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Restless Bodies, Unquiet Minds:
Poetry, Performance, and Power in the Andean Avant-Gardes

By

Tara Ann Daly

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Estelle Tarica, Chair
Professor José Rabasa
Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres

Fall 2010

Abstract

Restless Bodies, Unquiet Minds: Poetry, Performance, and Power in the Andean Avant-Gardes

by

Tara Ann Daly

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Estelle Tarica, Chair

In my project “Restless Bodies, Unquiet Minds: Poetry, Performance, and Power in the Andean Avant-Gardes” I argue that the avant-garde is not a discrete historical moment that has passed but rather a rhizomatic response to colonial legacies that have turned complex human beings into legible political subjects. Said transformation is part of an exclusionary method that privileges an enlightened, male *criollo* subject while depriving indigenous, poor, female, or queer persons of discursive agency. I examine how marginalized artists transgress normative conventions by incorporating embodied sentiments into their work, considering both the performative interruptions of avant-garde poetry and the linguistic disruptions of public stagings and installation art. Situating myself theoretically between a vitalist school that might conceive of the body as a source of limitless agency and Foucault’s constructivist reading of it as a passive inscriptive surface, I first look at the 1930s work of Peruvian poet César Vallejo, who uses neologisms to make visible the vulnerability of indigenous and working class bodies in Peru and Spain. I then engage José María Arguedas’s work from the 1960s in Peru to explore how his confrontation with the abject aspects to being human calls for a new community through oral tradition and literature. Turning to Bolivia, my latter two chapters consider the performance art, television programs, and poetry of Bolivian feminist Julieta Paredes and the multimedia work of artist Alejandra Dorado. I analyze the way that their anagrams, parody, and laughter reconfigure structures that limit the conditions of gendered and sexual intersubjectivity in the Andes.

The work I undertake in the project makes four principal contributions to the study of Latin American literatures and cultures. First, I theorize the avant-gardes as rhizomatic phenomena that continuously engage the theme of community across space, time, and bodies. While the term “avant-garde” is most commonly associated with the 1920s and 1930s in Europe and Latin America and the 1960s and 70s in the Americas, I revise such a linear genealogy to consider *rhizo*-gardes as part of an underground left that is in a perpetual state of becoming. Second, within my analysis of the *rhizo*-gardes, I demonstrate the way that the space of art enables the production of a desiring community outside of the “operability” of capitalism. This goal entails undertaking an analysis of how art produces and communicates desires that are aberrant to those of the ideal capitalist sovereign individual. Third, I come to understand the “common” as stemming from a subject’s confrontation with the abject, objective, and finite aspects to being human. I consider the transformative implications of such an encounter on the

current emphasis on visibility as it fuels biopolitical distinctions between subjects based on class, race, gender, and sexuality. How might the other senses – touch, taste, smell, and hearing – catalyze community in a different way? Lastly, particularly through my work in Bolivia, I aim to expand the archival corpus of the Andean avant-gardes by looking at understudied female artists as working in alliance with other historical avant-garde artists. Drawing on the Deleuzian concept of repetition, whereby repetition is not mimetic but is a mode of production characterized by difference and transformation, I open up the avant-gardes to a new temporal and spatial configuration.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Curriculum Vitae	iv
Project Map	ix
Introduction	x
Chapter One César Vallejo's Cuerpocentric Poetry	1
Chapter Two The Abject as Capitalist Critique in José María Arguedas's "El sueño del pongo" and <i>El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo</i>	24
Chapter Three Julieta Paredes behind the Scenes: An Ethics of Intersubjectivity	52
Chapter Four The Art of Alejandra Dorado: Anagrammatic Identity in the Contemporary Andes	80
Conclusion	103
Bibliography	106

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Once I settled on doing a PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literatures at Berkeley, it was José and Estelle Tarica who welcomed me back to the department. Estelle’s dedication to the Andes region and her intellectual rigor have consistently inspired me to be a better writer, thinker, and listener since day one. If she did not demand the precision and thoroughness that she does of her students, this project would not be what it is. That said, if she had not simultaneously enabled me to roam before coaxing me back to “the point,” I would not have stayed as engaged as I have over the last three years. José Rabasa pushes back in a way that makes me question my thinking from top to bottom. If he did not take me seriously from the beginning, I never would have learned to be fearless before ideas themselves. Nelson Maldonado-Torres’s commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and women of color feminisms has changed Berkeley’s campus in countless ways and I feel extremely fortunate to have gotten to work with him. In addition to my committee, Richard Rosa has informed this project in myriad ways. The stars must have aligned so that I could work with him during his two years at Berkeley. Additional thanks go to Ignacio Navarette, who has been a friend in the department since I got here, Emilie Bergmann, Natalia Brizuela, Dru Dougherty, Julio Ramos, Francine Masiello, Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco and Jim Clifford all of whom helped me in big and small ways during graduate school.

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Perhaps the longest moments of graduate school were those spent hoping deep in my bones that I could spend a day with Christine Quinan. I would not be the person that I am without her beautiful love and deep intensity.

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Dissertation: Restless Bodies, Unquiet Minds: Poetry, Performance, and Power in the Andean Avant-Gardes

Committee: Professor Estelle Tarica (director), Professor José Rabasa and Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres

File date: August 2010

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Spanish and Portuguese Departmental Conference Grant, Spring 2006

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PUBLICATIONS

“Alejandra Dorado and Julieta Paredes: Queer Art and Human Rights in Contemporary Bolivia” *Letras Femeninas*. Summer 2010.

“The Intersubjective Ethic of Julieta Paredes’s Poetic” in *Bolivian Studies Journal*. Volume 8: 1. Plural Publishers. Spring 2010.

“Clayton Eshleman on Translating César Vallejo, Poetic Creation, and Dreaming Awake” in *Lucero*. Volume 18/19. Spring 2009.

TRANSLATION

“Decolonizing the Technologies of Knowledge: Video and Indigenous Epistemology” by Freya Schiwy in *Digital Decolonizations/Decolonizing the Digital Dossier*, [http://trinity.duke.edu/globalstudies/\(2009\)](http://trinity.duke.edu/globalstudies/(2009)). Spanish to English. Co-translator with Dalida Maria Benfield and Freya Schiwy.

“The Notion of ‘Rights’ or the Paradoxes of Postcolonial Modernity: Indigenous and Women in Bolivia” by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui in *Qui parle*. Volume 19. Number 3. Fall 2009. Spanish to English. Co-translator with Dalida Maria Benfield.

CONFERENCES

Organized

Co-organized “Decolonizing the Nation, (Re)Imagining the City: Indigenous Peoples Mapping New Terrain in Bolivia” May 2008, Northwestern University

Papers Presented

“César Vallejo at the Limits of Language” American Comparative Literature Association Conference
April 2010, New Orleans, Louisiana

“The Embodied Poetic of Mujeres Creando” American Comparative Literature Association Conference
April 2008, Long Beach, California

“The Óptica Indigenista of Alejandro Peralta: Images of a Community in Boletín Titikaka” Latin American Studies Association Conference
Fall 2007, Montreal, Canada

“The In(ex)terior and the Ex(in)terior Space in Cecilia Valdés” Romance Studies Conference

Fall 2006, University of Oregon

“Los hombres zorros vuelven a lo real: José María Arguedas y el Manuscrito Huarochiri”

Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana (JALLA) Conference

Summer 2006, Bogotá, Colombia

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University of California, Humanities Research Institute Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory

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Summer 2007, UC Irvine

TEACHING

Writing and Research Courses

Ethnic Studies 101B: Humanities Methods in Ethnic Studies. Spring 2009.

Graduate Student Instructor for Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres.

Comparative Literature R1B, Core Research Writing Class: Memory and the Sorrow Songs. Fall 2008.

Co-Instructor; responsible for syllabus design.

Spanish 25, Introduction to Spanish Literary Analysis. Spring 2008.

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Spanish 3, Advanced Spanish Grammar, Spring and Fall 2006

Spanish 2, Intermediate Spanish, Fall 2002 and Spring 2003

Spanish 1, Beginning Spanish, Fall 2001 and Spring 2002

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Comparative Literature 260, Teaching College Reading and Writing Pedagogy Course, Fall 2008

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Student Editor, *Lucero* Graduate Journal of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UC Berkeley. 2001-2003.

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Dumbarton Oaks Museum/Harvard University. Center for Pre-Columbian Studies. April 2004 and May 2005.

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Conservation International, Central/South America. Summer 2002.

Conducted interviews with community members and project staff in the Gulf of Santa Clara, Mexico; three Costa Rican farming communities; a Quechua indigenous community in the Bolivian Amazon and a Q’echi Mayan community in the Petén region of Guatemala. Helped develop project evaluation metrics, methodologies, and reporting materials.

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Project Map

César Vallejo

1939

(h)ombligo

martirio

Alejandra Dorado

2009

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezado*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and . . . and . . . and . . .” This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb “to be.” Where are you . . . desiring bodies . . . going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation – all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic. . .). But Kleist, Lenz, and Buchner have another way of traveling and moving: Proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.

1969

José María Arguedas

carcajadas

huayronqo

1999

Julieta Paredes

INTRODUCTION

Project Summary

In my project “Restless Bodies, Unquiet Minds: Poetry, Performance, and Power in the Andean Avant-Gardes” I argue that the avant-garde is not a discrete historical moment that has passed but rather a rhizomatic response to colonial legacies that have turned complex human beings into legible political subjects. Said transformation is part of an exclusionary method that privileges an enlightened, male *criollo* subject while depriving indigenous, poor, female, or queer persons of discursive agency. I examine how marginalized artists transgress normative conventions by incorporating embodied sentiments into their work, considering both the performative interruptions of avant-garde poetry and the linguistic disruptions of public stagings and installation art. Situating myself theoretically between a vitalist school that might conceive of the body as a source of limitless agency and Foucault’s constructivist reading of it as a passive inscriptive surface, I first look at the 1930s work of Peruvian poet César Vallejo, who uses neologisms to make visible the vulnerability of indigenous and working class bodies in Peru and Spain. I then engage José María Arguedas’s work from the 1960s in Peru to explore how his confrontation with the abject aspects to being human calls for a new community through oral tradition and literature. Turning to Bolivia, my latter two chapters consider the performance art, television programs, and poetry of feminist Julieta Paredes and the multimedia work of artist Alejandra Dorado. I analyze the way that their anagrams, parody, and laughter reconfigure structures that limit the conditions of gendered and sexual intersubjectivity.

Through my engagement with this group of artists, I unravel various philosophical paradoxes that have haunted the twentieth and twenty-first-century approximation to the human, conceived of as a singular subject and a community member. For instance, how to simultaneously discuss the human as a material body and a philosophic mind? How to understand the human as a freely roaming agent and a socially constructed subject? And how to fathom the human as a singular life in communication with others, while maintaining distinctions between the self and another? In order to situate these paradoxes, I turn to the physical human body as a site of colonial inscription as well as a source of resistant agency to anchor my foray into the relationship between biopolitics, community formation, and a critical left.¹ Julieta Paredes’s work, for instance, provides a particularly rich ground from which to consider the paradoxical inclusivity and exclusivity to the category of the human because of her engagement with some of the gendered and sexual colonial legacies both invisible and visible in La Paz. Considering the differences and similarities between each of these artists’ work, I conclude that the avant-gardes might be read as a constellation of artistic and social movements – specifically counter to capitalism – in which the aforementioned paradoxes are exposed in their sharpest contours. By exposing these paradoxes through the creative process, the artists I

¹ See Carrie Noland’s work in *Agency and Embodiment* for a rigorous discussion of the tensions involved in talking about the body in Foucaultian and vitalist traditions. Noland effectively challenges the notion of inscription as writing and moves toward talking about gesture itself as scriptural (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

explore awaken quiet minds and move docile bodies toward the change they can be in the world.²

My project makes four principal contributions to the field of Latin American literature and cultural studies. First, I theorize the Andean avant-gardes as rhizomatic phenomena that engage the theme of community across time, space, and bodies. While the term “avant-garde” is most readily associated with the 1920s and 1930s, with a (re)emergence in the 1960s, I revise such a linear genealogy to consider *rhizo*-gardes as part of an underground left that starts and stops, only to sprout up later, proceeding by its own design. Second, within my analysis of the *rhizo*-gardes, I theorize the space of art as enabling the production of a desiring community outside of the “operability” of capitalism, drawing upon Jean Luc-Nancy’s and Juan Duchesne’s work. This goal entails undertaking an analysis of how art produces and communicates desires that are aberrant to those that shape the ideal capitalist sovereign individual. Third, I come to understand the “common” as stemming from a subject’s confrontation with the abject, finite aspects to being human which I explore theoretically through Julia Kristeva and Giorgio Agamben. I consider the transformative implications of such an encounter on modernity’s emphasis on visibility as the privileged sense for making biopolitical distinctions between subjects based on class, race, gender, and sexuality. Lastly, particularly through my work in Bolivia, I aim to expand the archival corpus of the Andean avant-gardes by looking at understudied female artists working in alliance with other historical avant-garde artists. Drawing on the Deleuzian conception of repetition, whereby repetition is not mimetic but is a mode of production characterized by an ungrounding based upon difference and transformation, I assemble a community of artists whose collective work opens up the avant-gardes to a new configuration.³

Before detailing each of these goals, I want to emphasize that the physical body as both a surface of cultural inscription and a depth of agency has served as the central theoretical frame to my work because the body is largely what is at stake in twentieth and twenty-first century discussions of power. And yet, despite its “obviousness” to humanity, the body is one of the greatest conundrums of being itself, in its perpetual foreignness to our very selves. As Jean-Luc Nancy aptly puts it, “Corps est la certitude sidérée, mise en éclats. Rien de plus proper, rien de plus étranger à notre vieux monde” (*Corpus* 4). With a desire to understand the “foreignness” of the self and the relation to otherness, I engage in close readings of a set of artists who explore

² I am borrowing the term *docile* from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1. I put his work on body politics in dialogue with Andean thinkers in the project.

³ This is to say that “to repeat” is to begin again, to affirm the power of the new and the unforeseeable. For Deleuze, repetition is produced not via mimesis, but via difference. It is a process of “ungrounding” that resists turning into a system of replication. So, to this extent, my project is not about nostalgia for a past avant-garde that is taken up and repeated via mimesis in the present, but rather an ongoing *becoming* left that is, by its nature, incomplete. For instance, Alejandra Dorado could be said to “unground” Foucault, for she takes a text he wrote and puts in it dialogue with a completely different set of texts than he intended. Again, in Deleuzian terms, such a process of becoming incorporates difference and gives rise to mutation.

the limits of the singular, embodied subject through writing and performance. Drawing upon philosophers' work, I explore "otherness" as conceived through Emmanuel Levinas's notion of an ontological religious "Other," Julia Kristeva's other as a confrontation with the "abject" and the feminine, and Nancy's interpretation of other as death. By exposing the limits to rational subjectivity through the confrontation with abject waste, cadavers, and the senses, César Vallejo, Alejandra Dorado, José María Arguedas, and Julieta Paredes draw attention to what is other within the self. They demonstrate the way that each subject is also an object – a material, finite being – before him or herself *and* others. Through a confrontation with the foreignness of one's own self, the singular being recognizes what is common: finite being.

In order to illuminate the relationship between the singular and the common further, the metaphor of the bellybutton, as one of the first marks of cultural inscription on the body, has served as a central unifying thread to my work. It is a recurring symbol in the eclectic works of the artists and writers with whom I developed relationships throughout this project. In my work, the *ombiligo* and the umbilical cord symbolize a number of tensions of being human aptly summarized by cultural theorist Judith Butler, "If I have any agency it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world that I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is a condition of its possibility" (*UG* 3). When we are first born, we are cut off from another body and are biologically autonomous beings, if dependent on others for food. However, culturally, we are usually ascribed a name, a gender, and a series of *logos* that place us within a social structure, almost immediately. We may or may not desire the identity or community into which we unfold, the beginning of our paradoxical existence as free and anchored at once. The *ombiligo* also symbolizes the collision of the popular with the elite, in its fleshy funniness to toddlers and its sophisticated symbol of origins to even the ancient Greeks: it is the bellybutton and the *omphalos* in one. Each of my chapters in some form takes this mark as a starting point for a larger theoretical inquiry into the fraught relationship between the single finite being as participant in the perpetual creation of community through "infinite" poetic and performative resistance. The bellybutton is, to summarize, an inscriptive mark that symbolizes, "a bond that forms ties without attachments, or even less fusion, of a bond that unbinds by binding, that reunites through the infinite exposition of an irreducible finitude" (*The Inoperative Community* xl). I will now turn to the material corpus and methodology I used to construct my discussion around the avant-gardes.

Materials and Methodology

The four goals articulated above emerged directly from my engagement with primary materials. While I could have designed a project based only on writing or performance, I was opposed to framing my discussion with what I see as an artificial division between artistic genres, especially in a region with a long and complicated relationship to "writing."⁴ The avant-garde is experimental in its firstness and concerns itself with inventing something new: poetically, politically, corporeally, and critically. Therefore, I made the choice early in the project

⁴ Angel Rama's seminal work *La ciudad letrada* (1984) continues to be the best introduction to and analysis of the role that writing and architectural organization played in delineating class and race, particularly during nineteenth-century Latin America. The legacies of this history continue to affect La Paz, Lima, and their suburbs.

not to work in one genre, but to approach the avant-gardes thematically by engaging artists who bridged multiple genres in their work. Particularly in the Andes region, where Spanish, Quechua, Aymara, and countless other indigenous languages mix, performance is an important tool of social resistance. At the same time, in addition to popular manifestations of resistance, I did not want to pit writing and an elite “lettered class” against more popular forms. To this end, I selected César Vallejo (Peru), José María Arguedas (Peru), Julieta Paredes (Bolivian feminist and activist) and Alejandra Dorado (a contemporary Bolivian visual artist) as the four artists whose works I would analyze in my project. There are numerous affinities between each artist. As only a couple of examples, the poetic tactics that Vallejo uses to challenge the notion of fixed subjectivity in language are transformed and renewed through Alejandra Dorado’s performative installation work. A confrontation with the abject and the attention drawn to the exclusionary economy of desires of neoliberal capital likewise both characterize José María Arguedas’s poetic and Julieta Paredes’s performances and grassroots community organizing. Moreover, the semiotic aspects to Arguedas’s poetic resonate with the hermetic aspects to Vallejo’s poetry and prose.

Taken together, I consider the artists to form what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a “multiplicity” through their shared engagement with the singular agency and collective constraints that stimulate a counter-capitalist community. For Deleuze, a “multiplicity” is in its most basic sense, a complex structure that does not reference a prior unity. Multiplicities are not part of a greater whole that has been fragmented and nor are they transcendental unities. The artists I have selected resonate with each other, albeit “underground.” By “underground” I mean that any dissimilarities to the surface of their work – such as generic affiliation, historical period, or the author’s gender or sexuality – are secondary to the shared internal desires to their projects revealed through an engagement with the abject, the hermetic, and the embodied aspects to being, all of which rest at the very limit of language. Through these underground alliances the artists form communities of transhistoric and transnational social resistance through their poetry and performance, or, writing and their bodies. It is from these types of alliances that what Juan Duchesne, following Jean-Luc Nancy, has recently called a “literary communism” coalesces. By bringing these artists to be *with* each other a critical community crystallizes, outside of genre, national, or historical confines. As Duchesne observes, “Existen condiciones para forjar una práctica crítica en el campo latinoamericanista que asuma la escritura como foco de replanteamiento del comunismo utópico, entendido como demanda radical de la comunidad igualitaria y replanteamiento de la lucha de clases. Dicha crítica apuntaría al impulso imaginario, lúdico, creador de mitos y rituales libres en la conjunción de arte y vida. . .” (9). I draw out the ludic elements to each artist’s work, and moreover, consider my approach to this project as playful as well: rather than provide a definitive interpretation to their work, I move it in new ways.

The selection of the aforementioned artists has been fruitful and stimulating for various reasons and has consistently sustained my interest in my own research. First, the project has enabled me to work across much of the twentieth-century, exposing me to three different historical moments. Despite their historical diversity – Vallejo worked primarily in the interwar 1920s and 30s, Arguedas in the tumultuous 1940s, 50s and 60s, and Dorado and Paredes in the past two decades – each artist presents a challenge to his or her political climate by critiquing the biopolitical exclusions upon which liberal and neoliberal capitalism hinge through inventive poetics that move physical bodies. By “move physical bodies,” I mean that they touch, in a

Nancian way, the senses: “‘Écriture’ veut dire: non la monstration, ni la demonstration, d’une signification, mais un geste pour *toucher au sens*” (*Corpus* 16). By biopolitical exclusions, I mean that the artists highlight certain types of human life that have been excluded from the political climate because of class, racial, gendered, or sexualized differences. For instance, Arguedas incorporates destitute prostitutes and displaced fishermen into his last novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971). I elaborate upon the particular strategies of each artist’s critique with greater detail below. Additionally, through the selection of these particular artists I have been able to explore the relationship between politics and art through an inquiry into the transformative relationship between the word and the body, in diverse genres. In the case of Vallejo, I work through poetry; in the case of Arguedas, I work with an experimental novel; in the case of Paredes, with street performances and poetry; and in the case of Alejandra Dorado, with multi-media installations that include photography, video, and theoretical texts.

As a result of the various genres and the comparative historical framework within which I work, my research methodology has been variegated. While I undertook close readings of many of César Vallejo’s, José María Arguedas’s, Julieta Paredes’s and Alejandra Dorado’s works, I also spent time in person with Alejandra Dorado and Julieta Paredes in the States and in Bolivia, where I was able to collect additional primary materials. The ability to work directly with living artists has greatly enriched the project, as I was able to experience firsthand the impact of Paredes’s and Dorado’s work on their audience as well as the way that their own bodies move – and move others – while talking about or enacting their art. This is to say that in their presence I could experience the creation of an unofficial community through artistic exchange.

In terms of the methodology I use in each chapter, I strive to work on both a poetic and a performative register. This means that I think about the relationship between writing and the movement of the physical body, as they inform and shape each other. Consequently, I work along the edges of language and performance: when does language become performance and vice versa? I believe that it is precisely on the brink between language and the body that “community” happens – when words exchanged actually *move* a subject to feel his or her physical body reacting to something, eliciting a response to an other. With regard to the poetic analysis I undertake, in each chapter I consider the linguistic interventions that authors make to draw attention to the singular agency each human being has to interrupt his or her language community. I consider neologisms, anagrams, gerunds, and stuttering as just some of the ways that this particular group of artists demonstrates his or her singularity in language. Each of these tropes interrupts a fixed poetic and invites the reader to consider language as something that *moves*, not something that *fixes* or *places* a subject.

For instance, through his neologisms, César Vallejo invites readers to co-invent, in some ways, his poetry with him because of their open interpretation. The author and the reader meet and move with each other in the space of the poem instead of one actively consuming the other. In Dorado’s work, she uses anagrams to demonstrate the “play” in language as phonemes can be rearranged to form inventive echoes of the sounds that went before. For Dorado, this works on a visual level as well, as her art installations also merge images with phonemic permutations to form games across image and language registers. José María Arguedas makes language stutter and skip (as well as the novelistic form itself), drawing attention to the body’s interruptive presence in speech. He emphasizes the semiotic tonalities to words over their symbolic meaning – concepts that I expand on in the chapter through Julia Kristeva’s work. And lastly, in Julieta

Paredes's poetry, she uses gerunds as a way of emphasizing the change and fluidity of identity politics instead of the placement of a subject in a sclerotic grid.

Second, I work on a performative register, particularly in the chapters on Bolivia, to think about the ways in which Julieta Paredes and Alejandra Dorado use their own physical bodies, whether images of them or as the primary medium, to affect their audience members. Like the poetic interruptions in writing, bodies also serve as syntactical interrupters in a social chain. While language, or writing, can "touch" bodies, so too does performance incorporate bodies that are left out of the sociopolitical space as part of a critique of the exclusions of capitalism. Performance, unlike writing, can also "happen" and then materially disappear, escaping the ability to be archived.⁵ These ephemeral moments are recorded in the bodies of those who are present, but have the potential to resist material archiving because of their transience.⁶ However, I see this as parallel to the reading process itself, also a performance that is often not materially archived. Both Vallejo and Arguedas also have background in performance, as Vallejo wrote numerous plays and Arguedas's novels, particularly *Los ríos profundos* (1956) and *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971) incorporate many performative elements, such as music, dance, and oral traditions. Continuing with the theme of difference and repetition in the avant-gardes, the renowned theatre group *Yuyachkani* in Peru based their 1985 play, *Encuentro de zorros* on Arguedas's last novel (Brie 15).

Situating the Avant-Gardes

I use the term "avant-garde" to talk about an aesthetic that comes from, and simultaneously aims to transform, the political left. This aesthetic works precisely at the limits of language and the physical body. I do not use the term to refer to a particular historical period (the 1920s and 1930s) or a particular geographic location, and in this sense, appreciate Fernando Rosenberg's reading of the avant-garde in Latin America as developing "narratives of space" that reflect a "shifting world-order" (2) rather than thinking of the term in relation to history. In order to reflect multiple "positionalities," to borrow Rosenberg's term, I choose to use its plural form to capture its various iterations across time and space. As Jean-Luc Nancy said of his own work in *The Inoperative Community* back in 1982, "the task that now befalls us is to elucidate, to review, indeed to revolutionize what the term 'left' means. In order to speak of the site that we are dealing with, I might venture the following thought: 'left' means, *at the very least*, that the political, as such, is receptive to what is at stake in community" (TIC xxxvi). In the previous quote, the notion of "what is at stake in community" is something that I try to explore very deeply in the project and what is, to me, hovering behind the question of "what defines the avant-garde?" In order to understand the avant-garde specifically in relation to community, this means that the *how* of community is what is at stake in my research. In the readings I undertake in each chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which each artist confronts the abject, death, and the irrational sensorial aspects to self. This confrontation causes each singular being to first confront

⁵ Diana Taylor's work in *The Archive and the Repertoire* is the seminal text on such distinctions.

⁶ Of course, with the increased archiving of performances themselves through video and photography, another layer of repetition and transformation is added to the event, making arguments about its ephemeral nature harder to stand behind.

his or her own otherness of self and then to recognize the stranger next to him as *no stranger than* his or her self because of this common limit to being human.

In his 1925 essay, “La deshumanización del arte,” associated with the European avant-garde, Ortega y Gasset celebrates an aesthetic contingent upon its containment in an artistic space that functions in opposition to the daily practices of being an embodied human. Such art often focuses on the material, visible changes that industrial modernity brought to society, but was less concerned with the internal emotional sphere of the human being. However, in contrast to this approach to the avant-garde, César Vallejo takes an inverse humanizing approach that hinged upon catalyzing a “sensibilidad nueva,” in his readers. For Vallejo, art should serve not as an end in and of itself, but as a means toward eliciting a deep affective or somatic change in the body. Vallejo’s “sensibilidad nueva,” or Vicky Unruh’s reading of his desire to capture a “human timbre,” is what catalyzes the formation of a community, whereas the mechanization of art worked, in some cases, against such a formation (Unruh 24). Interestingly, in fact, while modernity has superficially condensed space and time, it has conversely slowed down the formation of a physically local community in favor of a virtually global one. The quantity of communication and the frequency of contact between human beings have arguably increased, but the quality of both has significantly decreased. In my approach to the avant-garde, I am concerned with deep communication that happens only through a willingness to expose not one’s superficial self to the other, but the often-hidden sensibilities that make each of us vulnerable before each other.

With the advent of postmodernity, some critics have declared the end of what could be considered an “avant-garde” because societal fragmentation has led to such a radical de-centering that there is no longer an identifiable “left,” politically or artistically.⁷ For instance, in the edited volume *Avant-post*, Louis Armand refers to David Lehman’s book, *The Last Avant-Garde* (1999). In this book, Lehman posits that: “the argument against the viability of the avant-garde today rests on the assumption that there is no real resistance to the new, no stable norm from which the deviant artist extends” (as cited in *Avant-post* 3). However, if the “left” continuously calls for the reconsideration of “community” as what drives the political, a new avant-garde is particularly alive and well in the Andes region, and perhaps more apparent there than elsewhere, as recent political changes indicate. The avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s came, for better or worse, to be particularly associated with communist-leaning affiliations. Despite its community-based ideals, as a political project, communism in some forms led to the dangerous eradication of the community upon which it was based through its totalitarian permutations. Although communism has become, as Juan Duchesne helps elaborate, a loaded and sometimes scorned word, the term is rooted in the notion of a community based on equality. The process of creating desire to foster community through the space of art continues as part of the artistic *rhizo*-gardes.

The intervention I make into the avant-gardes is unique for multiple reasons. First, because of my focus on biopolitics and the question of the human instead of a focus on a

⁷ Interestingly, in 2008 the Yale Art History Department and the CUNY Graduate Center cosponsored a conference titled “Latin America: The Last Avant-Garde.” The focus of the conference was not to explore the “truth” to this claim, but rather, the implications of approaching Latin America within such a paradigm. The idea of a “last” avant-garde is impossible to me when working within a Deleuzian frame.

particular poetic or artistic style, I avoid doing an historical survey in favor of looking at discrete moments through the lens of the body as a site of paradox. My historical approach to the avant-garde is distinct from other works on the topic because I believe, drawing from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, that the avant-gardes are rhizomatic phenomena which take on various forms depending on the historical-political situation. They lack a definitive beginning or end much like the Deleuze quote with which we began, but I argue, share a common nucleus that I define as the desire to create an alternative community to capitalism. Thus, while Rosalind Krauss's work does much to debunk the notion of origins in the avant-garde in her seminal *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, I am not concerned with new beginnings but rather a series of processes that are always *becoming*, rather than situating a start or an end. The avant-garde I propose challenges a capitalist modes of reproduction that function through mimesis through the carving out of other space that favors embodied alliances that are negotiated around commonalities and cuts, difference and repetition. Rather than celebrate representational, hermeneutic (interpretive) meaning, I situate myself on the side of Alan Badiou, who says that meaning "is caught up in the movement of the poem, in its arrangement, and not in its supposed referent . . ." (30). But, this desire must be produced through art itself, for it does not exist *a priori* within the world. The production of such a desiring community entails an engagement with bodies across time and space.⁸ Deleuze and Guattari's explanation of desire based on movement and alliance is useful for framing the transgressive avant-gardes that seem to run underneath, or behind, capitalist spectacles. Each of the artists of this project heeds a political exigency to act, a demand made not just to literature but also to the arts in general. Each one chooses to point out the exclusions of a political community through an assertion of his or her singularity in language, which I expound upon below.

Vicky Unruh's two books on the Latin American avant-gardes, first *Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters* (1994) and second *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America* (2006) have both informed different parts of my project. The idea of a charged "encounter," whether between artistic genres, geographic spaces, or temporal periods has been a fruitful way for thinking through the relationship between European and Latin American avant-garde traditions, as well as the repetition and transmutation of forms that I lay out in my project. In her Introduction to her expansive study of the Latin American vanguards, Unruh reads the vanguard largely as a rehumanizing project, as contrasted with Ortega y Gasset's famous "Deshumanización del arte," which widely-circulated during the time period. In her words, Latin American vanguardism as a whole was driven toward a "rehumanization" that "sought an active reengagement between art and experience" (21). While Unruh's book is comprehensive in its geographic scope and survey of genres, I have aimed to go more in depth around understanding precisely the *how* of the "humanizing" impulse through an inquiry into philosophies of embodiment and power.

Interestingly, Unruh begins the Introduction to her book with a reference to Horacio Oliveira from Julio Cortázar's postmodern novel *Rayuela* (1963). Unruh refers to Oliveira's "linguistic strategies, anti-academic spirit, and implicit social critique" (1) as a means of

⁸ Duchesne's second chapter, "Delirio, teoría, comunismo" talks about literature in terms of its role in creating "una máquina deseante" which produces not a *product*, but only desire (or, a Freudian "real") itself. This is similar to the "utopic" ideal of communism of which Duchesne speaks, a desire that is never attained but always producing itself within art.

demonstrating the way the 1920s and 1920s aesthetic shows up in “new” Latin American narratives. It is of interest to me that she should begin with *Rayuela* because my rhizomatic reading of the avant-gardes is reflective of the postmodern form to Cortázar’s work. Unruh’s second book on women and performance in the context of the Latin American avant-gardes does important work for expanding the archive, particularly adding depth to analysis of Peruvian avant-garde artists sometimes overlooked because of José Carlos Mariátegui’s strong twentieth-century presence. Taking such a strong lead a step further, I expand the discussion of the female avant-garde artists by bringing sexuality into the discussion of the avant-gardes and looking more closely at Bolivia. I explore both gender and sexuality in the chapters on Dorado and Paredes and see them as part of the next generation that is continuing the work that Unruh’s second book explores.

With particular respect to the Andes region, Elizabeth Monasterios’s ongoing work on the Andean avant-gardes illuminates some of the lesser-known artists from the Lake Titicaca region of Bolivia and Peru, especially those involved in the production of *Boletín Titikaka*, like Gamaliel Churata (Arturo Peralta), Alejandro Peralta, and the group *Gesta Bárbara*. Monasterios refers to the “poco estudiado fenómeno que fue la vanguardia andina,” (544) emphasizing that the Andes region has been overlooked in relation to other areas. However, now that some of the more important archival work has been undertaken to bring the Andes into the fold of conversation, I see my approach to the region’s avant-garde not so much about the “individual” characteristics of these artists, but the ways in which its singularity might be put into dialogue in a larger context. I aim to echo Monasterios’s shared affinity for approaching poetry as a *process*, or as she says with regards to her poetic analysis, “no es ignorar la contenida sino más bien pensar fuera de ella” (541). The activity of thinking “beyond” the content of a poem means, to me, requires engaging with the hermetic and semiotic aspects to language, as I think I do in what follows. I do not work “beyond” language to access an alternative “epistemology,” or way of knowing in the world, but instead push to think about a way of *being* in common, that happens beyond language, geographic, and historic difference.

