulated storehouses of memory and knowledge” (908). Matches are interesting for outside of bounds and play contexts resonating over into the game, and the matchup between England and Argentina carries a copious amount of weight. Jorge Valdano, also a player for the Argentine national team that would go on to win the 1986 FIFA World Cup with Diego Maradona that year talks about those two goals in relation to *MARADONA*, like so:

En un partido de un grandísimo valor simbólico, Maradona mostró las dos formas de ser del argentino. En el primer gol muestra la trampa, la picardía criolla o la viveza. Argentina es un país donde el engaño tiene más prestigio que la honradez. Pero también tiene otra cara. Es la del virtuosismo y la habilidad. En el segundo gol Maradona corona el partido con una obra de arte. Es la habilidad, la gambeta, la nuestra. (La Nación)

This Argentine “ser”, this being personified by the *picardía criolla* will be discussed at length in this chapter. Valdano says it is particular to the Argentine being, and for purposes of the argument I will include it with the Argentine being, although I would suggest that it is particular of sectors of the population in Latin America that play at life because they have to maneuver through and around discriminatory factors in society in order to survive.

### **Colonial Football**

*MARADONA*, *La mano de DIOS*, and *El mejor gol del mundo* are so significant because of what they represent for football in its history in Latin America. Football technically exists in Latin America because of formal and informal structures of British

Imperialism during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Brenda Elsey has stated:

The manner in which football traveled the globe shaped its significance. Football diffused along the channels of the British Empire during the nineteenth century. Europeans brought the sport to Africa, Asia, and Latin America through educational institutions, commerce, and colonial government. (2)

However, to say it is the only reason why *fútbol* exists in Latin America is to discredit the local populations that adopted the sport of their own accord. Football was introduced to the region as a byproduct of British Imperialism. It did not become a cultural staple because of it. The adoption of the game and a mode of playing it became something representative of the region, and it makes sense. Football, and all its representations have a wide variety of playing styles and forms of being that are not just designated to a field measuring the requirements by FIFA, two goal posts, and two competing eleven player squads. A ball and a player who limits themselves to touching the ball without their hands can pass it back and forth against a wall, juggle the ball, or find another person to play with, no matter if it's on grass, cement, dirt, asphalt, or sand. The simplicity of the game, or at least the perceived simplicity of the game contributes to its ubiquity. Murry says this to the matter:

Soccer's popularity by far surpasses that of all other sports. It is based on the game's simplicity, its economic democracy, and its appeal to the poor, the illiterate, the working-classes - those who cannot afford a polo pony, a yacht, a squash racquet, or a set of golf clubs; whose games take place on streets and

beaches and spare lots, not in expensive leisure centers or well-manicured lawns; and who are more likely to settle their difference and express their grievances with blows rather than by recourse to lawyers and letters to the editor. (168)

This is the great appeal of the game. There are minimal aspects to the football, but the actual game is popular because of its adaptability and its ability to inspire dreams and aspirations of socioeconomic benefit.

In Argentina, the first football players were the English. When the Argentine populace started playing the sport, they were not playing in the disciplined style that the English football players approved of, nor in a way that lined up with their ideologies. The English excluded the local population from the clubs that played the sport.<sup>29</sup> As a result, that which is designated as *fútbol criollo* is a direct response to British Imperialism in the *Río de la Plata* region of South America. Hence, the aggregation of *criollo* to football, because it is a style that lay outside of the propriety of the country that founded the rules of the game and pejoratively signaled a different style of practicing it. This is kind of a double-edged sword of sorts, because although the British were excluding the local population, it was specific sectors of the population, the ones who could not afford to be part of the clubs to play on the designated field, use the right equipment, and learn the rules of the game there. Although, they could not be part of the clubs, they still wanted to

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<sup>29</sup> In Joshua H. Nadel's *Fútbol!: why soccer matters in Latin America*, he says; "Early soccer matches pit British against Anglo-Argentine youth in elite Buenos Aires athletic clubs, providing another field for the development of soccer in Argentina. Eventually, working- and middle-class citizens, immigrants, and native sons (and even some native daughters) began to play the game as well, improvising fields where they could and crafting balls out of anything they could find. From the outset these games differed markedly in style from the game taught in elite schools and athletic clubs. The elite played a proper, gentlemanly game that was well organized and well attended. Everyone else, however, played rougher, more individual and creative game bred in the streets and embodying all that the street implied: ingenuity, practical intelligence, and improvisation." (52)

play because of the influence that British culture had over the region at the time and the popularity of the sport, as Goldblatt states:

While economic relationships were at the core of British influence, the informal empire was always more than just pounds, shillings and pence. British teachers, schools and educational philosophies were in vogue and in demand among many of the elites of Europe and the Rio de la Plata, for Britain was not just the most powerful player in world affairs, it was the most modern. (114)

The gentlemanliness of football as a sport was conceived of having to be played on a field designated for the game using specific rules. Guardianship of culture and its accessibility constitutes an exceedingly discriminatory practice, leaving its membership to a high socioeconomic stratum. Under a colonial mindset, questions of propriety and gentlemanly conduct are tools of discrimination against what is deemed as improper without taking into account local traditions and customs.<sup>30</sup> Football being played on the street, elsewhere, or in a different way was an affront to the original designation. The separation in the practice of the sport inevitably facilitated the distinct playing nature of the social groups, as a result of the practice of the sport being performed by different cultures that were not a part of the dominant one.

*Fútbol criollo* is named for valuing a certain style of play that goes against the British discipline imposed for the purposes of standardizing the sport. Within the style of *fútbol criollo*, audacity and cunningness are held at high value. I would like to say that

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<sup>30</sup> "The birth of the criollo style - sometimes called Argentine, sometimes Uruguayan, and sometimes *rioplatense* - dates to the moment that poor youth, called *pibes*, began to imitate the elite game that they watched from the sidelines. Innumerable stories from the early twentieth century recount street children joining in this game or that, in Rosario or Buenos Aires or Montevideo, and stunning the proper, straight-laced elite sportsmen with their skill and guile." (Nadel 46)

they are held in higher regard over results, but just because the style has a different approach to the game, does not mean that results are not important, the metric might be a distinct measuring system. Playfulness and ball mastery are applauded even when what was intended was not achieved. Failures are still appreciated for the vision of the play, a vision that perhaps goes beyond a target not easily spotted by an ends justifies the means attitude. In Andreas Campomar's book *Golazo! The Beautiful Game from Aztecs to the World Cup: The Complete History of How Soccer Shaped Latin America*, he finds that in the 1920's "For the *rioplatenses*, dribbling was now deemed the highest form of football: the expression of criollo artistry. The cult of the individual had replaced any team ethic that might have existed previously (115-116). Campomar perceives it as the cult of the individual, but the capability to dribble is attributed to an archetype that is supposed to embody the essence of a community. If qualities attributed to the archetype are representative of a group of people identifying themselves with that behavior, while said behavior stands in opposition to the discriminatory practices of elite or colonizing populations, then even though the behavior might seem to be counterintuitive to a team dynamic, it is a close minded way of looking at a team. A football team works to a certain goal, quite literally trying to score them. If everyone is in agreement about how best to accomplish that goal, then the team actually has a good team dynamic, even if it is a different interpretation of what a team is supposed to be doing. The British style of play had their empire to think about. Their understanding of discipline and a team is tied to their colonial endeavors. *Fútbol criollo* had a backdrop of standing in opposition to the

colonial endeavors, I would not say resisting or surviving them, but actively existing and practicing a distinct mode of being to them.

### ***El pibe criollo***

When you don't fit the standards of the game, you have to reimagine a different form of play. This is what *fútbol criollo* was to the local population in the *Río de la plata*, and the archetype of *fútbol criollo* was and continues to be the *pibe*, the *potrero*, who's defining quality was the *gambeta*, the ability to dribble. In Eduardo P. Archetti's book, *Masculinidades: fútbol, tango y polo en la Argentina*, the author has an analysis of the Argentine sports newspaper of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *el Gráfico*, and gives the newspaper writer Borocotó credit for expounding the idea of "la gambeta criolla" in 1928 and then elaborating on it in 1950 (Archetti 102). "La gambeta, una expresión del cuerpo, pasaría a ser una manifestación esencial del carácter criollo" (Archetti 103). There are three defining characteristics of *el pibe criollo* as described by Archetti via Borocotó:

En primer lugar, el pibe criollo, al ver cómo jugaban los ingleses se dio cuenta de que ese estilo de juego no dejaba lugar a la improvisación, a la "imaginación". En segundo lugar, los pibes jugaban al fútbol espontáneamente en los porteros, sin instrucciones, a diferencia de Inglaterra, donde -según Borocotó- el fútbol se encontraba integrado al sistema escolar. En los potreros, con tantos jugadores en un lugar tan limitado, el único modo de conservar el dominio de la pelota durante un cierto tiempo era a través de la gambeta. En tercer lugar, Borocotó recuerda que el fútbol argentino llegó a ser conocido por las gambetas y que los jugadores que dejaron el país para jugar en Europa eran los mejores gambeteadores. (243)

The biggest aspiration for Diego Armando Maradona was to be what he came to incarnate: *Un pibe, un potrero*, the exponent of *fútbol criollo*. The archetype was a contestation to a system that has a history of economic exploitation of his country and tried to establish cultural supremacy of what should be what in terms of thought processes and practices. Barocotó paints a very romantic picture of what a *pibe* is in the excerpt below, saying that there should be a statue made of him. This is the *pibe*, the greatest champion of *fútbol criollo*.

Un pibe con la cara sucia, la melena rebelándose contra el peine; los ojos inteligentes, errantes, embusteros y persuasivos, y una mirada destellante surgiendo una risa picaresca que no termina de formarse en su boca, llena de dientes pequeños, probablemente desgastados por comer el pan de “ayer”. Sus pantalones, hechos de remiendos toscamente cosidos, su camiseta con los colores de Argentina, con el escote muy bajo y con muchos agujeros comidos por los ratones invisibles del uso. Una cinta de tela atada a su cintura y atravesando su pecho, un especie de faja que sirve de tiradores. Sus rodillas cubiertas con la costra de las heridas desinfectadas por el destino; descalzo o con zapatos, cuyos agujeros en la punta del pie dan indicios de haber sido provocados por muchos tiros de pelota. Su postura debe ser simbólica; como si estuviera gambeteando con una pelota de trapo. Ese detalle es importante: la pelota no puede ser de otro tipo. Una pelota de trapo y preferentemente atada con una media vieja. Si algún día se construye este monumento, muchos de nosotros nos quitaremos el sombrero ante

el mismo como lo hacemos en la iglesia. (El Gráfico no. 470, 1928: 150)

(Borocotó vía Archetti 244-245)

The monument has yet to be concretely erected, however the living monument has come to be *MARADONA* incarnate par excellence. Diego Maradona, as he said, considers himself a *cabecita negra*, a pejorative term for people of a lower socioeconomic class in Argentina. Juan Villoro criticizes him for liking figures like el Che Guevara or Fidel Castro, but what role models does Latin America have that could represent what *MARADONA* represents? Hope for less economically wealthy peoples and communities of Latin America.<sup>31</sup> The *pibe*, like many other footballers around the world has a hope of obtaining economic success through the playing of football by standing out. The *pibe* is one of the first figures in the history of the game to be a local representative that could stand up to a colonial power, which is why *MARADONA* resonates so much for people in Latin America, whether or not they are Argentine or not. This is because the *pibe* and *fútbol criollo* were popular tropes for many Latin American peoples, no matter the countries, that had the possibility of bettering their station.<sup>32</sup> In Tim Walter's essay, "'Another World (Cup) Is Possible!': Twenty Theses About Modern Football", he talks about the amount of influence football has all over the world and how it represents a potentiality of change, especially with the backdrop of football being FIFA. Walter's says: "Football can be transformed from a symbol of much that is contemptible in the

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<sup>31</sup> "The beautiful game has achieved what a succession of third-rate dictators and craven presidents have never been able to do: instill the continent with a sense of self-belief and a historical narrative of which it can be proud, and thereby cast off heavy shackles of colonialism." (Campomar 8)

<sup>32</sup> *Fútbol Criollo* was "a popular trope throughout not only Argentina and Uruguay but around the region. In Paraguay and Chile, Mexico and Brazil, the power of the message was unmistakable: the people, represented by the poor youth, could surpass the elite." (Nadel 46)



modern world to something potentially liberatory and revolutionary, which is more in keeping with the creative nature of the game itself” (330). FIFA has always attempted at uniformity and a monopoly over the sport, however it has trouble managing due to figures like *MARADONA* whose play endorses other forms of football.

The game, every official game of football is an interface of FIFA and *antifaz* of its power.<sup>33</sup> It is the most visible platform in the way it interacts with the world and how FIFA situates itself in it. FIFA exists at multiple levels of administration, but the spectacle of the game is where it is most obviously seen, or at least the place where they call the most attention to themselves to. Following Lefebvre’s statement about the everyday stipulating the legibility of forms, then the notion of being clear as a comprehensive phrase is not to make show of how something works in particular, but instead it is to provide a lens of understanding, FIFA’s constant “fair play” and “beautiful game” discourses are the lenses through which FIFA wants the world to see it as the ultimate benevolent authority of football. The maximum presentation of this is the World Cup, held every four years in a different country or region in the world, where the tournament turns into a demonstration of the rulers of the world organizing a massive sporting event as procedural meritocracy. This is the stage where powerful countries and organizations supposedly give the rest of the world a chance to feel like they are contenders in the world’s affairs. Whatever happens, whether the rulers win or lose, they win either way. It is still them flexing their economic power how they want to. For example; in Brazil during their most recent hosting of the 2014 World Cup, FIFA forced

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<sup>33</sup> I write *antifaz* because mask & disguise don’t do it for me, instead I want to emphasize the a false-facial-façade of FIFIA, but that felt effete.

the South American Lusophone country to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages in a nation that has the consumption of libations in stadiums banned as a move to suppress violence.

During the month of the entire 2014 finals, fans generated 3 billion World Cup-related Facebook interactions would not have been possible without the equally unprecedented presence of many of the less savory features of this tournament, which have been well-documented elsewhere. Mass evictions, the deaths of construction workers, the forced relocation of indigenous peoples, the suppression or gentrification of the favelas, the routinely brutal suppression or expressions of dissent by an expanded and increasingly militarized Brazilian security apparatus, the forced privatization of public areas to create FIFA's corporatized "zones of exclusion," the overturning of Brazilian law by Swiss not-for-profit organization walking away from the tournament with between \$3 and \$5 billion in profits while the Brazilian taxpayers were left with a bill for around \$11.63 billion.

(Walters 327)

Nonetheless, there are still signs of representation. A small victory is not going to uneven any keel or balance any dispute at an international level. Let us not forget that although the game being discussed in this chapter harks on Argentina eliminating England in the 1986 World Cup quarterfinal, it does not make up for *La guerra de las Malvinas*, which Argentina never had a chance at winning against the United Kingdom. However, a small victory nonetheless signals a small step towards self-recognition in the face of the oppressor(s). A forced visualization on the oppresseds' own terms. This is why the

Argentina vs England game, *La mano de DIOS*, *El mejor gol de todos los tiempos*, and *MARADONA* still resonate so much in the history of the sport and is so important and still discussed.