Cynthia Vich’s book dedicated to *Boletín Titikaka*, titled *Indigenismo de vanguardia en el Perú: un estudio sobre el Boletín Titikaka* provides a comprehensive analysis of the rich creative environment of the Lake Titikaka region during the 1930s and the role of this newspaper project in creating a counterspace to *la ciudad letrada* that was Lima at the time. Vich observes that “en el caso del proyecto del *Boletín Titikaka*, su intención de borrar los límites entre tradición y modernidad, entre regionalismo y cosmopolitismo, configuró una manera singular de imaginar el presente y el futuro de América Latina” (42). The notion of a transnational community – the *Gesta Bárbara* group was composed of both Bolivian and Peruvians and the Puno area sits on the shared Lake Titikaka (between Peru and Bolivia), and its relation to precisely the erasure between “regionalismo y cosmopolitismo” were two concepts that helped initiate my work because of the tensions they reveal between fixity and movement and locality and globality within the avant-gardes. However, rather than look at one particular historical moment, I wished to map such regional and cosmopolitan tensions to philosophic discussions around biopolitics and the “human.”

Rhizomatic Space and Time

As referenced already, I use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conception of space and time as elaborated in their two-volume work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to frame the time and space of the avant-gardes. Recently, Juan Duchesne has conceived of the avant-garde in terms of a "retaguardia," or that is, that which comes from the back instead of that which goes first. He elaborates this in his unpublished "Manifiesto de una retaguardia" and in his book *Comunismo literario y teorías deseantes* (Plural 2009). However, rather than think of a location "in front of" history or "in the back" relative to the present, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome enables us to think outside of a simple binary of before or after or in front of or behind, but instead to see the political and critical tactic of mixing disparate moments and traditions – times and spaces – into rhizomatic combinatory possibility. To me, this is an essential attribute to an avant-garde theoretical approach that wishes to critique capitalism. I thus think of relationships between artists less as hinging upon derivative contingency, wherein Dorado comes *after* Vallejo and results *from* his work, but more as working *together* at various points of contact. For instance, I do not claim that Paredes is a result or descendent of Arguedas, anymore than she is a result of Vallejo. However, there are points of contact between her performances and Arguedas that meet, in Duchesne's terms, *subsuelo*, or underground. These underground, hidden points of contact are what continue to catalyze a desiring community through literature and art across space and time, outside of the inscribed parameters of national politics.

Duchesne talks about the fact that neoliberal ideology has wound up exposed and discredited before the "amplias masas desposeídas latinoamericanas" (13). There have been innumerable social movements in Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Brazil that he calls "aperturas populistas parciales" and that revisit the idea of a community as central to an alternative economy of desires to capitalism. "La literatura y las formas expresivas creativas y experimentales como el cine de arte, el video y el performance, afines a la literatura en su disposición archiescritural ampliada y en su apertura al legado de las vanguardias artísticas, distan más que nunca de adaptarse al rol privilegiado en la alegorización de los proyectos de nación y modernidad del estado y la sociedad civil que una vez se pretendió asignarles" (13). The avant-gardes may have emerged largely as national projects, but in reality, they go beyond the confines of nation in their exposure of tensions between fixedness and movement. They are carried on and moved in human bodies, wherever they might roam or sit.

Bodies and Power

My readings of César Vallejo, José María Arguedas, Julieta Paredes, and Alejandra Dorado have led me to consider the ways that an exclusionary biopolitical sphere can foster the creation of resistant artistic communities. Each artist grapples with a similar questioning of whose language, whose body, and whose desires are represented in the official language and the public and private spaces of the state. Dorado's work, for instance, draws attention to the way that the panopticonal military gaze continues to affect the way that bodies move within Bolivia. She places portraits of Victorian era soldiers on the ground in one of her exhibits, transforming the conventional spatial paradigm of military surveillance that would situate these soldiers from a higher visual vantage point relative to the rest of society. Because each artist, like Dorado, subverts silent but pervasive power dynamics, I inquire into the way that political exclusion has historically operated by engaging Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben's work around the exclusive category of "the human."

As Michel Foucault has summarized most succinctly in *The History of Sexuality*, it is in fact only relatively recently in our history that the “human” has emerged as the center to philosophic and political inquiry. Writes Foucault, “for millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question” (THS 188). Foucault’s notion of “modern man” is a direct result of the 1789 French document *La Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, a seminal text in the history of biopolitics. In this document, the terms *homme* and *citoyen* are used to refer to the legal rights of man, but not the more inclusive term *humaine*, establishing an exclusionary baseline to modern political discourse that is later taken up at length in Agamben’s and Hannah Arendt’s work as a response to WWII. As a result of the 1789 document’s language, myriad critiques emerged both in France and abroad in response to the gendered, racialized, and class biases of its language. Such critiques have continued to develop as the historical conditions that shape a collective understanding of the “human” have changed.⁹

While recognizing that we are far from France and 1789 and that the works I analyze do not deal with human rights violations in their more egregious forms of torture, unfair imprisonment, or military occupation, the political conditions of capitalism continue to privilege certain types of biological life while making invisible less viable lives. If one cannot speak and put forth one’s desires as an agential “I” in the world, then one is reduced to what Agamben calls in *Homo sacer* the “bare life” of the “just human,” in reality, a rightless and abject body: that which is cast off in society. However, in what follows, I instead read the space of bare life as an inclusive space that I associate with a confrontation with the abject. I demonstrate that while critiquing capitalism, authors use the space of the abject to show that we are all partially bare lives: material bodies that are equal because of our finitude and limits. Such a confrontation equalizes the one and the many through the confrontation with our undeniable material excess, reminding each and every human being of his or her own paradoxical status as subject and object in the world. As I argue, the recognition of our “bare lives” and the abject can lead to the formation of a community outside of a totalizing model.

In his work, Giorgio Agamben puts forward the concept of “bare life” referred to above through a reading of the Greek distinction between *zoe*, which expresses “the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animal, men, or gods)” and *bios*, which indicates “the form or way of living proper to an individual or group” (*Homo sacer* 1). He calls upon an ancient figure from Roman law, the *homo sacer* or sacred man, who was banned from society because of a violation of the law but at the same time part of society because his life was deemed “sacred,” so he could not be killed in a ritual. Agamben then extends this notion of the *homo sacer* to consider all of those lives placed outside of the law because of their biological difference. Law has the power to define what “bare life” or the *zoe* referred to above is by limiting political being based on what constitutes a “good life,” leaving political life up to subjective value and making “bare life” that which *has to be* transformed into “bios,” the livable life of political culture.

However, trying to arrive to the common between us, in each chapter I look at the way that art engages the abject or “bare life” aspects to life in order to destabilize a politics based on

⁹ For instance, Olympe de Gouge’s 1791 *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* brings the original document’s gendered biases to the fore, “Man, are you capable of being just? It is a woman who poses the question: you will not deprive her of that right at least” (87).

superficial physical differences as articulated in language or law and returns to a common sensorial sphere that I associate with the abject. I demonstrate that community is more importantly based on shared desires that are invisible than visible differences that promote and produce prejudice and division between arbitrarily defined “good” and “bad” lives. Bodies, like community, function at the limit of expression: “*Les corps n’ont lieu, ni dans le discours, ni dans la matière. Ils n’habitent ni ‘l’esprit’, ni ‘le corps.’ Ils ont lieu à la limite, en tant que la limite. limite—bord externe, fracture et intersection de l’étranger dans le continu du sens, dans le continu de la matière. Ouverture, discretion*” (*Corpus* 16). Each one’s singular engagement with abject corporeality brings us to common physical limits we share as bare lives, not just as political beings. This confrontation brings us to the limits of rationality and opens us up to the strangers that dwell even with ourselves.

It is not surprising that scholarship done by gender and women’s studies theorists has particularly turned to the realm of “bare life” and the abject to recuperate a humanity for themselves that has been left out of the *bios*, or politically qualifiable sphere. Judith Butler’s discussions on gender and sexuality, particularly as they relate to performance, have been integral to my thinking through of the tensions between choosing one’s identity within a set of societal confines that already predetermine the viability of such an identity. As Butler’s work illuminates, on the one hand signifying practices can “injure” others, producing a symbolic violation that affects one’s “viability.” If a life is unviable, or unlivable, it is “precarious.” As Butler explains it, “Precarity” designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (*PL* 2).

On the other hand, however, I propose that writing and representational practices can also heal. To that end, each of the artists of this project responds to a particular site of feudalist or capitalist injury through using his or her art as a means of healing not the physical surface of his or her readers, but the psycho-affective depth to personhood. In order to heal, each author or artist first makes visible a particular type of symbolic violence that manifests itself either on or through the physical body. For instance, in one of her installations, Alejandra Dorado videotapes women looking at the walls of their kitchens to emphasize their marginalized and subordinated location within society, as they do not make eye contact and appear to have been punished. Then, she uses abject images to affect change within the reader’s body because social change must happen below the surface level of representation. In this same installation, Dorado places visceral photographs of women’s cesarean section scars blown up and with heightened color on the floor. These images confront viewers with a part of female embodiment not usually seen, even by a significant number of females, while also drawing attention to the limits to the embodied self. By exposing this corporeal vulnerability to the audience, Dorado may cause the audience to find itself “outside itself,” that is, exposed to something unfamiliar that may remind of a common corporeal vulnerability.¹⁰

¹⁰ Butler, in her work post-September 11th speaks of corporeal vulnerability as follows, “By insisting on a ‘common’ corporeal vulnerability, I may be positing a new basis for humanism. A vulnerability must be perceived and recognized in order to come into play in an ethical encounter, and there is no guarantee that this will happen” (*PL* 43). Art can open up the possibility of such encounters.

The Singular and the Common

Before summarizing each chapter, I elaborate the importance of the relationship between the singular and the community as I see them operating in my work. This tension, which is never resolved, underpins each chapter and the avant-garde itself. I began thinking about a singular subject as different from an individual through Vallejo's work, where he makes a distinction between the "personal," which I read to be synonymous with the "singular," as opposed to the "individual":

Cada poeta forja su gramática personal e intransferible, su sintaxis, su ortografía, su analogía, su prosodia, su semántica. Le basta no salir de los fueros básicos del idioma. El poeta puede hasta cambiar, en cierto modo, la estructura literal y fonética de una misma palabra, según los casos. Y esto, en vez de restringir el alcance socialista y universal de la poesía, como pudiera creerse, lo dilata al infinito. Sabido es que cuanto más personal (repito, no digo individual) es la sensibilidad del artista, su obra es más universal y colectiva. (ERC 410)

The term individual is associated with a liberal, autonomous subject while the personal for Vallejo enables a single being to connect to a social sphere. For Vallejo in particular, this personal or singular element is intimately connected to the "sensitivity" of the artist. Keeping this concept of the personal in mind, I contrast the liberal, rational, enlightened individual of capitalism and the personal or singular subject who still maintains his or her agency but also recognizes the limits to his or her mastery over self and others. As Juan Duchesne observes, "[l]a singularidad no equivale a la individualidad, pues no representa una unidad discreta e indivisible que como tal remite a un todo, plasmado en el individuo. La singularidad remite a un *cada uno* o un *cada cual*, en un constante devenir plural que no puede reducirse al todo, y en un devenir singular que no puede reducirse al individuo" (15). This definition of singularity resonates well with Vallejo's definition of the personal. Both engage in such distinctions in order to argue that the communist community does not represent the fusion of individuals into an entirety.

In Duchesne's work, the recognition of the singular works of artists as creating new desiring communities, has led him, as cited above, to observe that conditions exist to "forjar una práctica crítica...que asuma la escritura como foco de replanteamiento del comunismo utópico" (9). In what follows, I foster such a project by recognizing the singular contribution of each of the artists but the common confrontation they each undergo with the otherness within the self. For instance, Arguedas "charges" his words by bringing his body to a sexual limit. In drawing together these particular artists, I strive to find, to use Bolivian philosopher Luis Tapia's words, "un núcleo común" of resistance to liberalism and neoliberalism that slides across disparate spaces and times, genders and sexualities, races, and classes.¹¹ At each of these moments global

¹¹ In his book *La invención del núcleo común*, the political philosopher Luis Tapia points to the fact that in the last few years Bolivia has experienced various waves of questioning of the structures of exploitation and international and internal domination, some organized as part of the neoliberal domination of more recent times, some that have their origin in the history of the colonization of the land and the people of Bolivia. In this sense, there is a convergence of

crises in capitalism have led to a critique of liberal and neoliberal models of economics and governance and have often resulted in popular protests that draw attention to the gap between political representation and the collective bodies of people living within the state. Simultaneous to popular protests, artists and activists also make visible a similar phenomenon of exclusion in the aesthetic sphere, pointing instead to what Duchesne has called a “literary communism.” The community this project invokes operates behind the spectacular screen of artistic product, and is more importantly built around the artistic process itself as a counterspace to capitalist reproduction. Each artist’s common ability to draw attention to the paradoxes of capitalism in its production of desiring humans creates an “artistic communism” that emerges from different conditions of production. We meet under the body’s skin, just below the surface and sheen of spectacle, to access a common, often gritty, ground.

Chapter Summaries

1939 *Cesar Vallejo*

First, I engage the 1920s and 1930s work of the Peruvian poet, playwright, novelist, and essayist César Vallejo whose approach to the avant-garde as stimulating an embodied set of desires outside of capital serves as a platform for many of the ideas explored further in later chapters. Vallejo uses neologisms – new words and new *places* – to render visible the vulnerability of indigenous and working class bodies in Peru and Spain. As a response to the dehumanization of bodies in poverty-stricken Peru and later in class-divided Civil War Spain, Vallejo reconstitutes dismembered bodies, named limb by limb in his collection *España, aparta de mí este cáliz* (1939), into sites of renewed expression. In order to do this, he names what has not been named before his creative process, as is the case with the word *hombligo*, perhaps a combination of *hombre* and *ombligo*. This term, which appears in his collection *Poemas humanos* as well, creates a concept of the human that is larger than a visible marker on the body (ombligo) or a gendered term (*hombre*). Metaphorically, the two singular words “humano” and “ombligo” or “hombre” and “ombligo” merge to create a language that is greater than the sum of its discrete parts. His neologisms represent, in part, the innate agency we possess to transgress language systems that might appear unbendable, thereby creating a singular artistic process. They draw attention to the collective process that fuels inventive language. Within his poetry, Vallejo also confronts death, particularly that of Civil War Spain, to catalyze a community based on relationships between subjects and objects, as well as dead bodies and live humans, radically transforming the class structures of the twentieth-century Andes region and Spain. In both his confrontation with the limits of language and the limits of human subjectivity, Vallejo offers up his singular project as an act of communication to another who can or cannot choose to participate in such a dialogue.

neoliberal critique as well as the colonial and neocolonial conditions of living in the country. The recent rebellious waves in Bolivia have catalyzed Tapia’s writing and his main point, which is that there is “a necessity of imagining new forms of equality in terms of living together, and a form of democratic co-government that exists between cultures and between collective and individual subjects” (5).

Moreover, I approach César Vallejo's poems and writing as if they were shared bodies, arguing that his aesthetic resides in his ability to merge writing and embodied experience such that his singular poetic opens itself up to a collective audience through subjective suspension. By subjective suspension I mean that any one subject, with his or her personal desires, is subordinated in his poetry so that collective desires can emerge. In order to understand this phenomenon, I propose what I call a *cuerpocentric* approach to his language, instead of a *logocentric* one, because the former captures the flow between words and bodies and assigns the reader a more active role in the textual production, echoed in Michel de Certeau's belief that the reader, too, is a co-creator of a given text.¹² Vallejo's compatriot Mario Vargas Llosa, for instance, has described the mystery of Vallejo's poetry as entering a reader directly "through a sort of osmosis or contagion" instead of an uptake of legible discourse.¹³ Echoing Jean Franco's readings of Vallejo as well, the term *cuerpocentric* expresses the idea that Vallejo forces a person to confront the limits of his or her own rationality by crafting a poetic that is radical in its transgression, not just of language, but of a genealogical system of knowledge.¹⁴ To that end, I engage the work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who describe their rhizomatic approach to knowledge as "antigenealogy" (*ATP* 12), in order to open up the political implications of Vallejo's poetry further.¹⁵ Framing Vallejo's work as exterior to any specific genealogy and freeing it from any responsibility for "offspring" opens up the possibility of relationality between disparate artists.

1969

José María Arguedas

Considering two of Arguedas's works, "El sueño del pongo" (1965) and his last novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1969), I disentangle his poetic with the goal of presenting, but not resolving, the tension between the abject interior aspects to being a human and the exterior world of culture to which he or she belongs. I do not wish to imply that the interior life of a human and the social world are separate, but rather consider the physical body as the site where bare life (a biological body) meets political life (a subject who speaks and desires). Through a confrontation with the abject, Arguedas critiques the exclusion of certain biological lives that have been cast off from political life in twentieth-century Peru. His approach to *un humano nuevo*, a phrase that I borrow and revise from Ché Guevara's 1965 essay *El hombre nuevo*, requires the recognition that at base each and every human is a bare life prior to a political subject. The abject, like bare life, is a part of the self but simultaneously is a threat that destabilizes its unity. Arguedas's work demonstrates that through facing the abject an ethic toward the other – within the self and external to the self – can emerge. By an "ethic" I mean that even though one is not

¹² Pointing to the active role of a reader, Michel de Certeau has described the act of reading as containing "all the characteristics of a silent production" and described the reader as he or she "leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance" (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, xxi).

¹³ Mario Vargas Llosa is cited in the Introduction to Ilan Stavans' edited volume of *Spain, Take this Chalice from Me and Other Poems* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishers, 2008), xi.

¹⁴ Franco especially elaborates this topic in her article "Vallejo and the Crisis of the Thirties" in *Hispania* 72.1 (1989): 42-48.

¹⁵ I am primarily referring to concepts worked through in *Anti-oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

legally bound to foster another's well being, one chooses to reach out to another based on the recognition that what is strange or threatening about the other is already within the self.

Continuing with my goal to understand the contradictory "human," I ground my analysis in the term as it has historically circulated in rational political discourse, demonstrating the exclusionary mode through which the term has operated. By exclusionary, I refer to two distinct exclusions. First, as I said above, certain biological bodies are excluded from the political sphere based on racial, gendered, and sexual discrimination. Second, the abject aspects to *all* humans have also been hidden within rational liberal and neoliberal political discourse. Acknowledging the tensions embedded in the term from the outset of my discussion, I turn to these particular texts of Arguedas because they draw attention to those human beings who are treated as less-than-human within feudalism and capitalism. In both of the texts that I analyze, "El sueño del pongo" and *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, the exclusionary mode through which the term "human" has operated is revealed in different ways. First, in "El sueño del pongo," the central character, an indigenous servant, is humanized through Arguedas's engagement with the abject and the sensorial. When the pongo and his patrón stand naked in heaven, outside of the political system, their raw humanity shines through the visible surface of their bodies. As a result of Arguedas's emphasis on the abject, the *pongo's* humanity is revealed as he stands next to the master who treated him like an animal for much of his life. This first story critiques the feudal system of Peru and was translated by Arguedas from the oral Quechua in which it first circulated, drawing attention to the long history of the dehumanization of the indigenous population through their reduction to bare lives.

Second, I turn to Arguedas's last novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* in which he presents a number of characters with sensorial deficits – a mute character, a blind character, and a stutterer – who represent the universal abject conditions of embodied reality in 1960s Peru. Moreover, the poetic that Arguedas puts forth is in its entirety abject, as is emphasized through the symbol of the *huayronqo*, a dead fly. Confronted with metaphoric cadavers and a dead language, Arguedas's call for *un humano nuevo* requires an interrogation of precisely the space where embodied bare life meets discursive political life. His poetic solution calls for a revalorization of both the semiotic and symbolic aspects to language as theorized by Julia Kristeva. His political solution requires thinking neither within the confines of an individual-centered capitalism nor a group-centered socialism, but of a community based on coexistent singularity and complementarities, without forming a whole.

1999 *Julieta Paredes*

Moving to Bolivia, I examine the work of Julieta Paredes, a contemporary lesbian activist and artist. I demonstrate how her street performances and graffiti art metaphorically disrupt the architectural surface and pedestrian flow of La Paz in an assertion of sexual difference. In articulating her sexual desire, Paredes draws attention to the stifled desires of many other subjects who have suppressed a part of themselves – whether their sexuality or something else – in fear of biopolitical alienation. Paredes's poetry and prose contain parodic elements and elicit laughter, both of which undermine heteronormative ideologies. For instance, the café Paredes runs is called "Café Carcajada", and one of her books is titled *La virgen de los deseos*, an oxymoronic title that points to the disconnect between Catholic rhetoric around female virginity and the lived reality of a body that desires. In her ability to make her listeners laugh, Paredes

privileges an inclusive mode of embodied communication over the disembodied exclusionary logic characteristic of race and gender norms in post-colonial Bolivian urban space.

My discussion in this chapter approaches ethical intersubjectivity in Paredes's and Mujeres Creando's work.¹⁶ First, I argue that subjectivity rests in the inextricable space between embodiment and textuality, between the physical attributes of breathing bodies and the subsequent categorization of them in language and texts. I intervene in ongoing theoretical discussions built around body politics and the coloniality of being, centering my analysis around the metaphor of the bellybutton as it appears in Paredes's work. I see the bellybutton, the first cultural mark on the body, as symbolizing the interstitial space between the corporeal and the textual aspects to subject formation. This undecipherable knot is where body approximates but never becomes text and text approximates but never becomes body. The bellybutton symbolizes the *apriori* responsibility of the one for the other as well as one subject's inability to ever fully know the other. Mujeres Creando's and Paredes's emphasis on the body as a site of resistance to social norms contributes to their creation of a *living* poetic. This living, embodied poetic is less about creating a frozen *said* than about catalyzing a breathing *saying*, as I elaborate in the chapter.

My second theoretical intervention explores the ethical responsibility that the one has for the other based on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. As humans we pronounce and hear what Levinas calls the "living word" with our mouths in an attempt to reach out to the other and to come into relational, ethical being. Levinas writes of the "privilege of the living word, which is destined to be heard, in contrast to the word that is an image and already a picturesque sign," emphasizing the connection between language and a breathing body in contrast to the separation between a body and the written word.¹⁷ In the same bent, Levinas also draws a sharp distinction between the said, or thought content, and the saying, the gesture toward another being. He writes "in the saying there is always the trace of alterity that goes beyond anything that can be measured in terms of its thought content," (LR 144) whereby thought content is the "said." Levinas consistently privileges the saying in his work. He believes that prior to a system of language, which is necessary to meet many human needs and presupposed by them, is the existing individual and his ethical choice to welcome the stranger and to share his world by speaking to him. In other words, we do not become social by first being systematic. We become systematic and orderly in our thinking by first freely making a choice for generosity and communication, i.e., for the social (*Totality and Infinity* 15). It is my reading that the "saying" represents the social and the "said" the systematization of such saying in culture.

I actively interrogate the location of an "ethics of saying" in Julieta Paredes's work by looking for her creation of an embodied subjectivity and grammatical openings in language that engage a reader in dialogue rather than self-contain him or her in contemplation. Paredes often performs her poetry, literally embodying it, and living conversation inspires the content of her verses instead of abstract ideas. In some senses, her poetry is not just an aesthetic object of crystallized thought to be held but rather an active language to be inhabited. That said, it also

¹⁶ *Mujeres Creando*, a feminist activist group, was founded in 1991 by Julieta Paredes and María Galindo in La Paz. The group continued as a collective until the early 2000s, when Paredes went her separate way. I provide a comprehensive history of the group in my chapter.

¹⁷ Levinas refers to the "living word" in an essay published under the title, "The Transcendence of Words" in *The Levinas Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989. 144-149. I refer to this volume as *LR* from here forward.

does circulate in a contained form as a material book. As a reader, I can choose to make the artistic object breathe; to make it live, as it were, between myself and its creator, while also recognizing my inability to ever fully know the other through the work. Levinas consistently privileges being *for the other* (*pour l'autre*) over being in-itself or being for-itself. He claims, based on his belief that being itself is shared, that “existence is a creature” (LR 148). I argue that Paredes’s poetic works represent her auto-exposition to others. Such an exposition is an invitation to communicate and create with her.

2009 *Alejandra Dorado*

Lastly, I look at the work of Bolivian visual artist and *enfant terrible*, Alejandra Dorado. Dorado creates a visual poetic through photography, video, and text and intercepts the panopticonal gaze of both the church and the state through her democratizing spatial lay outs and the participatory elements to her exhibits. Based on her 2006 installation *martirio*, I explore how she consciously draws on Michel Foucault in her use of anagrams to challenge the stabilizing effects of inscriptive language. Her anagrams – stemming from the word *martirio* – constantly mutate, but yet each iteration retains a trace of something that connects all of the possible iterations of the phonemes. Her installations both reveal and critique power relations on personal and institutional levels. Coupled with the participatory elements to the work, Dorado draws out the ability each audience member has to leave a personal mark on the exhibit. She creates a fraught tension between the singularity of the one viewer and the collective creation of the community that her art draws together. Moreover, in its unsellability – it is a moving exhibit, not a contained painting – Dorado challenges the idea of market-driven art. By extension, he or she may choose to turn such critique toward his or her society.

My investigation into avant-garde artist Alejandra Dorado concerns the way that her multi-media work critiques subject formation, making visible the antagonistic relationship between being a disciplined subject in language and a restless human prior-to and in excess-of such an ordering system. Eschewing binaries that contrast modernism’s emphasis on a rational subject looking for self-same with modernism’s everything that is solid melts into air relativity, I choose to emphasize a middle ground. Instead, I underscore the play within and between sign systems. I argue that Dorado’s work consistently demonstrates that subjectivity is always “at play,” much like anagrams we find in language, and that this capacity for play is a protection from and a reaction to dehumanizing acts of corporeal and psychological trauma. Avant-garde literature and art rupture, among other societal norms, normative language. The anagram is an example of a trope that challenges the notion of fixed subjectivity in language and simultaneously supports a notion of corporeal being based on infinite combinatory possibility instead of finite totality. The notion of possibility or play in terms of identity politics is essential to community. In fact, as Butler observes, “Possibility is not a luxury. It is as crucial as bread” (UG 29).

Infinite Resistance

In conclusion, throughout the chapters that follow, it is my intention to highlight the adversarial role that the Andean avant-gardes continue to play as part of a transformative left so that desiring communities external to capitalism can continue to develop. As Nancy beautifully

states it: “Community is, in a sense, resistance itself: namely, resistance to immanence” (*TIC* 35). In its non-immanence, “community” does not have a sacred meaning, but is a gift to be “renewed and communicated,” not a work “to be done or produced” (35). It is the ongoing work of the avant-gardes to strengthen the ties between us that at once enable us to roam and keep us, in our finitude, connected to community. Paradoxically, each artist reveals the ways in which communities are shattered only to then reaffirm the power of art to heal broken bonds. Walking along the edges of language and the body, we confront the threshold of the otherness within ourselves and can begin to communicate with others, if we so choose.

In ending with the concept of “infinite resistance,” I emphasize the active role that not only the artists I explore, but that readers and viewers as well, have in opening themselves to the limits of their singularity and the contingent necessity of community. In theorizing the Andean avant-gardes as rhizomatic phenomena, I emphasize that the formation of a community within the avant-garde aesthetic is not completed. Instead, the avant-garde poses a continual need for stronger community formation as the central absence of capitalist existence. By colliding disparate artists, I have tried to approach criticism as a way of drawing together new *pueblos*, made of singularities who are not sovereign individuals, but rather, inseparable from other beings in their finitude.¹⁸ The tiny scar on our abdomens that never disappears is a constant reminder of the other body from which we came. In recognizing the humble limits of self, we can accept each other’s vulnerabilities and continue to participate in ongoing communication. Ultimately, feeling our restless bodies beneath us, we can choose to be unquiet.

¹⁸ “Finitude, or the infinite lack of infinite identity, if we can risk such a formulation, is what makes community. That is, community is made or is formed by the retreat or by the subtraction of something; this something, which would be the fulfilled infinite identity of community, is what I call its ‘work’” (Nancy *IC* xxxviii).

CHAPTER ONE:
César Vallejo's *Cuerpocentric* Poetry

César Vallejo's *Cuerpocentric* Poetry

In reality, the activity of reading has on the contrary all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance.

--Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xxi

Encountering César Vallejo, while on one level an ephemeral experience, is first and foremost a heavy material enterprise. Pulling tomes of his writing off of the library shelves, one at a time or in twos, I bring them home to figure out how to enter. There are too many folds. As I think back to my beginning as a reader of Vallejo, I envision a hand-drawn portrait of him done by Pablo Picasso placed at the beginning of Juan Larrea's 1939 edition of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. The understated portrait captures a somewhat prominent long nose and the crinkliest of eyes. That, however, is not César Vallejo, only a representation of him. In fact, the event that is encountering Vallejo and his poetry has traversed countries and cities and beds and couches and has settled into my elbows and ankles, my fingernails and my hair, as the latter grow, and I read him. As I look up a word in a by now tattered dictionary, I might spend a half an hour thinking about the phrase *21 uñas de estación* (Trilce XVII), picking at my own fingernails as I try to decipher a predominantly undecipherable poet. Rather than provide a romantic narrative of the act of a reading self, what this discussion captures most about reading Vallejo is the sensation of not just consuming his words but also being with Vallejo, beside Vallejo, for many months and many more months to come. Every Thursday that it rains, Vallejo. And every *¡Yo no sé!*, Vallejo in the bloodstream, a worrisome movement of my shoulders, a shrug, as he slips through me. In choosing to read Vallejo, my skin touches his verse, and I meet him in the transient space of his words for a shared interpersonal moment, *entreambos*. Although "he" may no longer physically be here, *su cadáver [está] lleno de mundo*.¹⁹

In the discussion that follows I approach César Vallejo's poems and writing as if they were shared bodies that readers metaphorically inhabit. I argue that his Andean avant-garde aesthetic resides in his ability to create a community by opening his personal poetic to a collective audience through subjective suspension. By subjective suspension I mean that one subject, be it that of the author or of the reader, is bracketed in his poetry so that a multiplicity of voices can emerge. By subject, I mean a desiring being that says "I," as a singular being in a social world; we make both ourselves and others "subjects," and they do the same unto us. However, in the space of Vallejo, a collectivity is made metaphorically fluid through the one

¹⁹ The neologism *entreambos* comes from Trilce XVII; Poem III of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz* ends with the line, "Su cadáver estaba lleno de mundo" (*Obras completas* 588).

body that is his words. In order to understand this phenomenon, I propose what I am calling a *cuerpocentric* approach to his language, instead of a *logocentric* one, because the former captures the flow between words and bodies and assigns the reader a more active role in the textual production, captured in Michel de Certeau's quotation above. Vallejo's compatriot Mario Vargas Llosa, for instance, has described the mystery of Vallejo's poetry as entering a reader directly "through a sort of osmosis or contagion" instead of an uptake of legible discourse.²⁰ Echoing this reading, the term *cuerpocentric* expresses the idea that Vallejo compels a person to confront the limits of rationality by crafting a poetic that is radical in its transgression, not just of language, but also of a genealogical system of knowledge. To that second end, I engage the work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who describe their rhizomatic approach to knowledge as "antigenealogy" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 12), in order to open up the political implications of Vallejo's poetry further.²¹

Before proceeding with Vallejo's poetry, a few words on Deleuze's conception of an "antigenealogy" and its relevance here. Deleuze describes a genealogy as a "tree-like structure" because typically at its top is, as Deleuze scholar Andrew Parr summarizes, "an immutable concept given prominence either by transcendental theorizing or unthinking presumption" (Parr 13). Whereas a genealogical ordering of knowledge is hierarchical, requiring subordinated ideas to reach a culminating top, the tree (or genealogy) is a self-contained totality or closed system. In this way, the ideas that form it cannot "move" because they are stuck in a series of contingencies. To the contrary, Deleuze proposes an "antigenealogy" that is based on his elaborate conception of the rhizome. The rhizome facilitates dynamism and exchange between concepts and ideas and crosses time and space. Deleuze's concept of the rhizome connects to politics as well because he believes any prescribed social formation, which to him is an "aborescent model," restricts flow and movement between bodies and ideas. The idea of flexible relationality that the rhizome captures also extends to Deleuze's notion of bodies, wherein a body is defined by the singular relation of its parts. The human body, this is to say, is just one example of such a body; the body can also be a social body, i.e., a community.

In order to access the community that Vallejo's poetry facilitates, first, I arrive at a definition of the "new" and the modern as articulated by Vallejo for the Andes. Second, I look at the neologisms Vallejo invents as an integral part to his creation of a rhizome, one that functions through symbiosis and shared creation rather than individuality and containment. And third, I explore how he combines his poetic voice with other voices through his poetry, whether human or animal, alive or dead, mixing temporalities and form to facilitate multiple *becomings*. This is to say that readers can become more connected as a community through confronting various others in his poetry: animals, material objects, or Vallejo himself, metaphorically. I read his performative approach to language as a critique of modernity's emphasis on human rationality and mastery over the self through grammar, sequential thought flow, and fixity – part of a genealogical approach to knowledge. Through his poetic transgression, Vallejo ultimately catalyzes movement within readers, enabling them to move *with* someone instead of toward him or her. While the first part of my analysis focuses on linguistic transgression within the poetic

²⁰ Mario Vargas Llosa is cited in the Introduction to Ilan Stavans' edited volume of *Spain, Take this Chalice from Me and Other Poems* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishers, 2008), xi.

²¹ I am primarily referring to concepts worked through in *Anti-oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

project, the second part of my discussion considers transgression in a philosophic sense. Although part of Vallejo's transgressive poetic has to do with linguistic inversion, he is also always working on another plane which is "a more complex use of the term [transgression] which arises in connection with extremist practices of modern art and philosophy; these designate not just the infraction of binary structures but movement into an absolutely negative space *beyond the structure of significance itself*" (Stallybrass and White 18).

In sum, the analysis I undertake of Vallejo's aesthetic frames the issues of a much broader avant-garde movement I analyze in the Andes, using a cultural studies approach to the arts through my exploration of theories of the body in performance and poetry. I argue that Vallejo's avant-garde serves as a salient point of comparison to other leftist political moments because it moves in multiple temporal directions and considers art as a humanizing project, an effective lens for understanding the way that his works might later interact with other bodies of art at different time periods. Temporally, his writings jump from a colonial Incan past in Peru, to his own 1920s and 1930s relative present, and a simultaneous future – but not in that order. In this sense, his poetry serves as a rhizomatic map that interfaces with other Andean avant-garde maps and bodies from different times and places through shared desires for a new mode of communication. Moreover, Vallejo's books move in multiple directions and touch the surfaces of other performances, books and bodies, like the aforementioned "contagion" of sorts. Commonly called "highly hermetic," I believe Vallejo's writing "has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come" (Deleuze, *ATP* 5). Or, as Alan Badiou notes in his *Handbook on Inaesthetics*, "'Hermetism' is a poor word to designate that meaning is caught up in the movement of the poem, in its arrangement, and not in its supposed referent" (Cited in Pérez, 5). Therefore, I am asking, how does Vallejo's poetry move bodies, move as a human body, and move with other bodies of art?