### **The Non-Profit Association from Zurich, Switzerland**

FIFA is a multibillion-dollar organization that claims it is a non-profit association based in Zurich, Switzerland. It sets the standards, regulations, and laws, and asks for a universal observance of them for the good of the game. *MARADONA*, *La mano de DIOS*, and *El mejor gol de todos los tiempos* references Diego Armando Maradona's narrative recourse for narrating the goals as divine and inspirational works, as transcendent actions from a lent spiritual hand and myth making accomplishment. For FIFA, the former is an unlawful goal, a sinful goal, an illegitimate goal, but one that they could not go back to disallow, and the latter is such a talented goal, is such an impossible play, working within the rules yet still being an offense to them. Ergo, for football, it is a seminal moment in its history because it detracts from the power that FIFA purports to have over the sport. Official Football history is told by FIFA on their official History of Football website and in summary talks about the game prior to FIFA's own existence as being too disorganized and so figures of authority were not happy with it. In 1314, The Lord Mayor of London forbade football within the city because of the chaos it caused. To infringe upon the law equated imprisonment. During the Hundred Years' war between England and France from 1337 to 1453, Kings Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V all made the game punishable by law because it prevented their subjects from practicing

more useful military disciplines, particularly archery.<sup>34</sup> There is a strong association of English archers during that time with lower classes, which is why the Lords of England preferred that the people be practicing archery instead of playing a sport.<sup>35</sup> The list is much longer but before the 19th century, according to FIFA there is a narrative of resentment towards football because the game consistently leads to public disturbances.<sup>36</sup> FIFA claims that before its organization and regulation, football was primitive. Quite literally publishing on their website that primitive football was more disorganized, more violent, more spontaneous and usually played by an indefinite number of players. All of that just so happened to change in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, where a new attitude developed towards football. The difference in the 19<sup>th</sup> century football is credited to education authorities noting that the sport could also encourage such fine qualities as loyalty, selflessness, cooperation, subordination and deference to the team spirit. Although the matter has much more to do with a designation of rules and regulations that would encourage the sport to be played in a certain way and in certain locations. The first official football association was the English FA that formed in 1863, Scottish FA 1873, FA of Wales 1875, Irish FA 1880, Netherlands and Denmark in 1889, and the Argentine Football Association formed in 1893. When FIFA was founded in 1904, the English FA,

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<sup>34</sup> “While the Anglos, Saxons and Normans that made up much of the English mix may have had their own ball games, it seems as likely that they learned them in the course of their long struggles with their Celtic neighbours. By the early medieval era football was sufficiently commonplace as both a village occasion and an urban pastime that edicts were issued in the names of Edward II, Henry V, Edward IV, Henry VII and Henry VIII which sought to ban, control or restrict. It was certainly violent enough for deaths and injuries to be recorded.” (Goldblatt 17)

<sup>35</sup> “A statute of Edward IV from 1477 reads, ‘No person shall practice any unlawful games such as dice, quoits, football and such games, but that every strong and able-bodied person shall practice with the now for the reason that the national defence depends upon such bowmen.’ Court records show that individuals were fined and punished for playing the game.” (Goldblatt 17)

<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that who is resentful is never stated.

did not wish to form part of it, but was quickly convinced by FIFA, stipulating that the rules and regulations would be determined by the FA. For FIFA, enticing the FA to join them was pivotal for how FIFA wanted to situate themselves in the game, and getting the first Football Association to be on board with the project was a way to make FIFA at least appear as the one and only authority over the sport.

The presence of FIFA's Law situates themselves in the play of the game. FIFA writes their Laws and talks about their Law in the FIFA handbooks with a capital "L" each time it is used, signaling FIFA's juridic fiction involved in the juridic right to auto reference its right to auto reference itself as the authority. Proper nouns are capitalized, and FIFA wants to make a show of their power, of their dictates as a proper noun. Meanwhile the football players' relationship to the Law is on the field. That presence, at the time of presentation is yet another affirmation of the autoreference of authority. Not even a self-authority of self but of self-authorized authority over others, over the game's users. What *MARADONA* does is create a factual break in that authorization of authority. There is no complete severing of the authority, for for every time he steps out onto a field of play, and every time anyone else steps onto a pitch and at least pretends to follow the rules, they are to an extent being subject to the authority that FIFA is exercising. Although, the rules of the game are not the foundation of the game, they have been implemented time and time again to later be actualized to its current state of affairs. It is never an a-priori action, but an a-posteriori one. Which means that there are always things that FIFA cannot account for in the game it presumes to have authority over. What happens is that the spectacle of interruption by *MARADONA*, *La mano de DIOS*, and *El*

*mejor gol del mundo* become an affront to the interface of FIFA, it becomes more than just a break in the Law of the game. It signals the *antifaz* of power presumed by FIFA in the interface, that is not necessarily acknowledged, by picking at a debility of the power as an *antifaz* because it cannot go back and affirm that the goals were wrong, nor can it presume to be in the always correct. Instead, it was someone else's wrongdoing, it was a player not conforming to "fair play", not FIFA's incapacity to handle the situation well. This is a consequence of their laws stipulating that they exist for the best interest of the "beautiful game", so how then could they annul an action that was so part of the spectacle that is remembered more than the 1986 World Cup final consisting of West Germany vs. Argentina? Especially after Diego Armando Maradona outclasses everyone on the pitch five minutes afterwards with an indisputable goal. Moreover, it is impossible to take symbolic value away from them.

FIFA's laws are based on the FA's original laws and regulations. Currently FA's international iteration is IFAB, the International Football Association Board, and they are in control of establishing the rules. The laws of football are presented in this manner by FIFA and IFAB:

The philosophy and spirit of the Laws

Football is the greatest sport on earth. It is played in every country and at many different levels. The Laws of the Game are the same for all football throughout the world from the FIFA World Cup™ Final through to a game between young children in a remote village.

That the same Laws apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village throughout the world is a considerable strength which must be preserved. This is also an opportunity which must be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.

Football must have Laws which keep the game 'fair' as a crucial foundation of the beauty of the 'beautiful game' is its fairness - this is a vital feature of the 'spirit' of the game. The best matches are those where the referee is rarely needed as the players play with respect for each other, the match officials and the Laws.

The integrity of the Laws, and the referees who apply them, must always be protected and respected. All those in authority, especially coaches and team captains, have a clear responsibility to the game to respect the match officials and their decisions.

Both FIFA and the International Football Association Board, employ within their declarative system of Laws a terminology that falls along the lines of transcendence.

When they provide adulations to the sport, or feints in their Laws, gambits, they are transcending their own Laws in the name of the game, they are not breaking them. The issue is that they name the game, in its play, in its reproduction, and in its existence. A transgression for them implies corrupting the game. A transcendence is being above the game to elevate it to greater heights. Transcendental actions elevate the game, its Laws, ergo FIFA.

The theatre of FIFA's fantasy in its self-reflexive authority is found in Britain. Actions in relation to the law that break the law in football are originally based on the

English Corinthian Spirit. Corinthian FC, founded in 1882, considered themselves missionaries for the British Empire, meant to bring together the colonies for the “Mother Country”, supposedly exporting the true ideals of the game and the right way of playing it.<sup>37</sup> In the Corinthian spirit, players were never to play for profit, only for love of the game. Rules of gentlemanliness in Football were established by the English Corinthian Spirit. This spirit is supposed to elevate the standard of comportment for on and off the field. Their discourse of transcendence and elevation brings to mind a divine aspect found in “The Spirit in the Laws” for football. FIFA suggests that when a referee is unsure about a decision, the referee should “Make a decision within the ‘spirit’ of the game - this often involves asking the question ‘what would football want/expect?’”. This is not mere coincidence that the question sounds like the Christian inquiry, “What would Jesus do?” Then there is a penalization for anyone, and I quote who “Shows a lack of respect for the game”. The game’s rules and its spirit are often equated to be one and the same. The rules are meant to keep the spirit of the game clean, to keep it fair. FIFA inherited a discourse that involves an understanding of the rules and laws of football as being transcendental. This way, the game, or themselves, can never be guilty of anything, meanwhile the participants that do not fall in line with what FIFA deems fair are.

FIFA then perpetuates marginalization and discrimination stemming from a British Colonial mindset. Making a hierarchy so that the metric makes the maker superior and situates the sovereign as sovereign to everything/everyone beneath. FIFA pretends to exist apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe and then

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<sup>37</sup> There were other football teams acting as missionaries for the British Empire sent by the FA, not just the Corinthians, like; Middlesex Wanderers, and Pilgrims (Murray 37).



pretends to provide a prescription for play as though the aleatory nature of beauty or the game in the “beautiful game” can be choreographed with a strict observance of FIFA’s Laws. There is always an aleatory nature in true play, the possibility of everything going wrong, and most importantly, that authority or laws are very capable of being in the wrong. This sits directly in contrast to the cruel optimist ethics that FIFA purports that Football instils. The case is that it is really they who work to instill them in football so as to imply a possible success story, an exception to the rule of success that all should aspire to achieve. Why else would so many players willingly fall into the tyranny of FIFA? The possibility of being greatly remunerated for playing a sport is enticing. FIFA then is able to coerce a mode of life, creating hopeful devotees further cementing their power in the interface they wish to provide.

FIFA establishes Laws that consider its own existence divine. To be transcendent is to be or go beyond the range or limits of something abstract, typically a conceptual field or division. For FIFA to talk about their “Laws of the Game” as being “the same for all football throughout the world from the FIFA World Cup™ Final through to a game between young children in a remote village” is definitely to be pretending to be transcendental, to somehow be found in every manifestation of the sport. And then there is *La Iglesia Maradoniana*, the religion dedicated to Diego Armando Maradona, founded on the 30th of October 1998 in Rosario, Argentina. *La Iglesia Maradoniana* is an obvious parody of Christianity, mocking specifically a Judeo-Christian themed religion in the Western World. The spread of religion by missionaries around the world is intrinsically tied to the international political powers that Western Europe presumed, specifically

England, spreading their culture and establishing colonies throughout it. It is no coincidence that the spread of football by the supposed missionaries of the British Empire that were, Corinthians FC, has obvious overtones of religion, and a civilizing aspect to its colonial endeavors:

The 1906 Annals of the Corinthian Football Club called its members ‘missionaries of the Empire’, linking British sportsmanship to international understanding as well as the bringing together of colonies and the ‘Mother Country’; prioritized charitable causes; and emphasized that a game should be a game, opposing competitive glory-seeking and trophy-hunting. Brilliant but selfish players, in the words of veteran Corinthian G. O. Smith (1872–1943), should not be tolerated. The Corinthian spirit of fair play was embodied in the famous principle that if a penalty was awarded against the team, the goalkeeper must vacate the goal to allow the opposition to score and take its just rewards for the Corinthian team's violations of the rules (and the spirit) of the game.

(Tomlinson 116)

FIFA takes its stance of “fair play” from Corinthians FC Missionary endeavors and philosophy. The Missionary undertakings were all vies for power, hidden or masked by a savior discourse for helping others. Although the help or the supposed aid is a presumption of understanding, it is an understanding that implies an offering of services to be rendered for the betterment. However, this scale of betterment has a goal in mind, a specific direction moving to a specific objective, establishing power.

*La Iglesia Maradoniana* mocks at the authority FIFA pretends to have. Moreover, one that considers itself the world's sport's authority. The *Iglesia Maradoniana* turns 1961 into 1 D.D., poking fun at the foundations of the Western World arbitrarily determining the world's time in reference to Jesus Christ's supposed birth. Two thousand years of interpreting time, of determining seasonal orientations around the birth of someone who is considered God or the son of God, is called into question by resetting the clock on the progress of existence to when Diego Armando Maradona was born by pointing out the autocratic use of authority implied in the action. Time is not appreciated around the world in the same way, and the imposition of a metric does not standardize it when there are still different ways of appreciating it. Time is just a fact that is, moments transpire, and this does not make time or its appreciation divine. There is no divine aspect to football. Football is a game that is played and has worldwide popularity and appeal. There is not anything transcendental about the game. Football's worldwide appeal is exactly that, it is not beyond that. Worldwide appeal is just what it is. Playing with a ball, using the parts of the human body that would not normally be associated with virtuosic handling of an object, literally the iteration of the handling as something because of the way one puts one's hands on something stems from that. Football is played with the other parts of the body with one ball. There is no complicated equipment needed nor that many limitations of place. Football is played on grass, sand, dirt, and concrete, and sometimes without goal posts, just a wall, two trees close to each other, someone's shoes, or a garbage bin laid down. Football's popularity I believe stems from what FIFA cannot do to the sport, standardize it. FIFA claims for itself the power, stating "That the same Laws

apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village throughout the world is a considerable strength which must be preserved. This is also an opportunity which must be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.” FIFA’s “for the good of football everywhere” discourse is a benevolent stance on the authority they pretend to wield over the World’s Sport. Moreover, the cultural monopoly they wish to hold comes from a colonial mindset where a presumed universal culture is imposed on very different communities of people that might not have the same valuing systems for the sport, much less life. FIFA claims to know and reproduce the right way to carry out football in the world. But theirs are moral standards and appreciations culturally rooted in actions from a Eurocentric place, influencing what is culturally relevant or permitted outside of its appropriate location. For football to exist the way it does in Europe, or more specifically, Western Europe, it does not mean that the sport cannot be represented in a different way somewhere else. FIFA only wants their right way of doing things as the accepted way to carry out actions. *MARADONA* is exceedingly not right in the eyes of FIFA and is constantly appreciated as a rogue figure.

*MARADONA*’s outspoken nature and outright stance have consistently undermined FIFA’ spectacle of the sport. There is much to take from Eduardo Galeano description of Diego Maradona’s playing style in his book *Fútbol a Sol y Sombra* where he states that Maradona’s crime came from being left footed; “el crimen de jugar con la zurda, lo cual el Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado, significa con la izquierda> y también significa <al contrario de como se debe hacer>” (55). *MARADONA* was never going to be FIFA’s right person to be an icon of the sport, as Galeano so succinctly says further:

Este petiso respondón y calentón tiene la costumbre de lanzar golpes hacia arriba. En el 86 y en el 94, en México y en Estados Unidos, denunció a la omnipotente dictadura de la televisión, que estaba obligando a los jugadores a deslomarse al mediodía, achicharrándose al sol, y en mil y una ocasiones más, todo a lo largo de su accidentada carrera, Maradona ha dicho cosas que han sacudido el avispero. Él no ha sido el único jugador desobediente, pero ha sido su voz la que ha dado resonancia universal a las preguntas más insoportables: ¿Por qué no rigen en el fútbol las normas universales del derecho laboral? Si es normal que cualquier artista conozca las utilidades del show que ofrece, ¿por que los jugadores no pueden conocer las cuentas secretas de la opulenta multinacional del fútbol? (58)

Establishing the duality of good and evil places all football not approved of by FIFA in an evil category. This as was stated earlier comes from a colonialist and missionary tradition of imposing morals in different social and geographic contexts, while trying to universalize them. Row and Schelling have this to say about time and dualities in Latin America in relation to Eurocentric imposed views. “The native world characterized by a non-Aristotelian fluidity of time and space, a permeability of things and beings, a multidimensionality, which undermined the stable categories of Western thinking, upheld by the Church against Satan, who was held responsible for such destabilizations of natural order” (21). The only way to be spread across anything is through a material investment in the world, through matter. Transcendence is a lie. *MARADONA* is not transcendental, he is transgressive. To be transgressive is to infringe or go beyond the

bounds of moral principles or other established standards of behavior. *MARADONA* is not a standard, nor is his “zurda endemoniada” a role model for playing football by FIFA.

The fact that *MARADONA* is left-footed may just be mere happenstance, which the aleatory nature of life in general always has an influence in, especially play, although to my analysis it solidifies/materializes his general unrighted disposition from the ground up. Most people in the world are not lefties. As was stated in the last chapter, the Western World’s appraisal of laughter is inherited from the Greeks, this is in much the same way for right/left polarity appreciations are inherited from them as well. As G.E.R. Lloyd discusses in his article, “Right and Left in Greek Philosophy”; “it will be granted that for the ancient Greeks, as for many other peoples, such antitheses as sky and earth, light and darkness, up and down, right and left, have powerful symbolic associations” (65-66). Binary classificatory symbols are a manner for interpreting the world. They lay out a general lay of the land in polarities and so offer literally a very black and white interpretation of everything. The issue is that they may imply a hierarchical discriminatory classification imbedded in the culture the appreciations are made in. The relationality is then expressed in issues of power at a symbolic level and later social articulations of power. G.E.R. Lloyd goes on to explain: “It was often assumed that right is essentially different from, and superior to, left, the one good, the other evil; or the one connected in some way with masculinity, the other with femininity; or the one thought to be honourable and an “Greek lettering” (as in Aristotle), the other not honourable” (66). Hierarchical binaries in oppositions materialize themselves in various contexts and are expressed in many different ways. Dualistic iconographic traditions are then cemented in

a day to day basis and absorb powerful symbolic associations the more they are repeated, the preference for the right is then a de facto default. Rightedness is considered to be superior because of the frequency of right handedness. Right, by definition, not just in English but in Spanish as well, *derecho*, is associated with laws, righteousness, with moral justification, with that which is sacred, with power, with what is legitimate, and with what is just. Issues of understanding behavior and literally reading symbols are from left to right and the directionality of a certain way to read something, the only way for messages or appreciations of language to be legible. The directionality implies a teleological progression in the movement, which the Western World has fetishized. *MARADONA* reads a different way; he is rogue because he is not rightful and therefore not contributing to the progress of the sport.

### ***MARADONA*, or a Sacrilege**

*MARADONA* is a sacrilege to FIFA and divine appreciations of the world. The opiate of the masses has long been considered religion, and football sometimes will be esteemed in the same category. *MARADONA*, as has been being seen does not fall into the transcendental aspects of religion or FIFA. The *Iglesia Maradoniana* is a respect of the irreverence found within *MARADONA* as a figure. His humanity is highlighted in the religion. Take for example the following; a side by side comparison of the *Iglesia Maradoniana* prayers with the three catholic church prayers they draw their inspirations from. The three Maradoniana prayers take their inspiration from the catholic prayers: *Padre Nuestro*, *Ave María*, and *el Credo*. The juxtaposition of those prayers are respectively, *Padre Nuestro (y es nuestro de verdad)*, *DIOS te Salve*, and *Creo*. Before

getting into an individual side by side analysis of the prayers I'd like to first talk about the commonalities in each one of them. The use of "Padre" changes to "Diego" and the use of "Amen" turns into "Diego" as well. It should be noted that, although the exchange between addresser and addressee within a prayer has always to do with the addresser's position to the addressee, the situated situates themselves there on their own. The exchange is reflexive, refracted back to oneself through the language being used. The changes with the Maradoniana prayers imply familiarity and a lack of hierarchy with the addresser and the addressee. The one to one communication replaces a patriarchal position, removing the hierarchy in a prayer becomes much more of a horizontal interaction, a much easier manner for seeing eye to eye with that which is regarded in such high esteem and the person doing the regarding. The repetition of the name "Diego" for "Padre", "Dios", "Vida", and "Amen" reaffirms the equity between speaker and imploration. The first comparison will be *Creo* to *Credo*:

**Creo.**

Creo en Diego.  
 Futbolista todopoderoso,  
 Creador de magia y de pasión.  
 Creo en Pelusa, nuestro D10s,  
 nuestro Señor.  
 Que fue concebido por obra  
 y gracia de Tota y Don Diego.  
 Nació en Villa Fiorito,

**Credo**

Creo en Dios,  
 Padre Todopoderoso,  
 Creador del cielo y de la tierra.  
 Creo en Jesucristo, su único Hijo,  
 nuestro Señor,  
 que fue concebido por obra  
 y gracia del Espíritu Santo,  
 nació de Santa María Virgen;



Padeció bajo el poder de Havelange,	padeció bajo el poder de Poncio Pilato
Fue crucificado, muerto y mal tratado.	Fue crucificado, muerto y sepultado,
Suspendido de las canchas.	descendió a los infiernos,
Le cortaron las piernas.	al tercer día resucitó de entre los muertos,
Pero él volvió y resucitó su hechizo.	y subió a los cielos,
Estará dentro de nuestros corazones,	está sentado a la derecha de Dios,
por siempre y en la eternidad.	Padre todopoderoso.
[Purposely left blank by me]	/ Desde allí ha de venir a juzgar a vivos y muertos.
Creo en el espíritu futbolero,	Creo en el Espíritu Santo,
La santa Iglesia Maradoniana,	la santa Iglesia católica,
El gol a los ingleses,	la comunión de los santos,
La zurda mágica,	el perdón de los pecados,
La eterna gambeta endiablada,	la resurrección de la carne
Y en un Diego eterno.	y la vida eterna.
Diego.	Amén.

For the *Credo*, the title is changed to *Creo*. As was stated before, the addresser's "Dios" turns into the addresser's "Diego". The all-powerful "father", the patriarch, turns into an all-powerful footballer. Western society is not based around all powerful football players. Its true, the influence they have on society is powerful, but Western society has inherited the conception of the power of God being articulated by those who have the power to interpret God. Football is a pastime, which until the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been professionalized and made lucrative. Footballers have yet to command political power.

The influence they wield is more often the case profitable to FIFA. Meanwhile FIFA has its way, the more popular a footballer is, the more lucrative the player is to the sport. While FIFA continues to act like a non-profit and treats their players like commodities, it has a copious amount of money to be making in their Swiss bank accounts. As the following verses continue, the all-powerful footballer creates magic and passion, while the all-powerful patriarch, created the sky, the heavens, and the earth. Diego's omnipotence is centered around his capabilities on the field, which is not omnipotence. Christopher Goto-Jones discusses magic and modernity the Western World as being antithetical to religion and science, like so:

Throughout history, magic has occupied a special place on the margins of society, defining the contours of experiences that are in some way exceptional or outside the normal and everyday. To some extent, this variously privileged or denigrated position at the frontiers of human experience echoes the location of religion and even science. All three of these fields seek to provide knowledge and experience of realms otherwise inaccessible to everyday processes of cognition. At various times in Western history, magic has been differentiated from religion (especially from Christianity), or it has been contrasted against the rise of modern science.

(1451-1452)

Magic and passion, within a handling of the reality inside the field of what is and is not possible condition by the laws of physics and FIFA's rules of the sport. The "Padre" created the earth and the heavens, the material and divine aspects of reality. The belief of the faith is in *Pelusa*, our 10/god or *DIOS*, our Sir. That "our" doesn't feel as reverential

as believing in Jesus Christ, his (formal) only son, our Sire. *Creo* situates itself as being really close to “Diego”. There is close proximity to his humanity, as opposed to God’s divinity. Instead of being born from the Holy Spirit, Diego was born from his parents, and moreover his parents are named after their nicknames, Tota and Don Diego. The Don might appear to be reverential or hierarchical, but in popular usage in Spanish, it’s rather common and has no association with a landowner. And right here, his being born where he was from is put in contrast to God being born from the Saint Virgin Mary. The location for the birth is given, an actual place in time is juxtaposed with an immaculate conception, a miracle of humanity. The material world from where Diego is from, Villa Fiorito is highlighted as an origin, and a very concrete one in the world. The only place in the prayer where Diego might be considered to be transcendental would be the reference to him being in our hearts as opposed to the right of God. However, I believe that is in reference to earlier lines because of the magic and passion he created in the footballing world. As Goto-Jones goes on to explain; “in the end magic is not about truth. Indeed, it is precisely about being creative and imaginative with the commonsense reality, making a new reality which is more attractive and contagious than the everyday in which most of us are forced to live. It is about showmanship, transformation, and illusion, not truth” (1470). Diego Maradona presents the possibility of living the passion of football in a different way, and a possible one, because he is human. Diego is in our hearts because of his humanity, not at the right of God because of his divinity. With the “Un Diego eterno” the indefinite article of “un” creates the sensation of there always being a Diego, not as

an eternal deity, but as multiplicity of footballers ready to break out of their own Villa Fioritos. As will be seen in the Ave Maria:

**D10S te Salve.**

Dios te salve pelota.

Llena eres de magia,

el Diego es contigo.

Bendita tú eres entre todas las demás

y bendito es el Diego que no te deja manchar. / Y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús.

Santa redonda, madre del gol

ruega por nosotros los jugadores

ahora y en la hora de nuestro encuentro...

Diego.

**Ave María**

Dios te salve María

llena eres de gracia

el Señor es contigo.

Bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres,

Santa María, Madre de Dios,

ruego por nosotros, pecadores

ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.

Amen.

For the Ave María, the title is changed to D10S te Salve. Where in the catholic version, that which is being asked to be saved is María, in the *Maradoniana* prayer, the request for salvation is the ball. The ball is given great importance in football because it is the common denominator for all footballers. “La palla è rotunda”, “For Italians, the roundness of the ball is the indicative of its wonderful malleability, the almost infinite permutations of the game, and-in a larger philosophical, metaphorical and metaphysical sense-the contingency and precariousness of life itself” (Pugliese vi-vii ). The ball’s roundness may first read as a fact of dimensional certainty, as an epistemological observation, however its symbolic implications have resonated throughout the globe. The ball’s protagonism is play’s protagonism in the game. Not one person nor one team is

capable of protagonizing the game, much less playing it, without the common denominator. Since the ball is round it is equal on all sides, therefore the protagonism that it could impart is equitable across the board. Everyone has full capability of handling it, but this is a potentiality. The ball creates the possibility of, rather than guaranteeing an outcome. “Diego es contigo” versus “el Señor es contigo”, places the being, of “to be” in Spanish, “es” as an innate characteristic of the ball over María. Diego Armando Maradona only has the capability of being, through a beingness with the ball, signaling a non-transitive being with the ball. Encountering other footballers instead of dying is placed as an affirmation of creating community. Life and living amongst others is praised, not a salvation in the afterlife.

**Padre Nuestro (y es nuestro de verdad)**

Diego nuestro que estás en la tierra,  
santificada sea tu zurda,  
Venga a nosotros tu magia,  
háganse tus goles recordar,  
así en la tierra como en el cielo.  
Danos hoy una alegría en este día,  
y perdona aquellos periodistas  
así como nosotros perdonamos  
a la mafia napolitana.  
No nos dejes manchar la pelota  
y líbranos de Havelange.

**Padre nuestro**

Padre nuestro, que estás en el cielo  
santificado sea tu nombre  
venga a nosotros tu Reino;  
hágase tu voluntad  
así en la Tierra como en el cielo.  
Danos hoy el pan de cada día;  
perdona nuestras ofensas  
así como nosotros perdonamos  
a los que nos ofenden.  
y no nos dejes caer en la tentación,  
mas líbranos del mal.

Diego.

Amén.

For the *Padre nuestro*, the “y es nuestro de verdad” suggests that the catholic version of *Padre nuestro* is not a true possessive. Meanwhile “Diego” is claimed as an actually ours. I’m concerned with the type of possession. This is seen as the reading continues. While the celestial “Padre” is located “en el cielo”, “Diego” is found “en la tierra”. This is also reaffirming the level field of communication. The sanctifying of God’s name is counterposed directly to the materiality of Diego’s left leg. Where name, God’s own name, is more of an absence. “Padre” is not a replacement for the sanctified name. If the name is sanctified, then the sanctification is directed to the relational patriarchy within the utterance. A reinforcement of the relationship between absentee “Padre” and praying subject. Meanwhile there is a direct material relationship to the “magia” in the goals remembered in the following two verses.

Prayers are a form of communicating to an object or objects of worship with the intention of building a relationship with them through the invocations. They are a way of making or establishing contact through a ritual, perhaps a nexus if sacred enough to bridge a correspondence, even though the extension is a round trip. People who appreciate *MARADONA*, have an understanding of him, at least a broadstrokes one, of who he is and why he has behaved in such a manner his whole footballing career, which is to say his whole life, know that he is not divorced from the sport and he will always be associated with it in some capacity. If one understands this significance, then “Diego”’s replacement for “Amen” in the prayers can be perceived more clearly. “Amen means “so be it”. With the substitution of “Diego” with “so be it”, there is a way of being in the

world that is against institutions like FIFA, so one of the most powerful and corrupt institutions in the world, does not want people being as such. Jorge Valdano has this to say about it.

En el momento que Maradona se retiró del fútbol activo, dejó traumatizado a Argentina. Maradona fue más que un futbolista genial. Fue un factor extraordinario de compensación para un país que en pocos años vivió varias dictaduras militares y frustraciones sociales de todo tipo... una salida a su frustración colectiva y por eso la gente lo adora allí como una figura divina.

*(ESPN Deportes)*

Valdano's comments, though not untrue, I believe are simplified greatly. Valdano's observations still fall into a reverential treatment of *MARADONA* as a God. As was seen in the prayers, he is humanized. He is replete with terrenal characteristics. He is *DIOS*, not Dios. He is *Pelusa*, shag or fluff, not *Barba*, with the authoritative association with the Western World's conception of a bearded god or philosopher. Many people's faith in *MARADONA* is the faith of that one has with their fellow human beings, with themselves. The biblical inquiry of "Am I my brother's keeper?" is answered when people can have faith in other people and in their own selves. *MARADONA* creates a nexus of communication for communities, not a pedestal to be idealized. He's too human for that, literally straddling death, defeat, and failure time and time again. As much as he is remembered for being one of the greatest footballers of all time, he's had nothing but uphill battles with one loss after another, maybe remembered just as much for his drug abuse. He is not selected for the 1978 World Cup in his country after being in the initial

25 selected but is left out by the Argentine technical director César Luis Menotti. In the 1982 World Cup, he is sent off for a red card against rival Brazil for throwing a wild kick, moreover, not having a good tournament. He leaves to Barcelona in 1982, but moves to Napoli in 1984, again being red-carded for fighting. Argentina barely qualifies for the 1986 World Cup, doing so last minute against Peru with a goal by Daniel Passarella, Maradona not having a good game that day. He's involved in a scandal with regards to a son he has outside of wedlock in the late 1980's, one he doesn't acknowledge until 2003. He loses in the 1990 World Cup Final to West Germany. He's suspended for 15 months after testing positive for cocaine in 1991. He is suspended from the 1994 World Cup for testing positive for ephedrine. All of these events, moreover his general outspokenness, never shying away from giving an opinion, keep him in the hearts of many people. So when he overdoses on cocaine in 2000 or has two heart attacks within a month in 2004, famously spread slogans are graffitied around the world marked on the walls trying to spread good vibes to him, but more so to the people who have respect for him and his exploits.<sup>38</sup> The graffiti, like him has a degree of seriousness and laughter, all calling into question the reverence given to death by the Western conception of God in the Judeo-Christian world by poking fun irreverently with the terrestrial clout Diego Maradona wields on earth; "Siempre vivirás, Dios no quiere competencia", "Barba (Dios): ya le diste una mano, estamos esperando la otra" and "Jesús resucitó una vez. Vos, miles". God, or the references to God are mocked by expressing God as "Barba" or "bearded one" and declaring Diego Maradona's brushes with death and returns to the

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<sup>38</sup> For biographical information regarding Diego Armando Maradona see Murray (180-183).



field as resuscitations. While there is still a revalorization of Diego Maradona only being part of the *MARADONA* equation; “No aflojés que vas a salir. No podés perder. No te olvidés que Maradona juega para vos”. Whom does *MARADONA* play for? If *MARADONA* as a figure plays for Diego Maradona, the same fallible one on his deathbed, then does he also play for other people? At that point, he was retired. So, if *MARADONA* still plays, it’s also off the field as well.

### **Diego Armando Maradona**

*MARADONA* is an improper way of occupying football’s space for the game. *MARADONA*’s mode of operation is a *potrero*. A *potro* is a colt horse in Spanish, often times referring to one that has not been broken in, one that has not been tamed, and a *potrero* is an open field where they may be found. The wild equestrian element in the word’s connotations is the subhuman component meaning to be cultivated by monikers of discrimination. According to La Real Academia Española, a *potrero* in various South American countries is also “terreno inculto y sin edificar donde suelen jugar los muchachos”. The wildness of the cognomen, *potrero*, sits in contrast to the gentlemanly aspect of officiated play. *MARADONA*’s official site references his beginnings in this way; stating that during his time in the under divisions of Argentinos Juniors, Los Cebollitas, Diego Maradona would work as a ball boy and during the halftimes of the First Division Argentinos Juniors games he would perform juggling acts with the ball. The spectators would cheer him on and ask he continue instead of the professional game. Interrupting the professionalism surrounding the sport by one-upping the paid for spectacle, by a ball boy spectacle; “¡Que se quede el pibe, que se quede el pibe!” was the

request (*Informe Robinson*). Diego Maradona grew up as just another kid from a *potrero*, him specifically from Fiorito. A low socioeconomic area of Buenos Aires. The tale of poor footballers growing up trying to find success is a common one. This implies a multiplicity of *MARADONA*'s, of re/representations of *potreros*. More enemies for FIFA, more modes of existence that will question their power, their supposed benevolence of FIFA spreading the “beautiful game” around the world suddenly begins to beg questions such as “who’s beautiful game? and “who is profiting from the spread of this beautiful game?” FIFA is the lingua franca of football, they do not want fluency in *MARADONA*, much less in *MARADONA86* because again Diego Armando Maradona is only part of the *MARADONA* construction, therefore only part of the symbolic value that can take over all the meaning from a FIFA’s World Cup, in his specific case, México 86. FIFA boasts the ownership to all of the World Cups, and they always go by, the FIFA [insert year] World Cup. *MARADONA86* is able to dispute that World Cup with the autodeclarative international governing body of football. Diego Maradona’s personal trainer, Fernando Signorini puts it in these terms.