Vallejo's Poetic Bodies

A prolific writer of poetry, prose, letters, pamphlets, and plays, Vallejo was a consistent cultivator of the "new," not just relative to what came before, but in terms of creating a different way of being in the world. During Vallejo's lifetime (1892-1938), modernity came to be characterized by the convergence of man and machine as the two became mutually constitutive in a way that has only continued to evolve through a neoliberal era. Specifically, Vallejo's approximation to the "new" operated in direct contrast to that of the Spanish literary critic and philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, whose famous declarations in *La deshumanización del arte* (1925) became a handbook for more than a small cadre of artists writing during these artistically charged decades. Writing against the surfeit of "lo popular" during the nineteenth century, Ortega y Gasset argues for a new aesthetic that is understood by "artistas," and separated from social reality: "el arte de que hablamos no es sólo inhumano por no contener cosas humanas, sino que consiste activamente en esa operación de deshumanizar . . . [e]l placer estético para el artista nuevo emana de ese triunfo sobre lo humano, por eso es preciso concretar la victoria y presentar en cada caso la víctima estrangulada" (28). Essentially, Ortega y Gasset celebrated an aesthetic that was continent upon its containment in an artistic space and that operated in opposition to the daily practices of being an embodied human. Vallejo, and other Latin American avant-garde artists like Mexico's Jaime Torres-Bodet, took an inverse approach,

celebrating avant-garde's "rehumanization" project.²² Writes J. Patrick Duffey in an article on both Torres-Bodet and Vallejo, "el poeta peruano rechaza la estética orteguiana de una vanguardia deshumanizada y formula su propia vision de un arte a la vez moderna y humana" (46). Vallejo's artistic body serves as a perceptive catalyst that creates a community between living and non-living things as multiple matters (human, animal, material) mix in his sprawling verse.

While recognizing material culture as a defining characteristic of human potential in the world, Vallejo mocked modern man's obsession with the speed of arrival, as evinced in the sarcastic quotation: "La velocidad es la seña del hombre moderno. Nadie puede llamarse moderno sino mostrándose rápido [. . .]. Dos personas contemplan un gran lienzo; la que más pronto se emociona, esa es la más moderna" (*ACC* I 173). By means of this observation, Vallejo draws attention to the absurdity of the concept of "feeling fast." Instead, Vallejo sees an artistic object itself, like a *gran lienzo*, as a medium that can transfer energy to a human being, but implies that this encounter is a process that is slow and requires contemplation. A viewer cannot rapidly uptake an object into the body, but must contemplate it slowly so that a deep change within the body can take place. This, for Vallejo, is transformation. We will analyze this further with specific poems below; that is, instead of consuming them, we will try to dwell in them.²³

Elaborating Vallejo's *cuorpocentric* vanguard further, despite his association with the international political and artistic movement that reached its peak in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Vallejo differentiated himself from some of his contemporaries, particularly out of Europe -- Stéphane Mallarmé, Charles Baudelaire, Vicente Aleixandre, and the aforementioned Ortega y Gasset, and in Latin America, Vicente Huidobro -- all of whom were more predominantly concerned with language and form as artistic ends, than art as a means toward a deep affective or somatic change within the human body.²⁴ Rather, for Vallejo, poetry's effect resides in its ability to move readers beyond the superficial newness of material expression toward what he sees as a modern sensibility. As has been widely cited, he wrote:

La poesía nueva a base de palabra o de metáforas nuevas, se distingue por su pedantería de novedad y, en consecuencia, por su complicación y barroquismo. La poesía nueva a base de sensibilidad nueva es, al contrario, simple y humana y a primera vista, se la tomaría por antigua o no atrae la atención sobre si es o no moderna. Es muy importante tomar nota de estas diferencias. (*Ensayos y reportajes* 154)

²² Additionally, see Vicky Unruh's *Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters* for comparisons between Vallejo and Torres-Bodet's rehumanizing turns.

²³ The relationship between producing and consuming has particular salience in the Andes region, which in some respects has long been seen as a producer of raw goods for other more developed nations, or alternatively, a consumer of the ideas produced by the North instead of a complex co-producer and consumer. I want to situate the Andes as an active producer of ideas, not just objects.

²⁴ Carrie Noland has argued that agency has been conceived of in terms of affect, but not in terms of somatic movements in the body. Her book *Agency and Embodiment* does work at explaining the ways that our gestures themselves and bodily motility are sources of agency.

Here, Vallejo draws attention to an important difference between certain approximations to the modern and his own. His selection of the words *simple* (simple) and *humana* (human) captures the bare sensibility that imbues almost all of his poetry, particularly from his first collection *Los heraldos negros* (1918), in which human suffering is expressed through an economy of words carefully juxtaposed to illuminate a material dearth with spiritual disillusion before a god who fails to meet the needs of a people. As the poet describes *golpes como del odio de Dios* in the poem “Los heraldos negros” (OC 24), readers are simultaneously prodded to question the material conditions of their existence, and, to look toward themselves as a solution to such *golpes*, rather than to an unreliable *Dios*. Vallejo does not direct his energy toward the creation of a beautiful, polished, crystallized surface, but strives to reach the affective depths of another person’s body, through his emphasis on art as an ongoing process. Such a tendency to emphasize the artistic process instead of the product goes against the grain of industrial modernity, with its focus on the arrival to a product instead of comings and goings, or what Deleuze and Guattari call *intermezcos*.²⁵ This emphasis on process is also echoed in all of my chapters in various ways.

Vallejo further opined, “Tan equivocadas andan hoy los poetas que hacen de la máquina una diosa, como los que antes hacían una diosa de la luna o del sol o del océano” (REC 403). Technological invention is not metaphorically situated “above” man nor is it ascribed more agency in Vallejo’s projects, but rests in the power of man *alongside* it and the horizontal exchange that takes place between human and “other.”²⁶ Vallejo does not wish to eradicate technology, but to challenge modern man’s tendency to turn it into a fetish. He sees gods and technology as relational to human beings, not as the producers of or the pretext for them. This is important for the implications on human relationships themselves.

In relation to the material world, Vallejo’s poetry has been described by some critics as revealing the predicament of the poet as a Marxist “subject effect” of the material conditions around him. Vallejo scholar Jean Franco, in her article “Vallejo and the Crisis of the Thirties,” lays out the constraints of Vallejo’s poetic subjectivity as compared to that of others working during the historical period. In the piece, Franco reads Vallejo’s poetry of the early 1920s not just as the register of a universal crisis, brought on by WWI and the tumultuous inter-war years, but moreover the crisis of the abstract notion of poetic subjectivity itself. Franco elaborates her concept of Vallejo, the poet, as a “subject effect” particularly as witnessed in Vallejo’s work *Trilce*, wherein his poetic agency seems to slip away as quickly as it manifests itself. In this collection “. . . where reality is primarily the linear law of evolutionary development in which the individual is a mere subject effect, it is impossible to envisage a new social practice since this would have to transcend the law of nature. Thus poetry is essentially a process of demystification in which the subject is recognized as a necessary but transient illusion” (Franco 42).

Vallejo later claimed that his poems themselves transcended the law of nature, as he described a poem as “una entidad vital mucho más orgánica que un ser orgánico en la naturaleza” (*Arte y revolución* 69). To an extent might the aforementioned “transient illusion of

²⁵ A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezco*.

²⁶ In this sense, Vallejo is creating a virtual space of multiple subjectivities prior to the notion of virtuality as employed today.

the poetic subject” facilitated by Vallejo’s poetry envisage a new social organism based on a mixing of the natural and the virtual? The illusion of poetic subjectivity enables the reader to bracket the self and enter the body of Vallejo’s poetry at the very moment at which the reader *and* Vallejo “disappear” into the poetry itself. Drawing from performance theory, “Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance” (Phelan cited in Taylor, 5). How can we think about the transient body created in Vallejo’s poetry as the transference of a personal subjective experience to language-turned-body and then, more importantly, back to someone else’s personal experience again? How is this poetic gesture, while theoretically similar to a Deleuzian notion of the creation of a body without organs, the ultimate gesture of empathy in the sense that the poetic voice is entirely selfless in order to account for an everyman or just as easily, an *everything*? Vallejo, as a physical body and subject, enters the poetry and flees, leaving the traces of his *sensibilidad* only to be picked up by another subject, that of the reader or listener. In this way, the poetry serves as a site of sensory exchange wherein *I*, and so many *Is* in so many other bodies, can virtually inhabit this other body of the poem, enabling a connection between the one and a many to be co-produced via the shared body of art. Vallejo, as I said already, decried the avant-garde in Latin America as a rhetorical project characterized by a “falta de honestidad espiritual” and said, “Levanto mi voz y acuso a mi generación de impotente para crear o realizar un espíritu propio, hecho de verdad de vida, en fin, de sana y auténtica inspiración humana.” For Vallejo, approaching writing as “an organic entity” enables human empathy to function: one can put oneself, in some way, in the shoes, in the material body, of another. This process captures co-existent differences and similarities in subjects through the hybrid trope of the body. Although I am different from Vallejo, that I share certain attributes with him is what pushes me to care about another and to want to move with another, not toward him or her as if in pursuit of a possession. It is to reach, as Deleuze and Guattari might say, “not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I” (*ATP* 3).

The work of Michel de Certeau is also illuminating in relation to collective bodies and co-production because of his insightful inquiry into reading practices. Reading, for de Certeau, is not a passive act, but rather a complex site of exchange, as illuminated in the epigraph above. As readers of Vallejo, we are not silent consumers, but rather producers of something that is the effect of text on “the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance.” This phrase, a delicately moving “ephemeral dance” captures part of the essence of reading Vallejo to me, that of being with him, of letting him enter our bodies and feel ourselves moved first by him, and then in his absence, with him inside us.

Further illuminating the relationship between a human body and artistic production, Vallejo characterizes a poem as a corporeal entity in his essay “Se prohíbe hablar al piloto,” a piece that appeared in the journal *Favorables/París/Poemas* in October of 1926 as well as in issue four of José Carlos Mariátegui’s vanguard journal *Amauta*. In this essay, Vallejo writes: “Un poema es una entidad vital mucho más orgánico que un ser orgánico en la naturaleza. A un animal se le amputa un miembro y sigue viviendo; a un vegetal se le corta una rama o una sección del tallo y sigue viviendo. Si a un poema se le amputa un verso, una palabra, una letra, un signo ortográfico, MUERE.” Through the use of metaphor, Vallejo likens poetic deconstruction to the amputation of a body, emphasizing the necessary contingency of each

element of a poem for the sustenance of the whole project. By describing each of his poems as organisms made up of many parts, Vallejo further develops his poetic philosophy, one less concerned with radical word choice as an end in itself, and more concerned with each word's role in contributing to an integrated, living being. This living being allows his transient poetic subjectivity – and so many other subjectivities of his readers – to pass through and inhabit this collective body. This living organism is the essence of poetry and the spirit of the 'new' for Vallejo. By considering the poem itself as a body he creates a fluid relationship wherein subjectivities can inhabit his poetic body and then move into and with each other. As Michelle Clayton has already observed in relation to *Trilce*, "If art is to be a natural production, it must issue from (and, implicitly, satisfy) the needs of the body, not to mention behave like a body" (90). How do Vallejo's poetic bodies affect our perspective?

New Places

In order for Vallejo's poetry to function as a metaphorically shared body, he must bring readers into contact with their own affective center through a poetic that transgresses the bounds of their reason. In this section, I show how Vallejo demonstrates that a society in crisis is often simultaneously characterized by a linguistic code in crisis, and that transgression is part of a revolutionary process that lodges itself in the body. During the long colonization process of Peru, physical, and perhaps even more importantly, imaginative weapons (like language and ritualized performances) wielded by the colonizing classes served as political *techné* for the organization of bodies. The symbolic and physical violence inflicted during such a process, while visibly written on the body through racialized, gendered, and sexualized labels, also operated through the imposition of Spanish. In his collection *Trilce* Vallejo un-disciplines bodies and language as a means toward resisting a logocentrism tacitly accepted in the status-quo society of Peru in which he lived. Later, during his time in France during the Civil War, he does the same, demonstrating the agency that just one person has to react to a society in crisis – whether in early twentieth-century Peru or Civil War Spain.

A primary way that Vallejo asserts his poetic, personal agency and invites the participation of readers in the poetic process is through his use of neologisms. Neologisms break through the surface of normative language and lead into an anagrammatic space of *new words*, but moreover, new places. Throughout all of his poetry collections, Vallejo uses these words that have not yet been uttered or written as a means of stretching language to accommodate his personhood. These words draw attention to the arbitrary relationship between signs and their referents by heightening readers' awareness of the composition of phonetic sounds and linguistic structures taken for granted. Neologistic rupture in language, of course, does not pertain exclusively to Vallejo, but transcends historical periods and events, and serves as a disruptive linguistic tactic that can dismantle ideology and awaken subjects from a passive position before language. Neologisms' ability to make one see or hear anew returns subjects to an embodied sensorial realm that transgresses language. Neologisms are not just an example of writing language, but rather *making* it, and moving it from the inside of a body/mind to the outside social world. The singular person has internal desires that, while perhaps affected by his or her society, are not necessarily expressible in language, yet. Therefore, in naming what has not yet been named, the singular person creates space in a collective community for his or her own desires. Once a new word is externalized, it can serve as a hinge between a personal and a

collective consciousness through communicative exchange. In inhabiting the body of Vallejo's poetry, therefore, subjects are awakened to their own ability to make things with each other if they are willing to expose themselves in language.

Although in its current usage the term neologism is most commonly used to refer to a new word, the Greek root *logos* provides an entry point into the meanings for the term. According to Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, there are ten primary meanings of *logos* in the Greek, all of which are documented extensively according to their original source. The following are the ten main entries that their lexicon lists:

- (1) computation, reckoning
- (2) relation, correspondence, proportion
- (3) explanation
- (4) inward debate of the soul
- (5) continuous statement, narrative (whether fact or fiction), oration
- (6) verbal expression or utterance, saying
- (7) a particular utterance, saying (often associated with divine utterance or oracle)
- (8) thing spoken of, subject matter
- (9) expression, utterance, speech regarded formerly
- (10) the Word or Wisdom of God, personified as his agent in creation and world government.

As evinced by this primary list of definitions, the semantic field of *logos* extends beyond just a "word" to encompass more complex forms of communication like narrative or verbal utterances. The term has also historically encompassed sacred words, in the case of the last definition and as also reflected in the current definition of neologism. By modern-day dictionary definition, a *neologism* refers to:

- (1) A new word, meaning, usage, or phrase
- (2) The introduction or use of new words or new senses of existing words
- (3) A new doctrine, especially a new interpretation of sacred writings
- (4) *psychiatry* A new word, often consisting of a combination of other words, that is understood only by the speaker: occurring most often in the speech of schizophrenics

One of the attributes to a neologism that interests me is that it does not just create a new place in language in the singular, but rather new *places*, or new *words* because it does not yet have a conventional definition. Thereby, it is a wildcard of sorts amongst words with more fixed meanings. A neologism provides an interpretive opening or tear in the net of language that even while perhaps having some kind of resemblance to a known word or words, is by virtue of its firstness, open to interpretation. It is at once rooted, in some kind of trace of a known word,

and travels, articulating itself in myriad ways depending on its context.²⁷ In his chapter on Aimé Césaire, “A Politics of Neologism: Aimé Césaire,” James Clifford observes in relation to neologisms, “In fact radical indeterminacy is the essence of neologism. No dictionary or etymology can nail down the significance, nor can an inventor’s (remembered) intention” (177). In this sense, a neologism both marks the agency of an author to disrupt systematized language, but also strongly invokes the interpretive skills of a reader, inviting his or her participation as an active creator of the artistic project at hand. In this sense, at the moving site(s) of the neologism, the artist and reader come to inhabit the same space. In Foucault’s essay “The Subject and Power,” he describes three different modes in which human beings are made into subjects. One of these modes includes the sciences, which he describes as “the objectifying of the speaking subject in *grammaire generale*, such as philology and linguistics” (*The Essential Foucault* 126). Thus, in relation to the formation of a subject, a neologism is a way collective agency can influence a *grammaire generale*, even if it is only to remind it of its own inherent *outside*, and therefore, incompleteness. The neologism as a trope is a marker of the agency to imagine the world in new ways, and to subsequently inspire an audience to hear and see the world anew.

I frame the discussion of neologistic innovation within a broader discussion of Vallejo’s undisciplined grammar. Throughout his career, particularly after his 1923 move to Europe from Peru, Vallejo wrote extensively on his view of art and its social role, eschewing grammar as a superfluous invention that cramped creative expression:

La gramática, como norma colectiva en poesía, carece de razón de ser. Cada poeta forja su gramática personal e intransferible, su sintaxis, su ortografía, su analogía, su prosodia, su semántica. Le basta no salir de los fueros básicos del idioma. El poeta puede hasta cambiar, en cierto modo, la estructura literal y fonética de una misma palabra, según los casos. Y esto, en vez de restringir el alcance socialista y universal de la poesía, como pudiera creerse, lo dilata al infinito. Sabido es que cuanto más personal (repito, no digo individual) es la sensibilidad del artista, su obra es más universal y colectiva. (ERC 410)

As made apparent in the above quotation, the distinction between the personal and the individual is essential to Vallejo because he sees personal expression as contributing to a collective spirit (or consciousness) while he consistently criticizes individual expression as a means to an individual’s end, as liberal or neoliberal discourse would espouse. The term “individual” is conflated with the idea of a public, externally “visible” subject, while “personal” encompasses an interior, more intimate being that exists behind the image that others see. Not only does he see personal invention in language as having something to contribute to a universal collective, he sees it as opening up infinite possibility for the coexistence of the personal and the collective good at once. If grammar works toward creating a “collective norm,” one way of personally rupturing such a norm for Vallejo would be using neologisms, personal transgressions of the normative language repertoire. The neologisms enable him to open up a new community that exists under the surface of words. Having been brought up in Peru, a linguistically diverse

²⁷ James Clifford’s work in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth-Century* revolves around the relationship between a concept of a root and a route within the broader cultural politics of modernity.

country with a long history of colonization, Vallejo is acutely aware of the way that language can be used to marginalize non-Spanish speaking subjects.

Trilce presents the reader with many different neologisms, all of which invite a reader to experience embodiment anew rather than look for meaning in the words on the page. As Rolando Pérez has observed, “rather than seeing the poet as an isolated, alienated member of society, with no social role to play, in the personality (but not the individuality) of the poet he [Vallejo] saw a catalyst for change. What Vallejo understood much better than others is that the success of politics depended much more on speech acts than abstract discourses” (7). Pérez’s use of the term “speech acts” underscores the embodied component that is embedded in speaking versus the disembodied element to written discourse. In speaking, gestures, stance, and an entire set of external characteristics to the speaking subject affect communication. In *Trilce* IX, Vallejo creates a virtual body in language, and expresses the desire infused in the creative process itself. The poem itself becomes charged with a sexual energy that results from the sounds of the words, not the actual referents. Take for instance the spelling of “Vusco” and “Volvvvvver,” which reflect a stammering self that decomposes himself sloppily (or drunkenly) over to the space of the poem. Since the standard spelling of the former would be “Busco,” Vallejo plays on the spoken similarity between the “B” and the “V” in Spanish, privileging performed speech over inscribed grammatical rules. The *vvvv* adds sonoric weight to the poem, and metaphorically captures the weight of the body that pushes itself into the sexualized sphere of the poem, longing to arrive through the exaggerated extension of the *vvvs*, to a place of mixing with “sus dos hojas anchas” of, perhaps, a book, alluding to the desire contained in the creative process itself. This excessive state of desire to be with another is expressed in the four *vs* of an overly saturated, repetitive returning, as if this searching has happened before. Vallejo also uses the word “válvula” which sounds similar to the female genitalia “vulva,” and yet also a valve, invoking technology. Pérez write, “When Vallejo writes ‘Vusco’ and ‘volvvvver’ in *Trilce* IX instead of the correct forms: ‘Busco’ and ‘volver’, he is not being merely ‘experimental.’ What he is in fact doing is making these words vibrate and stutter in an entirely new way, outside the commanding sign system of signification and phonetics, and opening up new spaces for innovative and linguistic liberation” (7-8). When reading the poetry, a reader has to pause before the unfamiliar repetition of sounds, drawing attention to the difference between writing and speech. The poem also brings together technology (the book) and physical desire (a body), drawing attention to the affective nature of the creative process. The poetic voice desires a book/body. Vallejo describes as the book, or the *dos hojas*, “se abre en succulenta recepción,” welcoming the reader into the living poem and the active reading act.

During his witnessing of the events of the Spanish Civil War, Vallejo continued to use neologisms to disorient readers in language, creating a body of poetry that could serve to resuscitate the literally and metaphorically dead bodies that roamed a 1930s Spain. As a first example of neologism, in Vallejo’s poem “Himno a los voluntarios de la República” the poetic voice requests:

“... déjame,
desde mi piedra en blanco, déjame,
solo,
*cuadrumano**, más acá, mucho más lejos. . .”

*my italic

The neologism *cuadrumano* is the first of a few that I interpret here. This term, which appears to be the merging of two Spanish words, opens itself up to various readings. On the one hand, it captures the poetic voice's auto-classification as a relatively ordinary and therefore square human being (*cuadro* + *[h]umano*) in relation to the heroic *voluntarios de la República* that the poet consistently praises throughout the poem. The poetic voice also situates himself spatially and temporally as “más acá” implying that he is potentially more grounded on the earth, if “acá” is assumed to be the realm of the mundane while an implied but not spoken “allá” is an other space – either of this world or another – to which the heroes he praises belong. It is unclear if “allá” is of the earth or beyond the earth, as somewhat similar to Vallejo's famous line: “Mi reino es de este mundo, pero también del otro” (also from this poem, Hymn to the Volunteers of the Republic). The implied location in space and time of the poetic voice is enigmatic because “here” exists and does not exist at once, as it is not nowhere, but then again, could be anywhere. The open interpretation of “más acá” dovetails with the open interpretation of its neologistic antecedent, emphasizing the multiplicity of locations that this one line of poetry opens.

Continuing with our analysis, the neologism *cuadrumano*, when interpreted beyond its immediate syntactical context in this single line of poetry, also captures other aspects to Vallejo's poetic project. For instance, this poem is a “cuadro,” or an extended, poetic depiction of the humanity Vallejo wishes to redeem through this particular poem as well as this collection as a whole. Likewise, the term also implicates readers themselves who Vallejo may be criticizing as stoic, emotionless ‘squares,’ who are largely impervious to the dramatic events unfolding around them. Vallejo creates a personalized *cuadro* that is this poem, or this collection of poetry, but that contributes to a collective *cuadro* of the Republican cause. The words of the poem are present on the page, and yet, the *cuadrumano* encompasses more than just the language Vallejo has invented, but rather, that new spirit to which he referred years earlier in his personal articulation of the newness of the vanguard – a new human sensibility and spirit – not only a demonstration of linguistic or technological innovation.

Attesting to the interpretive play that neologisms enable, George Lambie, who wrote a book on Vallejo titled *El pensamiento político de César Vallejo y la Guerra civil española*, provides an alternative reading of *cuadrumano* to the interpretations I have provided. He writes, “el término ‘cuadrumano’ parecería estar formado de dos palabras: ‘cuadrúpedo’ y ‘mano’, las cuales sugerirían la mezcla de la vida animal con el género humano” (218-219). Lambie partially supports this reading by linking it to Vallejo's disillusionment with the nature of man as expounded upon in other poetry collections. The term, in this way, insinuates the alienation of a person from his or her body. The alienating effect of this distorted corporeal image could cause readers to turn their attention inward to a consideration of what they have become. Part of what Vallejo's “human” would be, would encompass attributes other than the instincts of animals, because humans have the active ability to choose the way that they do or do not interact with other humans, species, and things in the world. Given the context of the poetry collection, Lambie posits that the term “. . . indicaría una etapa de transición en la que el miliciano rompe con su pasado alienante para comenzar su misión humanizante” (219). While in one respect the neologism is a *poetic* transgression that draws attention to the confining aspects to language, in another respect it also challenges hermeneutics as a practice. This is to say that whereas the

hermeneutic tradition is aimed at arriving to meaning in language, Vallejo privileges the hermetic aspects that resist interpretation but that touch a reader's affect.

Another aspect to the *cuadrumano* of Vallejo is the presence of a hovering, ubiquitous shadow of death. Vallejo attempts to portray death, and to summon death as well, in an effort to arrive to a place of rebirth that goes beyond the one life and beyond even the living being. He emphasizes that power over death is actually in the hands of humans at this moment of history, and to a certain extent can be controlled, an attitude that does not actually provide a new interpretation of scripture, per the fourth definition of neologism, but instead, replaces scripture with art and a god with humans on earth. In the fifth poem of Vallejo's collection, "Imagen española de la muerte" Vallejo begins with an interjectory phrase, saturated with an unspecified urgency as well as a spatial and formal tension: "¡Ahí pasa!", exhorts the poetic voice, "¡Llamadla! ¡Es su costado!" Vallejo creates a contradiction between space and material presence as the localizer "there" (*ahí*) usually places something or someone (we do not know what this something or someone is, yet) in time and space. But simultaneously this same something or someone that passes (*pasa*) there (*ahí*) remains unnamed by the poet, and therefore, ungraspable in readers' minds. The command form of the verb *llamar* (to call out or to name), directed at an unidentified "vosotros" implies that this vosotros does have the ability to *do* something in order to contain this entity passing through the imagined *ahí* of the poem. By activating a potential within his readers for action – that of calling out – this named "there" is always relative to a reader's position, extending its historical and spatial confines to an infinite number of "there(s)," in relation to a moving spatial and temporal "here" of the reader. In this sense, this particular there is rooted in the historical moment of the poem, but is simultaneously nomadic relevant to the reader. Because of its relativity, it almost becomes the reader's body, and the temporal and spatial fracture that "there" creates enables the poem to take on a modern-day valence that extends beyond the Spanish Civil War era.

As Vallejo's poem continues, the poetic voice further exhorts an audience to address the formless but linguistically present "la" that stands in for "la imagen española de la muerte." The poetic voice exclaims again:

"¡Llamadla! Ella camina exactamente como un hombre, entre las fieras,
se apoya de aquel brazo que se enlaza a nuestros pies
cuando dormimos en los parapetos
y se pára a las puertas elásticas del sueño."

In Vallejo's verses, death is personified as female, perhaps because the noun itself, *muerte*, is feminine. By describing death as walking like a man among beasts, Vallejo draws attention to the fact that death has agency, while humans themselves are described as beasts. By assigning death agency in the poem, Vallejo ironically exhorts humans to perceive themselves anew and to interrogate the living conditions that characterize the society they have created. Likewise, by describing humans as "beasts," Vallejo makes a distinction between a natural state of the *bruto libre* and a culturally constructed human, who through art might come to choose to participate in a collective good.

Next, the poetic voice continues: "¡Llamadla! No es un ser, muerte violenta,/sino, apenas, lacónico suceso; más bien su modo tira, cuando ataca, tira a tumulto simple, sin órbitas

ni cánticos de dicha” (592). The contradiction here is that, again, Vallejo is exhorting his readers to call “her,” but then underwriting death’s physical existence with the statement that this violent death “no es un ser,” but, “apenas, lacónico suceso.” So, after he has empowered her and given her physical existence, Vallejo deflates death by declassifying it as a being. The rational modern subject standing before Vallejo’s poetry confronts an enigma: how to approximate an event that *barely* expresses a laconic event? One might conceive of an event that expressed a lot in a few words, but the word *apenas* partially erases the event’s “expressability.” Through his poetry Vallejo is demonstrating the power of humans both to create and just as easily erase the violence that death unleashes on humanity.

Not only can the “Spanish image of death” hear, she can also speak, or more accurately, scream. Vallejo describes the Spanish image of death as she “¡Gritó! ¡Gritó! ¡Gritó su grito nato, sensorial!” The use of the adjective *nato* to modify a scream that originates from a space prior to a human’s entry into language, gestures toward an embodied sphere, reaching back to an irrational period of life, when self-awareness has not arrived and the body is not yet discernible as separate from the rest of the world. Elaine Scarry has observed that an expression of pain brings us to a space prior to the birth of referential language: “To witness the moment when pain causes a reversion to the pre-language of cries and groans is to witness the destruction of language, but conversely, to be present when a person moves up out of that pre-language and projects the facts of sentience into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language itself” (5). Likewise, William Rowe has claimed that in Vallejo, “dolor es previo a la conciencia” (*Hacia una poética radical* 107). In this sense, Vallejo’s *grito nato* reawakens embodied experience in subjects, which occurs as an impulse toward something other than ourselves, but without the awareness that this “other” is separate from our self. It is impossible to arrive at the meaning of this shout, or to understand the origin of such pain because it echoes infinitely outside of a logical language system. It is as if we and the abstract notion of pain are conflated at this moment, we and this “other” are *with* each other, neither originating before the other. In Vallejo’s verse, the exclamation points as well as the repetition of *gritó* approximate the excessive outpouring of this scream. The scream’s imagined sound and spatial reach extend beyond its syntactical location in the poem, but instead becomes a metonymy for the entirety of the poem, including all of the exclamation points, all of the exhortations, all of the urgency expressed in various ways – in parentheses, in exclamation points, in command form. In this way, Vallejo locates the poetic subject, as will be seen in later poems, *here* in a specific syntactic position, but is always gesturing toward a much larger space that resides *elsewhere* to logocentric inscription, but that extends from the experience of being in a body.²⁸ In this sense, as I elaborate later, Vallejo’s avant-garde may have originated in an Andean body, or in particular bodies, yet at the same time invokes a collective social body.

If death has seeped into a large number of bodies in Spain, Vallejo’s poetry provides organs that resuscitate fallen soldiers and sympathetic readers by means of his words. In poem III of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*, Vallejo writes:

²⁸ See José Rabasa’s “Elsewheres: Radical Relativism and the Frontiers of Empire” for a discussion of the spaces that remain “inaccessible” to empire. The notion of an *elsewhere* in this context enables a community to form in Vallejo that pertains to its own logic, outside of grammatical norms.

Solía escribir con su dedo grande en el aire:
 ¡Viban los compañeros! Pedro Rojas,”
 de Miranda de Ebro, padre y hombre,
 marido y hombre, ferroviario y hombre
 padre y más hombre, Pedro y sus dos muertes.

By inventing the spelling of the third person subjunctive plural of the verb *vivir* (to live) – *viban* – instead of the grammatically correct *vivan*, Vallejo emphasizes an informal and colloquial Spanish spoken by many people who were the heart of the working-class Republican front against fascism, privileging their spoken, embodied language instead of grammatical accuracy.

Moreover, in assembling the string of “padre y hombre” (father and man), “marido y hombre” (husband and man), “ferroviario y hombre” (railroad worker and man), and yet again, “padre y más hombre” (father and more man), “Pedro y sus dos muertes” (Pedro and his two deaths), Vallejo emphasizes that the proper name *Pedro* stands in for innumerable living people. The Pedro Rojas who lived as a father, or as a husband, or as a railroad worker is representative of one death: that of his synechdochal proper name. Meanwhile, the second death that Vallejo names stands in for the consequences of the death of the one on humankind: *y hombre y hombre y hombre y hombre y hombre*. Through repetition, this one *hombre* becomes representative of a collective humanity consisting of, syntactically and metaphorically, the relationship between a singular being and the other. This chain of *hombres* is representative of the Deleuzian notion of conjunctural identity instead of one based on the verb “to be”: “The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and . . . and . . . and . . .’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be.’ Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). The effect of death is reaffirmed in Vallejo’s later description of *su cuerpo, un gran cuerpo* that is discovered after Pedro Rojas is dead. Rojas’s single physical body is transformed into a lofty metaphoric body, as the adjective “gran” permits that it is offered up to the soul of the world in an earthly scene reminiscent of a New Testament death and resurrection scene, this time, an everyman character in alliance with others through repetition and conjunction, as the promise for the present. The poem itself becomes *the* body that stands in for the Pedro Rojas, y, y, y, y hombres whose bodies have gone and those that are reading it. It becomes part of the community of readers who absorb it, and carry it with them throughout their own *becomings*.

Julio Ortega observes that the fact that Pedro writes with his “dedo” suggests “una escritura natural; y escribir en el aire, una escritura cósmica. . . esta escritura ‘natural’ y ‘cósmica’ está hecha con el propio cuerpo, tal vez con la propia sangre, y es una pre-escritura, una huella oral, que irá a ser también una post-escritura, una marca transnatural” (HR 273). The third dictionary meaning of neologism reference above originated from the Bible and scriptural interpretation, as the tenth meaning of *logos* in Greek is associated with the Word of God. In selecting the title of the collection, Vallejo conflates the personal and the collective through the idiosyncratic syntax of “España, aparta de mí este cáliz.” He directs his words to the country of Spain, as if she had agency, but uses the intransitive verb “aparta,” de-emphasizing the agency of Spain herself. As a result of the syntax, the poet is ascribed the strongest degree of agency, as he is the subject creating the conditions of his own expression or his own “cosmic” scripture

according to his own syntactical arrangements and subject relations. In Latin America, Vicente Huidobro's doctrine "Creacionismo" included the observation that "el poeta es un pequeño dios," which in spirit is meant to empower the poet with transformative power *vis-a-vis* the world. Likewise, Vallejo sees art as a culturally constructed shared body that can resuscitate humanity's belief in itself. He promotes a "new" scriptural space that is open to multiple interpretations and led by a collective humanity. Moreover, the use of the "dedo" itself as a writing instrument, is essential as well to my cuerpocentric reading of Vallejo's approach to writing. Here, there is a trace of the *reportorial* aspects to Vallejo's writing experience, in that the gesture toward writing is metaphorically insinuated in Pedro Rojas's finger, a part of his body that enacts a gestural scene toward writing at this moment.