Llegamos a entrenar día por día... Yo aprendí que uno era Diego y otro era Maradona. Diego era un chico que tenía inseguridades. Es un pibe maravilloso. Maradona era el personaje que se tuvo que inventar para poder estar a las alturas de las exigencias del negocio del fútbol y de los medios de comunicación. Maradona no se podía permitir ninguna debilidad. Un día le dije que con Diego yo iría hasta el fin del mundo, pero con Maradona no daría un paso. Me dijo “sí,

pero si no hubiera sido por Maradona, todavía estuviera en Villa Fiorito. (*Diego Maradona*)

Signorini and Diego both recognize the separation Diego from *MARADONA*, however Diego says that *MARADONA* was necessary for Diego's success. While this is no doubt true, Diego's origins are what inform the qualities of *MARADONA* that FIFA cannot handle. The rest of the symbolic value denoted by *MARADONA* is so charged with different (*criollo*) interpretation of what FIFA wishes football to stand for and what the game is. *MARADONA* represents an alternative to FIFA's discriminatory "beautiful game" perpetuating "fair play".

Diego Armando Maradona Franco was born in Lanús, Buenos Aires, Argentina the 30th of October 1960. He started playing in what is designated as un potrero de Villa Fiorito. He grew to be 1,66m, about 5'5. He is heavily left-footed and stocky. His conduct always being associated with his outspoken nonconformist nature, to use a euphemism. Eliseo Verón is famously quoted for considering the idolatry behind Maradona as essential for the dispossessed to find a God in someone to take care of their needs. However, as has been seen shown, I do not think this is the case. He is not a role model. He is a human being; with problems, with addictions, his weight, hypermasculinity, and constant opinions oftentimes become a contradiction to his own statements. He is real. His talent was able to get him out of poverty and allowed him to never be completely manipulated by Football Federations. Although many clubs put a price to him, literally contracting his football services, he always stayed true to his own self, at least the one he portrayed. He was offered/given a wage, a salary, sponsorship,

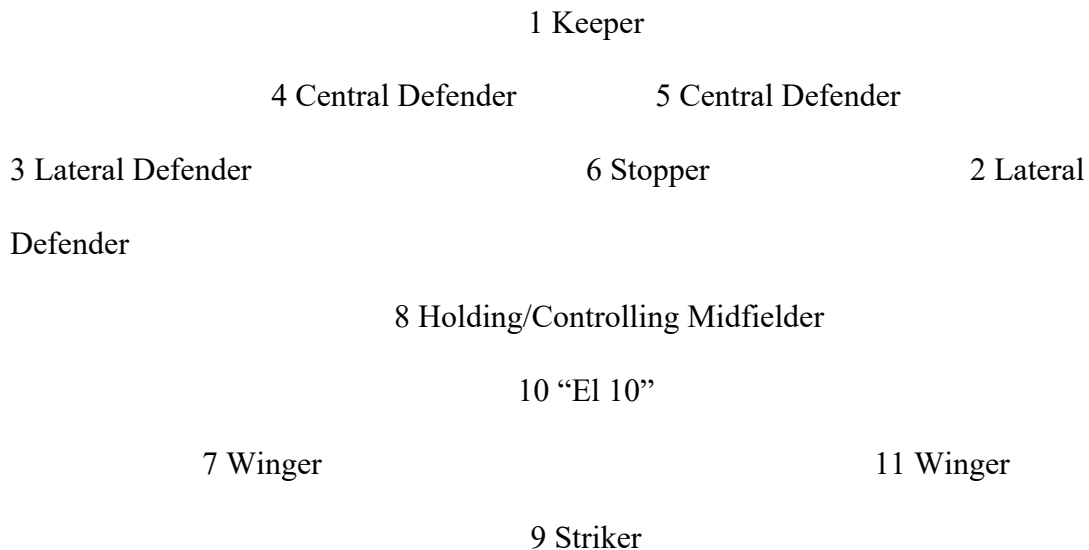
sometimes from nefarious sources, (but all sources are nefarious.) but never sold himself in the sense of betraying his character. He is a polemical figure because he is true to himself, or at least the his self-constructed self in the image of a popular figure. His debut was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1976 for Argentinos Juniors. In his debut professional game at the age of 15, his first touch on the ball was a nutmeg past a defender. Commenting, “Ese día toqué el cielo con las manos”. He does not opt for River Plate and decides to move to Boca Juniors. This decision is very indicative of his place in a socioeconomic mindset. Each team has a particular fandom. River Plate represents the affluent sectors of porteño society, being called *Los millonarios*, while Boca Juniors has a working-class tinge to it and goes by *La mitad más uno*. *MARADONA* openly denied a higher salary when deciding to play for Boca Juniors. As much as FIFA tries to promote the “fair play” and “beautiful game” discourse, *MARADONA*’s actual decisions for choosing to play for a less economically affluent team signals a fair natured decision in approaching the professional game. Again, FIFA says they are a non-profit organization, but how they situate themselves in the world football affairs is monopolistic and economically profiting in their orientation.<sup>39</sup>

Diego Maradona is a figure of a distinct type of valuing system that does not conform to quantitative styles of measurements. He, like many other players like him, are on a qualitative scale. El 10: This is obviously the number most associated with *MARADONA* and the more talented players of the world. The article “El” before the

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<sup>39</sup> “To most people, there is something recognizably obscene, indeed murderous, about the taxpayers of developing nations spending billions of their citizen’s money building white elephants and erecting a massive security infrastructure while a Swiss non-profit and a select group of multinational corporations walks away with the profits (£3-5 billion per tournament, tax free.) (Walters 320-321)

number signals a ten of tens kind of understanding of them. Of all the other number tens in the world, *MARADONA* is the most 10. Traditionally the numbers are indicative of a position being played on the field, like so:



The numbers never need to actually correspond to the positions, nor do the positions need to correspond to the previous schematic. There are various numbers of ways to place the positions on any board or the field, but this is the best understanding, at least from this author's perspective. This 10 has many designations: Attacking midfielder, creative midfielder, playmaker, fantasista, tresquartista, enganche, armador, etcetera... A common notion of this player is to think of the role being occupied as being free to roam and do anything with the ball without defensive obligations. Unfortunately it is a dumbed-down idea of the player maker because shallow understandings of defensive roles and offensive roles. This is a narrow minded in terms of strategy and general outlook on the game being informed by European black and white standards. FIFA or officiated sport's calculating systems are incapable of measuring the success of these

kinds of players because of the blind appreciation of limited binaries. Those appreciations are myopic understandings of the “10”. Not that I subscribe to the adage that the best defense is a good offense, but it does hold some ground here. To be on the attack, strategically is a defensive tactic. All players contribute to the attack and all players contribute the defense, the playmaker, like the name implies, does not merely orchestrate the attack, they orchestrate the game, reading and creating plays ad hoc, because like every game, it cannot be calculated, but adjusted to moment by moment. The playmaker, the tactician, is the X element on the field, the X factor making the magic and hopefully turning it into goals.

Not every creative player, not every *potrero*, or subscriber of *fútbol criollo* needs to be in the number 10 role. Again, *MARADONA* just so happens to be one of the best exponents of a distinct type of football. Huizinga states, “Play is based on an imagination of reality” (4), but FIFA wants the football world to be imagined through its lens. The issue here however lays in there being no “play” in FIFA’s “beautiful game”. FIFA literally cuts off imagination of the game and what *MARADONA* represents openly contests it. The articulations of *MARADONA* and the two most famous goals in history have laid their structuring in the public arena. The affinity with which the iconography and the inscribing subject has not ceased to captivate football audiences the world over. The audience feels part of something that can offer a different reality to the one that they know. The desire to rebel, the way the *MARADONA*’s inscriptions are layed: through dribbling and contestation while presenting the cleavages within the fabric of game put an otherwise unacknowledged social pressure on FIFA. *MARADONA* establishes a

scriptural coherence where it is not a valid form of interpretation. The illegality of the act is a desire to be a part of the political platform of the public discourse where otherwise a voice is not allowed or acknowledged. As Galeano states perfectly:

Maradona es incontrolable cuando habla, pero mucho más cuando juega: no hay quien pueda prever las diabluras de este inventor de sorpresas, que jamás se repite y que disfruta desconcertando a las computadoras. No es un jugador veloz, torito corto de piernas, pero lleva la pelota cosida al pie y tiene ojos en todo el cuerpo. Sus artes malabares encienden la cancha. Él puede resolver un partido disparando un tiro fulminante de espaldas al arco o sirviendo un pase imposible, a lo lejos, cuando está cercado por miles de piernas enemigas; y no hay quien lo pare cuando se lanza a gambetear rivales...En el frígido fútbol de fin de siglo, que exige ganar y prohíbe gozar, este hombre es uno de los pocos que demuestra que la fantasía puede también ser eficaz. (58).

Reimagination of football, and other ways of playing it would impede the lucrative nature of the multibillion non-profit. If Huizinga is not wrong about asserting that “[a]ll play is a voluntary action” (7), then FIFA wants its rules to be compulsory for the good of the game, and by definition, a game without actual play. He goes on to state that England became the cradle and focus of modern sporting life, and “with the increasing systematization and regimentation of sport, something of the pure play-quality is inevitably lost. We see this very clearly in the official distinction between amateurs and professionals” (197). *Fútbol criollo* is an essential aspect to communities as a style of being, that *viveza* and *picardía* so essential for survival comes off in the play of the

game.<sup>40</sup> All the poor footballers with no chances of becoming professional soccer players play at life. This is the general distinction between vain play vs sacred play, where failure actually means something (Huizinga 107). There is a real responsibility for the play at hand. The wealthy and the affluent, they play at death. Their station is not the place where the true conflicts of society are carried out. Most people, those whose rules of any game are not made to accommodate them, they play at life. Diego Armando Maradona plays at life. There is no hiding behind a grandiose universal symbol, no higher calling. A game is fundamentally about the game in itself, not its purpose, and provides the capability of imagination upon a reality already imagined in the interpretation. This ability, to reimagine football by necessity, redirecting the goal the FIFA's game establishes. Structures of power and economy corrupt the actual game but pretend that the rules are in favor of it. An interpretation of reality is imagination in itself, then to imagine upon that is a creative process, whether or not it is taken to in a certain direction or to a certain end is another story. Quite literally, the reimagination upon reality is a suspension of the previous appreciation. Within that previous appreciation, the structures of power are suspended in the reimagination. FIFA would like to perpetuate their own structures of power in the game to reaffirm themselves. This becomes difficult with players actually offering different interpretations of the game, different styles of play. The respect for the rules in the game, is a respect for the reality that FIFA interprets. This is not to say all of the rules are bad, but when FIFA's laws have to be blindly followed for the good of the game, that can only take away from the ludic elements of the game, the playfully creative

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<sup>40</sup> As Caillois says: "Games are largely dependent upon the cultures in which they are praised. They affect their preferences, prolong their customs, and reflect their beliefs." (82)



elements<sup>41</sup>. *MARADONA, La mano de DIOS, El mejor gol del mundo*, and *fútbol criollo* all undermine the culture FIFA pretends to perpetuate around the sport.

Diego Maradona isn't a myth. His exploits are substantiated by what he did. His phenomenon is like a legend that explains the symbols and the symbolism around this name. In his retirement game, Diego Maradona, imploringly says two things about culpability and the sport: "Porque se equivoque uno, no tiene que pagar el fútbol" and "La pelota no se mancha". He has a respect for the game, beyond the corruption that surrounds it, beyond the exploitative nature in the businesses the sport.<sup>42</sup> But *fútbol*, for him is not the football that FIFA refers to. *MARADONA's* conception of the game differentiates itself from FIFA in the genuine aspect of play that motivates the game, play that Diego Maradona understands very well. Before becoming a professional football player, Diego Maradona is interviewed in 1971 and is recorded saying, "Mi primer sueño es jugar en el mundial. Mi segundo sueño es ganarlo". Diego Maradona's priority is to play football on the largest and most competitive stage there is for the sport. He wants to play, above anything else. He admits he wants win, but it becomes secondary to playing. As was stated before, his style of play is a *potrero*, a *pibe*, who has fun with the ball.

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<sup>41</sup> "If football embraces the relentless uncertainty of play, it holds fast to the generosity, universalism and egalitarianism of play. When we play power games, we are not playing at all, for we have crossed into the realm of instrumentalism, self-interest, manipulation and inequality. Play can encompass none of these. Indeed, play that does not descend into bullying is necessarily democratic. Play rests on consensus, negotiation and turn-taking. It recognizes the virtues and limits of collaboration and competition. Too much of the former and you have an oligarchy; too much of the latter and you have the war against all. Play, like democracy, is open to revision, responsive to change and necessarily open-ended." (Goldblatt 910)

<sup>42</sup> *In Football and the Boundaries of History*, one of the editors, Stanislaw G. Pugliese states in the Preface that "FIFA (International Federation of Association Football), is wracked by deeply entrenched corruption, most notably the awarding of World Cup bids to Russia (2018) and Qatar (2022). After the arrest of 14 FIFA officials at the Hotel Baur au Lac in Zurich in May 2015, 27 officials from CONCACAF (The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football) and CONMEBOL (the South American Football Confederation) were arrested in late November." (V)

During his professional debut at 15 years old with Argentino Juniors playing against Tallares de Córdoba, Argentino Juniors lost that game 1-0. 1 is not a limit in poetic language and the legibility of *MARADONA* makes that loss not feel like a loss, no matter the aggregate.<sup>43</sup> The first time he touches a ball professionally he performs a nutmeg, “Un túnel a Cabrera” (*Informe Robinson*). I do not presume to know the nerves a footballer has when making their professional debut in the sport. I can only imagine that by definition, the first touch on a ball, like all touches on a ball should be executed professionally, with the intention of winning a game, and contributing to the overall strategy the club manager has tactically ordered the team to carry out. When a football player is receiving a ball, the priorities, in no particular order are, trying to keep possession of the ball, passing it to a fellow teammate, or scoring. Diego Maradona passes the ball to himself through the legs of one of his opponents. This action is very risky. It is a type of gambit, to get past an opponent, and probably one of the least safe ways at maintaining possession of the ball. It is also humiliating for the opponent. As Huizinga states, it is the shedding of blood in a duel, and not the death that takes symbolic value (95). Again, Maradona lost his first professional game, how is that legendary? He was known to play that way until he retired. Part of his seemingly endless repertoire was his use of the ball in unorthodox, or distinct handling of the ball. Professionally, how he treated the ball is very uncommon. However, for amateur players around the world, performing *malabares* with a ball are other forms of glory, are other forms of dueling at play.

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<sup>43</sup> Julia Kristeva makes this claim about poetic language (70), and Diego Armando Maradona has full poetic license to lose a game 1-0 and still be triumphant, in spite of the difference implying the loss.

A very common move of his, aside from his seemingly infinite number of tricks up his sleeve was to execute a *rabona*. A *rabona* involves kicking the ball by swinging one's leg behind the other leg and kicking the ball. Why risk something that is already risky. Is there such a thing as being reasonably dangerous? Repeating actions makes them common, and because they become common, there is less mental exertion, it is more economical to perform repeated actions, tried and true actions. *MARADONA*'s seemingly infinite repertoire is such because his movement and imagination was contextually driven, for every moment of every play called for something different. The magic attached to his maneuvering of the ball is his ability to think and act outside of standardized or common movements, and to execute them beautifully, with grace. This is why FIFA prefers to consider him and the two goals outside of conventions. Not all legal behavior is appropriate or honorable, not all illegal behavior is inappropriate or dishonorable. As Caillois states, "[t]he cheat is still inside the universe of play" (45). Breaking the game down in terms of hacking and fouling is more tolerated than showmanship, which spoils the play of the game. This is why Huizinga established the difference between the spoil-sport and the cheat (11). A spoil-sport may be well within the grounds of the rules and still ruin the play of the game. Meanwhile a cheat can make the game more interesting. In the pursuit for justice in a competition, winning out over a cheat is a sweeter victory, or a more fulfilled one. But again, if a game's importance is not limited to the play between the two teams on the field, then the history that the two teams represents is also at play. Why is *MARADONA*'s handball so significant in respect to him doing it to the English National Football Team? What happens when trying to weigh in

who is good and who is evil when *MARADONA* or the English National Football Team are accessed? When creating good and evil binaries, a contest is a perfect place to implement them. Take for example, the “beautiful game”. The “beautiful game” in regard to what other type of game? “Fair play” in respect to which other type of play. If play already implies “[s]tepping out of reality into a higher order” (Huizinga 13), this higher order is merely a different way of ordering and appreciating the surroundings at play.