Continuing with his belief in art as able to create a new community, Vallejo breathes life into objects through poetic transformation. Specifically, in the poem, "Pequeño responso a un héroe de la República," Vallejo refers to an untitled book that "retoñaba de su cadáver muerto," where "su cadáver" refers to the corpse of a fallen soldier. In choosing the verb *retoñaba*, which has botanical origins and translates to *to shoot* or *to sprout*, Vallejo highlights the organic materiality to the body through its somewhat eerie juxtaposition with a book. This "book" could be interpreted to be *the* book, a volume of writing that does not come from an "other side of being," but rather, from the transformative space of human communication here on earth. The prefix of the verb, *re*, implies that an activity is happening for the second time, or again, reflecting a cyclical and repetitive time, not a linear progression. Vallejo's selection of the verb *retoñaba* recalls an earlier place in our analysis, when Vallejo referred to poetic creation as an organic entity. The dead body is transformed into life again via the book. The "book" could be a reference to the Vallejo collection itself, or any of a number of books. Again, Vallejo's play with the relationship between life and death enables animate and inanimate objects and bodies to exist *with* each other, beside each other, without one moving toward or capturing the other. Later on in the same poem, Vallejo presents us with a collective, metaphoric "carrying" and honoring of the Republican cause of Civil War Spain. Vallejo writes:

Se llevaron al héroe,
y corpórea y aciaga entró su boca en nuestro aliento;
sudamos todos, el hombligo a cuestras;
caminantes las lunas nos seguían;
también sudaba de tristeza el muerto.

In the first line, a relatively clear visual image of the poetic content could be garnered from a close reading. The image would probably look like a group of people carrying a body either over their shoulders or in a corpse. In the next line, however, a new almost surrealist image is created by Vallejo as a physical description and more tangible word, *corpórea*, or "corporeal, bodily" and a sensorial, intangible word, *aciaga* or bitter, are both used to describe the physical "mouth" of the soldier that now enters into *nuestro aliento*, or our breath. The mouth serves as an ironic metonymy for the essence of the soldier, an essence that is highlighted by its transformation into ephemeral, untouchable shared breath. Again, the organism that is the poetic process transforms the one into the many as material bodies dissipate into shared molecules of air through artistic

production. It is this type of earthly transfiguration that the art creates. As we carry the body, metaphorically, we all sweat, with the *hombligo a cuestras*, or with *humanavels* on our backs.

This particular neologism, *hombligo* also appears in Vallejo's earlier collection, *Poemas humanos*, and is reminiscent of the earlier neologism *cuadrumano*, because it combines a location or contained mark on the body, *ombligo*, with the word for man, *hombre*, combining a specific, physical inscription symbolizing a visible origin to life, with a more abstract, wide-reaching word, *hombre*. Although we can literally visualize a bellybutton, the slightly more conceptual *hombre* stirs up a range of images, sensations, and ideas to mind that go well beyond the physical depiction of a man. Of course, the word *hombre* is only in our imaginations, because the neologism opens up a new paradoxical place or logos whose meaning is unstable and at play. Counter to neoliberalism's notion of navel-gazing, or the constant analysis and cultivation of self, the *hombligo* in Vallejo is a site that enables and stands in for play: the play between the one and the many, the text as body, a machine and man. It is the knotty site that ties and cuts at once, paradoxically leaving us searching, in that middle space: *intermezxo*. It is what makes us human. As Rolando Pérez writes in an article on the *ars poética* of nonsense in *Trilce*: "Vallejo's paring down of language and erasure of references was an attempt, as he said in *El arte y la revolución* to capture what was most universal and collective in humanity; in other words, that which could not be represented" (16-17). This *hombligo*, a knot of non-representation is on our bodies, and is the body in Vallejo's writing, an undecipherable center that cuts us from each other but also enables us to seek each other out over and over again.

Transient Subjects

*¡Oh enigma de enigmas!
¡A designios misteriosos obedece toda paradoja!*

--Jaime Saenz, *Perdido viajero*, 101

Moving from the specific example of a *neologism* to the collective consciousness in Vallejo's poetry, the piece that best captures the relationship between the singular and the collective as negotiated through a transient body of art is "Voy a hablar de la esperanza." Because of its paradoxical writing style, this is one of Vallejo's most radical pieces in terms of its ability to reveal the non-sense that serves as a constant undercurrent to hermeneutic approaches to a text. In trying to interpret this text, a reader quickly bumps into the indecipherability of the poem. If we try to interpret the title of this piece then César Vallejo — if the poetic *yo* of the frase "Voy a hablar de la esperanza" is actually César Vallejo — claims that he is going to speak about "hope." Immediately a poetic split between the proper name of the poet and the person that is or is not César Vallejo problematizes the notion of an "origin" as well as the "voice" of the text.²⁹ The title projects itself toward an unknown future through its present tense form of *ir* as coupled with the infinitive, *hablar*, as well as marks its intention: to speak of hope. However, the word *esperanza* never appears in the prose that follows, even if an abstracted concept of what "hope" might be filters up through the prose. The absurdity of the piece lies in the distance

²⁹ In *Trilce* II Vallejo also draws attention to the arbitrary relationship between signs and their referents as he writes, "Se llama Lomismo que padece/ nombre nombre nombre nombrE."

between the title and the content, in that the “meaning” of the words in the title move toward nothing, but rather circle in upon themselves in a hermetic loop.

The text, from the title to the last word, is a paradox. It writes and unwrites itself as it unfolds, in the sense that each affirmation is at the same time a negation. The first line of the text, “Yo no sufro este dolor como César Vallejo” exemplifies the pattern of affirmation and negation. Vallejo begins the sentence with an emphatic assertion of self: “Yo,” often a grammatically unnecessary first person pronoun in Spanish because the verb ending has already determined the number and voice of the person speaking. Although Vallejo asserts his personhood through the “yo” he then explains that he is not suffering *as* César Vallejo, reflecting an open identity politic based on a spectrum of possibilities for the “self,” alluding to his own otherness. As Stephen Hart observes, “. . . the projection of human identity presented in his poetry is that of a self that is not identical to itself, one in which the self is Other” (715). Reflecting Hart’s reading, Vallejo divides a self, undermining the aforementioned inclusion of the “yo,” drawing attention to the shortcomings of an hermeneutic approach to the poem. The line raises a few questions. Perhaps most obviously, if the poetic voice is not suffering *as* César Vallejo, the proper name, then whom is he suffering *as* or *for*? Critic J. Patrick Duffey describes it, “Vallejo escribe un poema de su dolor personal, pero al mismo tiempo cuestiona el aspecto personal del poema, y juega con la imposibilidad de definir precisamente el <<yo>> poético” (Duffey 48). I argue that Vallejo does not actually question the personal aspect to the poem, but rather the individual aspect to the poem, through a sloughing off of the name that would place him as different than any other “yo”s in language. Vallejo enables the “yo” to be so many *yos*, who can step into the body of his poem, try it on for size, and then return to their own bodies, carrying bits of the experience with them. Through this communicative process, Vallejo’s poetry is “reterritorialized” as readers carry the traces that the poem imprints on them to their own communities. As R.K. Britton pointed out early on, “If Vallejo seemed to despair of man as an individual, he at times held some hope for mankind as a collectivity” (543).

While Vallejo continues to evade individuality in language, he still does maintain an abstract personhood – or singularity – in the poem. Vallejo proceeds to say that he does not suffer as an artist, as a man, or even as a “simple *ser vivo*” (OC 342). I read the phrase “simple *ser vivo*” through Giorgio Agamben’s engagement with the concept of *zōē* or “bare life,” a human life that is disconnected from the political sphere and yet always already implicated in the same sphere from which it is excluded.³⁰ Vallejo’s notion of suffering originates, however, even beyond the sphere of *zōē*, emanating from a space of the non-living. If César Vallejo were dead, he would still suffer. And here, now, he does still suffer. Vallejo uses the body of his poem to capture, even if illogically, a suffering that reaches beneath, returning to Kristeva, the symbolic aspects to language. When he writes, however, “Hoy sufro desde más abajo. Hoy sufro solamente,” he is not able to eradicate the self entirely from language, but only gesture toward such destruction. The notion of “hope” lies in the potential to think from a new space, that is resistant to the logic of individuality, but instead characterized by a radical alterity resistant to placement or naming. In this sense, the neologisms analyzed earlier in the chapter are only a symptom of a much larger project for Vallejo: not one of reordering the world, but of criticizing

³⁰ See Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo sacer*, especially the Introduction, for an elaboration on the concept of bare life.

the centrality of individual subjectivity to a modernist project in order to lift the curtains of subject-object relations and to transcend their conventional confines.

In her reading of the same piece, Elizabeth Monasterios has interpreted Vallejo's adverbial clause "desde más abajo" as an Andean trope that alludes to the Incan division of the empire into four quadrants: "Las cuatro partes que lo conforman reproducen a nivel textual el diseño cuatripartito o *siyus* que conformaban la geografía del Tawantinsuyu. Dentro de esta geografía, queda claramente expresada la idea de dos territorialidades distintivas y recíprocas: un arriba y un abajo" (549). While this reading of space is plausible, it also restricts the message of Vallejo's work to a regional register, while he seems to be making a broader commentary on the paradoxical nature of being a singular human being regardless of location. In fact, consistently throughout his writing, Vallejo seems to be navigating distinctly in an *intermezco* space that enables the coexistence of locality and movement, of singularity and universality at once that while at times rooted in an Andean tradition, is also always simultaneously overturning the concept of one location, in one body, in one state, in favor of multiplicities. In this sense, I see a more geographically broad and spatially diffuse sense of "below," in Vallejo, encompassing a depth of being that extends beyond the contained body that is César Vallejo, an artist, a living being, or a poet, and beyond a space that we can conceive of within the binary structure of above and below. The living organism that the poem activates includes the César Vallejos that went before him and the César Vallejos that will come after him and that share intensities with him, and then grow in multiple directions.

Vallejo proceeds to erase a concept of causality or origin, elaborating that he suffers *sin explicaciones*. The predicament of being unable to name what it is that is causing an affective and or kinesthetic response within the body is a condition of being itself. The poet poses questions: What could be the cause of said suffering? Or even more enigmatically, where is that space (*aquello tan importante*) that would have stopped being the cause of such suffering? When he answers his own question: *Nada es su causa*, he is responding not only to the fact that nothing is the cause of this suffering, but challenging the notion of causality itself. If causality is in question, then much like Deleuze and Guattari will challenge years later in *Anti-oedipus*, a genealogical order of origins and offspring is biologically and ideologically challenged. "Yo creía hasta ahora que todas las cosas del universo eran, inevitablemente, padres o hijos. Hoy sufro solamente," writes Vallejo. A world without causality is a world turned inside out, pointing to the acute inability of the poet to make sense of the relationships around him. Pushed to the limit of comprehension in language, Vallejo highlights the urgency of recognizing the failure of the current world order, wherein suffering is so ubiquitous as to envelop the entirety of the world. And yet, despite a jettisoning of the self or the *yó* throughout much of the text, a voice – a *yó* – is present again, suffering, even if transiently. And yet, this *yó* does not come from a particular body, but seems to be a floating body whose shoes could be filled by many other *yós*, through shared attributes or in Deleuzian terms, "intensities." Vallejo's poetry enables these intensities to flourish. The poem's paradoxical content augments the affective sensations it causes.

Is the statement made in the title of the poem ironic or does it invoke hope? If it is meant to invoke hope then where or what exactly is such a hope? There is a strong sense of agency underlying the entirety of the text because someone, namely César Vallejo, wrote it. Thus, even though at the beginning he would seem to cast into doubt his poetic *yó*, the poem's

existence puts forward a hope that maps to the artistic process itself. Likewise, it turns the usually passive condition of suffering into an active act directed toward others. As it envelops so many, Vallejo's suffering brings us right to the brink of hope. And the personal choice to choose to write and to publish work engages a person with the world around him or her, opening up his or her mind and body to another through the act of writing and reading.

Elizabeth Monasterios also refers to the indeterminate space Vallejo puts forward in his piece:

El dolor que revela el poema carece de causa ubicable, no está en un sitio determinado ni refiere a un hecho concreto. Al contrario, está en todos los espacios, y toca todas las instancias de la vida. Esta desquiciante situación de simultaneidad es lo que no encuentra referente en nuestra conciencia, más bien habituada a la linealidad de los acontecimientos y a la relación causa-efecto. (Monasterios 546)

When Monasterios refers to the “desquiciante situación de simultaneidad” she underscores the radical historical inversion in Vallejo that enables the past and the present to move in a non-linear fashion. Also, her reference to the ubiquity of the “dolor” that is in “todos los espacios” dislodges pain from any one site and exposes it to the possibility of all sites. This radical sense of dislocation reflects the way that pain moves within an organism on the most basic level. We cannot pinpoint the origin of it, and yet its effects are felt everywhere from our teeth to the bed in which we lie. As a reader, an hermeneutic approach to this text actually falls short of capturing the poem's impact. In its indecipherability, it stirs an anxiety in me that is only matched by the fact that I know others feel this same angst before a “suffering” larger than our singular selves. The restlessness the poem provokes can catalyze community through the recognition of a nameless and placeless vulnerability that haunts us. The inability to name such a force confronts us with a melancholic hermetic that serves as the undertow to almost all of Vallejo's texts. This hermetic aspect to his writing pulls us closer to the edge of ourselves and moves us toward others because it is the limit we share.

A similar sentiment to the one expressed in “Voy a hablar de la esperanza” also characterizes the poem “Los nueve monstruos,” in which Vallejo speaks of “el dolor que crece en el mundo a cada rato,” and refers to the dolor as happening “dos veces.” In this poem he also assigns inanimate objects pain: “Y el mueble tuvo en su cajón, dolor; y el corazón, en su cajón, dolor; y la lagartija, en su corazón, dolor” (512). The repetitive “dos veces” marks the tension between the poetic “yo” who suffers, and the meeting of our readerly selves within the body of the poem. Here, as we saw above with the soldier's death that happened twice, a doubling that symbolizes the singular and the collective at once occurs: the recognition that one is a singular being with limits. These limits exist in relation to another finite human beings and to the material objects and other living beings that exist in the world. Vallejo makes man-made objects flow like liquid into those that are biological, such as a heart, as we watch the furniture with a drawer become a heart with a chamber and that becomes another species, a reptilian lizard. The fact that Vallejo can feel as if a drawer or as if a lizard creates a radical space of empathetic exchange between human, animal, and object in a way that in the of drawing limits and difference might serve to bring humans closer to each other. As Butler has observed, “For the human to be human, it must relate to what is nonhuman, to what is outside itself but

continuous with itself by virtue of an interimplication of life. This relation to what is not itself constitutes the human being in its livingness, so that the human exceeds its boundary in the very effort to establish them" (UG 12).

Vallejo's transient subjectivity or extreme ability to feel *with* or *as* inanimate and animate beings also comes out in one of his earlier poems, "Huaco," included in the collection *Los heraldos negros*. This poem, comprised of five stanzas, sees the poetic voice mutate as he transforms himself into various beings and essences. He begins, "Yo soy el corequenque" and ends with "Yo soy la gracia incaicia," transforming into "el llama" and "el pichón de condor desplumado" in between. Throughout the verses, a flow not only between different temporalities but also between different forms occurs as "volutas de clarín," something physical, are described as "brillantes de asco," an ephemeral description incongruous with material reality. Likewise, the poetic voice talks about being the "grace of the Incans," conjuring up traces of movement perhaps lodged in the Incan bodies, but without reference in the concrete world. And, he describes as "mis piedras se encabritan los nervios rotos de un extinto puma," combining the materiality of stones that are temporarily animated through the biological nerves of an animal, only to be made sclerotic again through the adjectives "roto" and "extinto." In inhabiting this poem, a reader cannot rationalize the words that surround him or her, but can potentially experience the intensities between the human body and that of a puma.

For Deleuze and Guattari, "Becomings-animal" are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. By "perfectly real," they mean that *becoming* produces nothing other than itself: the movement from one state of desire to another. As they continue, "We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes" (ATP 238). In Vallejo's poetry, as a reader brackets his or her own body to enter that of the poem, the reading process enables us to *become* something or someone else. In this way, the poem itself enables a series of *becomings* for both the poet and the reader, creating a symbiotic relationship between both of them, and that puts their alliance in a different genealogy than that of a territorialized space (a nation) a singular body (yours/mine) or a genealogy (ancestors).

Various other poems by Vallejo situate themselves at a temporal moment that is less about a beginning or an ending, but more about moving in a middle space suspended outside of a logical series or structure: "El traje que vestí mañana" writes Vallejo, "no lo ha lavado mi lavandera: lo lavaba en sus venas otilinas, en el chorro de su corazón. . ." The obvious mixing that goes on between the past (vestí) and the future (mañana) turns temporality on its head, as time conceived as a series of sequential events is semantically challenged. The ordering of the sentence also puts forth an inverted relationship between subjects and objects. The "traje," the material object of the poem is privileged over the subject embedded in the verb ending "vestí" and the sequence of the event in calendrical time is made irrelevant, because *mañana* becomes oxymoronic when juxtaposed with the preterite *vestí*. Vallejo's poetry thus eludes the grip of "territorialization" as Deleuze and Guattari espouse, and also of "temporalization," as it puts forth an open, non-sensical poetic.

Equally radical to Vallejo's poetry is the unique mixing of the subject and object relationships that take place in his verse. When he says of his *traje* that "no lo ha lavado mi lavandera," he then adds an enigmatic statement that is not quite a counterstatement, but a movement away from what he just said, "lo lavaba en sus venas otilianas, en el chorro de su

corazón.” Here, the poet implies, if we were to even attempt an hermeneutic reading, that the lavandera absorbed the *traje* turned essence into her own body, passed it through her veins and heart, and returned it to the poetic voice. As Michelle Clayton has observed in relation to *Trilce*, “what this profoundly heteroglossic poetry suggests is that those subjects and objects can no longer be accounted for by anything like a unitary discourse, that they are caught up in multi-stranded networks of meaning in modernity, all of which bear upon and refract those objects in constantly shifting ways” (83). Here a series of *becomings* happen between a suit, as it becomes part of a permeable body, and then reemerges, transformed. As the material object passes through the veins of a body, the relationship between nature and culture is transformed such that neither is privileged over the other, but they ebb and flow together.

In the Introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari put forward their idiosyncratic approach to historical consciousness, celebrating not a serial or structural model of relationality, but what they see as the rhizome. A rhizome is not based upon an origin and an end, nor unidirectionality, but rather, opens up a way of conceiving of countless plateaus that are always “in the middle,” in a suspended space of *intermezzi*. Along one of their own literary plateaus “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal,” Deleuze and Guattari invite readers to think of the action of *becoming* itself as a way of being in the world, not necessarily arriving *to* or departing *from*, but the very process of *becoming* as the movement that is relational existence. In its marvelous disorientation from what has become a naturalized way of thinking not about some particular thing, but a naturalized structure or series of thought itself, they transform and make plastic a system of thought that has been imagined as permanent scaffolding.

César Vallejo’s poetic does more than only serve as a hermetic space. When experienced in the body, and read through some of the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari, Vallejo provides a cogent mode of conceiving of the Andean avant-garde itself. Vallejo’s *vanguardia* does not trace a European or even a “Latin American” avant-garde, but maps a site of possibility for various lines of movement that are taken up in my later chapters and that grow in their own multiple directions:

The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency [. . .] The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. (*ATP* 12)

Deleuze and Guattari go on to say, “the map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged “competence” (13). The project of mapping an Andean avant-garde is thus not one of tracing a genealogy, but rather, of creating maps that rhizomatically crisscross historical temporalities and bodies. History, have claimed Deleuze and Guattari, is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history. In the chapters that come next, I continue to look at a concept of nomadology, as the avant-garde reappears in different physical bodies, but carries on different “contagions” from Vallejo’s open book, *un jardín biológico*, that flourishes in multiple directions and in various bodies, creating communities of alliance.

In conclusion, Vallejo's approach to the poetic process *as if* it were a body frees the subject to dwell in the space of his poetry, inhabiting a transient space of otherness that awakens both the ability to think and to feel with another in order to form hybrid organisms. On one level, the temporary alienation Vallejo's language invokes defamiliarizes a reader, forcing one to reorient one's expectations before a text to the register of experience rather than cognition. Because an hermeneutical approach to the poetry fails, a reader must feel the poetry as it momentarily becomes, then enters, and transforms the body. In the end, agency is enacted in the act of trying to read, then logocentric transgression becomes a cuerpocentric one, enabling subjects to imagine themselves in another's body, with another feeling, with another experience. In this act, the one body is put in contact with the possibility of being in another, so that symbiotic, hybrid alliances might emerge across time, space, and bodies. Movement *with* becomes privileged over movement *to* or *from*, and the realm of human, animal, nature, and technology intermingle.

Reading, as de Certeau indicates, is not a passive activity but a creative production where author and viewer meet. Vallejo's poetry rehumanizes his readers through confronting them with the agency they have to change the collective language system of which they are a part. His poems are in the end more vital than organisms in nature because they serve as points of convergence for multiple subjects who relate through his words. In his commitment to a singular poetic aimed at slowly moving readers, Vallejo puts forward a poetry that does not arrive to a meaning but rather moves readers, stirring a nostalgic longing for something unnamed, but infinitely present: human community.

Chapter Two:
The Abject as Capitalist Critique in José María Arguedas's "El sueño del pongo"
and *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*

The Abject as Capitalist Critique in José María Arguedas's "El sueño del pongo" and *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*

...el hombre está dirigido por un frío ordenamiento que habitualmente escapa al dominio de su comprensión. El ejemplar humano, enajenado, tiene un invisible cordón umbilical que le liga a la sociedad en su conjunto: la ley del valor. Ella actúa en todos los aspectos de su vida, va modelando su camino y su destino.

—Che Guevara, "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba," 11

As part of the socialist revolution unfolding in 1960s Latin America, Che Guevara articulated his vision of "El hombre nuevo" in a document published under the same title in 1965. While using discourse to awaken a rational population to its own possibility for social change, Guevara selected the metaphor of the umbilical cord to help mend a broken corporeal bond between humans who had become alienated from each as a direct result of capitalism. Keeping in mind that Che's portrait and various allusions to communism appear in José María Arguedas's last novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, in this discussion I begin with Guevara's metaphor of the umbilical cord, a symbol of the abject – a term I define below – in order to consider the societal transformation that José María Arguedas calls for through the construction of a "rhizomatic novel" in his last work.³¹ Like the invisible umbilical cord referenced above, cast off upon birth, the abject aspects to being human – those which consist of a confrontation with death, waste, and our own objective materiality – have been historically made invisible under capitalism in favor of an enlightened and disembodied human.

Considering two of Arguedas's works, "El sueño del pongo" (1965) and his last novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971), I disentangle his poetic with the goal of presenting, but not resolving, the tension between the abject interior aspects to being a human and the exterior world of culture to which we belong. I do not imply that the interior life of a human and the social world are separate, but rather consider art as a space that transforms what is sometimes excluded from capitalist political life into that which would enable a desiring community outside of the operability of capitalism to coalesce. The reading I propose of *un humano nuevo* however, also entails a revision of Che's socialist project because his vision of a community could be interpreted as totalizing, eradicating the possibility of ongoing social resistance in favor of the arrival to an all-encompassing whole. I instead choose to engage with Jean Luc-Nancy's more fluid notion of community as elaborated in *The Inoperative Community* as a way of negotiating a balance between singularity and collectivity as an ongoing process of *becoming* that which it wants to be. Accepting paradoxes and working with them seems more realistic to me than promoting utopias.

³¹ An oil painting of Che Guevara is described as it hangs in Father Cardozo's office in the Second Part of the novel, shortly after Arguedas's third diary entry.

In both of his texts, Arguedas critiques the violence embedded in feudalism and capitalist expansion, which strip certain human beings of the possibility to desire outside of feudalistic and market constraints. If one cannot speak and put forth one's desires as an agential "I" in the world, then one is reduced to the "just human," in reality, a rightless and abject body. But, while critiquing capitalism, Arguedas's texts simultaneously use the space of the abject to demonstrate that we are all partially bare lives: material bodies that are equal because of our finitude and limits, regardless of our political status. Such a confrontation equalizes the one and the many through the confrontation with our undeniable material excess, reminding each and every human being of our own paradoxical status as subject with agency and object with an end in the world. As I argue, this confrontation with the abject can lead to the formation of a non-totalizing community outside of capitalism. Such community formation is facilitated through the rhizomatic formation of Arguedas's novel, wherein there is no beginning nor end, but a community of voices formed through the artistic process itself: Arguedas himself, mythological foxes, readers, and a number of "allies" articulated in the paratextual aspects of the "novel proper."

While feudalist and capitalist political communities are formed on the basis of characteristics that "close" them – that is, make rules that exclude certain bodies from them – I want to consider a largely invisible and dispersed undertow that works against a reading of the abject as that which must be expelled and instead consider alternative communities that retool our shared finite ends as an equalizing and inclusive force to community formation. Jean Luc-Nancy's work, particularly as elaborated in *The Inoperative Community*, and when coupled with Julia Kristeva's readings of the "abject," points to the confrontation with precisely what has been "cast off" as necessary for the recognition of the other both within ourselves and outside of ourselves. For Nancy in particular, the recognition of being itself as a finite experience is the necessary criteria for the formation of community. However, unlike the notion of a politically-totalizing community that is associated with a contained individual as a monadic agent of capitalism *and* unlike Che's notion of "[l]a perfecta identificación entre el gobierno y la comunidad en su conjunto," (Guevara 16). Arguedas's and Nancy's notions of community articulates itself between singular or collective poles and grow as rhizomes. Their version of a community is not a complete community, but one always *moving* so as to offset the stasis that can lead to an accumulation of concentrated political power in the hands of a few.

In regards to the abject, Julia Kristeva explains the concept as follows: "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated" (*The Portable Kristeva* 230). For Kristeva, the abject is not necessarily an object per se, but rather a "something" that one does not recognize as a thing but as "death invading life" (230). When Kristeva defines the abject as unrecognizable as a "thing," it is because the abject is both part of us and not part of us, lurking along the border of our subject/object selves. Expressing the reaction one experiences before an encounter with the abject, Kristeva asks, "How can I be without a border?" (231), meaning, how is it that this excess waste or byproduct that falls away from me, both constitutes me, but at the same time, is *not* me? Such is the confusion that the abject throws before us. This leads Kristeva to declare, "abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it –

on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger” (236). I engage the Kristevan abject because I see a direct correlation between Agamben’s concept of bare life and Kristeva’s work. Politically qualifiable subjects – those “bare lives” who have made it into the sphere of “bios” and thereby count politically – are reminded of the limits of their political existence through their confrontation with the abject. Such a confrontation, I argue, is what catalyzes the formation of “other” communities that are based upon such mutual exposition to what is behind or beyond both capitalist individualization and communist totalitarianism.

Returning to Nancy for a moment, his approximation to community hinges upon the recognition of a limit similar to Kristeva’s border between self as subject and object. For Nancy, being itself – not being an individual, but the philosophic category of “being” – is finite. It is a thing, in other words, whose end is confronted when we see our own end: a cadaver, an open wound, a bag of blood. These demarcations equalize human beings, reminding us that that which we cast off is actually that which makes us ourselves. For Nancy, it is only in confronting such a limit that we are able to expose ourselves, fully, to another being through communication. Moving full circle, the invisible “umbilical cord” of which Che speaks is precisely the type of confrontation to which I refer. Never seen again after our births, this material excess is an abject reminder of being’s limits. Dependent on a mother who psychoanalytic traditions would have haunt us, the umbilical cord is perhaps the consummate example of the abject for Kristeva, the symbol of all that the rational individual should hope to forget, and an “inaugural loss.” And yet, this reminder of our bare life is what can catalyze the formation of *inclusive* counter-communities to capitalism or totalizing communist regimes.

Before turning to Arguedas’s formation of counter-communities to capital, I want to briefly connect the concept of the abject elaborated above directly to language. In addition to elaborating the abject in her work, Kristeva strives to bring the “speaking body” back into discourse, particularly through her distinction between two modalities to signifying language: the semiotic and the symbolic. Whereas the symbolic encompasses the meaning in language constituted through the relationship between words and their referents, there is also another element to signifying language for Kristeva that is the semiotic. The semiotic captures what Kristeva calls “drives,” expressed through the tonalities, pitches, silences, – broadly, the musicality – of language. I would add, then, that Kristeva’s semiotic links directly to the *hermetic* aspects to language to which I referred in my work on Vallejo, or those elements that “move” the reader, whereas the symbolic is that which the reader “understands” or “interprets.” Expanding the distinction between the symbolic and the semiotic to the level of a text, Kristeva differentiates between a “genotext” and a “phenotext,” wherein the genotext refers to the process of arriving to language – the “behind the scenes” if you will – and the phenotext refers to the product. The genotext she explains, “can be seen as language’s underlying foundation” while the phenotext denotes “language that serves to communicate, which linguistics describes in terms of ‘competence’ and ‘performance’” (57-58). While both “textual” parts to the novel are needed for its significance, I will be particularly interested in the “genotext” and the semiotic aspects to Arguedas’s work as they work to destabilize the notion of text itself as a product. Instead, Arguedas’s novel, largely unfinished, captures the writing process itself more than any tangible product.

To summarize, then, within capitalism, there are emerging counter-communities that cannot be placed within the same exclusionary principles of biopolitics and bare life. I believe

such communities are made particularly visible through popular manifestations, literature, and the arts, spaces that serve as critical ruptures. Particularly, through a confrontation with the abject, Arguedas critiques the exclusion of lives that have been cast off from political life in twentieth-century Peru. His approach to *un humano nuevo* requires the recognition that at base each and every human is a bare life prior to becoming a political subject. The abject, like bare life, is a part of the self but simultaneously is a threat that destabilizes its unity. Arguedas's work demonstrates that through facing the abject an ethic toward the other – within the self and external to the self – can emerge. By an “ethic” I mean that even though one is not legally bound to foster another's well being, one chooses to reach out to another based on the recognition that what is strange or threatening about the other is actually already within the self. In working through Arguedas's rhizomatic last novel, a radical new conception of “community” emerges based upon comings and goings, ups and downs, and an uncontainable story-telling process that does not “end,” but continues through the readers who carry its message with them.

Keeping in mind the terms I have laid out above, I turn to Arguedas's critiques of feudalism and capitalism. In both of the texts that I analyze, “El sueño del pongo” and *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, the exclusionary mode through which the term “human” has operated is revealed in different ways. First, in “El sueño del pongo,” the central character, an indigenous servant, is humanized in a space elsewhere to reality through Arguedas's engagement with the abject and the sensorial. When the pongo and his patrón stand naked in heaven, outside of the political community, their raw humanity shines through the visible surface of their bodies. As a result of Arguedas's emphasis on the abject, the pongo's humanity is revealed as he stands next to the master who treated him like an animal for much of his life. This first story critiques the feudal system of Peru and was translated from the oral Quechua in which it first circulated, drawing attention to the long history of the dehumanization of the indigenous population through their reduction to bare lives.

Second, I turn to Arguedas's last novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* in which he presents a number of characters with sensorial deficits – a mute character, a blind character, and a stutterer – who represent the pervasive abject conditions of capitalism in 1960s Peru. Moreover, the poetic that Arguedas puts forth is infused with aspects of the abject, as is emphasized through the symbol of the *huayronqo*, a dead fly. Confronting readers with metaphoric cadavers and a “dead” language, Arguedas's call for *un humano nuevo* requires an interrogation of the violence of capitalism as well as an acknowledgment of the perpetual resistance of *communitas* – liminal communities that work under the surface and behind the scenes to form creative alliances. His poetic solution is a rhizomatic approach to the form of the novel itself, as it has various sections, starts, stops, meanderings, and incomplete ends. As Arguedas says, “Cuántos Hervores han quedado enterrados!” (LZ 243), referring to the remaining subtexts that are still buried beneath his novel. Like Nancy's community that is never a unity, never a formation, Arguedas's novel is thus perpetually in process. This captures the infinite resistance that I argue in my Introduction defines the *rhizo-gardes*. While he never finishes the novel, lending it quite readily to a categorization as “genotext” in process – Arguedas's suicide might be seen as the ultimate confrontation with the abject. In my optimistic reading, Arguedas exposes his own limits so that readers might see the pressing need for a transformative approach to community within Peru, as catalyzed by this literature. Che Guevara

framed the need for socialist change through the metaphor of trees, “Podemos intentar injertar el olmo para que dé peras, pero simultáneamente hay que sembrar perales” (Guevara 22). To Che, not only did the “old trees” need to be transformed, but also new trees needed to be planted by socialist youth. However, in the Arguedian approach to community, it is not about planting trees, with their downward growing roots and their upward motion toward the sky. Instead, we must think of a different genealogy for community altogether: a rhizomatic one that opens up a new space, time, and history based upon spatial proximity and renewable resistance. Like Audré Lorde’s famous observation, “We cannot dismantle the master’s house with the master’s tools,” we might, it seems, want to plant potatoes.³²

Encountering the Other in “El sueño del pongo”

In the poignant short story, “El sueño del pongo,” Arguedas critiques the treatment of an exemplary indigenous servant under the *latifundio* system of 1930s Peru. This story originally circulated orally in Quechua – a language that could be considered abject to the extent that it was excluded from *la ciudad letrada* for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – until Arguedas later transcribed it and translated it into written Spanish. At the beginning of this story an objective third-person narrator describes a “pongo,” that is, an indigenous servant who works in the landholder’s home for a determined amount of time and then returns to the fields. Like the third person omniscient narrator who presents part of Arguedas’s *Los ríos profundos*, this narrator initially speaks with the descriptive voice of a disembodied ethnographer. For instance, the narrator explains that the pongo “era pequeño, de cuerpo miserable, de ánimo débil, todo lamentable; sus ropas viejas.” The description of the pongo begins with an objective physical description, “era pequeño,” which is followed by a subjective judgment, “de un cuerpo miserable.” These two sequential external observations result in an evaluation of the interior of this character who is “de ánimo débil.” The text demonstrates that to the Quechua storytellers of the era, it was typical that the physical, visible exterior of a body be conceived as sufficient evidence to indicate something invisible and interior to the body, the *ánimo*. In this tale, the *ánimo*, or spirit, of the pongo rests somewhere between the interior and exterior of his body, reflective of a society concerned more with classifying bodies than knowing people. Such an *ánimo* is syntactically embedded in the middle of descriptive, superficial characteristics, as the third person narrator also refers to the pongo’s “ropas viejas,” a physical detail that contributes to the belief that this servant has a weak spirit. However, as the story goes on, we will see that the *ánimo* of the pongo is extraordinarily strong and comes directly from his interior will. In fact, as Arguedas tries to underscore throughout all of his work, there is not a direct connection between one’s physical exterior and the possession and/or quality of a “soul” or spirit.

As the story unfolds, the “gran señor, el patron,” likened to a *dios* on earth, asks the pongo, “Eres gente u otra cosa?” further underscoring the visible characteristics used to delineate the category “gente.” As critic Sergio R. Franco’s observation seconds, “El pongo, al parecer, encarna una humanidad tan degradada que resulta problemática en su estado

³² In his book *Comunismo literario y teorías deseantes*, Juan Duchesne mentions “planting potatoes” in conjunction with Deleuze. Given that the Andes region is the largest producer of these rhizomatic tubers, it is too hard to resist the metaphor.

ontológico.”³³ The pongo’s humanity is “degraded” not by himself, but rather, by the external conditions that limit his ability to be considered a subject in the world. To the landholder, the pongo is much like a chair or a bed, agency-less property, much like any other material *cosa*. When the patrón asks the pongo the aforementioned question, using the word *cosa* to further objectify him, the patrón has spent essentially no time with him. They have not spoken, they have not touched each other, they have not breathed next to each other, and they have not felt anything toward the each other. The only thing that the patrón has passed over the pongo is his gaze. After the patrón sizes up the pongo visually the text reads: “A ver! - dijo el patrón - por lo menos sabrá lavar ollas, siquiera podrá manejar la escoba, con esas sus manos que parece que no son nada. ¿Llévate esta inmundicia! - ordenó al mandón de la hacienda.”

Further violating and transforming the embodied reality of the pongo, the patrón asks him to get on all fours and to run like a dog. As the patrón watches the performance he commanded, he laughs heartily, mocking the pongo’s ontological status further by reducing him to another species. Moments later the patrón, assumedly bored of the dog performance, then tells the pongo that he is now no longer a dog, but a *vizcachá*, a small, bunny-like animal commonly found in the Andes region. The *vizcachá* is notably a soft and retiring animal that often remains hidden. Especially given the historical period, the choice of such an animal feminizes the pongo and further equates him with Kristeva’s feminized abject.

Despite the series of violent mental and physical games to which the patrón subjects the pongo, Arguedas, or more accurately, the Quechua storytellers whose words preceded this written account, deftly turn the tables around during the latter half of the story. After an undetermined amount of time, the pongo relates a dream he had to his patrón. However, before the pongo begins to tell this dream aloud, he asks the patrón for permission to speak. The patrón replies, “Habla . . . si puedes.” The command form of the verb *hablar* is obviously expected, as the patrón commands his pongo. Arguedas’s use of ellipses stands in for the patrón’s contemplative doubt as to whether or not the pongo can or cannot speak, demonstrating the space of ambivalence around the pongo’s status as human or other-than in the pongo’s eyes. During this silent interval, the patrón judges the pongo, who should be seen but should not speak without being spoken to first. When the pongo does speak he crosses into the space of subjectivity, his agency is revealed, and he can and does share a powerful story with the patrón. As we will see below, the content of the pongo’s dream will serve as the ultimate comeback story for someone who has been objectified by others based on superficial visible differences.

Unlike the first part of the story in which he barely spoke, during the second half of the story the pongo relates his lucid dream to the patrón who listens attentively, occasionally interjecting in agreement with the narrative trajectory of the pongo’s tale. Even while placed in a passive position before the storyteller, the patrón acts assured of the way in which the story will end, colonizing even the imaginary space of the pongo’s dream by inserting his voice into the story. However, he cannot entirely colonize such a space because it is outside of his rational control. In the dream, the pongo explains, he and his patrón find themselves in heaven, awaiting their judgment before a Christian God. Unlike during their lives on earth, both of them

³³ See Sergio R. Franco “El sueño del pongo”: entre la abyección y el deseo” in *Especulo* 36: <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero36/suepong.html> (October 2007).

stand naked in heaven such that the pongo's "ropas viejas" no longer figure as a determining factor of his ontological status. At the gates of heaven, the pongo explains to the patrón "A ti y a mí nos examinaba, pesando, creo, el corazón de cada uno y lo que éramos y lo que somos. Como hombre rico y grande, tú enfrentabas esos ojos, padre mío." Standing before them, thus God judges not what he discerns based on the surface of their bodies, but their *corazón*: what they were and what they are. This temporal distinction between what they "were" during life and what they "are" implies that their humanity, while evinced on earth through their daily deeds is in fact a presence that extends beyond their earthly wanderings into an existential space that exists beyond the symbolic and temporal realm of earth.

As the dream continues, the pongo explains to the patrón that two angels came and gave the patrón a gleaming chalice full of a crystalline gold. According to the will of God, one of the angels must gently paint the patrón's entire body with it so that he appears to be made of gold. The patrón, still listening, nods his head and says, "Así tenía que ser" indicating that to him this is the inevitable outcome to his already gilded life on earth. With almost giddy anticipation, the patrón then asks the pongo what he received in heaven, to which the pongo responds that his angel brought "un tarro de gasolina de excremento humano." Then, this weak, tired angel had to smear the excrement all over the pongo's body, in a haphazard manner, just like the mud that is applied to the walls of "una casa ordinaria." At this point of the story, the patrón seems barely able to contain his joy upon hearing the content of the dream and says to the pongo, "Así mismo tenía que ser," again equating himself with a god on earth who knew all along both his and the pongo's fate. However, just when the patrón is about to breathe a sigh of relief signaling the end of the story, the pongo continues, abruptly ending the tale:

No, padrecito mío, señor mío. Cuando nuevamente, aunque ya de otro modo, nos vimos juntos, los dos, ante nuestro Gran padre San Francisco, él volvió a mirarnos, también nuevamente, ya a ti y a mí, largo rato. Con sus ojos que colmaban el cielo, no sé hasta qué honduras nos alcanzó, juntando la noche con el día, el olvido con la memoria. Y luego dijo: 'Todo cuanto los ángeles debían hacer con ustedes ya está hecho. Ahora ¡lámanse el uno al otro! Despacio, por mucho tiempo.' El viejo ángel rejuveneció a esa misma hora; sus alas recuperaron su color negro, su gran fuerza. Nuestro Padre le encomendó vigilar que su voluntad se cumpliera.

And so the story ends, this time, with "Nuestro padre" and the angels using their sense of vision not to classify the exterior of the bodies – for the one is covered in the nectar of gods, the other, in the waste of the world – but to see into the depths of each person: "Con sus ojos que colmaban el cielo, no sé hasta qué honduras nos alcanzó . . ." After staring for a long time, *el Gran padre* demands that each lick the other, turning the moral of the story around in one quick command: *¡Lámanse el uno al otro!*

The moment that the pongo and the patrón arrive to a space beyond the constructed social situations of earth, their true character is evaluated based on what is said to be their "heart" in the story. They are equalized even through the grammatical reflexive form, "Nos vimos," and the command form, "Lámanse," which expresses a reciprocal action through the addition of the pronoun *se*. This grammatical creation of a *with* each other forces the patrón to metaphorically see his own human status on equal footing with that of the pongo before God,

as he and the pongo must simultaneously face their own ends. Moreover, the dream's visceral nature reanimates the senses of taste, touch, and smell along with that of sight. The Gran Señor still sees the two human beings standing before him, but more importantly, experiences them holistically through the combination of all of his senses.

The patrón, who symbolically treated the pongo like excrement on earth because of the latter's inferior race and class, enjoys the fruits of his labor in the next life. He must confront his own abject instead of treating the pongo as such. And in this space of the afterlife, the patrón will not really be able to see the pongo from a distance that would enable him to appear as an object, but rather will have to taste, touch, and smell his own waste with his own nose, tongue, and mouth. Likewise, the pongo will enjoy the fruits of his own labor on earth, touching, tasting, and smelling the golden honey of his redemption. In this story, what it is to be human is not about the visible recognition that one receives in this lifetime alone, but rather, extends beyond the physical body as inhabited on earth to touch a soul, "ánimo," or sensibility that continues to exist after the physical body is gone. It is a sensibility that is much more than what is visible on the surface of the body. Likewise such humanity comes to *mean* as it manifests itself between one person and another, and belongs to no one. As Sergio R. Franco observes:

Lo abyecto nos fascina, provoca nuestro goce, pero, a la vez, nos atemoriza y repele, porque amenaza las fronteras (imaginarias) de nuestro ser y nuestro universo, confundiendo sus límites, subvirtiéndolos. El poder de lo abyecto nos afecta tanto simbólica como somáticamente, y nos "infecta" con su impureza. Por ello, debe confinársele más allá de una frontera imaginaria trazada entre el ser y lo que lo pone en riesgo. (*Espéculo* 2007)

Within the discourse of a Christian ethic, the abject on earth become the inheritors of gold in heaven, and the wealthy come face to face with their own materiality. Arguedas, as well as the oral Quechua culture that first circulated the story, uses the trope of the abject to draw attention to the hidden similarities between two bare lives that are equalized when placed outside of the political realm.

Far from painting a utopic solution to ontological difference, "El sueño del pongo" perpetuates another long-rooted tale of Christian redemption that in many ways promotes the continual subservience of the indigenous population in the name of a hopeful afterlife. The importance of the story for some is that religious salvation a solution, but as a story, the most important critique is that which it makes of behaviors on earth through a consideration of the bare lives of even the wealthiest classes. This story underscores the choice that one has to speak up for those whose lives are precarious under the societal conditions of 1930s Peru. While the Quechua storytellers would have used this as a hopeful piece to build a community among the pongo-class, Arguedas's decision to translate this story into Spanish and to circulate it in writing potentially enables the story to meet the landholding class with their violent past. At the same time, the story serves to demonstrate the agency that the pongo class maintained in oppressive social conditions. Their choice to tell this story to each other would strengthen the bonds of community amongst them, enabling the isolation of any given singular pongo's story to reverberate with an audience that would have empathized with their predicament. In its later

iteration in Spanish, it points to the pongo class's last laugh before the landowners, a peaceful but powerful testimony to a past not easy to forget.

Sensorial Deficits and Corpses in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*

While the short story “El sueño del pongo” critiques the feudal class system through the patrón’s confrontation with the abject in heaven, in the novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas presents a more complicated and personal critique of the dehumanizing environment of capitalist Peru. The critique of capitalism that Arguedas makes in this novel is made most clear when we consider it within his larger creative trajectory. This novel marks a radical change in Arguedas’s writing that is directly tied to Arguedas’s personal *ánimo* before his work. Whereas prior to this last novel Arguedas’s collective textual and paratextual corpus had largely been framed as a unification project in a racially and class-divided nation, aimed at bridging binaries – Quechua and Spanish, anthropologist and object of study, orality and writing – his last novel deviated significantly from his previous novelistic projects. As Martín Lienhard summarizes:

El zorro, en efecto, es en muchos sentidos una novela-límite de clasificación difícil. Última obra de Arguedas, último producto narrativo del indigenismo teorizado por Mariátegui-Valcárcel, última de la serie de novelas urbanas “sociales” iniciada en el Perú en los años cincuenta, esta novela bien podría ser – pero esto no depende exclusivamente de la literatura, sino más bien de la historia – la primera de una serie nueva y todavía sin bautizar: una serie cuyos textos devolverán a las mayorías populares un papel activo, en vez de “aprovecharlas” en tanto que referente narrativo. (9)

While Arguedas’s earlier novels like *Yamar fiesta* (1941) and *Los ríos profundos* (1958) fit within a national lens based on an *indigenista* politics that would attempt to make the indigenous population visible within the political sphere by means of revealing their rich affective and cognitive interiorities via the externalization of the Quechua language, Arguedas’s last novel presents a complex social crisis brought on by globalization, with its entrepreneurial optimism and promise of freedom of choice. Part of the manifestation of what Lienhard calls the “mayorías populares” in his last novel means that alterity in the text no longer articulates itself along the axis of criollo/indigenous and nor does it fit within a nationalist paradigm. Instead, in Arguedas’s last novel, the category of “human” is not just parsed out into *criollo* or *indigenous* categories, but is complicated so that many axes of difference intersect in the urban environment of Chimbote: sexes, genders, races, nationalities, abled and otherwise-abled bodies. Confronted with what forty-years later is discussed as the “intersectionality” of difference, Chimbote as a representative political space is neither the nation nor the globe, but a hive of unqualifiable bare lives. These bodies mirror Arguedas’s encounter with his own abject, which takes the form of his cadaver, as well as language’s confrontation with what seems like its collapse.

Returning to Kristeva for a moment, her semiotic aspect to language is directly connected to the abject because of its association with the physical body, and moreover, the maternal body, which is pushed away at birth. As Kristeva writes, “The abject confronts us, on the one hand, and this time within our own personal archaeology, with our earliest attempt to

release the hold of *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside her, thanks to the autonomy of language” (*Powers of Horror* 13). In the four diaries of his novel, Arguedas consistently struggles to connect to the feminine sphere again in order to recuperate the semiotic element to his language – the tonalities, the rhythms, and the “undercurrent” which was previously Quechua. In this sense, his struggle with the semiotic is part of his struggle to form a language community that can exist within Chimbote. While in his diaries Arguedas makes clear that the writing process of this novel was a struggle, he is able to partially hold onto the semiotic aspects to language in his text through maintaining *drives* in language, or *desires*, that Kristeva connects explicitly to the semiotic. Kristeva’s depiction of *drives* in language, it is worth mentioning, is quite similar to a Deleuzian notion of *intensities*, which he uses to express the degree of desire. Thus, when Kristeva talks about the symbolic elements to language, she is speaking of the *what*, that is to say, the object of desire. However, in order to capture the *degree* of such desires, the semiotic aspects to language come in to play: the intonation one uses, the rhythm that is altered to express degrees of a certain affect. Because for Kristeva, this part of language is associated with the maternal and female, the first place where we become aware of the sounds, rhythms, and movements of the body, we will begin our discussion by analyzing Arguedas’s relationship to women in order to move toward a larger discussion about his portrayal of the abject in the novel.

To summarize, after I explore Arguedas’s relationship to women and writing, I provide a reading of his presentation of *el Mudo*, a marginalized fisherman-in-training in the novel, *la Muda*, his prostitute mother, and *el tartamudo* or the stutterer, as examples of some of the types of affective disorders that reveal some of the communicative obstacles that capitalism creates. Each of these characters serves as a particular example of biopolitical exclusion occurring within Chimbote and each particular character’s marginalization operates on an allegorical level, representing collective exclusions across geographic and political terrain. These characters are interpellated, but have little power to interpellate; they are objectified and desensitized, but yet maintain resistance to such objectification through their ability to maintain emotional connection despite their predicament. The marginalization of *el Mudo*, *la Muda*, and *el tartamudo* in the novel begs the question as to how they might exist in a climate that produces “precarious” conditions for their lives.³⁴ Providing a counterexample to the aforementioned characters is the blind character, Antolín Crispín, a hopeful inverse of the others. He catalyzes the formation of community and alliance, resisting the fetishization of otherness through a return to a spontaneous movement rather than pre-contemplated production as he plays his guitar. Through the metaphor of blindness, Crispín serves as a symbol of the invisible aspects to being human that prevents the discourse of capitalism from ever entirely capturing the lived reality of embodied existence. In this way, Crispín’s musical interventions in the novel serve as semiotic undercurrents to the symbolic surface of the text.

Encountering the Feminine and the Fly

³⁴ Judith Butler discusses precarity as that which designates the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death in her book *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso Press, 2004).

Formally, Arguedas's last novel consists of four diary entries interspersed among the body of the text. Through these diaries, Arguedas exposes his internal struggles to simultaneously write and stay optimistic before a life that increasingly wraps around him like a rough, wool blanket. Beginning in the shadows of his own death, in the first diary of the book, Arguedas alludes to his desire to arrive to his own death, a goal realized by the end of the novel. When the novel skitters off – it does not officially “end” – Arguedas's cadaver is what physically remains of him because he commits suicide and never finishes this project. However, in the many pages leading up to his end, he approaches the feminine specifically in order to fend off his own death. In her work on women as portrayed in various works of Arguedas, Anne Lambright also refers to the work of Julia Kristeva and the abject to approximate part of Arguedas's poetic. As Lambright observes, “. . . a nivel lingüístico y narrativo, la obra arguediana va desarrollando un código de lo femenino y lo masculino que corresponde desde nuestra óptica a los conceptos de lo semiótico y lo simbólico que teoriza Julia Kristeva” (332). She also goes on to observe that in Arguedas's texts, particularly those that take place along the coast like *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, “lo femenino se presenta en crisis, manifestándose ya no en la esperanza, sino en lo abyecto o lo melancólico” (333). However, I don't read the abject as the opposite of “hope,” but a necessary confrontation with reality that can lead to a very “hopeful” ethic practiced through an engagement with popular arts and literature, both of which can catalyze the formation of community.

Arguedas begins his novel with a diary entry dated *10 de mayo de 1968*. In the first sentence of the entry, Arguedas intimates a melancholic desire to remove himself from the sphere of life. He writes: “En abril de 1966, hace ya algo más de dos años, intenté suicidarme. En mayo de 1944 hizo crisis una dolencia psíquica contraída en la infancia y estuve casi cinco años neutralizado para escribir” (7). As the text makes evident, the psychic schism that José María Arguedas feels in his own body is directly related to his ability to write. Arguedas chooses to describe himself as “neutralizado,” with relation to writing. The choice of “neutralizado” connects a technical vocabulary for describing a molecular state to the energy level physically required for Arguedas to be able to write. The implication is that Arguedas must be “charged” -- either positively or negatively -- in order to write. He must have a direction, a path, for the fulfillment of his desires. This notion of being “charged,” again, goes back to both Kristeva's notion of the semiotic and Deleuze's concept of intensities. While I have no intention of “diagnosing” Arguedas, his choice of the word *neutralizado* implies that when he is in “crisis,” he actually cannot desire because he is “flat.” In some ways, it would seem that an *imbalance*, perhaps one resembling bipolar disorder, is perhaps a productive or even necessary condition for Arguedas's writing. This is to say, that even now, when writing this last novel, despite his claims that it is a “struggle” to write, he is clearly not *neutralizado*, for there are some 400 pages of text that he has produced. I would argue that in order to access the semiotic aspects to language, and to make, as he says, words “vibrate,” Arguedas needs to access not just affect, but the *intensity* to affect that enables it to infuse the symbolic parts of language with desire.

Arguedas's expresses his subjectivity through the “I” that is voiced through his writing. The voicing of this “I” connects his physical desires to a larger public. When Arguedas says, therefore, *intenté suicidarme*, he creates a division between his subjective intention (I want) and his objective body (to kill myself). If he were to kill himself, his body would undergo the most extreme objectification at the moment that he, an active subject, could kill himself, a physical

and material object that contains his desires. The transformation that Arguedas makes from a struggling subject to a lifeless object is postponed through the female and writing. In the diaries, a feminine energy is conflated with Arguedas's ability to write. While Arguedas begins the diary with an auto-diagnosis, he also articulates the temporary cure he finds for his "dolencia psíquica," a physical sexual activity: "El encuentro con una zamba gorda, joven, prostituta, me devolvió eso que los médicos llaman <<tono de vida>>" (7). In the context of this passage, I read the expression <<tono de vida>> as the ability to feel degrees of desire. Arguedas's illness throughout much of the novel has to do with his almost obsessive orientation toward himself as object of his desire for annihilation. In order to save himself, he orients himself toward a sexual and racial other who reconnects his desires to their "tonalities," or degrees. When he is neutralized, Arguedas does not have the necessary drive to write, but when his physical body is sexually stimulated his mental and emotional desires bubble back up and enable him to produce ideas again as a desiring "I." These degrees of desire express themselves in the movement of his language.

In Arguedas's words, "El encuentro con aquella alegre mujer debió ser el toque sutil, complejísimo que mi cuerpo y alma necesitaban, para recuperar el roto vínculo con todas las cosas. Cuando ese vínculo se hacía intenso podía transmitir a la palabra la materia de las cosas" (7). Arguedas's choice to refer to the "vínculo" as something "intenso," emphasizes the fact that the "vínculo" between himself and the word is not something captured through the symbolic aspects to language – the grammar, the sentence structure, the word choice – but through the semiotic elements that bring to the word "la materia de las cosas." Moreover, when he observes that after someone else touches him he can recuperate the "broken link," Arguedas points to the physical energy exchanged during a sexual encounter as facilitating a more fluid relationship between his "alma" and the other objects of the world. The concept of "alma" or the aforementioned "ánimo" stems from community formation: the reaching out to another. For Arguedas and Vallejo, language's ability to transform relationships between people and even between people and things is part of the ongoing process of *becoming* a community and is a constant cure for Arguedas. Writing can serve as the place where Arguedas can access desire in its "intensity." As language becomes intensified, communication (and community) can be transformed and strengthened. While in previous works, the infusion of Quechua sounds and tonalities brought *intensity* and movement to his texts, in the last novel, Arguedas expresses a struggle to find semiotic movement because of the estrangement he feels.

As Roland Forgues observes, "En el diario fechado del 11 de mayo, José María Arguedas subraya de modo más neto aún que las palabras representan la vida misma del ser humano por el lazo afectivo que establecen entre el hombre y las cosas con las cuales se confunden" (LZ 310). He quotes Arguedas's February 11th diary entry in which the author writes, "Cuando el ánimo está cargado de todo lo que aprendimos a través de todos nuestros sentidos, la palabra también se carga de esas materias. ¡Y cómo vibra!" (LZ 10). Exemplifying the point about language and intensity that I made above, the description of "la palabra" as also charged with "lo que aprendimos a través de nuestros sentidos," encapsulates the relationship that Arguedas sees between the word and the desires of a community. He uses the first person plural here to insinuate the collective aspect to communication, and the way that our senses can affect, or infuse, the word. Whereas previously Quechua would seem to have been able to make the

wor(l)d vibrate, in this last novel, language struggles and stumbles, but as I will elaborate below, still remains a site of creative resistance.

As already mentioned, Arguedas himself calls upon a zamba, an afroperuana, as a medium for reconnecting his language to desire, but this encounter does not bring the results he wanted: “El encuentro con la zamba no pudo hacer resucitar en mí la capacidad plena para la lectura. En tantos años he leído sólo unos cuantos libros. Y ahora estoy otra vez a las puertas del suicidio” (7). Gareth Williams reads the opening passage of the novel as a quest for order and for the forging of a harmonious relation, in his words, between the *indigenista* intellectual and the world beyond. Williams note that, “Through this episode the novel strives to constitute itself from the very beginning as a perfect threshold of in-distinction between the physiological life of bodies, the world of production (in particular, the production of writing and the consequent forging of a public intellectual), and the return to critical reason” (46). While part of Arguedas’s fight within the novel is to reason through the symbolic aspects to a language that is always running away from him, he also needs to access the semiotic aspects to language, inscribed in the body of the abject zamba other. The zamba, of marginalized race and gender within Peru, does in fact enable Arguedas to recharge his words with the materiality of their referents. This semiotic part to language, when combined with symbolic elements, would enable Arguedas to continue to present a counter-community to that of capitalism. Such a struggle infiltrates the entirety of the novel.

A particular Quechua image becomes a salient representation of the struggle to access the semiotic aspect to language throughout the novel. The *huayronqo*, a Quechua word for a bluebottle fly, comes to stand in for Arguedas’s own transformation into an object – specifically, a cadaver – as well as the partial stagnation of his poetic language. This is particularly of note because in many of his other books his language moves seamlessly from Quechua to Spanish, awakening both meaning and affective movement in his reader. In this last book, however, a particular image of a *huayronqo* becomes the central motif for a poetic that is struggling to move as it once did, just like the author himself. Arguedas recounts:

Hice algo contraindicado anoche, contraindicado por mí. Cada quien toma veneno, a sabiendas, de vez en cuando; y yo siento los efectos en estos instantes. En mi memoria, el sol del alto pueblecito de San Miguel de Obrajillo ha cobrado, de nuevo, un cierto color amarillo, semejante al de esa flor en forma de zapatito de niño de pechos, flor que crece o que prefiere crecer no en los campos sino en los muros de piedra hechos por hombres, allá en todos los pueblos serranos del Perú. Esa flor afelpada donde el cuerpo de los moscones negrísimos, los huayronqos, se empolva de amarillo y permanece más negro y acerado que sobre los lirios blancos. Porque en esta flor pequeña, el huayronqo enorme, se queda, manotea, aletea, se embute. La superficie de la flor es afelpada, la del moscón es lúcida, azulada de puro negra, como la crin de los potros verdaderamente negros. (LZ 17)

While Arguedas talks about his desire to make the word itself vibrate through his writing, in this last novel the word operates like the *huayronqo*, remaining stuck metaphorically in the consumptive cycle of capitalism. The image of the *huayronqo*, “azulada de puro negra,” is an uncanny, abject image that interrupts the novel on numerous occasions. The “ron” sound lends

the word an onomatopoeic aspect, the “ron,” perhaps resembling the buzzing of a fly, while the hard “qo” sound offsets a fly’s buzzing movement with a hard “k” sounding end, despite the open “o” vowel. The “qo” sound also lends a sonorous heaviness to the word, contributing to the image of the enormous fly that Arguedas constructs. Kristeva’s insights on the semiotic aspects to language capture well such invisible attributes to “the fly,” that are nonetheless present in the Quechua language.

In his book *The Emergence of the Latin American Novel*, Gordon Brotherston discusses the huayronqo as follows:

As a leitmotif in the First Diary there hovers the *huayronqo*, an insect a cross between hummingbird and fly, intensely black, which flies with its legs dangling down, to land helplessly on the plush face of a flower, inebriated to the point of paralysis . . . [t]he *huayronqo* hovers to more purpose as the unmistakable omen of death in the Quechua-speaking world Arguedas grew up in, and as a self-incarnation whose separate identity is nevertheless wholly respected. (102)

Brotherston’s description of the “inebriation” of the fly also draws attention to the paralyzing effect that capitalism has not just on the Quechua culture, I would argue, but on community in general. Throughout the novel, the huayronqo is a masculine subject within the story, with agency to consume and rest within the *ayaq sapatillan*, or “corpse-slipper,” a small white lily used commonly at funerals. Arguedas’s knowledge of the *huayronqo* and the *ayaq sapatillan* is a traumatic experience for him because it comes to symbolize his confrontation of not only his death, but of a more symbolic death of the notion of community as a whole. Throughout the novel, Arguedas describes countless displaced flies that find themselves in the *ayaq sapatillan* of Chimbote, stuck in a consumptive cycle. Metaphorically, the flower captures the author and his characters, making them stuck rather than enabling them to continue to move. The novel begins, thus, with an abject image that then haunts the remainder of the novel, reappearing periodically throughout the text. As the text advances, Arguedas’s own cadaver as well as that of the *huayronqo* work together to continually infect the bodies and the poetic of novel proper, serving as an uncanny presence that cannot be captured entirely in language, but that extends beyond the limits of being and into the realm of the abject. Simultaneously, however, the confrontation with this image that Arguedas provokes can cause restlessness in readers because it, for lack of a better word, haunts. Such a haunting is interruptive to the surface of the novel, in a way that causes readers to pause before language. The *huayronqo*, to me, serves as a warning sign in the novel that speaks to the potential future of a sick society who represses that (and those) which they do not wish to see.

Sensory Deprivation

In his article, “Chimbote and the Shores of Indigenismo: Biopolitics and Bare Life in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*,” Gareth Williams demonstrates that in this last novel Arguedas’s characters are reduced to bare life, illuminating the ubiquitously silent and invisible violence of capitalism. Here, I do not wish to duplicate his efforts, but to complement them. Thus, in what follows, I expand the criticism on his last novel to include an analysis of the pervasive othering

between almost all persons in the increasingly uncontainable Chimbote and nation-space of Peru. While the indigenous other is a constant concern in Arguedas's work, and one that has received the majority of critical attention within Arguedas studies, I account for other non-indigenous marked bodies in the text only beginning to emerge as part a collective political consciousness during the late 1960s: mute characters, stuttering characters, and blind characters. I argue that their presence, on the one hand, draws attention to a particular violence of capitalism: its unaccountability for bodies that do not fit into its affective norms; but on the other hand, I optimistically point to the fact that the presence of these characters signals a newly emerging left that increasingly operates on alliances between these human beings across the boundaries of citizenship, race, and class.

I am particularly interested in the ways that the mute characters, the stutterer, and the blind man communicate within the novel. On the one hand, they appear to lack expressive agency within the novel because of their sensorial defects. They communicate with difficulty, neither saying what they mean nor meaning what they say, pointing to a rupture in the symbolic order of language. However, their language does more readily map to the semiotic aspects to Kristeva's poetic, bringing their own embodied realities into their communication patterns. Through an emphasis on some of the limits to their bodies, Arguedas metaphorically underscores the damaging sensorial effects of capitalism, but he also enables them to maintain community and communication despite their marginalized positions. Like the mythological foxes who appear intermittently throughout the novel, these characters are a reminder of the underside to capitalism. They are reminders of the way that lives, and precarious ones at that, continue to unfold behind Debord's "society of the spectacle."

The four diaries aside, the novel begins aboard a boat at sea where we encounter an assortment of characters in mid-dialogue. Arguedas introduces readers to "El Mudo" at the beginning of Section I of the novel.³⁵ "El Mudo," which translates from the Spanish to English as "the Mute," can technically speak and hear because he communicates across many pages of the novel, drawing attention to the metaphoric distance between a word and its referent. The *logos* does not coincide, this is to say, with the embodied reality of this character, an example of the symbolic violence that a name can perform due to its misrepresentation of a person's lived reality. As Judith Butler has observed, "To be called a name is one of the first forms of linguistic injury that one learns. But not all name-calling is injurious. Being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language" (Butler, *ES* 2). Expressing the same ambivalence before Arguedas's naming practices in this novel, on an allegorical level, the name "el Mudo" is in fact an accurate title for a metaphorically mute society. The Mudo's speech ricochets off the words that other characters emit and he often responds to what they say to him with something that makes little sense. The community's metaphoric muteness recalls the image of the *huayronqo* again, as words buzz about in the novel like flies, but fall upon deaf ears. The folds of human ears, like the flower petals, capture words but trap them, breaking down a

³⁵ The novel is divided into two Parts. The "Primera parte" is divided into three sections and interrupted once by the "Segundo diario" entry. The "Segunda parte" of the novel begins after the third diary entry but, unlike the first part, has no division. Instead, it ends with what Arguedas titles as ¿Último diario?, his fourth and final entry. In this sense, the second part of the novel remains incomplete.

process of communicative exchange. By drawing attention to this schism in communication, Arguedas initiated countless dialogues posthumously about his book. In this sense, the rupture to which his poetic points is a highly productive space from which much meaningful reflection has sprung. His *pachakuti*, or revolutionary moment, later occurs in an extratextual space through his confrontation with the limits of the human.

Returning to the body of the novel, the first sentence of the novel exposes the symbolic violence to which I have just referred, or in a twist of the apt phrase by critic Rubén Bareiro Saguier, written with *palabras que hacen heridas*.³⁶ “Chaucato partió en su bolichera <<Sansón I>>, llevando de tripulantes a sus diez pescadores, entre ellos al maricón el Mudo . . .”(LZ 25). By bestowing the nickname “El Mudo” to this particular character, Arguedas emphasizes his familial name, but returning to the metaphor of the umbilical cord with which we began, connects el Mudo not to his father’s last name, but to his mother’s nickname, *la Muda*. In fact, his mother is called *la Muda* throughout the novel, but unlike her son, is actually mute. In privileging the maternal nickname, Arguedas also moves us from the symbolic grammatical register of language to that of the feminine and body-focused semiotic. Kristeva’s reading of the abject as that which is outside the grammatical limit of language functions in direct contrast to the Lacanian emphasis on the phallus of the father. Arguedas emphasizes the maternal and the abject here, highlighting the bare lives of el Mudo and his mother instead of the rational symbolic order of the father and the law. He chooses to draw attention to this other type of communication and naming as a means of revealing the limits of symbolic language. In confronting such limits, he delineates the limits of capitalism’s reach.

In addition to bearing the moniker “el Mudo,” this same character is also labeled a “maricón,” a derogatory word for a gay man repeatedly throughout the novel. “Maricón,” which derives its meaning from the diminutive of the female name “María,” has historically been used to describe an effeminate man, and is in and of itself a problematic distinction laden with biases. In this sense, “maricón” is thus another example of misnaming, in the sense that it derogatorily differentiates one type of man from the other, qualifying types of “men” based on a range of potential “male” behaviors in relation to other practices seen as, assumedly, “less-than-male.” Those who are less effeminate are simply “men,” and those who deviate from an implicit norm, renamed. The use of this term strips “el Mudo” of his subjectivity because it transforms desires that he has into transgressions vis-à-vis the norm of the time, emptying him of an ability to orient his reasoning and sentiment outside of a particular economy of desire: one linked to a heteronormative male/female code of binaries.

The following exchange between Chaucato and el Mudo serves as more evidence of the violence that language can perform on biological life:

Putamadre Mudo: aquí se trabaja en cosas di’hombre. El hombre se diferencia por el pincho, ¿no? Tú has nacido con pincho, oye Mudo, aunque sea pa’tu joder. Cuando el hombre agarra cuchillo nu’es pa’recibir lapos en el suelo . . . ¿Has venido madrugando al Puente pa’confesarte y recibir tu puteada? (25)

³⁶ Rubén Bareiro Saguier uses the phrase “palabra herida” to describe Arguedas’s language in his preliminary notes to the Ediciones Archivos version of the novel.

In this speech act delivered by Chaucato and directed at el Mudo, the word “hombre” is used to define a biological bare life that is unqualified beyond the minimal possession of a penis, as differentiated from that of an unnamed but opposite female. Thus, Chaucato addresses el Mudo with disgust again, labeling him a “Putamadre” and differentiating his actions from the “cosas di’hombre” taken up on the “aquí” of the ship. El Mudo’s orientation toward “other things” unnamed is insinuated as Chaucato claims that even though el Mudo was born like a man with the “right parts,” he has misdirected his energy, indicating his otherness in comparison to the rest of the female-directed masculinity of the boat. However, a few lines later, Chaucato declares “ti’hago hombre” again, implying that there on the boat, whether el Mudo desires it or not, he will be masculinized. This socially-constructed approach to gender and by extension, sexuality, contradicts the previous definition of “man” framed as a biological being and insinuates that one is *made* a man, giving culture an active role in the production of gender and sexuality. Within the context of the novel, El Mudo’s participation in the capitalist economy could potentially “straighten” his queered sexuality, as heteronormative images of the sea as “la mar es la más grande concha chupadora del mundo” characterize the beginning of the novel.