*MARADONA* is just another *pibe* who learned to play on a *potrero*, him specifically from Villa Fiorito. This implies a multiplicity of *MARADONA*'s, of re/representations of *potreros*. More enemies for FIFA, more modes of existence that will question their power, their supposed benevolence of spreading the “beautiful game” around the world suddenly begins to beg questions such as “who’s beautiful game? and “who is profiting from the spread of this beautiful game?” FIFA wants to pretend that all the participants in football are on equal playing grounds, because *agon* hinges on equality being artificially created. The threat of defeat adds to the interest of the game. It creates tension and interest. *MARADONA* represents the guile of trickery that is still honorable because it is true play can work against greater odds to actually creating an equal playing field. Affiliation of footballers is to the game, not FIFA- a respect for play, not the rules.

“for any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole of the State,  
and ought to be prohibited”

Plato

### CHAPTER 3

Accomplices & Collaborators: Communal Music in the *Aplicación*, “*n*”

*Aplicación* is a neologism coined by the singer/songwriter, Jorge Drexler. The name, like the project, is a fusion between the Spanish words *canción* and *aplicación*. The entire program is titled, “*n*”, representative of the mathematical symbol for all natural numbers and figuratively representative of all the possible versions producible by the songs. There are three songs, or better said *aplicaciones*: *n1*, *n2*, and *n3*, and Drexler describes them in the app in this fashion: “Hay que entender estas canciones como un proceso. Carecen de una única versión definitiva. Por decirlo de alguna manera, no son canciones sólidas, sino líquidas. Están a medio camino de un ser vivo: siempre el mismo y siempre diferente” (*n*). The *aplicación* blurs the traditional boundaries of the various media that are present in the project in the same manner in which it does so with the player (user/listener/lector/actor/participant), possibilitating their transformation into a new kind of app user. The app is designed so that by merely opening it the format and content of the songs are changed and never conceivably repeatable. What Drexler has done here is actualize the concept of producing a musical composition to invite the user to participate in the creation of the song as a form of an open suicide of authority, where the singer/songwriter requests the participation of the player of the app in the composition and signification of the songs, and in doing so shares the authorship to leave

the performative act in itself and its great number of variations as a continuous possible site where the songs' protagonism takes place. This chapter seeks to analyze the function of the player in all the three *aplicaciones*, where the author, the app, and the player are all spliced into the performance, at once accomplices and collaborators in an updated type of subjectivity for the songs being produced that are very much informed by *candombe*, long-standing traditions of Afrouroguayan *sobrevivencia* in Uruguay.

The play on words between *canción* and *aplicación* stresses the importance of the musical component of *aplicación*. The prefix, *apli-* is used to emphasize that that which is being applied is the song as a form in the execution of the technological component of *n*. The performance of the app is informed by a tradition of songs while the media and the everyday is the instrument for the playing of it. The most obvious connection that *N* has to Uruguay is Jorge Drexler himself. Although, the success of his musical career and the engineering of the app have taken place in Spain, the style of his music and the references in his songs speak of his *Rioplatense* origins. There is a specific tradition that lends itself very well to make an analysis of “*n*”’s social significance within the little South American country with such a long tradition of democracy; and it is *candombe*. *Candombe* is tied very closely to the Afrouroguayan history of the country.<sup>44</sup> In George Reed Andrews’s book, *Blackness in the White Nation: A history of Afro-Uruguay*, he claims that since *La República Oriental del Uruguay*’s inception as a country in 1813, Uruguay has taken a great number of measures to eliminate socioeconomic class inequalities, and that

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<sup>44</sup> In the first half of Jorge Drexler’s song, “Memoria del cuero”, he talks about *candombe* being a prisoner taken to Uruguay on slave ships. In the second half of the song he makes a reference to his grandfather fleeing Nazi Germany on an Ally ship, signaling his own association with *candombe* and marginalized peoples in Uruguay.

emphasis on class opportunities sought to umbrella other discriminatory issues, such as gender and race in its universal discourse. Although the measures taken have had significant results in terms of class; racial and gender inequality is still an issue that deserves more attention, and the performances of *candombe* makes those shortcomings apparent.

### ***Candombe sobrevivencia***

*Candombe* is an Afro-Argentinian musical style and dance, centered around drums, and performed by groups called *comparsas*. The style of communal music has its roots with the African people enslaved and forcefully taken to Uruguay during the Spanish colonial period. As a word, *candombe* is employed in Uruguay as a qualifier to express all that is tied to Afro-Argentinian culture, often-times pejoratively as an all-encompassing *cosa de negros*. In spite of it being brandished as a racially disparaging qualification, this has never dissuaded non-Afro-Argentinian interest in *candombe*, but it does complicate it. At first it was a religious ritual from Africa that was later re-signified and employed during Catholic festivities, which today has translated into *Carnaval* in Uruguay. That fact is in itself a testament to how the Afro-Argentinian community has negotiated the survival of traditions into today's Uruguayan culture.<sup>45</sup> *Candombe* then as a practice manages to endure and becomes a stalwart for Afro-Argentinian community organization and expression. As a marginalized group, that was their way of opening a space for themselves in public places outside of a work environment where they were typically

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Turino affirms this quality of communal music this in his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, "music, dance, festivals, and other public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups which are, in turn, basic to survival" (2).

consigned to military service and menial jobs. However, there in the performance they would literally take the street, *ganar la calle*, and in song and dance publicly exist as they wished in the face of discriminatory circumstances. The lyrics of *candombes* through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have a history of manifesting discontent with those conditions, denouncing the practically forced military service of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the limited opportunities for work that seems to be a perpetual state of affairs to this day.<sup>46</sup>

*Candombe*'s performances did not always limit themselves to the holidays. Due to the segregation and grouping of the Afro-uruguayan population, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were put in *conventillos*, which would more or less translate into housing projects. These *conventillos* have helped the formation of the *candombe*'s culture. Spontaneous performances of *candombe* are initiated by a *llamada*. That call consists of someone going out into the street and beginning to play the drums. Whomsoever answers the *llamada* recognizes the drumming for what it is and is invited to form part of the performance. The intimacy behind a call, to ask if another is there and have the call recognized and answered is indicative of the solidarity in the improvised community that is created. A cry is that initial moment of somatic extension from the body, that extension of the self to be connected with someone else. The *llamada* is a call, a rhythmic cry in the hopes of an answer.

What almost immediately happens is that non-Afro-uruguayans begin participating in *comparsas lubolas*, which is a way of saying blackface performance groups. This takes place between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is revealing of

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<sup>46</sup> Refer to George Reed Andrews's *Blackness in the White Nation: A history of Afro-Uruguay*



what non-Afrouruguayans thought about Afrouruguayans. *Candombe*'s association with *Carnaval* creates a temporal space where racial hierarchies and their prescribed roles can be broken, if only momentarily. The Afrouruguan community then, *gana la calle*, and opens a spatial timeslot for themselves where otherwise they are not permitted. In that victory, the appropriate actions allotted to them for those spaces are negotiated and suddenly forced to be acknowledged outside of the norm. What the non-Afrouruguan community does is try to mimic the spirit of the performance. These blackface performances are temporary identities picked up for a short time period, embodying the judgments the *comparsas lubolas* had on the Afrouruguan community, while at the same time enjoying themselves in the judgement. Some of the first *comparsas lubulas*, like *Negros Lubulos*, appeared around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were exclusively made up of young white males who claimed that their goal was, as Andrews paraphrases, "to make known among the public the customs of Old Negroes" (17). In that statement they affirm their authentic representation of a ritual not actually theirs yet hint at a time when the ritual might be indirectly theirs because of the indirect property ownership of the slaves. The *Negros Lubolos* were by their own dictum the authority on the correct performance of *candombe* because of a sense of ownership, not as a culture they inherited but by slaves that belonged to them.

It is telling to note how much the culture was appropriated from them in the fact that *lubolo* is now synonymous with *comparsa* today. Originally, *Lubulos* were an Angolan-Congan ethnic group, one of the many African ethnic groups that were forced to cross the Atlantic in slave ships, but the popularity of *Negros Lubolos* made the term

*lubolo* a word for a blackface performance of *candombe*. Blackface performances are not a norm anymore, and the term employed to signify them is no longer a modifier of *comparsa* but a word that can stand in its place. Racially discriminatory assumptions are cemented during the *comparsas lubolas* years. The highly sexualized, overly physical, simple minded, super jovial Afrouruguayans become characters that are only good for entertainment and imply a nostalgia for a pre-abolitionist past. Those judgments were again made by young white men vicariously living out a fantasy, putting on an identity during a time when that specific identity does not need to have a servile behavior in order to be accepted in society, to later take off that identity and think they are an authority on it. The Afrouruguayans cannot take off their Afrouruguyan identity after any performance. The observance and embrace by non-Afrouruguayans performances makes them part of a spectacle orientated inclusion in Uruguayan society. That type of appreciation is at a superficial level and only makes sense in the discriminatory social imaginary.

The evolution of *candombe* stems from a tradition of resistance and solidarity: At first with the *Salas de Naciones*, which were comprised of similar African ethnic groups during the years of slavery that would gather together when permitted, later with the *Sociedades*, which were organizations formed after abolition, and then to the *conventillos* or barrios where they were relegated to in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only to be torn down during the years of dictatorship.<sup>47</sup> During each time period, the communal organization always sought to support other members of the Afrouruguyan communities

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<sup>47</sup> See *Los tambores del candombe* by Luis Ferreira

and reinforced that history of their past. Suppressing the ethnic African diversity minimizes its visibility within the Uruguayan culture, homogenizing an already discriminated people in an effort to make them less unique and eliminate whatever history they might have brought with them to Uruguay. To this day, each *comparsa* identifies with a specific barrio where the *conventillo* was from, that is itself a vestige of the initial resistance and struggle experienced by the *naciones*. Visually, the colors that form part of the spectacle of the *comparsas* are one of the indicators of that history, however the greater distinction is found in the drumming. The rhythm and time developed by each *comparsa* is a marker for a *nación* (Ferreira 131). In the drumming of the *candombe* performances are inscribed the multiethnic Afrouruguayan history of Uruguay that has been discriminated against to bolster the official Euro-Uruguayan discourse.

The invisibilization of the Afrouruguayan community, despite *candombe*'s general acceptance in Uruguay is a result of the country's Eurocentric historical emphasis it has had a long history of propagating. About a quarter into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *El libro del centenario del Uruguay*, declares that the country is populated by a race of European descendants, the indigenous people have disappeared, and the "Ethiopian race, brought to the country by the Spanish conquerors from the African continent to serve as slaves, has visibly declined, to the point of constituting an insignificant percentage of the total population" (Andrews 3). Andrews finds that the textbooks used in schools from the 1920s to the 1960s had two recurring themes: "the uniquely democratic character of Uruguayan politics and society, and the importance of European immigrants in building

that society” (3-4). There are a number of problems with this. All the Africans were not of one ethnic group, but as stated before, to group them as one homogenizes their culture and history that was brought over with them. Also, to blame the Spanish for bringing them over highlights the democratic character of the Uruguayans and absolves them from the slave trade. This problematizes racial discrimination in Uruguay because the immediate jump into democracy did not dispel the social hierarchies from colonial times. By law the Afrouruguayans were on more equal terms in society, nevertheless that does not take into account the social practices that are inherited from a society that continually undervalued people from African descent as human beings.

Identity in the musical performative nature of *candombe* is established by the dynamic drum playing. While the Euro-Uruguayans can identify their European ancestry based on their register of surnames as indicators, and further make invisible African history during slavery by imposing their own last names on the slaves, African ancestry is registered on the drums, which as the Uruguayan musicologist Coriún Ahoronián notes, is underappreciated in Western music as a result of Eurocentrism (2). Playing the drums in the *comparsa* is to remember the long history of resistance in the Afrouruguayan communities, from slaves to peons to neo-slaves only allotted servile occupations, as Ferreira finds (81). There their syncopated rhythms tell a story for those community members to hear it and feel it. In the act, they write down their own history in the public performance and remember it while they embody it in the same way, expressing in illicit communication their past in the ongoing present. *Llamadas* to this day maintain the distinct rhythms that are inherited from the *naciones* down to the barrios (Ferreira 131).

They are coded calls that members of the community could identify with and respond to. When the three sections of the drums play; *piano*, *repique*, and *chico*, it is called a *cuerda*, it is done in a call – response fashion, and is actually described as a conversation between the drums. For it to be an authentic performance, there must be a communal energy informed by the collective alliance of performers. It is a ritual with customs that recount a history not inscribed in letters nor in binary code but in the drumming.

To think of drumming as communication might at first glance be considered a stretch to Eurocentric Western culture, but that is because of how much emphasis has gone into the valuation of language's sacredness being found in the written word.<sup>48</sup> Although, as was seen in chapter 1, when taken into consideration with the ones and zeros that binary code functions with, styles of drumming that span a much more complex notational code may be even more informative. Historically, the development of technology has accompanied the creations of our cultures and the meanings behind the space we engineer to inhabit that world. According to Ferreira, because of the employment acceptable by Uruguayan discriminatory standards, the Afrouruguayans had easy access to the materials and tools to construct the drums that are used to this day (81). Without them, *candombe* would not be what it is. In the time of digital natives, widely used personal media devices are very common and *n* based its distribution on that. To use the app indicates a union between the technology and the player, where the songs existence is contingent upon a performance. Here I am looking at the player's place, or body, in the performance of the *aplicación* in the same way Tia DeNora appraises the

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<sup>48</sup> See *The Materiality of Language* by Bleich

body in her book *Music In Everyday Life*, where the body in a musical performance has the capacity to be an “interstice of nature, culture, and technology” (75). Much like *candombe*, the beat kept on the drum’s membranophone is how the player must be involved with the screen. The player witnesses and executes the actions of the performance in live time. It is a long chain of codes so attached to the instant that it is only possible because of the instrumentation between the media and the player. Music from an instrument is not autonomous from the instrumentalist, nor is the instrumentalist thus so without the instrument. According to N. Kathryn Hayles, this type of posthuman relationship is conducive to new types of subjectivities for humanity with the creation of new technologies. The body and the instrument are always technologically mediated by the performance being embodied. Consider for a moment the performance of a drummer’s musical solo: This entails the instrument, the instrumentalist, and his/her virtuosity. Within the creation of the instrument that is the medium for the music is inscribed the body of the instrumentalist and incorporated by the instantiation of the splice between the two in the enactment. When the drums played by the *comparsas* in *candombe* communicate a culturally rich history, they are doing much more than entertaining an audience, they are embodying a past of resistance in their performance. In “n” there is an incorporation of the body and the app into the music by the creation of the songs in the performance giving a new conception to what it is to be an entertained consumer of music.<sup>49</sup>

“N”

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<sup>49</sup> Turino says “people develop a deep sense of engagement and investment through direct participation in contrast to simply being a spectator or consumer.” (231)

Within “*n*”, there is a multisensory interaction with the feedback loop where the stage for the app to have its performance is not virtual reality but the real world. The performance is transposed from the player to the app and then back into the reality of the player. Therefore, the duo-dimensional screen makes the player participate in the three-dimensional world, not the media’s virtual platform. This comes off as a contrast to other digital media or virtual reality games where often times discrimination occurs more flagrantly than in real life due to the perceived distance and anonymity the screen provides, much the same way the blackface performances of *candombe* were done in a spectacle supposedly outside of normative time that were just another expression of Uruguayan racism inside of normative time.<sup>50</sup> In an era of digital natives, with so much information so easily accessible, for better or for worse eyes naturally follow screens like moths do to flames and a copious amount of information is seen without being processed. What is known and what is understood strikes as a contrast due to the lack of meaningful engagement with the material addressed, like uninformed *candombe* drumming and prejudiced blackface acting. As a result, hegemonic discriminatory practices follow, often times racist and misogynistic, within those virtual worlds because of the perceived lack of accountability in the real one.<sup>51</sup> This is not a condemnation of virtual reality or an implication of it being less meaningful when compared to the real world, the problem here lay in the type of problems that arise when dealing with digital media and virtual reality as though there were not an interplay with the real one. Instead of media screens

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<sup>50</sup> I associate this action as being akin to Lefebvre’s *illusory reverse image*: “What we find is a false world: firstly because it is not a world, and because it presents itself as true, and because it mimics real life closely in order to replace the real by its opposite; by replacing real unhappiness by fictions of happiness, for example – by offering a fiction in response to the real need for happiness – and so on.” (CEL 57)

<sup>51</sup> See “Racism, Sexism, and Gaming’s Cruel Optimism” by Lisa Nakamura

possibly acting as a portal to creative spaces between the virtual and the real, they could just as easily be an entrance into negligence, similar to the kind displayed by Uruguayan Eurocentrism homogenizing Afrouroguayan history and appreciating *candombe* as only a spectacle to entertain Euro-Uruguayans. The *aplicación* requires the consumer of the media to wake from the doldrums of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology when almost anything can be looked up at the end of a series of clicks, because to know something is not necessarily an implication of having understood that which is known. The smart phone or tablet is replete with information, the app takes this information and with the player meaningfully incorporates it into the songs and the world to make it into a synesthetic media. The tactile nature, the time of day, the geographic location, and the directional compass are taken into account on much more than merely a cursory basis. “*n*” brings all of this together in such a way where the player must interact, think critically, and be accountable for the decisions that are made inside and outside of the media in real time. Tablet and smartphone media tend to serve as a distraction from life, and the *aplicación* is a call back to it.