After the opening exchanges in the novel that take place at sea, Chaucato’s boat docks along the shores of the growing urban port, Chimbote. However, even though back on firm land, the chaotic communication on the boat does not settle once on shore. In fact, upon docking, the relentless Chaucato continues putting down el Mudo, talking to him about a character named Maxwell, a gringo, who, the text insinuates, el Mudo once tried to knife. The motivation for such aggression is never stipulated, but rather part of the senselessness of the violence that later ensues. As the boat is docking, Chaucato says, “Oye, violinista, cabrón – gritó desde el Puente –. Has trabajado bien, venenoso. Y tú, Mudo, habla . . . ¿Qui [sic] habrá haciendo ese gringo Maxwell con la puta gorda? Jamás dentra al burdel. Tú sabes, maricón, por eso quisiste punzarle, sin saber manejar chairó” (30). Now, rather than be made a man, this time El Mudo is feminized by Chaucato who metonymically strips him of his manhood as well as his agency with the phrase “sin saber manejar chairó” (30), implying that el Mudo cannot wield a knife, a symbol of his masculinity. Somewhat cryptically, el Mudo answers, “Me dijeron, Chaucato.” El Chaucato responds, “Te dijeron qué? ¿Quién?” to which el Mudo then replies, “Me dijeron, porque yo era mierda. Desde ahora ya no seré mierda, Chaucato. Tú sabes. . .”(30).

The syntax of the exchange above prohibits readers from fully understanding the context, as the subject of the verb “dijeron” remains unclear and the interrogatives “Qué?” and “Quién?” disorient a reader further from the topic of the sentences. But the power dynamic this language sets up places El Mudo in a passive position before the labels that have been already inscribed upon him from the outside. El Mudo as a subject – that is, as an “I” who expresses and acts upon his own desires – does not find space in language or society for initiating action, but instead must react to the outside environment around him. In this sense, el Mudo remains disoriented to a great extent because he cannot direct himself toward an object, but instead serves as the object of others’ desires for him. El Mudo even describes himself in the past as “era mierda,” an objectifying label put upon him by others, but assimilated by him. El Mudo’s promise to himself for the future, is only in response to Chaucato’s goading: *ya no seré mierda*. This promise originates from an imposed heterosexuality that comes hand and hand with his newfound association as a fisherman, “Ya soy pescador, pues, Chaucato,” he says (30). By taking on the label of “pescador,” and by association, the behavior of the other male bodies on the

boat, El Mudo is transformed again from his position as a waste product – “mierda” – into a masculine producer in the world. However, as we will see momentarily, his role as a producer requires the enactment of violence on others.

A few minutes later, in a crowded brothel, el Mudo attempts to stab Maxwell, repeating the knifing already referenced by Chaucato in the passage analyzed above. “Maxwell sintió como un aire en la espalda y se lanzó al piso; el Mudo tropezó con él y cayó. No pudo retener el cuchillo. Antes que nadie, la Muda, su madre, a cuatro patas, alcanzó el cuchillo y lo guardó. Era la prostituta más sabia de Chimbote” (32). During his ungraceful attempt at stabbing Maxwell, el Mudo trips and falls, unable, it is implied, to successfully stab the *yanki*, who was dancing with numerous prostitutes. La Muda, who is described animal-like “a cuatro patas,” quickly surrounds the gringo and reclaims the knife, trying to help her son out. Meanwhile, Pretel, another fisherman, grabs el Mudo and punches him in the mouth, a symbolic gesture that brands the “muteness,” or impotence of his character, onto his face. Illuminating the fragmentation of the family unit between mother and son, Arguedas describes as: “La Muda lo dejó que lo golpeará,” visibly numb before the scene.

After the altercation, el Mudo:

... gemía en la pieza de su madre, mientras una corta cola de clientes esperaba en la puerta. Ella gruñía: <<Uh, uh, uh!>> y hacía como que succionaba algo con sus labios. El Mudo dijo: <<Primera vez que rajo cuchillo y me se cae el gringo. A Petrel le tengo miedo, pero voy a comérmelo, putamadre, Muda.>> Ella señaló en el aire el tamaño de Petrel, luego describió su figura, y entregó al Mudo cuatro billetes de quinientos soles. (33)

During this scene, the exchange between el Mudo and la Muda evinces the economic relationship even between a mother and a son within the environment of the novel. El Mudo sobs on his mother’s floor as she performs her role as prostitute, serving clients as he expresses pain, not in language but through a bare, unqualified “voice,” before her. He calls her, “Muda,” not “Mamí,” or even “Madre,” employing the same name that anyone related or unrelated to her would call her. This interaction reduces both el Mudo and his mother to animals, to bare biological animals that moan and grunt, but do not have the ability to emotionally connect nor to talk about the root of the violence that festers beneath the event that just occurred. In particular, the vocabulary used to describe la Muda’s actions would imply that she is an animal, a bare life, as she suctions her mouth to someone or something else: “Capital is dead labor, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks” (Marx 257). When El Mudo expresses his trepidation before Pretel, his mother responds by giving him money, as financial exchange is the only way to relate to others, if not brute physical force. La Muda is only one example of the objectification of the female body and the equation of it to that of an animal, a less-than-human like the pongo discussed earlier, in Chimbote. Regardless of the economic marginalization of el Mudo and la Muda in the story, el Mudo still cries out to his mother for help. The gesture of reaching toward another precisely at a moment of vulnerability demonstrates the continual existence of a community that is not only based around economic exchange.

In conclusion, through the characters of el Mudo and la Muda Arguedas points to a quiet (nearly mute) undercurrent to a capitalist-based community through engagement with the abject and the semiotic aspects to language. When as readers we see el Mudo groveling and crying on the floor as his mother continues her prostitute services, the violent darker side to capitalism eclipses its positive attributes. Despite the precarious conditions it creates for these two characters, Arguedas does not entirely eliminate the possibility of a different type of community from his novel. By not turning away from the text, but instead confronting the cumbersome story put before us, we can recognize, at a minimum, the need for change in the society Arguedas presents.

***El tartamudo*: Stuttering and Bifurcated Speech**

When a language is so strained that it starts to stutter, or to murmur or stammer . . . then language in its entirety reaches the limit that marks its outside and makes it confront silence. When a language is strained in this way, language in its entirety is submitted to a pressure that makes it fall silent.
- Gilles Deleuze, "He Stuttered"¹¹³

Slightly later in the novel Arguedas transports readers to a bleak space, this time, not the tumultuous sea, but to an additional inhospitable brothel. He describes the space like this: "El pabellón blanco no tenía patio ni árbol. Los cuartos daban a callejones más anchos, de piso de cemento, alumbrados con tubos de luz neon blancos" (LZ 37). Based upon Arguedas's description of the desolate patio and the little narrow hallways, cement floors, and neon lights, the space sounds like a prison or an insane asylum, creating an unwelcoming atmosphere that could geographically be anywhere due to its anodyne descriptions but that is also nowhere, much like Agamben's notion of spaces (and states) of exception: camps, prisons, hospitals.³⁷ All of these spaces' primary purpose is to reduce human beings into bare lives. To this end, prisoners or patients are assigned numbers and ideally lose their personal agency when placed within such confined spaces, under strict rules. The brothel is a space that accommodates bare lives because the sexual acts that take place are not, at least initially, based on emotional connection but on a physical desire to possess another human being. This is not to say that such desire is not part of being human, but that the brothel serves as a limit space where the clients confront their own raw desires along the edge of "culture."

At this brothel, Arguedas presents readers to Zavala, "meditador, lector y pescador, sindicalista enérgico, no hablaba pendejadas ni en los bares ni en las asambleas, pero no podía mandar una lancha y olisqueaba ansioso los prostíbulos" (36). Zavala has a sidekick who we meet a few pages later, and who, similar to el Mudo, is called "el tartamudo," not his proper name. The modifier "the" ascribes this particular stutterer a central role as the singular stutterer within the text, a differentiating violence that implies he is the aberrance amongst the other speakers. But, just as was the case with El Mudo, the stutterer as well stands in allegorically for Arguedas's own writing process. This novel, after all, stutters its way to its incomplete end.

³⁷ See Agamben's *States of Exception*

With a series of starts and stops defined as much by interruption as by a smooth flow of a communicative loop of saying, hearing, and response, Arguedas's metaphoric stuttering is an integral part to the subversive form and history of the novel. This is to say that the very breaks in the communication – the interventions of the diary, the dancing foxes, and the migratory bodies of the characters – emphasize the semiotic aspects to language more than the symbolic, or the hermetic more than the hermeneutic. The motif of stuttering reminds of the incommunicable undertow to the symbolic aspects of language, as well as the central role that the biological body plays in communication. Words do not seamlessly flow from the mouth, but get caught up as one person faces another. Arguedas may use such a technique to slow down the process of novelistic consumption, something that Vallejo attempted to do as well with his poetry.³⁸

To stutter or to stammer increases the potential for misunderstanding because this type of interrupted, choppy speech impedes the communication process. But, it is not just el tartamudo who slows down the reading process of the book but the poetic language itself. Not only does the one stutter, but the entirety of the community does metaphorically. El tartamudo symbolizes the capitalist erosion of meaningful language in Peru and reminds of the value of slowing down. As examples of just some of his speech patterns, the stutterer says:

¿Por-po-por qué a-a-andas? –le preguntó la noche en que bailó Maxwell
Co-co-cocobolo!
Ma-ma-mare nostrum!
Za-za-avala? (38-39).

While early twentieth-century avant-garde poets in Europe and the Americas invented a language that looked similar in its creative “destruction” of the three phrases above, in many cases the authors were attempting to make language symbolize the sounds of a speed-obsessed technological age: trains, cars, and the velocity of sound as bodies moved around urban spaces with unparalleled efficiency. In other words, language functioned through mimesis in relation to industrial machinery. However, in this text such stammering expressions are used to critique the demise of language into a meaningless pile of insignificant or redundant sounds, and to actually slow down the speed of communication, emphasizing its behind-the-scenes process.

As was also the case to a lesser extent with el Mudo, the stutterer's words seem arbitrary to the point of being non-sensical, as in the case of “co-co-cocobolo.” However, their non-sensical nature underscores an irrational, embodied part to language that is resistant to the symbolic elements of it. Thus, the stutterer comes to be dually coded. On the one hand, he stands in on an allegorical level for the violent transformations that communication in all languages undergoes in this novel, already evinced with the case of El Mudo and La Muda. The transformation does not just affect the Quechua language – as we touched upon through the symbol of the *huayrongo* – but causes alienation in the Spanish language as well. The cacophony

³⁸ I included a quote that expressed Vallejo's critique of the “modern man's” approach to visual art in the previous chapter. He explains how the person who sees a painting and cries the fastest is the “most modern.” This emphasizes art as a consumable product instead of as a process that transforms materials.

of the text seems, in fact, to prohibit mutual understanding and reflects the blocked flow between one body and another in terms of communicative abilities. On the other hand, the stutterer's presence and language is hopeful to the extent that it reminds of the semiotic aspect to language, one that interrupts the symbolic weight of capitalism. Thus, paradoxically, the opaqueness of the language makes egregiously clear the personal and social crisis that underpins the text but also the personal and social hope that can move readers toward change.

In one of the last essays he wrote, "He Stuttered," Gilles Deleuze notes that it is sometimes said that bad novelists feel the need to vary their dialogic markers by substituting for "he said" expressions like, "he murmured," "he stammered," "he sobbed," "he giggled," "he cried," or "he stuttered," all of which indicate different voice intonations. Writers can then either *do it*, as in, have characters who stutter or else *say it without doing it*, to be content with a simple indication that the reader is allowed to fill in. However, of interest to us here, Deleuze proposes a third instance of the "stutter" in language: when *saying is doing*. This is what happens when stuttering no longer affects preexisting words, but itself introduces the words it affects; these words no longer exist independently of the stutter, which selects and links them together through itself. It is no longer the character who stutters in speech; it is the writer who becomes a *stutterer in language*. He makes language as such stutter: an affective and intensive language, and no longer an affectation of the one who speaks (Deleuze, "He Stuttered" 107). Arguedas as a writer is "el tartamudo," stumbling through this last novel. The ugliness of the prose at times stands in for the desire to communicate the underside of language, its bifurcations and its hidden cadavers: non-sense, incommunicability, and the limits of the rational phrase. El tartamudo serves as a symptom of Arguedas's disoriented poetic, one that ceaselessly bifurcates and meanders, reminding of the impossibility of a totalizing hermeneutic, whether capitalist, communist, or anything else in between. Slippage in communication (and community) is part of resistance, a constant dislocating of terms that keeps the process perpetually ahead of its product.

The Blind Musician

Antolín Crispín appears intermittently throughout *Los zorros* as one of the only characters with the ability to awaken a moribund social body to the sound and rhythms of song.³⁹ Again, this is relevant because it, too, connects to Kristeva's conception of the semiotic. Like the other three characters previously analyzed, Crispín is also afflicted with a physical impediment, the inability to see. Despite his inability to see, and in fact, perhaps by virtue of his lack of sight, Crispín is forced to experience the world through his other senses in a way that others cannot. In this way, Arguedas's inclusion of him in the novel lends itself to a discussion on the concept of spectacle and its underside. Unlike the patrón from "El sueño del pongo" who objectified the pongo and unlike Chaucato who objectifies el Mudo, Crispín does not discern physical difference in part because he cannot hold anyone in his sight. Crispín, in some ways, is different from other performers in the text who are under the gaze of their audience; he plays his guitar

³⁹ Arguedas brings dance into the novel as well not only in the brothels, but also through the foxes.

even though he cannot see his audience and relates to them more primarily through sound and the spoken or sang word.

Arguedas introduces readers to Crispín toward the beginning of the novel: “Nadie más dijo nada. Los que formaron el cordón de espectadores del negro se dispersaron. Pero luego de las palabras de la señora se hizo un instante de silencio a plomo y pudo oírse a lo lejos, la tristísima guitarra del ciego Antolín Crispín” (61). Here, Arguedas describes the people as “spectators” of “el negro,” drawing attention to the racialized otherness of this character, “el zambo,” whose exterior difference and different way of speaking invokes the curiosity of the crowd. Arguedas mirrors this objectification of the other with relation to race and gender when, as mentioned in the earlier part of the discussion of this novel, he refers to his encounter with a “zamba” prostitute, an objectified female who mediates between his desires and the page. While in a certain sense Arguedas himself thus “spectacularizes” an exoticized zamba, who in her racial difference serves the role of distant and objectified “other” to Arguedas’s productive needs, he also implicitly criticizes the spectacularization of other bodies, presenting one of many unresolved tensions in the text. This is also one of the irresolvable tensions of being human, as explored throughout this project: the tension between simultaneously being both an object and a subject in one’s own body, as well as relative to others. While it would be easier to present a uni-dimensional reading of Arguedas’s position before this, he is riddled with contradictions, just like this novel. The contradictions are an integral part of the process of his many *becomings*, those never captured in language and those that reveal themselves in his equally process-driven last novel.

Returning to the complex relationship Arguedas has in relationship to spectacle, in his first diary Arguedas also criticizes the production of money-driven spectacles instead of the more spontaneous performances that Crispín and the foxes embody in the text:

Un amigo peruano me llevó anoche a una boite-teatro fea; le dijeron que presentaban danzas y cantos chilenos. Era cierto, muy entretenido para el público al que vanidosa aunque <<objetivamente>> llamamos vulgar, frívolo, etc. Entre calatas, cómicos, conjuntos de jazz y de pelucones, todo mediocre, apareció un <<ballet>> chileno. ¡Maldita sea! No digo que ya no es chileno eso; pero para los que sabemos cómo suena lo que el pueblo hace, estas mojigangas son cosa que nos deja entre iracundos y perplejos . . . Y maldecíamos juntos estas cosas que son fabricaciones de los <<gringos>> para ganar plata. Todo eso es para ganar plata. (*Primer diario* 13)

In his critical account of his theatrical experience, Arguedas criticizes what he sees as a vulgar and frivolous production that, while entertaining to an audience Arguedas describes as “vanidosa,” is of only mediocre quality. Here, Arguedas expresses the increasing alienation that he himself feels not only from the spontaneous performances of his childhood Peru, but moreover, from the other members of the audience. When he talks about the Chilean ballet, his anger grows exponentially, expressed by his use of exclamation points to express his frustration. He also associates himself with a group of unspecified people, “los que sabemos cómo suena lo que el pueblo hace,” privileging the notion of “authenticity” to that of “fabrication.” It is not insignificant that he says “suena” instead of “parece,” deemphasizing the sense of sight associated with the proliferation of images associated with mass capitalist production, and

focusing on the way the performance should have “sounded.” The privileging of other senses besides sight is a motif that runs throughout the rest of Arguedas’s textual corpus, and comes to full fruition through the blind Crispín.

Ultimately, the sound of Crispín’s music does seem to penetrate through the physical border of his listeners’ bodies, igniting a process within them that echoes and reverberates in their bodies, unable to be captured in Arguedas explains that as the negro’s spectators disperse, a ring of silence breaks up the cluttered background of the text, and the far-away sound of Antolín Crispín’s music: “la tristísima guitarra del ciego...” (61). In describing the music as *tristísima*, Arguedas at a minimum implies that the guitar music has the potential to stir emotion in its listeners. Also, in placing Crispín in the distance, Arguedas demonstrates the way that sound is uncontainable, extending beyond its “product,” in the sense that Crispín is not “selling” anything at this moment. As Levinas says in “The Transcendence of Words”: “In sound, and in the consciousness termed hearing, there is in fact a break with the self-complete world of vision and art. In its entirety, sound is a ringing, clanging scandal. Whereas, in vision, form is wedded to content in such a way as to appease it, in sound the perceptible quality overflows so that form can no longer contain its content” (147). Crispín is, with the foxes, the overflow of this novel, continuing beyond its boundaries as an “artistic product.”

After his sad music is referenced, Crispín appears again in the novel, interrupting a discussion going on between a prostitute named Florinda and Tinoco, her argumentative and knife-wielding husband. “Cuando Florinda estaba hablando apareció en la puerta que daba al patio, el joven ciego, flaco, de anteojos negros, Antolín Crispín” (73). During an exchange between Crispín and Tinoco, the latter, albeit sarcastically, tells Crispín to save him, even after Crispín has insinuated that others in town refer to Tinoco as “Pescador maleante, anti-cristo” (73). Tinoco responds: “Oye. . . en lo oscuro conoce el ciego qué es. Asimismo, algún día . . . yo, maricón cabron a ostí, Crispín . . . Mejor toca el guitarra, oye. Ahistá, en el banca. Toca el guitarra, oy Crispín, p’alma del triste pendejo agua-sangre” (74). Tinoco subordinates himself, relinquishing some of his power and asking Crispín to rescue his “alma,” from an unnamed present despair. Crispín then contemplates “las doce cuerdas de la guitarra” and appears to offer up hope in the form of stirring emotion in others: “Antolín pulsaba cada alambre y cada entorchada, las hacía llorar por una. Después tocó la introducción al *huayno*, cordes y melodías improvisadas . . .” (74). He makes the strings of the guitar “cry” while playing, creating emotions through the sound that comes out from his guitar. Crispín’s improvisation enables him to transgress traditional keys of music, moving beyond notational norms to invent something new that can move the internal bodies of his characters. In this sense, unlike some of the characters that might be said to represent a state of capitalist *being*, Arguedas offers through Crispín an antidote of *becoming* based on creative combination and play, matched only by the zorros in the text. Improvisation, like the combinatory work of a *bricoleur*, involves mixing the melodies and harmonies of musical notation to celebrate the movement between them. Likewise, the *huayno* combines Andean and Spanish traditions, as it transports some indigenous traditions to the urban environment, drawing not on a space of myth, but of human creative potential as it evolves over time. In this way, mestizaje is becoming and transformative, not assimilative.

Just before Arguedas begins his second diary, in which he expresses his confrontation with another one of his by then increasingly traumatic and debilitating writing blocks, he leaves off again with the hopeful music of Crispín, this time, demonstrating the power of this blind

musician to transform the waste materials of production into song, a passage that merits quoting at length:

El humo de las fábricas, el griterío de los vendedores de fruta, comidas, sándwiches, maní que tenían sus puestos en las aceras de las calles o al pie de los muros que cercaban las fábricas; el flujo de los colectivos y triciclos que pasaban y volvían bajo los remolinos de humo; el desfile, en grupos o a solas, de los pescadores que se iban del muelle y montaban en los colectivos o se detenían a devorar anticuchos, sándwiches, fruta; el ladrido de los perros en las barriadas, todo eso se constreñía, también como relampagueando, en la guitarra de Crispín Antolín que seguía cantando en su casa de la Esperanza Baja, sentado en al misma silla. Ciego flaco, jovencito, había bajado, cierto, nieves, cumbres, precipicios, desde su pueblo, tras la Cordillera Blanca, hasta la línea del tren que corre por el endemoniado cañón del río Santa. Tocaba en los mercados y cerca de los muelles. Oía la luz de la isla, el zumbir de la tráquea humana de donde sale el hablar de cada quien, tal como es la vida. Así su guitarra templaba la corriente que va de los médanos y pantanos encrespados de barriadas al mar pestilente, de la ecosonda a la cadera . . . Un círculo apretado de gente escuchaba siempre a Crispín: se quedaban, horas de horas algunos, esperando, junto a la guitarra, bajo el sol o el nublado. (78)

This passage effectively synthesizes innumerable elements of the changing 1960s Chimbote. First, the smoke of the warehouses pollutes the air, blocking the view across the city and impeding vision. The constant shouting of the food vendors then deafens the soundscape of Chimbote so that the white noise of economic exchange drowns out meaningful communication. The crisscrossing of vehicles across the landscape crowds the open spaces of spontaneous encounter and the dogs that pepper the streets begin to outnumber the humans. And yet, even amongst the fishermen who “devour” their sandwiches, everything described in the dense paragraph and convoluted text is transformed by the guitar of “Crispín Antolín,” whose name is reversed toward the end of the novel, perhaps a purposeful move by Arguedas. Crispín, at least as portrayed in this paragraph, would seem to stand in for Arguedas himself. Both have, after all, traveled over the mountains and the snowy peaks, crossed the precipices, and followed the train line to get to Chimbote’s shores, even though Arguedas’s meanderings were multiplied in between.

Regardless of the “mar pestilente” or the brothels on the coast, Crispín is able to catalyze the formation of something resembling a community, one of the only visible ones to exist in the novel. As Arguedas describes it: “Un círculo apretado de gente escuchaba siempre a Crispín: se quedaban, horas de horas algunos, esperando, junto a la guitarra, bajo el sol o el nublado” (78). Arguedas describes the tight circle of people, implying that their bodies might even touch each other as they “always listen[ed]” to Crispín. The use of the verb “escuchar” contrasts the active sense of listening to someone else or something else with the muteness that characterizes my earlier analysis of the novel. The fishermen and passers-by who listen to Crispín even stay for hours, “esperando,” not I would argue, for the return of a mythological past, or the arrival of a Messianic future as José Luís Rouillon suggests in his article, “Aproximaciones al mito y al

cristianismo en el último Arguedas,” but for the immediate arrival of the next song. The fact that Crispín is “jovencito,” but that he has gone from the sierra to the shore need not imply that indigenous identity and orality is dead, but simply that it, too, is as *cosmopolitan* as “gringos” dancing in brothels.

A Proximate Community

To summarize, in both the short story “El sueño del pongo” and in his unfinished *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas critiques a biopolitics of exclusion as promoted by both feudalist and capitalist social structures. Through a consistent confrontation with the abject in these two works – the classes of people who have been cast off or marginalized – Arguedas subordinates the sense of sight and the symbolic aspects to language by drawing attention to the other senses: smell, taste, hearing, and touch as part of the semiotic aspects to language. In “El sueño del pongo,” while the pongo and the patrón share the same sensorial environment and physically must move through the same spaces together, the patrón relies on rational language and the sense of vision to assume a false ontological difference between himself and the pongo. In this story, Arguedas and the Quechua storytellers who went before him, draw upon a Christian ethic that reveals the equal bare lives of both the pongo and the patrón through a return to the abject: the naked body standing before an other. Through this confrontation with the abject an interior invisible spirit of the “just human” is privileged over the cultural construction of hierarchical difference, calling for a change in the community structure. In translating this oral story into written Spanish, Arguedas enables the newest generation of the *latifundista* classes to experience the legacy they have inherited. While I am not able to prove that this story actually “changed” a deeply entrenched power dynamic, its message coincides with a particularly salient observation made on the power of art by the playwright, Griselda Gambaro: “Creo que un artista es un producto de una sociedad y trabaja para esta sociedad. Si bien el arte nunca ha servido para impedir los horrores del mundo, sí ha servido para tener conciencia de esos errores” (Zandrastra 43). Arguedas, in choosing to (re)tell this story, reminds of past grievances to potentially raise awareness around social injustice in the present.

Additionally, in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas confronts his own abject objectivity, first through an encounter with the female “other” and second through the recurrent image of the *huayronco* and the *apaq sapatillan* whose uncanny meeting serves as a metaphor for the haunted language of the text. The poetic that Arguedas puts forward in this novel reflect the specifics of a capitalist Peru, but also extends beyond the nation, reflecting the changing conditions of embodied proximity that globalization catalyzes. Then, by drawing attention to the sensorial deprivation of some of the characters in the text, Arguedas demonstrates the conditions that capitalism creates particularly for certain bodies within the community. Despite their marginalized status, however, Arguedas’s characters continue to build resistant communities to capitalism, underground. His vision of *un humano nuevo* requires a confrontation with the cast off umbilical cord from which we began as a metaphoric reminder of the corporeal proximity to another from which human life begins. The semiotic aspects to language that begin in our bodies share a constant undertow to the representational political spaces that would treat bodies as interpretable, symbolic commodities. As we increasingly find ourselves as strangers in strange lands, an ethic of respect before the other is as essential as our respect for ourselves.

In conclusion, approaching Arguedas's work through the lens of the abject draws attention to the bare lives that serve as the interior to all human beings, regardless of language, race, gender, or sexuality. The confrontation with each and every person's objectivity helps reveal the embodied aspect to existence that has been suppressed within modernity. Likewise, Arguedas demonstrates the equalizing abject aspects to those bare lives that have been historically marginalized within the economic systems of feudalism and capitalism in Peru. Far from proposing that a utopic space of perfect equality might exist, I think that a continual acknowledgment of the paradoxical conditions of speaking of the "human" in the world fosters a continual renewal of the personal agency that each person has to recognize the otherness within him or herself as a way of understanding part of the predicament of someone else's humanity. In confronting what is foreign within ourselves, we open ourselves to the possibility of transforming community from the "bottom" up. I believe that Arguedas saw literature and the arts as a way of exposing himself and others less visible in society in order to continue to move the political left. While Guevara spoke of "el premio [que] es la nueva sociedad," implying through the word *premio* that this new society is something material that can be reached, Arguedas's *nueva sociedad* is not reached, but produces its desire within the pages of his text and extends beyond it. Choosing to tell such a story is one of the many gestures toward the other – within and outside of the self – that one can make. As Arguedas wrote in his short story "El Vengativo": "Me siento demasiado humano, no puedo guardar por más tiempo esa tremenda historia" (OC 31).

Arguedas, Again

Finishing this chapter while in Bolivia, I opened up the back issue of a theatre journal, *El tonto del pueblo*, with a section dedicated to the Peruvian theatre troupe, *Yuyachkani*, a Quechua word that means "me acuerdo" or "recuerdo" but that also translates as the present progressive, "me estoy acordando" or "estoy recordando." The latter translation reflects the movement, to me, that is an integral part to the process of our thoughts themselves, as they appear on the horizon and continue beyond their enunciation. The group *Yuyachkani* was founded in 1971 and has since been performing in both traditional national theatres and in poor neighborhoods of Peru, a theatre troupe that aims to be popular and political. As part of their substantial repertoire of plays, the group performed *Músicos ambulantes* (1982), based on one of Grimm's fairytales but inspired by Arguedas's writings. As Teresa Ralli, one of the principal actresses and founders of the group says about this era of the group's development, "Nos pasamos 10 a 15 años caminando por La Sierra, estudiando haciendo nuestra esa cultura hasta tal punto que yo siento hoy que soy de todo Perú, tengo un pedazo de mí que es Ayacuchano, que es Huancaíno y su música me hace vibrar" (Bjerregaard 10). After putting on *Músicos ambulantes*, the group put on *Encuentro de zorros*, based upon Arguedas's last novel. As one of the actors describes it, "Nos dijimos, por qué no mostramos el otro lado, el lado difícil, traumático, conflictivo del problema de la marginalidad y de la emigración. Volvimos a Arguedas y vimos que su propia vida era también una experiencia de esta contradicción que no se resuelve en este país" (11). I mention these plays as evidence of the vibrations that Arguedas's works had on the transmittal of memory in Peru, as they reverberate in ways unforeseen to him. Arguedas consistently attempted to bring multiple voices together to celebrate the complexity of culture in Peru.

Through fellow artists who choose to continue his story, his work repeats, transforms, and moves community.

Chapter Three:
Julieta Paredes behind the Scenes: The Ethics of Intersubjectivity

Julieta Paredes behind the Scenes: An Ethics of Intersubjectivity

...*En nombre della que no tuvo voz
ni voto, cuando se dispuso
esta su suerte de hacer. . .*

César Vallejo, *Trilce* LXXV

Bartolina Sisa brazenly defended the Aymara indigenous peoples against colonial elite interests in late eighteenth-century Bolivia. As a result, she was executed alongside her husband, Tupac Katari, a peasant leader and direct descendant of the Incans, on September 5, 1782.⁴⁰ Because of her belief in the rights of the indigenous *ayllus*⁴¹ to political and territorial sovereignty, her body was transformed into a public spectacle, as has been recorded through the written and oral traces of these events. First, an official decree stipulated that she be paraded around the Plaza Murillo and hanged at the gallows. Second, she was to be tortured before her death –flagellated, raped, flogged, and dragged through La Paz – as gaping spectators observed. Then, even after she was hanged, her dead body was to be quartered and put on display in the center of various *ayllus* as a visual warning to fellow insurgents. The traumatic experience that Bartolina Sisa and Tupac Katari underwent has been repeated in countless dehumanizing acts justified by colonial norms of language, race, sex, and socioeconomic conditions in the Andes. Such dehumanizing, traumatic acts are manifestations of a deep philosophic fissure between what criteria constitute the human as opposed to the otherwise-than-human within colonial and post-colonial settings. In order to address the ethical responsibility the self can choose to take for another, I explore the conditions of intersubjectivity in the Andes today by framing contemporary artist and activist Julieta Paredes's embodied poetry, both as part of *Mujeres Creando* and as separate, as an ongoing creation of a space of ethics.⁴²

This discussion approaches ethical intersubjectivity in Paredes's and *Mujeres Creando*'s work through two primary lines of theoretical inquiry. First, I argue that subjectivity rests in the inextricable space between embodiment and textuality, between the physical attributes of breathing bodies and the subsequent categorization of them in language and texts. I intervene in ongoing theoretical discussions built around body politics and the coloniality of being, centering my analysis around the metaphor of the bellybutton as it appears in Paredes's work. I see the bellybutton, the first cultural mark on the body, as symbolizing the interstitial space between the

⁴⁰ Sinclair Thomson has undertaken a comprehensive study on the La Paz anti-colonial movements of the early 1780s in his book *We Alone Will Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

⁴¹ *Ayllu* is the Quechua word for the political unit upon which Andean societal structure is based. An *ayllu* is often made up of extended families that share heritage as well as land rights.

⁴² Julieta Paredes and María Galindo founded *Mujeres Creando* in La Paz in 1990. After years of activist work, the group divided in 2001. María Galindo continues to work under the name *Mujeres Creando* while Julieta Paredes primarily works with the *Asamblea Feminista* in La Paz.

corporeal and the discursive aspects to subject formation. This undecipherable knot is where body approximates but never becomes text and text approximates but never fully incorporates body. The bellybutton symbolizes an *apriori* contingency of the one on the other as well as one subject's inability to ever fully know the other – both within and outside of herself. Mujeres Creando's and Paredes's emphasis on the body as a site of resistance to social norms contributes to their creation of a *living* poetic. This living, embodied poetic is less about creating a frozen *said* than about catalyzing a breathing *saying*.

My second line of argument explores the ethical responsibility that the one can choose for the other based on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. As humans we pronounce and hear what Levinas calls the "living word" with our mouths in an attempt to reach out to the other and to come into relational, ethical being. Levinas writes of the "privilege of the living word, which is destined to be heard, in contrast to the word that is an image and already a picturesque sign," emphasizing the connection between language and a breathing body in contrast to the separation between a body and the written word. (LR 46). In the same bent, Levinas also draws a sharp distinction between the said, or thought content, and the saying, the gesture toward another being. He writes "in the saying there is always the trace of alterity that goes beyond anything that can be measured in terms of its thought content," (LR 144) whereby thought content is the "said." Levinas consistently privileges the saying in his work. He believes that prior to a system of language, which is necessary to meet many human needs and presupposed by them, is the existing individual and his or her ethical choice to welcome the stranger and to share the world by speaking to another. In other words, we do not become social by first being systematic. We become systematic and orderly in our thinking by first freely making a choice for generosity and communication, i.e., for the social (*Totality and Infinity* 15). It is my reading that the "saying" represents community and the "said" the systematization of such saying in culture. There are traces of saying both on the body and in language, as will be explored below.

I actively interrogate the location of an "ethics of saying" in Julieta Paredes's work by looking at her creation of grammatical openings in language that engage a reader in dialogue rather than self-contain him or her in contemplation. Paredes often performs her poetry, literally embodying it, and living conversation inspires the content of her verses instead of abstract ideas. In some senses, her poetry is not just an aesthetic object of crystallized thought to be held but rather an active language to be inhabited. That said, it also does circulate in a contained form as a material book. As a reader, I can make breathe; to make it live, as it were, between myself and its creator, while also recognizing my inability to ever fully know the other through the work. Levinas consistently privileges being *for the other* (*pour l'autre*) over being in-itself or being for-itself. He claims, based on his belief that being itself is shared, that "existence is a creature" (LR 148), in the sense that any one "I" is dependent on others for his or her existence. Likewise, Paredes' poems, whether performed or written, are creatures to be shared as ongoing sites of intersubjective dialogue.

The necessity of an ethical poetic emerges out of the colonial conditions that created definitions of the human and the "less than" or "other than," often based on superficial physical categorizations. The exploration of what constitutes the human has particular historical relevance in colonial and neocolonial Andean settings, where the construction of racial and

gendered subjects foregrounds the colonial project.⁴³ The coding of bodies based on race and gender -- the one constantly implicates the other -- has led to what Nelson Maldonado-Torres has called the “coloniality of being.”⁴⁴ The coloniality of being refers to a subject position that is based on being “less than” or “other than” human because of political categories constructed by those who hold physical power and power in language. The classification of different subjects was not horizontal during colonial settings, but rather vertical, “[t]hat is, some identities depict superiority over others. And such superiority is premised on the degree of humanity attributed to the identities in question” (*CofP* 244). However, despite the metaphorical vertical structures colonial legacies impose, persons can use language as a communicative tool to reach out to another, reconfiguring artificial hierarchies around the human.

Returning to the metaphor of the bellybutton, in my discussion of Julieta Paredes and Mujeres Creando, I challenge us to consider the bellybutton not as the consummate reflection of a liberal or neo-liberal preoccupation with the ontology of a never-attainable autonomous self, but rather as a site representing the ethics of being as articulated by Levinas. This mark on our bodies is thus not only a reminder of our individuality but also of our contingency on another. As Levinas explains, “The responsibility for the other can not have begun in my commitment, in my decision. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a prior to every memory, an ulterior to every accomplishment, from the non-present par-excellence, the non-original, the anarchical, prior to or beyond essence” (*Otherwise than Being* 11). The bellybutton is the trace of a space prior to subject formation where ethical responsibility resides and marks the fact that we are responsible for the other *a priori*. As an inscription, it physically reminds of the mutually constitutive relationship between the self and the other, the core around which Levinas’s philosophy rotates.

Within this larger philosophic framework, Julieta Paredes’s and Mujeres Creando’s work consistently originates from the female body as source of de-colonial agency and neo-liberal social-critique. Since 1990, they have created a space within Bolivian discourse for bodies that do not conform to societal norms because they are queer. Although their sensationalist visual street performances and videos are key elements to their work, I emphasize some of the less-visible attributes to their work – that is, the processes behind their products. Mujeres Creando’s representation of the body in diverse texts creates a space of constant “saying” that gestures toward the other while respecting his or her difference. The existence of alterity is not a threat, but instead an *a priori* condition of being itself.

Before looking at Mujeres Creando and Julieta Paredes’s spectacles, graffiti, and written poetry, the grammatical construction of Mujeres Creando’s name is the first indicator of the living language their poetic creates. The Spanish syntax permits that *mujeres* (women), be either the active subject of the verb *creando* (creating) or the object of this transitive verb. In this sense, their title can be read in two directions, Women Creating or Creating Women, reflecting an open

⁴³ See Aníbal Quijano’s “Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social” in *Journal of World-Systems Research* 6, no. 2, Special Issue: Festschrift for Immanuel Wallerstein, Part 1, Summer/Fall 2000. 342-386.

⁴⁴ For a discussion on subontological and transontological difference, see Nelson Maldonado Torres’s article, “On the Coloniality of Being” in *Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge Press, Spring 2007. 21:2. 240-270.

hermeneutic, and emphasizing the way the female (or any body) itself functions as subject and object in society, depending on the social context.⁴⁵ *Creando* is the present progressive form of the infinitive *crear* – to create – implying an ongoing transformation of society, as well as an aesthetic newness, as *crear* implies more originality and aesthetic sensibility than a verb like *hacer* – Spanish for to do or to make. Thus, as reflected in their title, their work aims to create a continual opening in language whereby human classifications, like gendered bodies (*mujeres*), can evolve in a present progressive movement of constant emergence.

Mujeres Creando's Work

The original Mujeres Creando collective was formed in La Paz in 1990 after Julieta Paredes and María Galindo – at that time, a lesbian couple in their twenties -- returned to Bolivia from Italy, where they had been living in exile for several years. “Julieta y María regresaron a Bolivia en 1990 convencidas de que debían construir un espacio de mujeres en el país. . . así fue como nació la comunidad Creando, en una casa ubicada en las laderas de Villa Fátima, en las Delicias” (Mujeres Creando, *PMNC* 8). Although never officially exiled by the state, they suffered what has been described as “un exilio sexual, humano y político” (Mujeres Creando, *VdeD* 36). By geographically distancing themselves from their own society, their sexual difference within the norms of La Paz came into clearer focus and they returned to Bolivia determined to change gender paradigms on their own terms. The couple, along with Mónica Mendoza, a university student in La Paz, formed Mujeres Creando and shortly thereafter published their first book, *¿Y si fuésemos una espejo de la otra? Por un feminismo no racista* (1992), a text aimed at decolonizing feminism from a subject position of alterity in Bolivia. Shortly after forming the group, Mujeres Creando recognized the need for a concrete space from which to work, and so opened up the “Centro Cultural Feminista Café Carcajada” in July of 1992, described by them as “un lugar adonde confluyen las utopías intuitivas de mujeres campesinas, cocalleras, lesbianas, universitarias, madres, colegialas” (*VdeD* 41), underscoring the heterogeneous ideals upon which the group was founded.⁴⁶

With a space of their own, Mujeres Creando began to develop strategies for raising social awareness around gender, sexual, and class inequality. Their early work consisted of spraying colorful urban graffiti, producing a newspaper, creating a television program, performing in the street, participating in formal arts activities, organizing women's conferences, maintaining their original café, and supporting social activist work, including the takeover of a federal bank. Over

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Grosz writes about the way the body became more “amenable, malleable, subordinate to mind than before” during 1980s Western contexts. “Such a conception never questioned the body's status as an *object*, never even considered the possibility that the body could be understood as subject, agent, or activity.” *Space, Time, and Perversion*. New York: Routledge. 1995. 2.

⁴⁶ Writes Helen Álvarez, “Con el nacimiento de Mujeres Creando, surgió otra necesidad: tener un espacio propio . . . como resultado de un intenso trabajo, en Julio de 1992 abrió sus puertas el Centro Cultural Feminista “Café Carcajada.” El azoro de la sociedad paceña no se dejó esperar, la cultura urbana no entendía el concepto de un espacio de mujeres, incluso intentaron identificarlo con un burdel” (*PMNC* 12).

the course of their first decade, they published a number of different books including: *Seamos creativas, hagamos lo imposible, un mundo no machista y sin opresiones* (1992); *Sexo, placer y sexualidad* (1996), a sexual-education handbook for Bolivian women; *Porque la memoria no es puro cuento* (2002), a book that came out of their participation in an international women's conference in Argentina; *Mujeres grafiteando* (2003), a collection of their graffiti; and *La virgen de los deseos* (2005), a book that provides an historical overview of Mujeres Creando and their work. I have drawn primarily on *Porque la memoria no es puro cuento* and *La virgen de los deseos* for my historical grounding of the group. I also refer in the latter half of this chapter to Julieta Paredes's published poetry which includes *Amor y lucha* (1992), an early personalized poetry collection, *Grafiteadas* (1999), which captures the graffiti she personally has done around La Paz, and *Con un montón de palabras* (2000), her most recent personalized collection of poetry. The only book-length scholarship on Mujeres Creando is a volume edited by Elizabeth Monasterios titled *No pudieron con nosotras* (Plural 2006), which includes chapters by Julieta Paredes and María Galindo as well as Monasterios, Ana Rebeca Prada M., Mónica X. Delgado, Freya Schiwy, an Introduction by John Beverley and an epilogue by Norma Klahn. This book explores their creation of an autonomous feminism in Bolivia from various disciplinary perspectives and has been integral to my understanding of their work.

Despite the various critiques their work undertakes -- ranging from neo-liberalism to a more recent refusal to blindly interpret populist Evo Morales's election as president as an elixir against social inequalities -- Mujeres Creando has most consistently identified itself as a feminist, anarchist group.⁴⁷ The evasion of an official history, however, is representative of the way Mujeres Creando approach their role as authors of their movement. Individual authorship is something they continually challenge as a group, whether by "signing" their work as a symbol or performing collectively, often with active "spectator" participation. There is not one voice that tells their history, but instead disparate accounts of their kaleidoscopic work, emphasizing an approach to history that is not about creating a subjective totality, but rather an inter-subjective dialogue of infinite possibility.

Although María Galindo and Julieta Paredes co-led the group for close to ten years, in 2002 Paredes split off from the group in order to work more actively at the grassroots level through community-based activities in and around La Paz. As both Paredes herself and Elizabeth Monasterios relate it in *No pudieron con nosotras*, Julieta Paredes began to define herself from an Andean feminist position that privileged the anarchist traditions of the anti-colonial feminist fights and the Andean form of political organization that celebrates a community-based democracy, whereby political action would derive from a Feminist Assembly.⁴⁸ Paredes now primarily leads social development activities for the La Paz members of the *Asamblea Feminista*, a diverse group of women who have worked to promote women's needs to the Morales's government; the *Asamblea Feminista* also has members in all nine provinces of Bolivia. Paredes's work emphasizes the collective aspects to decision-making and the long-held Andean belief that

⁴⁷ María Galindo wrote a speech titled, "Evo Morales y la descolonización fálica del estado Boliviano" that criticizes Morales directly. See www.mujierecreando.org, under the link "Artículos/Articles."

⁴⁸ See Monasterios's chapter "Los desafíos del fenimismo autónomo en sociedades que arrastran pasados coloniales" in her edited book *No pudieron con nosotras*.

the *ayllu* is “el verdadero sujeto en los Andes,” as expressed by intercultural philosopher Javier Medina (79). Paredes maintains the original Café Carcajada for Asamblea Feminista meetings as well as educational programs and social outreach activities. Most recently she has been developing a conceptual framework that rethinks male-female relationships from a position of reciprocity, rather than from one of hierarchy. Galindo, on the other hand, opened a new café called *La Virgen de los deseos*, in 2005 and has maintained the group’s original name, *Mujeres Creando*. Although the reason for the divide is not explicitly documented, Galindo appears more heavily involved in the international art and performance art worlds – having participated with others in the 2007 Hemispheric Institute’s Performance Forum in Argentina as well as finishing recent art exhibits in the Basque Country – whereas Paredes is a political activist first and foremost, and aims to decolonize society from the bottom up. Paredes’s most recent work with the *Asamblea feminista* in Bolivia, often goes on behind the scenes, but is interested in catalyzing deep social change through putting forward a new way of thinking about gender, sexuality, and being. In sum, while Paredes concerns herself with social processes, Galindo, in my opinion, is much more fixated on her individual public identity and the arrival to a final product.

However, bracketing the group’s divide and its implications for a moment, their early work is integral to understanding how they created a space of ethical inter-subjectivity in language through embodied words and images. In the retrospective work titled *Porque la memoria no es puro cuento* (2002), the editor and early member of the group, Helen Álvarez, explains that in 1993, *Mujeres Creando*’s graffiti began appearing on walls throughout the city of La Paz when Bolivia was in the thick of a political election that would lead to Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s victory. Their graffiti spoke out against racism, and state, family, and sexual violence (*VdeD* 42). Reflecting on the power of this medium, and demonstrating *Mujeres Creando*’s conception of graffiti in relation to embodiment, they say: “Grafitear así es pues algo muy serio, es una acción donde ponemos nuestro cuerpo en la lucha histórica para transformar nuestra sociedad. No ponemos un cuerpo heroico, no un cuerpo militarizado, ponemos un cuerpo vulnerable, sensible, sensual, creativo, desarmado y no violento” (*PMNC* 205). By putting forth a “vulnerable and non-violent” body, *Mujeres Creando* draw attention to the trauma that militarized and armed bodies have inflicted upon exposed subjects. But moreover, they contrast their bodies to those implicated in an ethos of war, an ethos in opposition to their conception of the vulnerable, innocent subject and to Levinas’s philosophy.⁴⁹ From 1993 onward, graffiti became a cornerstone to their work, with its mix of eye-catching aesthetics and engaged political messages that consistently challenged a neo-liberal subjectivity, as will be explored in depth later.

The public’s reaction to both Paredes and Galindo as a couple as well as the group’s work as a whole was and continues to be contentious. As one extreme example, on May 29, 1993 Galindo and Paredes and Julieta Ojeda, a supporter still actively engaged with María Galindo’s part of the group today, were preparing food for a local festival at the original café. Jhonnathan Makae, a French businessman and acquaintance, stopped by Café Carcajada and invited them to a party to be held at his apartment that night.⁵⁰ As Galindo relates it in a newspaper article that ran shortly thereafter, “Asistimos a la fiesta, pero cuando bailábamos

⁴⁹ For an elaborate discussion on the ethos of war, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres’s *Against War*, particularly Chapters One and Two, which both address Levinas’s work.

⁵⁰ “Agredidas por extranjeros sin justificativo alguno” in *Presencia*, June 6, 1993.

entre nosotras fuimos agredidas y vejadas sin consideración alguna.’ Lo grave – dijo – es que la agresión tuvo características racistas y antifeministas que lastiman mucho.”⁵¹ By their account, Paredes and Galindo adamantly refused to dance with male guests, and additionally ignored insinuations that a group sex session might be an appropriate way to end the evening (*VdeD* 45). After a physical altercation ensued inside the party, Galindo, Paredes, and Ojeda were further harassed and followed onto the street, at which point they got away in order to call authorities. They began to form a legal case against both Jhonnathan Makae and Darrien du Portal, who within a week after the incident, had conveniently returned to France. On May 4th *La Razón* published an article recounting events through the eyes of du Portal. According to the paper “[a]firma, por el contrario, que las agresoras fueron “tres mujeres histéricas” que armaron un inexplicable alboroto en una fiesta a la que no estaban invitadas.” The same article reports, however, refers to the certified medical reports of Galindo and Paredes, which clearly indicate the extent of their injuries. They also denounced the French men as “racist” and “antifeminist.”

Although Paredes and Galindo had officially informed authorities and documented their physical wounds, no legal action ever ensued. Refusing to ignore the injustices suffered, they initiated a hunger strike they would sustain for fifteen days, forcing the government to react to what was seen as a human rights violation. As Álvarez summarizes, “La huelga de hambre terminó tras la intervención del alcalde paceño, Julio Mantilla, quien se comprometió a interceder ante las autoridades, pero eso nunca se hizo realidad” (*VdeD* 47). This event is particularly relevant in light of the spectacular elements to Mujeres Creando’s work. Whereas the idea of physical sexual activity between Paredes and Galindo would have thrilled the eyes of those who had suggested a group sex activity within the private walls of the party, the spectacle their bodies had been turned into after they engaged in a scuffle with the other guests was conversely met with a blind eye by public authorities. It is particularly appropriate that they would have responded with a hunger strike, an exercise aimed at quite literally erasing their bodies and their physical desires – whether the desire for food or the desire for same-sex love -- from La Paz. Their creative work addresses the contradictory reactions to their alterity. They are both exotic spectacles gaped at and simultaneously vulnerable subjects brushed aside when inconvenient to maintaining normative rules. This tense dichotomy reveals underlying hypocrisies in the way ethics and embodiment relate in the public sphere.

In 1995, Mujeres Creando began publishing a newspaper, appropriately titled *Mujer Pública* and described by them as constituting “una relación ética con la palabra del movimiento” (*VdeD* 45), connecting their ethics to language. In an effort to sell their paper they initiated “acciones de la calle,” or street happenings, attracting crowds interested in the novelty of their radical rhetoric, often aimed at critiquing the neoliberal discourse imported from the north. They deconstructed the biased rhetoric that multilateral NGOs like USAID and The World Bank were wielding in relationship to women, particularly that which espoused “equality” to men. Mujeres Creando challenged the ideal that females should aim to be the same as men, not only across genders but also across class, race, and geographic spaces in favor of the continual acknowledgement of complementary difference. Galindo and Paredes were particularly concerned about the fact that USAID was funding the participation of women from Latin America in the Fourth Global Women’s Conference in Beijing. Although the financial support

⁵¹ Ibid.

symbolized an opportunity for Latin American women to have a voice at the table it also meant their participation was contingent on a tacit acceptance of conditions determining what topics the meeting would address and the implicit neoliberal gendered frame within which the meeting would be conducted. Rallying support for their critique throughout Bolivia, Mujeres Creando actively spoke out against the Beijing conference organizers' rules of engagement with domestic workers, campesinas, women from regional labor movements, and with women from El Alto, a predominantly Aymara and historically activist city north of La Paz. The result of this coordination was the publication of "Dignidad y autonomía," a self-financed statement that spoke out against what Mujeres Creando saw as the complicity between USAID, the World Bank, the female representatives from Bolivia to the conference, and the Bolivian government.⁵²

The aforementioned is only one of many examples of Mujeres Creando's efforts to decolonize the NGO rhetoric around gender and to expose the insidious "institucionalización del feminismo" happening in South America.⁵³ In one of the segments that Mujeres Creando produced for their Thursday night prime-time television show that aired for three months starting in January of 1999, Julieta Ojeda – a current member of María Galindo's faction of Mujeres Creando – is shown sitting on top of a brand new red car as she narrates the fictional story of a certain daughter who picks up her mother at the airport in this shiny car that, she explains, an NGO she works for gave her as a gift. She then explains to her mother how she lives in the upper class South of La Paz because she needs to dedicate herself to feminist work and wants the tranquility of this wealthier area of the city. As Ojeda's narrative and the video progresses, the "daughter" explains that she has maids to clean and cook because she does not have time to uphold domestic duties since she is dedicating her life to women's issues. The video, although fictitious, draws attention to the hypocrisies between theory and practice; between rhetoric and action.

In 1999 The Museum of Contemporary Art, *La Reina Sofía*, in Madrid invited María Galindo, who had increasingly become the more public "face" of Mujeres Creando, to participate in an international exhibit titled "Utopías." Galindo put together an installation she called "Así como tú me quieres, yo no quiero ser de ti." As part of her performance she called herself an "impostora" because she wanted to emphasize that she considered herself outside the system of privileges in which those who consider themselves "artists" dwell, challenging the desire to be labeled an artist while in the same gesture pushing a label she saw as being imposed from the outside – artist -- to accommodate her subversive intervention. This rebellious stance is a page ripped from the classic playbook of the notion of avant-garde art, whose very premise is based on a rejection or outright questioning of pre-established labels. Like so many avant-garde artists before her – South American included -- by calling herself an artist and denying her

⁵² Although nothing was changed – USAID funded the Latin American women as planned – the document catalyzed Mujeres Creando's future collaboration with an autonomous feminist group in Argentina, ATEM (la Asociación de Trabajo y Estudio sobre la Mujer). This affiliation led to the presentation of "Dignidad y autonomía" at another conference called "Paralela de la Paralela" in Mar de Plata.

⁵³ In an article titled "Indigestar al patriarcado," published in the magazine *Cuarto Intermedio* in Cochabamba, Bolivia in November of 1998, and reproduced in *La Virgen de los deseos*, María Galindo launches a thorough critique of the NGO influence on feminism in Bolivia.

status as artist, Galindo entered into the paradox of becoming an artist at once. A year later, Mujeres Creando received yet another invitation from *La Reina Sofia*, this time to participate in the largest exhibit of contemporary Latin American art the museum had shown to date. The exhibit was organized by five prestigious art critics from Cuba, Argentina, Mexico and Spain, all of whom had diverse interpretations of the history of art. A polemic sparked among them when one of the critics, Rafael Doctor, proposed that Mujeres Creando exclusively occupy a coveted space in the museum's exhibit space for one month. His suggestion was met with skepticism because Mujeres Creando's work – performative and graffiti art – was not classifiable and did not extend from formal arts training, but rather, a commitment to socio-political change (*VdeD* 78).

Mujeres Creando occupied the aforementioned coveted space in the museum for over a month during which time Galindo, Paredes, and Florentina Alegre (another participant and member of the group) interacted with over 70,000 visitors. Simply by being present, they pushed the dissenting critics as well as visitors to expand their conception of art. However, this focus on artistic representation and the aesthetic realm instead of on the ground, grassroots community organizing work would increasingly divide the group, as Paredes has consistently been more interested in informal social change from below rather than aesthetic projects that do not necessarily correspond to the needs of a community base. The Reina Sofia initiated only the beginning of their exhibits in museums and is indicative of part of a gradual process of incorporation into a system of aestheticized art to which Julieta Paredes has remained consistently opposed. After this exhibit in Madrid, Mujeres Creando sans Paredes received invitations to represent their work from Zaragoza, Barcelona, Valencia as well as Germany. Most recently, Galindo exhibited her newest work “Ninguna mujer nace para puta” or “No woman is born a whore” in Bilbao, Vitoria, Zarauz, and Zaragoza.⁵⁴ This exhibit and accompanying book – co-authored with another South American feminist activist named Sonia Sánchez – aimed to draw attention to the exploitation of sex workers and the exploitation of women's bodies in Bolivia and beyond.

In 2001, Mujeres Creando gained international attention because they became involved in occupying the Agency of Bank Supervision (Agencia de Supervisión de los Bancos) in Bolivia, in solidarity with a debtors' organization called *Deudora*, composed of 70% female and 30% male members indebted to microcredit lending institutions. According to an interview with Julieta Ojeda that ran in the on-line and print magazine, *Z Magazine*, desperate armed members of the debtors' group took over the Agency of Bank Supervision, demanding total forgiveness of all debts.⁵⁵ Mujeres Creando heard about the occupation on the radio and went to the bank themselves in a show of solidarity with the debtors, with whom they had been in close contact. According to Ojeda's account, the financial institutions had committed usury, deceiving people who did not understand the technical language of financial contracts and exploiting the ignorance of an often under-educated peasant class. Prior to the aforementioned take over, Mujeres Creando had been researching Banco Sol and Pro Mujer, a popular financing NGO, but “sólo encontra[ron] abuso y más abuso, usura y otros delitos” (*PMNC* 29). Mujeres Creando

⁵⁴See www.mujerescreando.org for photos of these exhibits.

⁵⁵ This interview was conducted by Sophie Styles and appeared in the June 1, 2002 issue of the magazine: <http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/jun02styles.html>

had also organized peaceful protests with the debtors, such as one where the debtors marched from their communities into La Paz, took off their shoes and dipped their feet in paint, leaving imprints of their soles on walls in the center of La Paz to symbolize their arduous journey. By Ojeda's account, the debtors were in La Paz for three months during which time the presidents of the banks refused to hear them. They had been met with tear gas on numerous occasions during their attempts to speak with the authorities, and as a result, a number of them had developed respiratory infections. By this point, they had become desperate and for this reason resorted to taking over the bank, a decision that Mujeres Creando did not directly support. At the end of the occupation of the Agency of Bank Supervision, a significant amount of the debt was forgiven.⁵⁶

Spectacular Bodies

I explore corporeal spectacles as aesthetic and ethical acts that reveal the responsibility between the singular subject and the collective community. I then turn directly to the way Mujeres Creando create spectacles in order to bring attention to the unethical racial and gendered hierarchies of society as well as the flaws that riddle neo-liberal discourse.⁵⁷ Although spectacle can be repressive, as in the case of Bartolina Sisa with which we began the chapter, I focus on the liberating aspects of Mujeres Creando's live spectacles as an embodied response to sexual and gender repression and normative rules. Regardless of what space within which it takes place, unlike other artistic mediums, live spectacle uses the human body itself as a visible communicative code between a performer and an audience. Because the surface of the body becomes the primary locus of communicative power, the medium is hyper-visual, sometimes to the point of caricature. The hypervisual aspects to the surface of the body upon which spectacle hinges for its effectiveness may work in three ways. First, spectacle may make viewers more aware of the way their own bodies are deciphered visually by those who see them, drawing out differences between subjects, and pointing to the relationality of being. Second, spectacle might critique the way we classify based on visual characteristics in a way that reduces being to a glossing of corporeal surface, rather than a living creature unto itself. Third, spectacle can also provide an outlet for the enactment of repressed desires, highlighting the externally imposed and internally willed powers on the body (the state and the consciousness that controls desire), while it enables the transgression of these invisible lines in an assertion of agency. Spectacle can stimulate other marginalized bodies to awaken to their own desires and to feel solidarity with others' way of being in the world. Of course, generalizations about spectacle aside, the meaning of any spectacle is contingent on its particular setting and the web of relationships it exposes.

Baz Kershaw, a critic of radical performance studies and author of four books on performance and spectacle, defines spectacle in an article, "Curiosity or Contempt? On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism" as "customarily splattered with riven responses: it is loved or hated, assiduously embraced or shunned" (592). Kershaw argues that despite the binary

⁵⁶ The event is also inadequately summarized in *Porque la memoria no es puro cuento*, but it is difficult to discern exactly what went on who was responsible for what. Another article on it is: <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no10/creando.htm>.

⁵⁷ The coloniality of being is discussed by Nelson Maldonado-Torres in his article "On the Coloniality of Being" in the journal *Postcolonial Studies*, spring 2007.

assumption of either/or – loved or hated -- the same displays of excess can be the subject of rapture *and* disgust in a viewer. More significantly he believes that spectacle seems always to transform the human, however conceived “into something more or less than itself” (593). It is not necessarily that the human is turned “into something more or less than itself,” but sometimes that the hypocrisies of who or what determines a “normal” human, or an ideal subject, are revealed through performance. In his work, Kershaw denotes four types of spectacle: (1) spectacles of domination -- associated with the church, monarchy, state; (2) spectacles of resistance -- of the people, the masses, the revolutionary avant-garde; (3) spectacles of contradiction – spectacles that negotiate new types of power-broking, hunger strikes, saturnalia; and (4) spectacles of deconstruction – that displace the nature of the “real.” This chapter began with an example of a spectacle of domination as Bartolina Sisa’s body was transformed into a dismembered “less-than human” site by colonial forces in Bolivia. This domestication, or making “docile” of indigenous and female bodies, has been a constant throughout the history of colonial Latin America but one that has been met with sustained resistance. This violent public performance is similar in effect to the spectacles referred to in Michel Foucault’s articulation of eighteenth-century public violence as the chief mode of punishment in *Discipline and Punish*. In Foucault’s reading, it is in fact precisely at the end of the eighteenth-century that punishment as a physically-inflicted bodily practice made into a public spectacle transitioned into its more current, or for Foucault “modern” form, punishment as the confinement of a body in a penitentiary system whose goal is the reform of the “soul” or “spirit.”⁵⁸ A soul or spirit might be disciplined through language, but likewise, the same being might use language as a way of resisting such discipline. The very nature of language is that it constantly mutates, reflecting its open and infinite form. Language resists discipline, by continually transforming itself each time any one self speaks to the other.

It was not until 1994 when María Galindo, in an interview with the newspaper “La razón,” declared herself a lesbian publicly that Mujeres Creando came to be outwardly associated with queer rights as well as women’s rights. Their homosexuality is extremely important in terms of its connection to the body because Galindo’s and Paredes’s bodies came to symbolize sites of same-sex desire in the public’s eyes. Until this moment of public enunciation, their sexual orientation was not a secret, but it was not necessarily a predominant characteristic of the group because the base of the movement was – and continues to be -- heterogeneous (*PMNC* 19). The performance I analyze below is particularly groundbreaking within and beyond the Bolivian context because it emphasizes lesbian identity through the positioning of the physical body and creates a public queer space in La Paz, both physically and in language. It points to an alternate subjectivity to that of a white, heteronormative male.

Street performance became a means through which Paredes and Galindo could enact their sexual difference. Performance activates the physical body, with its dangling limbs and moving energy, allowing subjects to communicate their desires outside of written language’s

⁵⁸ “Punishment,” writes Foucault, “had gradually ceased to be a spectacle . . . Punishment, then, will tend to become the most hidden part of the penal process . . .”(10-11). Foucault further cites G. de Mably, a French legislator, who wrote in penal reform documents in 1789, “Punishment, if I may so put it, should strike the soul rather than the body” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 16).

circumscription. At the same time, it can ignite new areas of language through its interruptive power. During a street performance undertaken in the late 1990s, Paredes and Galindo painted a large (approximately 10 x 10 feet) heart in the middle of the street in a crimson red color reminiscent of the color of blood, conjuring up a sacrificial scene. In the video of the event, passers-by in La Paz are shown gathering – one man is adamantly giving the “thumbs-down” sign with his hand – before Galindo and Paredes pick up a dozen red roses each, which they begin distributing to audience members. Some of the onlookers accept and smell the roses openly, others accept them with a look of skepticism, and still others outwardly refuse them. This embodied act of gift-giving and its acceptance creates a reciprocal bond between the disparate citizens of La Paz based on practice: they share space and are corporeally proximate. The moving gestures captured on the video demonstrate a bond between bodies that goes beyond only rhetorical affiliation, important for creating spaces of practical resistance to “official” discourses.

After establishing a level of rapport with their audience, Galindo and Paredes spread out a white sheet on top of the painted heart, upon which they spray painted, “Somos libres y dejamos a las y los demás que lo sean.” Grammatically, this sentence emphasizes that Galindo and Paredes exist (*somos*) in relation to others (*las y los demás*), pointing to the relationality of being as opposed to a cult of individualism associated with neoliberalism. The use of the word “free” articulates their agency to choose their sexuality among other things and the word *dejamos* draws attention to the fact that despite their personal choices, Paredes and Galindo are not imposing their views on anyone. The implied question is thus why should anyone else’s desires be imposed on them?

As the performance continues, they lay down a blanket and pillows on top of the spray-painted sheet and climb into their makeshift public bed together. Each has a pillow under her head, and both are covered in a wool Andean blanket typically found in households in the region, connecting with audience members through this materiality. They clasp hands tightly in their shared bed on the exposed street of La Paz. The camera continually pans to the crowd, as Galindo and Paredes take turns speaking from a microphone. They say: “Estamos aquí vulnerables a sus críticas, su morbosidad, sus condenas y sus juicios, pero ninguna puede negar que nuestro amor es un amor valiente que construye, que crea, que hace una nueva sociedad.” In this sentence, they emphasize their physical and emotional vulnerability as they lie down on the ground, open to the criticism they anticipate receiving because of their actions. However, while acknowledging the possibility of critique, they also point to the underlying love that defines their relationship together. As they describe it, their love is a constructive love that creates space for “a new society.” This new society departs from the relation between two bodies, gender or sexual identity aside, that form a loving, supportive pair.

By purposely making a spectacle of themselves, Galindo and Paredes draw attention to their lesbian identity and to their right to live and love in the same public space as other citizens, despite their sexual difference. Through this performance, they push public space to accommodate their bodies and their own discourse begins to affect the bodies of others by instigating conversation and dialogue, as can be witnessed in the video. Having been written upon countless times before – both by official and unofficial discourse, as they have been formally arrested on various occasions – through this spectacle they demonstrate the agency they have to represent their own bodily desires publicly, even if these deviate from what is

considered the norm, and open the space for what they name “a new society.” This new society includes a public space in which two women can peacefully demonstrate their difference, ideally, without being stared at or ridiculed. Ironically, in order to reach a place where they one day might go unnoticed, Paredes and Galindo perform hypervisibility today.

As a second example of spectacle as contradiction, *Mujeres Creando*’s hunger strike derives some of its impact from its diachronic referencing to past hunger strikes carried out in Bolivia. Marcia Stephenson’s work is particularly useful in this context, as she devotes a chapter of her book to an historical overview of significant hunger strikes that have occurred in Bolivia, particularly those led by women. According to Stephenson, “hunger (desire) calls attention to a permeable sense of self and to the appetitive relations that throw into question boundaries between the self and the other” (6). In the fifth chapter of her book, Stephenson speaks of four different historical moments in Bolivia when hunger and more particularly hunger strikes became tools of counter-hegemonic resistance. First, during 1781, prior to Bartolina Sisa and Tupac Katari’s death, Aymara insurgents strategically cut off the food supply to La Paz, thereby subverting the Spaniard’s desires to maintain the “impermeability” of the city’s boundaries. In this sense, Stephenson observes that “immured within the city walls, the inhabitants of La Paz became their own abject” (163). In *Mujeres Creando*’s case, their hunger strike emphasizes the fact that they – lesbians – are seen by some as the abject threat to their society. In this sense, as elaborated by Frantz Fanon, *Mujeres Creando*’s existence is an example of subontological difference. The French businessmen treated them as if they were somehow *less than* being because they disrupted the social norms of a party. They were then *less than* again because the authorities did not intervene on their behalf. And yet, through their hunger strike, the very *less than* that defined them paradoxically draws attention, in the end, to their innate humanity: their desire for ethical treatment and for dialogue with their fellow citizens.

Lastly, in one of the episodes that *Mujeres Creando* taped for their program “*Creando Mujeres*” that ran every Thursday night during primetime for three months in 1999, members of the group went to a wealthy southern area of La Paz, Cala Coto, and stood in front of the large chain grocery store *Ketal*. This store served as a strategic backdrop to their criticism because it has come to symbolize class division in Bolivia since the majority of the population continues to shop at open-air markets or small stores, not larger chain stores like *Ketal* that are customarily stocked with imported and processed foods. As part of this event, indigenous women from *Mujeres Creando* as well as Julieta Paredes, dressed in a pollera and traditional Aymara hat, gave out small woven hats adorned with a ribbon that read “Un país feliz es un país sin racismos” to the primarily white, female clientele walking in and out of the store. As traditionally-dressed indigenous women are not frequently spotted at this store, many of the primarily white women reacted to them negatively, some even assuming that they were there “begging” for money, as evinced by a few of their video-taped reactions.⁵⁹ Some others responded positively, pinning the hat to their lapel, in a sign of solidarity with the anti-racist message. Still others, one woman in particular, seemed to think that putting the hat on her lapel was more of a nuisance than anything. She climbed into her car with the delicate hat in hand, but encountering difficulty in

⁵⁹ For instance, one older woman said with a sigh, “Ya he comprado. No puedo comprar todos los días” while another one says, “No tengo nada de monedas para darte,” even though neither one was asked for money.

pinning it on to her shirt, she tossed it out the passenger seat's window onto the ground. In this video, Julieta Paredes's role in deconstructing the racist hypocrisy toward indigenous peoples is particularly poignant. As she speaks into a microphone at the end of the video, she explains that in a word, the day's activity was about "hipocresía." She comments that "de chola, nadie me acerca a hablar" (as a chola, no one approaches me to speak) whereas usually some women approach her when she is dressed as "herself" to say hello or comment on her work.