It takes courage to connect with the world, to connect it with oneself, and it is that embodiment that “*N*” provides to the individual. As Hayles finds, “because embodiment is individually articulated, there is also at least an incipient tension between it and hegemonic cultural constructs. Embodiment is thus inherently destabilizing with respect to the body, for at any time tension can widen into a perceived disparity” (197). The body is an intrinsic part of the self. Society makes judgments about the body, affects it in specific ways, and acts upon it based on its characteristics. These actions reflect back into



the consciousness of the individual to form part of the self. The environment constructed by the hegemonic culture directly influences the embodiment of the individual based off of the body; be they gender, race, or economically imposed by ideological constructs. Prevailing ideological cultures dominate cultural practices through such means. Meanwhile “*n*” resists these conventions following the example of *candombe*. According to Ranciere, “Politics is primarily the conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence of the status of those present” (29). *Candombe* is a way for a marginalized people to find their way on that stage. Afrouruguayans have had a long history of isolated success stories that fit into the dominant Uruguayan discourse. The same discriminatory issues are raised when what their occupations were are being considered and what they are referred to as. “El negro” or “la negra” are typically the qualifiers added to Afrouruguayans’ names while being tied into industries of the spectacle; music, football, dance... etcetera, often times, the only place society allows or is okay with them to be successful. For example, Martha Gularte and Rosa Luna were both successful videttes in *comparsas*, which are highly sexualized female dancers in *Carnaval*. Per Aharonián, Andrews, and Ferreira, the vidette was incorporated in *Carnaval* as a national marketing strategy. Both Gularte and Luna had other occupations; Gularte published books of poetry and Luna was a newspaper columnists, one of the very few female Afrouruguayans to be so; yet what the Uruguayan public remembers is Luna’s breasts and Gularte’s legs, actively dismissing their written work (Andrews 172). These cases highlight the gender and racial inequality within the social imaginary. They can only exist under certain circumstances within it, and when not objectified to form

part of it, it is with a clause like, “es negro pero con alma blanca”, necessitating in the mind of non-Afrouruguayans an apologetic characteristic to offset the Afro characteristics.

The body is normalized by hegemonic cultural constructs, but because embodiment is so circumstantial to the individual at the time and place of performance, when the performance in “*N*” is spliced with the app and the player, it is capable of new subjectivities of individuality over habitual uniformity. Instead of media that caters to a subject that may hide behind that anonymity of a screen through a distance from the real world out of a sense of security based on hegemonic practices, the subjectivity created by the player and “*n*” is in a process of autopoiesis. The player is not just the consumer of the performance or the act, because of the app the player is the performance and act. It is a co-constructive authorship. The songs are flexible and versatile to express individuality, not rigidly trying to fit the subject into a supposed universal norm. An objective is stern, recalcitrant, unyielding, meanwhile “*n*”’s politics are not that of a regime that wishes to break down and modify its subject to be constructed in the image of dominant ideologies. “*n*” on the other hand is a continuous work in progress as its own goal, as an anti-end, as a means that fulfills. The idea for the app is to make agency possible, for to be its cause is for it to maintain a dominion as a result of being an origin. It does not presume so much because it was born out of a collaboration, where all the team members were part of the creation as a whole, not just Jorge Drexler. “*N*” makes the players reflect on their own limitations. There is no attachment to grandeur, no voyeuristic view of a rockstar, nor a

vicarious life through an avatar, it is the player, the app, and how they wish to musically occupy space in the world.

“*N*” is a compilation of songs written specifically for the format of the medium. As Drexler states, “Del mismo modo que un videoclip o la portada de un disco complementa el significado de una canción, los nuevos dispositivos aportan posibilidades de ampliar sus círculos metafóricos”. Its inception can only really be as a song in the application. *N* does not make sense on a disc or playlist, nor can it be performed live because it has yet to be composed before reaching the audience. However, it is possible to record and share the song after the player is finished, though there is no one definitive version, and whatever songs that may exist as a result depend solely upon the direct intervention in the edition by the player. One of the first things the player is presented within the app is options. There are options to move right, left, up, and down in the screens. The player is not confined to any one screen, but presented a series of digital spaces to explore and enter at will without instructions to be adhered to. Typically, a sequence is presented in an audiovisual media so that whatever narrative it might provide is understood in the manner in which it was intended. The power here of course laying in the producer, editor, director, and writer. In “*n*”, there is freedom to explore and no order to follow. As a video game, the most similar category to “*n*” is interactive fiction, where there is not a narrative but a potential narrative. Recent scholarship by Nick Montfort places the importance of interactive fiction on the feedback loop between the interactor and the program, and the emphasis is on the experience of making a narrative, not the actual narrative itself. “*N*” goes beyond that by the potentiality it presents in its play

which lies in the ritualistic engagement and the importance of the narratives produced. The player in this audiovisual media is a hyperactive listener/reader/editor. Fulfilling the role of a listener or reader goes beyond being a passive subject. Information is taken in and assessed at a level that implies more than merely being a receptor. This is why the term hyperactive is being used here. An active listener/reader is a listener/reader engaged with the material. A hyperactive listener/reader is engaged with the material passed the level of an audience member and meaningfully collaborating with what is heard and read, intertwined with not only the media at hand, but the surrounding environment. I do not mean to underplay the singer/songwriter, nonetheless the experience and the song as a whole is composed as a contribution. The singer/songwriter and the creative team of “*n*” all contributed to provide a platform for the player to engage with the app as an instrument in the performance of the songs and break with the dichotomy of audience and performer. The player intervenes in the verses, melody, and the composition. The multiple trajectories of the songs are not only determined by the player, to be conducted by them, but also developed and navigated by the player. By this I mean that as an instrumentalist and conductor, whatever the direction the songs take is a decision made by the player through the app, and both go along for the experience as well, composing their own song and not having it prescribed to them.

### ***NI*, “Habitación 316”**

*NI*, titled “Habitación 316” offers the possibility to narrate an event in retrospect. The facts of said event are undefinitive, more akin to hazy memories than well documented actions. They are not only ambiguous but are also interchangeable in the

formation of the song. It is important to note that the songs in “*n*” are never really played in the recording industry sense of the word, the way a song is played on the radio, a disc, or a playlist. In the latter sense it is not played by the individual so much so as it is initiated by an individual, pushing the play button or command for example. To play a song in “*n*” is to compose the song itself and give it meaning. Within the various narrations of the song, the material the player has to work with is grounded upon one single document, sung in the only verse that does not offer the option to be chosen: “En la nota decía: Habitación 316”. Throughout the various stages of the song, such as the verse and chorus, the player has a copious number of lyrics to choose from. There are always three options for the chorus and a total of thirty-eight for the verse in successions of eight. For the options in the verse, there are nineteen short and nineteen long, coherently mixable. The centrifugal non-linear narrative provided on a spindle of lyrics in the application revolve around the only definitive document in the story which just so happens to be the title as well, and like a memory which is never really stable, it gives the player the liberty to provide their own version of the song that is never meant to have a definitive one, so long as it follows the storyline of “En la nota decía: Habitación 316”. It is the origin of the story that can be recounted a total of 10 to the 27<sup>th</sup> power of different ways. To give a basis for the conceptualization of that numeral, it is a number greater than all the grains of sand in all the beaches on planet earth.<sup>52</sup>

When being played, *nl* is represented as an echo with one origin. The origin being the recounting of what the note said, but as it ripples away from the center the centrifugal

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<sup>52</sup> Drexler confirms this in an interview about the app.

circles become bigger and bigger. With their increase in size and space, the space between the parameters dwarf the verses, symbolically leaving more room for interpretation. This may be considered approximate to their actions, while they travel further from the epicenter they are also traveling further away from the original source and becoming more of an interpretation of what happened. What they said at the time of inception can no longer inhabit all the space that it once did. To use the author's words in another song, they are an echo of an echo of an echo that once was.

The use of the imperfect tense in the conjugation of "Decir" indicates a continuity in action. This is the way it is remembered and propagated in the players's memory "En la nota decía". Despite there being no definitive action in the note, merely the possibility-of in the place that is mentioned, "Habitación 316"; the fact that the note has the connotation of a continuous past action in the imperfect tense is indicative of the force carried behind the writing into the memory. It is to say, the subject of the song, which is the player, has the room number echo in their memory just as it is sung in the chorus, "En la nota decía: Habitación 316, 316". The repetition of the room number reflects the force behind the intention that lingers just as it does in the song, "tres uno seis, tres uno seis". This force creates the transjunctioned form found in the rest of the song, interconnecting in any verse on the instincts of the player. While the song breaks a part, literally in the numbering of the room into separate numbers as opposed to one whole unit, resisting even the firm documentation in a quantified series of rooms, such as its name would be in saying "treientos deicisies" or "tres deicisies" the forms it typically takes in the hispanophone world, in its embrace of transitive form, the song defies having a definitive

version or side of a story, separating at the numerals. The breakdown is then a possibility of construction across the verses. The act of remembering is therefore presented as a process not as a finality, and embraces the act of remembering the event as a continuous interpretation of the truth while it is enacted, not a fact.

The song is not openly ambiguous, to call it so would be to ascribe to it an intent of infidelity to the story. For the most faithful act one could do to remember an event is to not limit it. A one-sided story covers up its angles by only projecting one facet. Like every person, like every event, the layers that compose the entirety reflect the different situations and mirror the distinctive points that all came together during that particular moment in time and space. According to Virno:

The remembered present is virtual: it is a potential that coexists with the (perceived) act, but is not cancelled out by it. With 'false recognition', conversely, the simultaneous presence of heterogeneous moments (the potential of the act) is camouflaged as the chronologically articulated repetition of a homogenous act; the possible – "now" is passed off as a real – "back then"; the present event seems like the hallucinatory verbatim copy of another event that took place in some previous period. (26)

In the process of remembering, to recall the past is just as much influenced by the matrix of the present that is never really static. Therefore, remembering becomes more of a point of inflection that when recollected again will not be a copy of the last recollection but a new recollection of the past ones for that time and place.

The moment or the event while being played “is”; to say that it “was” is to constrain it and to give it an expiration date or a time for it to be placed on the shelf of history. The force of the event is unknown to all except for the player because it is after all their momentary story with the app that is being related. *n1* is the only one from the project that Jorge Drexler attempts to perform at concerts. When he does, the dichotomy of the performance really sets in. At those concerts, Drexler waits for the direction of the player to sing the verses. The relationship is distinct from the performance of the app due to the actual stage and spectators still present, however the break is evident enough. Typically, at most concerts, the roles of audience members and performers are strictly adhered to by necessity of the spectacle. There is a stage that separates the two, the audience is below it, watches, and listens; and the performers on top of it, performing, and playing. So long as both parties interpret their respective roles well enough, the performers are not booed off stage, the audience does not walk out, and there is a mutual understanding. However, the performers hold most of the power in the dichotomy. They could have tomatoes thrown at them or be chanted into an encore, but because they are the object of the crowd’s affection, the sway of power remains in their domain. In *n1* the power to define the meaning of the event is that of the player.

The problem with historiography in Walter Benjamin’s terms is that to write history as a linear sequence of events leading to the present state of affairs as the transpired narration worth knowing over any possible other, denies simultaneously other possibilities while presenting its tale as all-encompassing (263). Its objective is to objectify history and use it for its own purposes while at once petrifying other



possibilities of representation. In contrast, the pluri-history of experience offers the capability of treating the experience as an interpretive one, not a factual one. To archive it is to construct a means with a particular end in mind. 20<sup>th</sup> century history in Uruguay, following the Western tradition has been written by the “I”, the Cartesian ego that thinks and therefore exists, but this exclusive “I” is a European male or in Uruguay’s case, a Euro-Uruguayan, an “I” that fits the criteria to think, and has been legitimized by the correct institutions. Such a history excuses the position of dominion of this “I” and then may be considered a result of complicit narration. The idea of the unfolding of history lies in its presentation as a natural progression, implying an egocentric view of the present that stands atop a structured perspective of a hierarchical past. It would make itself out to be the pinnacle of the moment. Thinking of the present as a result of the past justifies the present state of affairs and validates the domination of whatever ruling class might be in power. This type of historiography is implicit of hierarchy. In the act of restoring the past one puts value on the present. Still, the present is not a fixed place nor is it unbiased when providing a situated place to look in hindsight. It is just as biased as the memory and circumstance it chooses to retrieve.

Centrality as a focusing act creates margins and liminality. The yearning for attention by the black-faced performances tried to have a monopoly on the focus of *candombe*. There is then a centralized power that only authorizes entry to that which is beneficial. The centripetal force shapes the manner in which history may be appreciated. To monopolize its form is also to decide what does not fit in it and what will be excluded. Afrouruguayan history was being replaced by blackface interpretation of Afrouruguayan

traditions. There is a difference between policing the past and being vigilant of it. The latter indicates a sense of care, to care for it in all its parts and be considerate of what might be left behind, while the former seeks to dominate it and correct it where it may be deemed to get out of hand, much like a longing return to a time when the Afrouuguayans were slaves or behaved more servile. The act of song making in *n* is an anti-monopolization of the past. It opens up the space for interpretation as opposed to creating a specific space for it to have a definitive understanding. This preservation of one particular narrative is an intent to preserve something as is, that in turn is an intent to keep a multi-sided history of the event from turning. The control of information is the dominion of it. Dominion in the sense of creating for it a function that serves a preconceived purpose where the ordering and sequencing will yield a specific product.

A manipulation of the past does not occur in *n1*. It does not pretend to be a history of an encounter, over-indulged with one-sidedness and heavy-handed with an agenda to historicize in mind. What occurs has much more to do with fluidity as opposed to the definite. There is no reason to think of the event in terms of a binary between raconteur and listener, for that would again involve a hierarchy implicit in the flow of information. In this case the telling of the story would be the flow. However, the hierarchal structure of history is broken down in the construction of the storyline. The song's purpose implodes on itself. To break the binary is to cube the storytelling. The third dimension is not only an addition of a third element but a reimagining of the first and second in their original function of producer and receiver. As a result of the dynamic interplay of output and input of information and commands being processed, the recounting becomes an

incorporating practice rather than a one-sided telling. The distance between the two is broken and bridged through a union of accomplices. The tripartite relationship between the producer, media, and receiver is reconfigured in the media and a new venue is created where the dynamic of the parties articulates the event knowing that each time they play, it will be different.

*nl* provides a version of a story. One event and an unlimited sequencing of verses is storified to cater to altering perspectives. The emphasis on some verses while the complete ignorance of others tell a side to a story. The story is not meant to be boxed and read on any one specific side, nor is there any limited number of sides to be adhered to. The song wants to exist on any plane it so chooses to reside on based on the performance of the player. Like every person, like every event, the layers composing the entirety reflect different situations and emphasize distinctive points. To follow the metaphor used by Drexler, as liquid songs, the player decides to crystallize the version most deemed fit, or the happenstance version of the moment. The moment is constrained inside the quarters of the finalized song, but the story is not. Its ability to be captured serves here as a testament to that, in contrast to the otherwise recalcitrant result of a finalized recording. A product is produced, not reproduced, and as a result does not have to fit any archetype.

The present inherits an ideology from the past, a monopolized manner of storytelling and thinking. What is told must conform to the qualification of what is worth knowing and being mulled over, this is why Gularte and Luna were not writers but sexually objectified performers. This archived register is the force that forms the notions of history and preserves its unidirectional discourse. Unless it is contested, it literally

gives itself the power to define the meaning of the event while masking it under the natural process according to a certain ideology. One would like to think that veracity and justice would win out in the end of that confrontation and candidly relate the events with a sense of ethical obligation to what is genuine and accurate. However, it is more often the case that those in power sanction themselves with the authority to legitimize their own narrations of the past and deem anything contrary to that tale as illegitimate, without regard to authenticity or fidelity to the event. As a result, history can just as likely be as apocryphal as fiction may stand to be just as truthful.

Between the authority and the illicit, the official and the imagined, the truth and the lies, and the historical and the fictional, there lies a limited binary of systems offering a critique within all the instances of collision between the respective parties and further reveals what weapons are being wielded by both sides, why they are attributed to each party involved, and the meaning behind what it is that is being fought over. There is no objective reality in this dual understanding of thesis and antithesis that supposedly yields a new thesis. That formula is limited in scope. To lack the possibility of yielding an alternative narrative outside of the binary does not allow for a reimagining of the present. To break with a preconceived notion of the past is to begin a new present. *n/* resignifies these binary relations and recodifies the integral unity made up of the performance to allow the player the instrument to remember in the composition of a song. The performance does not just have the ability to be inscribed in the recording, but in the memory of the player.

The opportunity to narrate an event is to have the power to remember it. The possibility offered in “*n*” is not a privilege but a condition for the song’s existence. Language is a pivotal faculty people use to orient themselves within the world based on a significant understanding of the spaces and objects around them- the signifiers that are relied upon take the form of denominations. Language exists at the most fundamental of levels and it is by those lexical signifiers that people attach a relevance to beings and surroundings. To live is to remember and the right to imagine is a stalwart for individuality. As Virno states, memory “is that faculty that distinguishes individual existence” (4). To imagine oneself in time and space outside of the material reality, presents the ability for one to be self-conscious of their character and perform the characteristics that make up their individuality. A performance in *nI* is a self-sanctioned history of the event over a systematizing history as a collection of facts. Facts are collected to offer a legitimate truth. The more they are built up the more power they sway over people. What happens is that they can ward off contestation. This is why monuments dwarf people, myths do the same as a conception of grandeur to be aspired to, and homogenous hallmarks engulf individuality, leaving an empty trust in weight as a sign of reliability. Conventions are then appraised as seeming permanent archetypes that weigh upon people, and to leave them behind is no easy feat, for they are configured as being from a time immemorial- natural aspects of the present state of affairs since always.

One of the risks of treating memory as an act of finality is to force facts to find precise details that provide an end in itself to be deemed worth something in a capitalist economy. Due to this quantification of worth as an accumulation of data, when there is

not enough, just as the adage goes, it may be lost to history. The implication of a contest here is pertinent in the sense of history being the victor over something. The “what?” is the question being begged. If history is in contest with an adversary, whom is it compelled to defeat? When history has that conception behind it, and then is associated with a game, there is an implication of a version that has won out. However, the problem with that is that there is a losing story that will not be considered due to procedural meritocracy, not to mention the stories that were not even allowed to participate in the contest, and that’s assuming the game wasn’t rigged. Based off of established conventions, what is lost to history was not pertinent nor valid, the losers were not worthwhile, while others were not even in contention. There is that which is authorized and that which is not and furthermore that which lay outside of the possibility of being considered within the dichotomy. It is this consideration that *nI* presents the possibility of in its performance.

The anatomy of memories must break away from that of suspended time. Its record and registers are not static. If they were, they would not be able to be revisited with the intent to learn something new. When they are not considered or looked upon through different perspectives, they are limited to what they can yield. The maker is not in charge of all the various possibilities, that is left up to the player. To take the tale of history that has been written as a sort of epic, meant to aggrandize a people or a nation, to have it become part of one’s memory, of one’s experience as a citizen, although never actually lived, just identified with, is to set a paradigm. In order for the paradigm to exist, those othered, in Uruguay’s case the Afouruguayans, only conditionally form part of it.

The malleable details in *nI* do not offer a discriminatory base. There was no hero of the moment, there was no myth to venerate, there is no recreation of an anterior. That is a possibility, but its politics is that of emancipation from such confining norms. The presence of the encounter implies a past before it without a historical genesis to copy, mimic, or perpetuate. Only the one the player makes at the moment, probably never to be made again, about the encounter of two ungendered individuals that came across each other and may have met up in “Habitación 316”.

Historical appropriation is in a sense a cultural imposition by the historical register of records being perpetuated into the present culture. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afro-Argentinians were all a homogenous African, their multiethnicity could not form part of the national discourse. In *nI*, the intention here is not to look back for an umbrella model to reenact, but to propose a continuous analysis of the present. *nI* provides a non-conformist attitude that always seeks to adapt itself in terms of the present circumstance without an intention to apply a universal rule to all situations. The notion of a definitive history or a static history orients the present and coming future. It is comforting to think that one has a grip on what has past. It provides a foundation to base further understandings. However, the action is similar to thinking that the world was the center of the universe and everything revolved around it. Both stem from an egocentric view. The Earth is not static, just as the present is not static. Although the large number of possible versions of the story may never be exhausted, they are never completely written off. The centrifugal verses disperse in a three-hundred and sixty-degree fashion while still offering the possibility of being rotated to the left or rotated to the right by the

player, or not at all. This distance is more akin to what actually happens to the memory in retrospect. When a person remembers, that which is recollected, time and time again, is not the actual event, but the memory of the event the last time it was remembered. Little by little, details may become ambiguous to make them fit in a coherent storyline and the chronology might be edited to fit a different order for the present understanding.

As an experiment, this is musical fiction as a performative action. It requires the player to interact with the world via the fiction of the story. *NI* breaks with traditional notions of narration and the boundaries of fiction to provide the player options to choose from and the capacity to edit the song. It is an intent to make the experience personal, which it does so very well providing the player with possibilities, such as that of choosing the language in which to narrate between English and Spanish. Although, both languages have a history of colonization and violent imposition in the Americas, the dual option of languages breaks the monopolization of only having one. As a result of being able to experience the story in its original and in its translation, the room for interpretation is embraced rather than discriminated against. The performance is not directed to an audience or being played for them, it is directed by them for them, henceforth displacing hierarchies imposed by traditional institutions. The player edits the song, instead of an institution that regulates what is deemed appropriate for audiences, the audience here deems what is representative of the player for the player. There is no need for a leader. The indication is that of a liberated system to spread its record through the diverse vectors, resulting in a liberated player and app constructing their own storyline in the song.



In order for the app to have its full effect, it must be felt as being a part of the player. The command system is in sync with the player, because any feeling of a lag would be felt as a delay associated with the phone or tablet as an extension of oneself. The register and time it takes for a button to react is instantaneous. This is a personal register of codes where the certainty of numbers and calculations is put at a counterpoint to the most important variable in the incalculable equation of the song; the human element. The individuality of the player cannot be encoded into the system to produce a specific result, a desired narrative. Within the pattern constructed to place knowledge in such an order to reduce uncertainty, the player disrupts the standard when they are incorporated into the song. Standard measurements for what is considered normal are the metric for discrimination. Such notions produce racist scientific discourse like phrenology, craniometrics, and eugenics, to name a few. This is why the strangers are unraced and ungendered in the encounter. They need not apply to any ethnicity or heteronormative standard. That degree of human incalculability in the app would be what Hayles considers as being a mutation and “crucial because it names the bifurcation point at which the interplay between pattern and randomness causes the system to evolve in a new direction” (33). The history of any event, like space and time, is constructed. The only true perpetual is the Here and the Now which is ever-changing. The possibility of having a narrative on multiple temporalities and taken into account and permitted to cohabit is made possible in *n1* as an experience-based media. Time and space are relative and unique to every subject, and every player may do what they will in/with “Habitación 316”.

## ***N2, “Madera de deriva”***

Where the verses were edited by the player in *n1*, *n2* strikes as a contrast due to the verses being the only consistent in the project and the player must merit the musical sections of the composition. *n2* is titled, “Madera de deriva” and seeks to highlight the erratic trajectory of life and learning by where one has gone by. Music is a sensuous art that is appreciated as an atmospheric experience. The music in *n2*, or better yet, the act of making music is the vehicle used to connect the player and the app to the world. Though it is not merely a bridge but also an exploration device. It is in a sense, role reversal, although instead of using sound as sonar for echolocation, it is the player being the instrument of human-location for the song. There is then a dynamic relationship between the app, the player, and the outside world. The relation between the instruments and the mapping register at a personal level. The player is part of the instrument making the music, moreover is also the instrument of mapping. The human element is again stressed before the knowledge placed on the screen although only as a collaboration of it. The app directs the player so much as the player directs the app. The player’s corporeality is tested and made evident by the performance. One must experience the time and space of the location to understand it past the level of information. It can be whenever time at wherever latitude and longitude, but that says nothing of the uniqueness of the place nor the player’s circumstances there when they happened to coincide.

Electronic devices connected to the internet provide a distance between actions and users of the tools. As already stated, there is anonymity where choices may have repercussions, but people can click so many times without a consequence, when

something does spill over across the screen, it is surprising, although it should not be. Virtual reality has a direct vestment into the real world. The dynamic between consumer and media comes from a pre-established accord between those that are performing and the audience spectating. There is a spatial distance that permits the participants to interpret their preconceived role in the spectacle that lacks accountability outside of the that role. The distance delineates the dichotomy, and the participation by the audience members is limited and mostly vicarious, while the performer's ego if unchecked believes it has full control. Typically, the fourth wall is faked at one's convenience, however in *n2*, it cannot be. The player is the conductor of the *aplicación* in more than one sense of the word. They try out parts of the song, experiencing each musical section in their entirety before actually being able to employ all of them when composing a song to understand how to keep time and not be told how to. The app as a space is one that asks the player to enter another, to break away from preconceived notions of privilege and proximity to performances, to agency. It appears to be an isolated space, confined to the screen of the phone or tablet, but it transcends, and does so at a very individual level.

The longest standing tradition of resistance in the hispanophone world that has suffered under the oppression of coloniality is represented in the app as the Basque National Orchestra. The music the player works with in *n2* was recorded by that symphony. To unlock different sections of instruments, one must traverse a specified distance in whatever direction the app's compass points to. It can go up to five-hundred meters. As an historically marginalized people within the Western world surviving through Roman invasion, Visigoth invasion, Moorish invasion, Frankish invasion, and

Spanish invasion and keeping their cultural practices is stressed as a point to be made. As opposed to being mapped and giving a point of the world an emphasis in a two-dimensional space, the player is made to be the mapping instant, to enter and dwell a space with consideration of those there. Maps imply a sense of dominion, they mark spatial differences and give the creator of the map and the reader of it a privileged place. I'm thinking specifically of the names of spaces as metaphorical locations in relations to others as an egocentric view. To hold the world in one's hands, or read its information is in a manner that bequeaths one self-importance. *N2* brings the player back to the three-dimensional world to actually inhabit that space and displaces notions of hierarchy attached to orchestras, maps, and the world.

With an orchestra, the Western world's notion of a symphony being an elite practice is put in contest with the participatory nature of *n*. Access to classical music is in itself an economic privilege, and *n2* takes the conduction of an orchestra in the day-to-day life of the player. As Turino finds; "participatory performance does not fit well with the broader cultural values of the capitalist-cosmopolitan formation, where competition and hierarchy are prominent and profit making is often a primary goal" (35). Complex tastes often consist of gradual increments in seeking pleasure. Typically, one wants greater and greater intricacy to continue to feel the same amounts of satisfaction. The problem here lays also in exposition. If one does not have access to orchestras or symphony halls, how then can one develop a taste for it? Economic walls are constructed around what has the privilege of being designated as higher culture for a refined audience. The only purpose being the elevation of an "I" and a debasing of an "Other".

When heard live, an orchestra is heard in a concert hall with an auditorium seating. Some seats are closer to the performance, some are inside privileged quarters meant to separate those seated there from the rest, and others are still further back. Not to mention the workers of the hall who are not considered as being a part of the audience nor always credited with the spectacle. As a personal experience, there is no hierarchy in *n* to compete with, no one else to “Other” or ignore. The designation of “Very Important People” is then displaced and does not belong in the performance. The relations between the resident of a space and a visitor are broken down and no longer about who belongs and who excludes whom and converts the encounter into a direct question of how individuals will treat each other when neither is more privileged than the other in that same space of the performance.

The focal point of the performance is the player, and everything is in his/her hand. They are the amateur maestro, where the performative space being created is a public space where all included members participate in in their everyday lives. An amateur is someone who engages in the pursuit of something on an unpaid basis, in contrast to a professional. The negative connotations associated with the word are a result of monetary compensation. However, the etymology of the word, like that of maestro for the conductor, is also from Italian, *amatore*, lover in English. To do something for the mere joy of it is dangerous in a capitalist society, where productivity and compensation of skill must be the norm for said society to function. In Uruguay, the more marketable the performance of *candombes* were during Carnaval, the more it was being done by people who did not know its history, who drummed without knowing the stories they were

telling of the *naciones*, *sociedades*, or *barrios*. To open up a space for interpretation, a space for oneself, and to create the conditions for that process to take place is how *n2* breaks away from fixed conventions. It is about what is seen, what is heard, and how the player reacts while inhabiting the space designated as the stage for the performance. To have a full experience, the app recommends using headphones. The binaural audio technology in the player's ears provide this personal experience a textured atmospheric one, akin to feeling the energy of the drums in a *comparsa*. The model for creation fits the venue, the space is very much conducive to music, and *n2* was specifically made for that purpose. A negotiation between the exterior world of the player, the internal, and the song's venue happens instantaneously at the moment of mapping. The music coming in through the headphones provides a non-directional experience of the music, making it seem like it is part of the atmosphere. By that I mean that the source does not originate from one speaker in terms of the player, but is directly heard no matter which direction they are facing in a three-dimensional way thanks to the distribution of music between the left and right ears. The intimate space of headphones transcending localities to blur the lines between everyday life and art and quotidian discriminatory divisions becomes apparent. The nature of the space then determines the reality of conflicting ideas in the music most appropriate for that place. The context and venue is constructed in the player's mind and embodied in their reality where the proximity to the spectacle is no longer a question of capital or seating. It is again a spectacle to which the player is a part of, but so is the world around them. The player conducts an orchestra with their finger to connect with the world on their own terms, understanding that it is not a static place, and

even the most familiar space cannot be predicted. The experience of a route that may be quotidianly traversed is no longer an unconscious effort of habit but suddenly bequeaths a new subjectivity with the performance of the app and offers a new lens of looking at the route and place. A musical situation and personal experience quickly becomes a very social one.

The compass makes an effort to open in the different sections of the orchestra. It requires a commitment, and an effort to experience each musical section. Relationships between the environment that are taken as a snapshot by the player are then associated to that musical section. What is revealed is part of the process. The player is the heart of the orchestration as well as the cerebral conductor. A person grows by the places they experience, not by the places they ignore or oversee. In this trajectory, both the player and the app are along for the ride. A place is a stylized object or site; it is a construction, and the stage for the song, the exits, and the entrances are determined by the commands the player orchestrates. The randomness incorporated into the performance is even greater than *n1*, not out of the player's whims or caprices, but because *n2* departs from a preconceived notion of life happening around the player, where what is not in the performance may suddenly be in it and the player has to manage with that space. In reality, as soon as the performance starts until it ends, there is no off-stage. Unless the player stops, they are confronted with a new way of thinking listening, seeing, and inhabiting. *N2* challenges the player as an art form to see the world in an expanded way. The social cue of being distracted by a device and using an auditory ploy as a "don't talk to me" strategy forces the player to become in a sense more involved with the

surrounding world. Instead of possibly alienating a neighbor with media, the player is confronted with them. The player has to acknowledge that they are there to themselves because everyone crossed may be part of the performance, everything may be part of the environment. This represents a responsibility of being by the player in the incorporating practice. There are aspects the player does not know or does not understand about the place chosen to experience the *aplicación* even though it may be a local production, about as local as one can get, where the social spaces of the performance must be negotiated no matter how complex. The player created their own environment being aesthetically the corporeal part of the music. How one is mobile is a question about choice and the dynamics of the situations have the player's personal performance on the line. The player's movements are then not only significant to the musical piece but also to the player's corporeality and reality. This is not a blackface performance with an identity to pick up then take off. How the player really feels about the various people and locations confronted becomes conscious and evident to them and how they traverse the people and spaces embodies the performance. The act of movement is an intent to destabilize and echoes music's nature in the app.

Space and time is traditionally understood in the Western world from a diegetic notion of the "I". The relationship between time and space must be stressed here. Time being measured by the actual movement of objects in space, and space being measured by calculations of distance between objects. It is important to note that the calculation of movement is spatial movement. Time is a projection upon reality, relying on the movement of the sun. However, it is the earth's movement around the sun that is



calculated. The stage is set by the player, but the performance is not just done by them. They may choose the location of the venue and the selection becomes that which creates the signifier within that which is being signified in the song, but only in the inscription if there happens to be one, not the performance. The embodiment of the song by the player and the app, as a process, is engaged with the surrounding world; the here and the now, the present as a place both of time and space. On our first adventures into the world we carried with us what we knew best, ourselves. The self has boundaries placed on it by the body. Mobility is key in exploration but sound break the boundary of the body when conceiving of oneself. I'm thinking specifically of projecting ones' voice. Our interaction with the world has always been mediated by the language we use to interpret it and the ideological frameworks we base our understanding on in inner monologues. However, the voice takes on a privileged role in this mitigation. It is the first conception of ourselves outside of ourselves, being part of a space that is outside of the body yet so internal to it. "N" is part of a computational system that far exceeds informational input able to be generated by the player. Although, without the player, it is merely information, and without the present, the performance cannot take place. Whatever inner feelings or appreciations the player has about the surroundings, it is evident that the outer time and space is fully capable of continuing without him or her. If the new subjectivity created by the performance of the player and app has importance, it only does so because the rest of the world does too.

Maps are made to imagine a route. To create a layout of what is known and establish boundaries. As a text to be read, they help with a two-dimensional notion of

space to give us orientation within the world we inhabit. Mapping the world is in a sense an attempt to control it. To decide what means what and how it is significant is to become the thinking part of that construction. Music does not tie everything together, it frees it from firmly fixed structures, just as the voice is a conception of the self-outside of the body's boundaries. While experiencing *n2*, the world, no matter how far removed from the individual player, becomes in sync with the music in the player's logic and rationale because of experiencing it in a different way. Suddenly, walking past things or people that would in other instances be mundane are syncopated through the music to the player's action and thought process to be perceived of in a different light.<sup>53</sup>

The time it takes to walk at a moderate pace, and by moderate, I mean to be engaged enough with the world around you to watch where you are going, is about the time it takes for the song to play from the start to the end and complete the distance required to open up another instrumental section. Therefore, each instrumental section addition is experienced as a whole before there is another added to it. The constructions of all the sounds is part of the process and the music augments the visual and corporeal experience. As an experience, *n2* is thrilling. To conceptualize five hundred meters as more than a number that defines a certain distance between two points and actually engage with what is traversed gives the player an appreciation for the distance and what is experienced on route. What is more amazing is that the starting point is completely determined by the player. They have full control over the commencement while the ending is a complete unknown. People are creatures of habit and however familiar we are

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<sup>53</sup> "Our products thus become the mediators between the internalized constellations of habit and the social and physical world around us." (Turino 120)

to certain places; we still establish routes to follow from place to place. The ending point at the 500 meters from where one starts is determined by the app. The algorithm used to choose the direction leaves the manner in which the distance will be traversed up to the player; because the only thing to be discerned is the direction, the route takes importance over the destination to be reached and as such is experienced as a means for a means to be reaching for.

*N2* treats space as a stage for the journey. Each walk, each frame, is a distance, is an experience. Situational awareness and awareness of place are a constant throughout the process. There is not a universal experience, but a local one at a personal level. The experience makes the player question and confront established conceptions, things that they might take for granted. Instead of a place being fixed in convention, the player chooses the place for a necessitated new purpose. Each walk, each frame, is a distance experienced. The starting point is planned but the rest is improvised, and the manner in which it is, is decided by the player. The people, the boundaries, and markers of representation are all confronted in the encounters to reveal something about the performance that stays inscribed in the memory of the player. To be in the pocket is to jam and fall into a groove with other musicians. Music will make the meaning of the place and experience. Every instrument requires tuning. The player as an instrument becomes in tune with their surroundings. To be in the pocket takes on a different meaning when the jam is taking place by everyone all around you and the significance of a space is constructed by the experience. Embodiments of individuality in “*n*” are highly stressed

but not to the extent of an egotistical expression. *N2* makes it evident that the player is not the center of the universe.

### ***N3*, “Décima a la décima”**

The history of the *décima* and its use in music explain its so purposeful application in the *aplicación*. The *aplicación* cannot function without the proper medium. It requires the computational system of a tablet or smartphone. Curiously enough, the *décima* also goes by the name of *espinela* as a result of the prowess with which the poet/musician *Vicente Espinel* applied the form. It is not by coincidence that the poetic meter takes his name and the creation of the modern guitar is attributed to him. Both predate him, but the association is telling enough of what the meter and the instrument mean to the form. When the *décima* is used as the form to follow in folk music, something that it does in every Latin American country, and the Canary Islands, it is always accompanied by a guitar. The combination of the two have been a tried form for Latin American folk music, and what Drexler has done is prescribe a technological component to the recipe on one of the most widespread apparatuses. It is difficult to imagine the dissemination of the *décima/espinela* without the accompaniment of the guitar because of its oral nature implied in its musicalization, the same way the *aplicación* would be impossible without a smartphone or tablet. The *décima* and its structure easily lends itself to music and that explains its multifunctionality and use in *n3*.

Drexler describes the qualities of the *décima* in this manner: “Algo en su estructura genial de tensiones y reposos musicales (no hay que olvidar que el malagueño Vicente Espinel, era sobre todo conocido como músico) se adapta mágicamente a la

melodía.” The explanation offered by Drexler lacks scientific rigor, but its ubiquitous use as a go-to form found in folk music throughout the hispanophone world is evidence enough, just as its structure is. In the book, *El octosilabo castellano*, Saavedra Molina finds that Spanish phrases have a rhythmic tendency to be expressed in eight syllables. This oral melody in short burst of octosyllables and timely pauses to begin another phrase in eight syllables, or in the case of a *décima*, another verse, is the powerful nature that lay behind the *décima*. The leading scholar on the *décima*, Maximiano Trapero explains:

La *décima* es un fenómeno cultural que ha sobrepasado los límites de la literatura; es –por decirlo con una expresión ya usada por nosotros- un ‘complejo cultural’... igual que para la queja, la *décima* sirvió para la alabanza, y se mostró perfecta para la controversia, e incisiva para la burla, y mortal para la sátira, y cantarina para el canto, e intimista para el amor. Diez versos que podían convertirse en poema, que podían constituir todo un poema. (9)

A great part of the reason behind the *espinela*’s wide use is because of its capacity to succinctly express a complete thought in ten musically ripe octosyllabic verses. Drexler states that “Por su brevedad y contundencia, era usada en la llamada literatura de cordel, breves crónicas inmediatas que se colgaban a secar en una cuerda, una especie de antecedente de Twitter, para entendernos”. The more succinct use of language, the more urgent a message comes across and captivates. This is where the wielding of language must be efficient and precise. Throughout five centuries the structure of the *espinela* has been proven to be a strong cultural manifestation made individually at a very local level; *Son Jarocho* in Mexico, *Repentismo* in Cuba, *Payadas* in the Southern Cone, *Canto del*

*mejorana* in Panama to name a few, and now in the hispanophone virtual world. In

Kenneth Goldsmith's book, *Uncreative writing*, he states that:

These short bursts of language are the latest in a long line of linguistic reductions: Chinese ideograms, haikus, telegrams, newspaper headlines, the Times Square news zipper, advertising slogans, concrete poems, and desktop icons. There's a sense of urgency that compression brings: even the most mundane tweets-what someone is eating for breakfast-can feel like breaking news, demonstrating, once again, that the medium is still the message: the interface of Twitter has reframed ordinary language to make it feel extraordinary. (175)

The ephemeral continuity of beauty and its brevity validates the long and large tradition of compact yet pithy messages. It is in this manner that the *aplicación* caters to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience that is saturated with a constant flow of images, texts, music, and videos, constantly looking for a screen and having a very short attention span.

The title, "Décima a la décima" is composed of eight syllables, just as every verse is in an *espinela*. The octosyllabic title, like the verses, represent the number of possible combinations and versions the song has to offer. Moreover, the duration of the song is contingent upon the hour in which the app is opened. Time takes on a significant role in the process, the word "tiempo" appears once in each *décima*, never repeating itself in the number of the verse. The suggestion would be that time would be the binding metaphor of  $n^3$  where the hour of the day determines the number of *décimas* allotted to the player to work with. To keep the time, melody, and rhythm is fundamental to the composition of a song, and in the Hispanophone musical world where practically each region employs

the lyrical structure of *espinela* in a style of folk music, the management of all the characteristics of tempo mark the fundamental difference in authenticity. Also, the option to pause the song, to look over the verses, and then later to record is an invitation by the singer/songwriter for the listener/reader to participate.

The player, as has been being shown, is the fundamental part of the process of the *aplicación*. The technological component of the app is a productive tool, one which Drexler calls “una herramienta poetica” part of the creative creation, but not from the perspective of the singer/songwriter. He utilizes it as an invitation to participate on behalf of the listener/reader. The song itself may be considered conscious of itself, a bridge to the player indicating that the app and the player are more than what they might appear to be in the performance of the song. The instrument and the instrumentalist are incapable of being separated in the performance. While the less involved the player is, the more solid the song stays and the less it approximates an *aplicación*. When opened, the borders of the app fit the rectangular aspect of the screen and the singers are represented as triangles, and each singer is represented symbolically by their initials and an exponent over them, respectively in this order: Xael López (xl<sup>0</sup>), Vítor Ramil (vr<sup>1</sup>), Fernando Cabrera (fc<sup>2</sup>), Martín Buscaglia (mb<sup>3</sup>), Jorge Drexler (jd<sup>4</sup>), Kevin Johansen (kj<sup>5</sup>), Daniel Drexler (dd<sup>6</sup>), Kiko Veneno (kv<sup>7</sup>), Álex Ferreira (af<sup>8</sup>), René Pérez (“Residente” Calle 13) (rp<sup>9</sup>). They are all arranged in such a manner so as to compose a larger triangle, with the singer/songwriter, jd<sup>4</sup> in the middle. When choosing the singer or the verse of the *décima*, the screen focuses in on the chosen triangle until the entire screen is covered by it and a new complete one is born from it. The act not only takes the focus off of jd<sup>4</sup> but also

expands the triangle out of the screen, directing it to the player of the verses. It is not by happenstance that jd<sup>4</sup> has the fourth power, the quarters of the song and app are established by him, but he challenges the player to break the fourth wall of an already broken fourth wall in the third performance in *N* and take the stage to creatively manage the verses otherwise the original author and contributors.

A “pie forzado” is characteristic of a duel between two *decimeros*, where one *decimero* challenges the other to follow the first verse of the former so that the latter must coherently construct the rest of the *décima* around it following the storyline and meaning of that first verse. As it is, to choose between ten singers produces a sensation of contestation between the voices, but the challenge to actively participate in the composition puts the player on the same plane as the singer/songwriter in the production of the *décima*, and to an extent the singers which include the singer/songwriter. The gesture is powerful, especially when taking into account that the verses took Drexler nine months to write and he abandoned the project more than once.<sup>54</sup> The fourth wall of the screen then lay in shambles. To blur the pre-established hierarchical lines of a show and an audience is an open invitation to take the stage, better yet, it takes the performance to the crowd. The performative element of the song/application creates a time outside of time, something that Bakhtin might find to be carnivalesque time from his analysis of Gargantua and Pantagrue:

As opposed to the official feast, carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all

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<sup>54</sup> “N”



hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (10)

The composition of the song consists of various stages of creation between the elements; music, lyrics, edition, recording, production, etcetera... all of it before reaching the audience. In the case of the *aplicación*, what arrives is the final product of the media, in the sense that it is an instrument to be played, but without the songs. Although the less the participation the player has in the creation, the more solid the *décima* stays. In other words, the verses follow a specific format, and that was not the original intention. When opening the app, there is already an unavoidable element at play because the hour in which it is opened by the player determines the number of stanzas that will be able to be heard. The *décimas* go augmenting throughout the day, from 1:00 AM/PM until reaching their maximum of ten stanzas from 10:00 to 12 AM/PM. The *aplicación* cannot exist without the participation of the listener/reader. This is much like the carnivalesque experience Bakhtin describes: “This experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability, sought a dynamic expression: it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms” (10-11). This special time is what is commonly referred to around the music community as a jam. This jam session is an improvised musical session based off of inference and cohesion between the musicians, in a way that may be considered ritualistic for the formation of a band or for the session. Every musical group, no matter how formal and long lasting or informal and brief, will have its own sound, good or bad, just as every musician has his/her own style that adds their own

unique component to the group. In this case, the essential variable which carries the power in the performance is the player. The only component that can give significance to the song is the instrumentalist of the media, the one with the power to perform the improvised version of the song.

The whole process is a performative act, where the screen works as a portable portal to create a musical stage practically anywhere. The *aplicación* requires that the player be more than merely a receptor of the emission and actually participate in the inscription or the destruction of the song. *n* can only be experienced in the act of producing it. This is a result of the superb use of the technology by the *aplicación*. Although the technological power behind it is not a guarantee of a creative use of it, it does require a responsibility when being employed. Drexler's intention is not simply writing another song and putting it on an app. That could have been done on a single or disc. As a singer/songwriter, he redefines his role as author of the many possible songs in "*n*". According to Roland Barthes in his essay "The Death of the Author", to give a text an author is to impose on it limits. In this case, *n3* may be understood as an eclectic construction of authorship of various singers where the charge of conductor on is entrusted to the player. To hear "Décima a la décima" exacts a commitment from the player, beyond that of a listener or reader. This is the requisite that gives significance to the *aplicación* and differentiates it from an application or a song. The player must contemplate the verses and choose them before proceeding. To stutter or stall is to take too long and bow out of the duel and the app will follow the preconceived order. That time limit and sense of urgency mimics the duel in the "pie forzado". Therefore, if the

player wants to be more involved, they must have more of an understanding of the verses and the stanzas, making them more familiar and tied to the performance of the song.

The composition of “Décima a la décima” like the rest of the songs in “N” are a performance on behalf of the mediator, where the mastery of the instrument begets a new subjectivity. In the case of the *aplicación*, its technological register gives more importance to the embodiment by player and app. N3 takes the *décima* as a musical form and updates it using modern technological elements where the meaning of the song has more to do with the player’s performance than the actual singer/songwriter. The player and the app splice to become the embodiment of the creative process. They are not only a recipient of the verses to be read and heard and images on the screen, they are performing the song, just as the app is not merely a transmission of media. The use of the *aplicación* refuses to be in the background of a café or a party, it requires a commitment to experience. The song that is produced by the player is part of the content of the message. Without the assistance of the player, the application, in Marshal McLuhan’s terms would be a message without any content. There is a very fitting Jorge Luis Borges quote in the informational text part of “n” taken from the story, *La maquina de pensar de Raimundo Lulio* that says: “Como instrumento de investigación filosófica, la maquina de pensar es absurda. No lo sería en cambio como instrument literario y poético”. In the story, Borges goes on to write that a dictionary of rhymes is a type of “maquina de pensar”. *La maquina de pensar* is refined information, just like the musical and verse structure of the songs in “n”, coded in a certain way to be used as a tool to be mediated by an individual

in a creative process, but the process is completely conditional upon the player, and it's the player's input that makes the music.

Preestablished conventions of are easy to graze over in everyday with and a veneered understanding of everything around is to perpetuate the prescribed reality by dominant ideologies- it's a coerced lens of viewing the world to provide the knowledge to exist in it. There is more here that is unknown because of the presumption of knowing society's reality, without actually living out the conflicts of society. It takes an effort to actually take the time and to look at something differently and gain another perspective that might have another way of understanding the world from legitimate experience existing in it. To find out where someone is coming from, there is positionality at the moment of communication. Informing what is they are saying informs the relationship between people. Understanding the world is mediated through practices- speaking to the reality of the world that is lived in. All work and all innovation have always been information inscribed and incorporated by human beings. Every instrument takes a mastery of knowledge and to be able to produce it is an act of embodiment. The creation of the *candombe* drums by individuals, just like the playing of the instruments by the individuals are acts of embodiment. The subjectivities born out of the marriage between technology and humans have always been occurring by people, embodied in their abilities. All artefacts are constructions, made by people, and people as a social creature can never be separated from the political. That feedback loop, whether it be between *candombe* drummer and Afrouuguayuan history, instrument and instrumentalist, or player and media, is a familiar place for popular peoples, and the more prevailing and stronger

media like “*n*” become at expressing people’s existences in society, the more space is going to be opened at a democratic level.

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