Lastly, in another portion of the television programming, *Mujeres Creando* deconstruct the idealized portrayal of the idealized North American female body through an avant-garde performance built around the use of mirrors and Barbie dolls. At the beginning of the video two middle-aged women in the streets of La Paz hold a full-length mirror on its side, with Barbie dolls perched precariously along its edge. As the women walk, the mirror captures the ethnically diverse population of La Paz citizens, almost none of whom look remotely like blonde, twig-like Barbie dolls. The action draws attention to the glaring disconnect between the Barbies, whose images circulate on the surface of a material world, and the reality that is reflected back as part of the same image. This reality will never meet this idealized material expectation, and moreover, attempts at reaching this external material goal only prohibit a subject's internal tranquility. Later, the same Barbie "episode" features various females whose dressed bodies are wound with white rope that is dangling with Barbie dolls. This rope, too, symbolizes the way that material images confine not just the body but the spirit of women whose form and movements simply do not correspond to those of a Barbie doll's. As the video progresses, the women began to dance, slowly seeming to lose control of their bodies, as the Barbies are symbolically pulled off their bodies, both by them and by other women who help them tear or cut the string with scissors. Because the Barbie doll is an export from outside Bolivia and South America, the impact of the performance registers at an allegorical level whereby the external influence of the neo-liberal individual consumer-based US is felt upon the female social body of Bolivia. In the context of the current political climate in Bolivia, representative of the failure of the duplication of a neo-liberal political model, this display gains further weight in retrospect, in its deconstruction of a normative heterosexual female subject and a replicable economic model. The music that accompanies the video adds particular impact to the scene because by the end of the "episode," the women are dancing freely, almost chaotically, in a show of their regained liberty and the spontaneous creation of energy that can emerge from the inter-subjective proximity to other bodies.

Poetics and Coalitional Spaces

While Paredes's performative moves are integral to her assertion of lesbian difference, her rhetorical strategies, both in her speeches and her poetry, showcase important similarities between herself and a larger collective of both women and men. It is important to highlight her poetic because while her work with *Mujeres Creando* has received a lot of attention for its radical nature, or aforementioned hypervisibility, Paredes's much more muted poetry connects her lesbian identity to a broader community, important for building alliances with other women or men who might not be out yet or who are supportive of queer rights. It also demonstrates the continued importance of words themselves as disruptive shifters of common perspectives.

Paredes titled one of her poetry collections *Un montón de palabras*, drawing attention to the

literal nature to her work. In speaking with her in La Paz, she talked passionately about poetry as an activity she undertakes to process the lived experience of daily life in *Villa Fátima*, a largely working-class, hillside neighborhood in La Paz. Her poetry is not an isolated hermeneutic space from the world, but rather, intimately tied to the steep ascent from La Paz that brings you to her door; to the laundry that is blowing on a roof next door; and to the smell of pasta that is cooking in her kitchen. She downplays the fact that what she has written is or needs to be called “poetry,” simply calling it a “pile of words.”

Paredes opens the collection with a poem about a simple, festive celebration on Bolivian soil. The poetry consists of vocabulary of the everyday, and would be easily accessible to the members of the community that she wants to build:

Mujeres Creando ha decidido bailar y cantar
Sobre este suelo
Poniendo alas a las desobediencias
Para que sean palomas y corazones de paz

Decidimos
Pintarle vestidos de colores
A este suelo desnudo
Unas veces rojo, otras lila, otras verde
Otra el arco iris entero
Hasta que este nuestro suelo
Se alegre.
Se limpie las amarguras de su piel
Y nos lance puñados de frutas en carcajadas. (*Un montón* 3)

The process of “painting the soil” described in these lines captures Paredes’s (and the larger feminist community’s) aspiration to make the simplest of the landscape’s elements her own; she wants the right to access and to leave an impression on common public space. The soil itself becomes feminized through the “colored dresses” that Paredes will paint in all of the colors of the rainbow, insinuating through metaphor the inclusionary politics to her work. The rainbow Incan flag so prevalent in the Andes is almost identical to the gay rights flag, and the feminization of the soil links women’s rights to indigenous rights, as the latter conceive the soil as part of Pacha Mama, an earth mother. Paredes’s choice of the word *carcajadas*, in the last line above, invokes her consistently bemused attitude. While the message behind her work is serious, her cackling laughter always echoes behind it, with the goal of unsettling the “rational” faces of the elite class in Bolivia. This laughter reverberates in the name of the café that the original *Mujeres Creando* opened, *Café Carcajada*, which loosely translates to Café Cackle. This word’s onomatopoeic sound brings traces of the sensorial experience of the body into language, in some way translating or accounting for the material reality of the poet’s lived experiences.

Symbolically drawing together bodies in her written work, in a 2006 article Paredes wrote titled “Para que el sol vuelva a calentar,” she rhetorically builds alliances between herself and a collective with the simple juxtaposition of a “we” and “I,” maintaining her personal difference while fostering allegiance between women. For instance, she writes, referring to the title of the

book in which her chapter is published, *No pudieron con nosotras*:

No pudieron con nosotras . . . aquí estamos, aquí seguimos, dándole dolores de cabeza al sistema y cada día para nosotras es la celebración del placer y un rito a la vida. Para mí, Julieta, vivir sin esta vida es imposible ya. Si no fuera lo que soy – aymara feminista lesbiana – no sabría cómo hacer, ni por dónde empezar mis días. El solo hecho de pensarme como una mujer aymara de barrio, calladita y sumisa a lo que diga mi entorno, lesbiana que a diario tendría que ocultar mi deseo y amor por las mujeres, sería un suplicio. (*No pudieron* 61)

This paragraph, which appears at the beginning of the article, inserts Paredes's sexual identity into a larger community. The term *nosotras*, the exclusively feminine form of the first person plural, "we," is set in opposition to the non-gendered specific "they" of the verb *poder*. This unspecified "they" could not (*no pudieron*) with "us" (*nosotras*: the female exclusive form), setting up a tension between a "we" and an oppositional "them" and fostering camaraderie between those women who identify with the *nosotras*. Like the celebratory verses of her previous poem, Paredes emphasizes that the day-to-day life of this collective "we" consists of celebrating pleasure and a basic ritual to life. In this sense, the defining characteristics of this all feminine "we" are different, and Paredes's lesbian identity is more different still from an implied neocolonial "them." In fact, the denial of such difference would be a torturous act (*un suplicio*). Through an allusion to torture, Paredes purposely invokes human rights discourse here, and the symbolic violence enacted on bodies through a limitation imposed on their desires. As Judith Butler has opined in relation to gender identity, "Possibility is not a luxury. It is as crucial as bread" (Butler 29). Here, Paredes is begging for something quite simple: to live without hiding her sexual identity in public, to realize the possibility of being herself.

Ultimately, within the *nosotras* there is still space for the person, Julieta, who names herself in the paragraph and carves out a particular space for her identity: "Si no fuera lo que soy – aymara, feminista, lesbiana – no sabría cómo hacer, ni por dónde empezar mis días." Here, Paredes speaks from a position of self-proclaimed alterity, identifying with three different groups – *aymara* indigenous, feminists, and lesbians – all affiliations that determine the way that she lives each of her days but none of which specifically limit her. In this sentence, although declaring her differences, Paredes reaches out toward additional groups that both make up a specific *nosotras* but that also form part of various communities at once.

Such a navigation of tricky terrain between building groups of alliance, maintaining difference, and acknowledging similarity extends beyond the national borders of Bolivia for Paredes. While quick to name herself a feminist, she is careful to distinguish her brand of feminism as distinct from neoliberal feminism. Paredes explains that in Bolivia, "se habla del feminismo como invención de las mujeres del norte, tomando como referente movimientos mundialmente conocidos como el período de los 70 y los movimientos por la liberación de la mujer en EEUU y Europa, ampliamente propagandizados por los medios de comunicación" (*NPCN* 68). While constructing a Bolivian-rooted brand of feminism that stems from the embodied realities of women there, Paredes's antagonistic tone toward the north sometimes seems counterproductive to alliance-building, and reduces multiple and intersecting feminisms to neat binaries. Paredes writes:

Equivocadas están entonces nuestras amigas y hermanas en el norte occidental al creer que ellas inventaron la lucha feminista. Ellas inventaron su propia versión de la rebeldía mujeril ante el patriarcado. Nosotras tenemos la nuestra, heredada de nuestras abuelas, raíces propias de lo que hoy es nuestra lucha. (*No pudieron* 79)

While this rhetorical position does serve to inspire Bolivian women to own their feminism, and is directed largely at international NGOs, the gesture toward creating a “we” and a “them” based upon a stark North/South binary is not the most conducive way to opening mutually beneficial dialogue between women of the *norte occidental* and the south that could be based on the acknowledgment of co-existent similarities and differences between the two groups of women. This includes the very important recognition of “third-world feminisms” in North America and “first-world feminisms” in South America. The tensions, this is to say, are much more complex than North/South, and indicative of the need for deeper collaboration and dialogue across various geopolitical scales.

In conclusion, the contradictions and tensions within Paredes’s work are not problematic but rather symptomatic of the inextricable oppressions that Paredes, and many others, live. The lesbian space she begins to articulate is part of a larger feminist space, and sometimes secondary to larger coalitional concerns. Her multifaceted work reveals only some of the tensions that ensue in working on issues of gender, sexuality, race as they play out on local, national, and global scales and puts forward productive challenges to artificial binaries.

The Movement of Graffiti

It was while watching a graffiti writer that I first began to perceive how agency might work. As I observed the writer, his gestures revealed themselves to be simultaneously a repetitive routine and an improvisational dance; a script was obviously at the root of the performance and a script was its ultimate, durable product, but in between, as I could plainly see, a body was afforded a chance to feel itself moving through space.

--Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment* 1

A repetitive motion and an improvisational activity, graffiti writing transforms public space into a creative tablet. A simple walk up and down the Prado of La Paz, or along the main street of any South American capital city, greets the citizen and tourist alike with numerous male ghosts turned into material presences, most commonly captured in the form of iron statues. The majority of the men represented as the names of streets and plazas are of Spanish descent, war heroes of the Republic, and symbolize a male ethos of war that looms over the city. One of the plazas in Bolivia, “Isabel la Católica” is named for the Queen of the “New World” herself, a Spanish import who never stepped foot in La Paz. The gap between the white male bodies represented in static aesthetic form and the reality of the dynamic social bodies populating the

streets is vast. Mujeres Creando slips into this space. Both their spectacles and graffiti might be thought to partially fill in such glaring representational gaps as *living* aesthetic projects to the dead iron statues. Mujeres Creando's graffiti stands in, partially, for the intangible memory of women whose traces are otherwise absent in the physical space of La Paz and raises awareness around the lack of respect toward women in both private and public spheres. Their graffiti creates a dialogue with women from earlier generations who contributed to the formation of Bolivia as a nation and served as the initiators of a Latin American feminism. It also catalyzes dialogue between contemporary men and women living in La Paz through its vibrant colors and prominent placement in busy areas of heavily trafficked areas of La Paz, as explored through concrete examples below.

“Nuestro feminismo ni recicla ni rellena. Remueve, mueve, y conmueve.”⁶⁰ This graffiti tag encapsulates the way Mujeres Creando approach embodiment and language in their work. These three verbs might map to spectacle (*mueve*), which involves the physical movement of their bodies and the gathering of others around them. Graffiti, the focus of this section, stirs up (*remueve*) past bodies from feminist movements as well as the reactions of onlookers and poetry emotionally moves bodies on the interior (*conmueve*). In language, these words that create movement express the effect Galindo and Paredes see their language as having on others' bodies. Mujeres Creando creates their own *living* concept of poetry, a poetry that comes from the female communities in which Paredes was raised and continues to work, and from poetry that came before them but yet breathes again in a new context. Mujeres Creando acknowledges that female predecessors have inspired their own creative output. Galindo writes: “Hay grafiteadas que recuperamos del movimiento feminista: Alfonsina Storni, Julieta Paredes, Sor Juana [Inés de la Cruz] and Tecla Tofano de Venezuela” (*VdeD* 203). These poetic influences are not surprising because the three that Galindo names (in addition to Julieta Paredes, who I am considering a member of the original group) also had physical bodies that were perceived as anomalous “otherwise” when subjected to the societal norms around being female during their era. Additionally, all three had a vested interest in bodily representation – whether through theatre in the case of Sor Juana and Storni, or sculpture, in the case of Tofano – aimed at creating a material form that expressed their female subjectivity. Lastly, all three approached poetry as a means of corporeal transformation from a spectacular otherness into an ethical being in relation to others. Ultimately, each of the poets mentioned rebels against the writing rules of their day, pushing aesthetic form to accommodate her subjectivity, before the political sphere might be able to. Here I will explore Sor Juana and Alfonsina Storni's parallels with Mujeres Creando, postponing Tecla Tofano's art for future investigation.

During Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's era, a female who wanted to thrive outside of a domestic space had no other choice but to enter the convent. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's strategic entrance into the convent in seventeenth-century Mexico afforded her access to books and a space from which to develop her sharp creative writing while cultivating her soaring intellect. She used rhetorical devices that reverberate in the work of Mujeres Creando, often taking on a self-deprecating tone, as in “yo, la peor de todas” to anticipate and therefore circumvent the retort she assumed her male audience would make toward her work. However,

⁶⁰ See “A vosotras, grafiteras” in the March 2008 issue of *rojo y negro* based in Madrid, Spain for reference to this particular graffiti tag which is also included in Julieta Paredes's book *Grafiteadas*.

through the same gesture, she put herself in dialogue with others, making visible the inter-subjective experience of being. Like her, Mujeres Creando are the first to name themselves “locas” or “impostoras” in an effort to de-legitimize others from interpellating their bodies as if they knew them. In this way, they claim ownership over their own labels and avoid external classification, using language as part of a preemptive deconstructive performance. They build a linguistic defense around the surface of their body so that it does not have to be confined by externally imposed rhetoric, but can slip between and outside of labels.

Much like we will see in Julieta Paredes’s poetry, Sor Juana also used the spaces of daily life as inspiration for her poetry, having observed, “Si Aristóteles hubiera guisado, mucho más habría escrito” (de la Cruz XX). From inside the confined walls of the solitary life of the convent, Sor Juana was able to engage the male authorities of her day in a polemical debate around the hermeneutics of religious texts and gospels, much like Mujeres Creando have spoken out against the confines of urban space and political leadership to which they have served witness in La Paz. Centuries away, Sor Juana’s sharp tongue is recalled in a metonymic uptake of her word, and consequently, her female body through Mujeres Creando. Her physical body is not here, but the concrete and ephemeral desires embodied within it, only partially revealed through writing, continue to influence a collectivity of like-minded subjects who see language as a window to inter-subjective liberation, not a container of subject-object confinement.

To provide a few concrete examples of Sor Juana’s poetry as reiterated by Mujeres Creando, the latter spray-painted “hombres necios que acusais a la mujer sin razón” (*Grafiteadas* 48) on a wall between two colonial style windows partially covered by iron grating in La Paz. *Hombres necios*, the opening phrase to one of Sor Juana’s well-known poems, employs the vosotros form of *acusais*. The use of this form is additional evidence of the direct reference to this past era, even grammatically, in the present. Although it may have been coincidental, the photographic image of the graffiti captures an appropriate juxtaposition of the poem’s content with the colonial-style windows. Such an architectural backdrop is particularly effective at connecting the present verse to the past, given that Sor Juana used her creative agency in seventeenth-century Mexico to critique the claustrophobic society within which she lived, particularly in relation to the rights of women to access, pursue, and produce knowledge. One might imagine the ghost of Sor Juana’s spirit behind the bars of one of these windows, as if she herself had reached around and spray-painted this graffiti on the wall. By conflating their own authorship with that of Sor Juana, Mujeres Creando’s creates a diachronic dialogue with the women who went before them and reveals social biases over the course of history.

On other occasion, Mujeres Creando spray-painted, “¡Qué lindo! Yo soy la peor de todas” (*Grafiteadas* 91), an example of a postmodern (and ironic) recapitulation of Sor Juana. Again, the expression “Yo soy la peor de todas” comes directly from Sor Juana who wrote this in her *Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea*. Mujeres Creando, in writing this, ignores the insults they have received from others, celebrating the negative view others have of them and even turning the line into an, albeit sarcastic, compliment. The use of the word “yo” emphasizes the existence of the individual subject. However, as embedded in the phrase, “la peor de todas,” the “I” exists relative to the other women of the female-gendered “everyone.” Thus, both Sor Juana and Mujeres Creando’s reiteration of her poetry demonstrate a poetic intersubjectivity based on relationality between beings, not just a confined self. The one always exists among the many and for the other, not as an isolated monad.

Creating additional dialogue through art with their predecessors, Mujeres Creando cite Alfonsina Storni, the Swiss born, but Argentina-raised poet of the early twentieth century whose introspective, vanguard poetry is infused with a desire for both sexual and creative freedom. Storni writes from a symbolic “jaula,” as canonized in the poem “Hombre pequeño,” drawing attention to the desire for a female subject’s freedom. Storni also writes of the objectified recipient (*me*) of the anonymous male gaze of “tú *me* quieres blanca” (the title of one of her poems). Storni acted at a young age and wrote plays in addition to poetry; her poetic reflects a rhetorical resistance to the “domestication” or taming of women that Marcia Stephenson has talked about in the early twentieth-century in Bolivia, as she uses her poetry to evade marginalization from the body politics of her day.⁶¹ In her poem “Tú me quieres blanca” she uses words as a form of embodied resistance, revealing the way that men see her own body and being as “blanca,” “alba,” “de nacár,” de “azucena,” – all material words whose connotative meaning is associated with sexual purity, as well as with a crystallized, contained materiality. However, it is through her writing that Storni is able to assert the fact that she is not any of these material nor spiritual ideals, directing the “buen hombre,” – her silenced interlocutor -- to go to the forest, or to the mountain in order to touch with his own hands and feel with his own lips nature in all of its “purity.” In this way, she explains, the “buen hombre” can “pretend” that a woman is all of the things he desires her to be. Although Storni did not have equal footing with men in the public sphere, her aesthetic powerfully illuminates the egregious absence of a female voice within the public, political, and even domestic sphere of her time period.

Mujeres Creando transpose Storni’s poetry to the external wall of a public restroom: “Tú me quieres virgen, tú me quieres santa, tú me tienes harta,” providing an amusing and fresh look at her aesthetic. Men and women alike can now read Mujeres Creando, reading Storni, before they enter the semi-private space of the bathroom (*VdeD* 73). Because public restrooms have historically been a place where sexual violations have taken place, and furthermore, where unedited messages are often carved, written, or spray-painted -- some deprecating to women, others empowering -- it is not coincidental that Mujeres Creando chose this particular surface for Storni’s words. In her narrative-poem “Mirando al signo,” Julieta Paredes refers to writing in bathrooms that to her symbolizes one of the most popular forms of writing. She writes of women that “...escriben nombres y palabras en las tanta wawas de Todos Santos, escriben con sangre sus decepciones en las paredes de los baños de la Pérez...”, making visible the many ways that women write outside of published books. The juxtaposition of the “tú” with “me” also points to the intersubjectivity between men and women in language, with the subject of “tú” (the male) desiring something of the object “me” (the female). However, Storni and Mujeres Creando mock the male desire expressed through tired rhetoric and expectations imposed upon them.

During a feminist congress they held in Sorata, Bolivia, Mujeres Creando made a collage-like sign that said “Son más cómodos los cuadritos”, a phrase that recalls Storni’s poem “Cuadrados y ángulos,” which speaks not only to the externally-visible rigid lay out of cities –

⁶¹ The emphasis on the indigenous identity of some of the women explored in Stephenson’s work does not apply to Storni.

“casas enfiladas” – but also to the rigidity of modern internalized human emotions.⁶² In this poem, Storni writes: “Yo misma he vertido ayer una lágrima, Díos mío, cuadrada...” (Storni 119). Storni’s poem reflects the impact that modern urban planning and its accompanying architectural forms have not only on the exterior of the body but also on its internal emotional output, which is likewise metaphorically restricted. Tears are usually amorphous and symbolize a loss of rational control over the body, whereas here, they are as neat as a square city block. The cuadrados of which Storni speaks refer to the increased control over the body in the 1920s and 1930s in Argentina, where a liberal emphasis on economic productivity and urbanization forced the body to become more disciplined – to such an extent that feeling itself was to become entirely systematized, again recalling Foucault’s work, particularly in *Discipline and Punish*. However, as Mujeres Creando stir up the memory of Storni’s writing in their collage, they demonstrate an acute resistance to the discipline of emotions since their irony works explicitly against those who would accept rigid order as more “comfortable.”

Through their graffiti, Mujeres Creando transforms the form of poetry and the notion of authorship. These transformations reconfigure the intersubjective relationship between an author and reader. Whereas published books can be cost-prohibitive and consequently imply limited public access, using public space for poetry reminds of its populist roots and emphasizes collective creation. Addressing the role that access to public space has in promoting their work, Mujeres Creando said in an interview: “Si renunciamos al uso libre del espacio público renunciamos a encontrarnos entre diferentes. Si renunciamos al uso libre del espacio público nos resignamos a vivir arrinconados y arrinconadas, aisladas y aislados en nuestros espacios privados que lentamente se convertirán en jaulas, en celdas, . . . Hemos hecho la calle nuestro espacio comunitario, social, e histórico” (*VdeD* 83).

In his seminal book on Latin American literary history and the development of the metropolis, *La ciudad letrada*, Angel Rama illuminates the coincidence of the physical rise of the Latin American urban space and the figurative instantiation of the lettered, educated class. Upon reading the book, a sense of claustrophobia can set in, as if there were no way out of the built



environment or as if the sky itself were a slate of c-i-e-l-o, with no embodied aspect to experience outside of the rational production of language. The history of the lettered city serves as a backdrop to Mujeres Creando’s urban unframing. Their graffiti detaches writing from the bound pages of leather books conventionally located in statehouses or national libraries. As they spray graffiti on colonial buildings that once symbolized the *criollo* ruling class, Mujeres Creando use the surface of the city as a palimpsest that they can over-write with messages that critique the corruption that often goes hand and hand

⁶² A photograph of the collage can be found in *Porque la memoria no es puro cuento* (La Paz: Mujeres Creando, 2002). 52.

with political power. Rather than think of the only way to “revolutionize the city” as amassing bodies in a form of protest, graffiti-writing challenges the same dominating power Rama demonstrates that traditional writing has created in Latin America.⁶³ And yet, traditional writing continues to be a powerful source of resistance.

Julieta Paredes’s Communal Scars and Ethical Openings

...su mirada empezaba en el cuerpo
--Julieta Paredes

Julieta Paredes’s published poetry provides a quieter reflective undercurrent to the “louder” aspects of the original Mujeres Creando’s work and creates a living poetic ethic in language that I think serves as the philosophic basis for her community-focused work post-Mujeres Creando. Whereas the spectacular street performances bracket fear in order to transgress political boundaries and normative borders, the poetic works of Paredes reveal a deeper vulnerability not just worn on the surface of the body but embedded in her psyche. By creating a poetic out of the lived, common language of conversation and community, Paredes establishes an ethical poetic that is about capturing embodied, lived experience in a language that is accessible to many who otherwise would be excluded from canonical parameters of “poetry.” She brings a silenced other of the “clandestine nation” into the intersubjective experience of reading or performing poetry rather than putting forth a form that inspires readers who only have formal poetic training.⁶⁴

In Paredes’s narrative-poetic construction “Mirando al signo,” a piece she contributed to a colloquium of Bolivian women writers in 1998, she writes “Nuestras sociedades son cuerpos como mi cuerpo, en los cuales hay heridas, cicatrices y zonas erógenas.”⁶⁵ Through the use of the words *heridas*, *cicatrices*, and *zonas erógenas*, as well as the double translation of the preposition “en” as “in” or “on,” Paredes invokes the visual mark of a cut or a scar on the surface of a body’s skin, but then pushes the imagery to erogenous zones that are not necessarily visible to the human eye, but are borderless areas from which emanate the desire to love and feel intensely both from the inside-out and the outside-in. Through the words *heridas*, *cicatrices*, and *zonas erógenas*, she emphasizes the incised surface of the body, and puts forth an extremely vulnerable subjectivity emphasizing the invisible and visible effects that one body can have on another, whether literally or symbolically.

As is the case with the name Mujeres Creando, in “Mirando al signo,” Paredes employs the present progressive of *mirar* (looking at) emphasizing the *process* of “looking” and the evolving nature of a subject’s perspective from moment to moment. The act of “looking” implies multiple viewpoints, as if seeing something from every angle, rather than “look at” which implies a fixed Cartesian subject position. This implies seeing things not only across

⁶³ Rama as well acknowledges that writing can be used as a tool of resistance, but his emphasis is on how the elites used it to control urban political space.

⁶⁴ Jorge Sanjinés, the Bolivian filmmaker, titled a film of his *La nación clandestina*. 1989.

⁶⁵ *Memoria: Diálogos sobre escritura y mujeres*. La Paz: Sierpe Publications. 160. From here forward this book is referred to as *DEM*.

spatial but also temporal planes. She writes: “Las mujeres hemos parecido ‘las muditas’ de la sociedad,” combining the visual verb (*parecido*) with the aural noun (*las muditas*), an observation that emphasizes the absence of the voiced desires of women in society, but the presence of their superficial bodies as gazed upon by others. Although women have been spoken for in certain public spaces, in fact they have been speaking all along, just not necessarily at a privileged register. To further highlight the invisibility of a female epistemology within society, Paredes notes that the patriarchy has been afraid of “saberes desconocidos, saberes de mujeres” because they do not come from a “privileged body.” Paredes, like many women writers before her, connects embodiment directly to epistemology. As unprivileged bodies (I am reading unprivileged as female within this context), women have developed “en clandestinidad” (*DEM* 155). The unexplored space of “saberes desconocidos” (unknown knowledges) is connected to a collective voice of the “we” in the aforementioned “*hemos parecido las muditas...*” Paredes’s rhetoric empowers her, as she is speaking from the “we” of her matrilineal line as well as a much larger “we” of women who read this and perhaps relate to it, connecting the one to the many through the invocation of an invisible space of embodied, interior knowledge.

Paredes also bridges the present to the past and past to present in “Mirando al signo,” recalling that her grandmother taught her to appreciate her own corporeal difference as a site of pride: “Aprendí de mi abuela que la sociedad eran cuerpos donde el cuerpo de ella y mi cuerpo eran otros cuerpos, no éramos los mismos que los cuerpos de la tele” (*DEM* 156). Rather than imitate or emulate idealized bodies on the television, or those of the Barbie dolls mentioned earlier, Paredes’s poetry puts forth her different body, reminiscent of the racial difference that characterized her grandmother and other Aymara women who went before her. And yet, despite some similarities, Paredes’s “difference” is all her own: “Si no fuera lo que soy – aymara, feminista, lesbiana – no sabría como hacer, ni de dónde empezar mis días.” In one sentence, Paredes affirms who she is, and also asserts her way of knowing in terms of practice, as in “no sabría como hacer” and place and time, “de dónde empezar mis días.” She uses Andean metaphors to describe her feminism as well, as in, “El feminismo le dio a mi vida y a mi pensamiento alas de condor y cimas de montaña, elementos desde donde miro y entiendo mi tiempo, mi pueblo, mi historia” (*VD* 62). The use of “alas de condor” and “cimas de montaña,” traditional symbols of the Andes, demonstrates the importance of embodiment (the existence of a body, as situated in space) to Paredes’s discourse. Through these metaphors she puts the multi-sensorial space of the Bolivian Andes into the center of what gender is to her, pushing away the idea of universal feminist discourse in favor of a localized, lived variety.

With regard to the body, the coexistence of similarity and difference is integral to understanding the complex articulation of intersubjectivity. At the beginning of this discussion, I articulated that I am concerned with the metaphor of the *ombiligo*, in Spanish, or navel in English. The *ombiligo* has come to represent one of the crucial paradoxes of human intersubjectivity as inscribed directly onto the body. We are at once autonomous bodies with our own agency but that agency is contingent on the same body from which we were initially cut for our existence. Additionally this slightly eroticized, inscriptive mark is curious as a space that we might decipher as holding part of the mystery of being. Before the cord is cut, we are social beings, but have not yet entered a systematized world. Afterward, we are put into a system of classification as we quickly are declared a girl or a boy, and shortly thereafter, receive a proper name. Once in this

system, a range of expectations are assigned to us based on gender, race, class, and name, and the first umbilical inscription upon us is reduced to a meaningless scar. However, it is a trace of our *a priori* existence, previous to entering systematized culture.

In her collection “Un montón de palabras” Paredes begins one poem with the beseeching question “Por qué no me quieres?” which is addressed to an unspecified “tú,” the informal “you” in Spanish. Because of the interrogative form, a reader is actively implied in the silence of the unanswerable question, emphasizing the engagement involved in artistic encounters themselves and a lack of mutual understanding. At one point during the poem the poetic voice inquires, again:

¿Por qué no me quieres
si he salido del centro de tu ombligo?
si he nacido justo cuando necesitabas de mí
y es a plan de tus dolores
que aprendí a hacer de los míos

In this stanza, Paredes creates a physical relationship that has one body emerging from the other one that it desires in a metaphoric use of the word *ombligo*, implying that the poetic voice is as original to the being of the person that she loves as that very person herself. If this is the case, if they were in a poetic sense born in and of each other, the answer to ¿Por qué no me quieres? is unfathomable to the poetic voice, because she was born “justo cuando necesitabas de mí.” Metaphorically, this contingency of the one to the other reflects intersubjective embodied being and also may insinuate the collectivity of the ayllu, “el verdadero ‘sujeto’ en los Andes,” according to Andean philosopher Javier Medina.⁶⁶ The originating bellybutton enables similarity and difference to function; it is symbolic of an absence that once was the tie between one body and another, but also of the presence of each person’s absolute alterity and uniqueness from the other.

In another poem from the same collection, Paredes laments the frustrating times in which she lives. She writes “suelo que transito/sus agujeros resumen/pestilente vahos de mentiras/cinismo y mediocridad,” referring to the cynical attitude of the neoliberal era. However, through her words, Paredes expresses and calls for something different. She envisions a change whose spark must be ignited from the intersubjective responsibility for the other, rather than a prioritizing of self. She writes:

Siento arcadas en el centro, en el ombligo
Es tiempo de pasar de la nausea al vómito
Romparamos este escepticismo comodón que nos
devora
Recuperemos la fuerza incontenible
De rebelarnos y no vendernos

⁶⁶ Medina, Javier in *Aportes al diálogo sobre cultura y filosofía andina*. La Paz, Bolivia: Publicaciones Siwa, 2000.

Reacting to the cynicism and lies of the status quo, Paredes invokes the unease she feels in her center, in her bellybutton. When she stipulates that it is time to pass from nausea to vomit, the nausea does not literally originate from her bellybutton, but rather she uses this metonymically to refer to the part of the body that symbolizes being an ethical human outside of a political or economic structure or system. Although an autonomous being, the poetic voice sees herself as socially connected to a larger collective, *a priori*, before a system of hierarchical classification exists. She passes from this universal mark on the body to the nosotros form of *romper*, encouraging a collective we to break with the skepticism that devours “us.” Additionally, by using the command form, Paredes inspires action and invokes the other’s responsibility to reach toward others. Moreover, by assigning agency to skepticism – an attitude that originates in human beings but is passive – Paredes demonstrates the way that passivity itself has grown stronger than the will to act. When she uses the future of the indicative, as in “recuperemos,” Paredes’s verb strengthens the belief of the collectivity in their own ability to create change by recuperating the uncontrollable force that comes from rebelling and by not selling themselves to a system that would make them passive.

Moving to a more intimate register within the same collection, Paredes writes:

No sé lo que a veces me falta
tengo tus ojos
tus caderas
tus labios
tus deseos
pero aquí dentro mío
solo tengo vacío
no te siento a lado mío
puedes ser tú
no sé....
acaso será
¿qué entre mi laberinto de miedos
tus angustias se esconden?

Here, the poetic voice expresses anguish at the inability to contain another being despite a partial approximation through language, of the physical parts to this corpus. However, she wonders how the interior and invisible parts of her body might relate to this other, wondering if “your anxieties” hide themselves amongst “my labyrinth of fears.” The poetic voice is partially empty inside because of the “tú” that eludes her, as evinced by her doubt, “puedes ser tú, no sé...” and the subsequent ellipsis. This suspension of self-expression as in “no sé...” affects a readership, drawing us into a space of shared doubt, represented by the dots that represent language’s dissipation. The inability to fully know the other is moreover expressed by the phrase “acaso será,” (perhaps it will be), which demonstrates an existential insecurity in regards to the answer that maybe, perhaps, will be. The question with which Paredes ends the poem repeats the gesture referenced above, which is the posing of a question that plays with the personal possessive pronouns of “mi” and “tus” as well as “laberinto” and “angustias.” The lines point to

a space of possible poetic transcendence, where your anguish (as reader) is part of my labyrinth (as poetic voice). However, no matter what we might share, you can never be me and I can never be you, we can only gesture toward mutual understanding. The other's alterity remains intact in the sense that despite a gesture toward him or her, full understanding is never attained. Questions always remain, as in the last line of the poem.

Circling Back

To conclude, at the Fall 2007 Latin American Studies Association (LASA) conference, the Latin American historian Sinclair Thomson spoke about a relatively unknown yet fascinating event that took place in Peñas, Bolivia in November of 2006. Said November, a group of young female and male indigenous activists and elder Quechua and Aymara yataris and amautas,⁶⁷ reflecting on the need to unify an indigenous spirit, met in Peñas to reconstitute the dismembered body of the legendary eighteenth-century neo-Incan political martyr, Tupac Katari. Although not reported in the US press, and covered only superficially in Bolivia, this ritual event has great social and political significance. As we began with the graphic physical disciplining of Bartolina Sisa's body, we conversely end with a pacific event that demonstrates a commitment on the part of engaged citizens to physically and spiritually recuperate the spirit of Tupac Katari. However, the event did not concern itself with the female counterpart to Katari, Bartolina Sisa, but was rather about recuperating a male indigenous figure who is now metaphorically embodied in President Evo Morales, who was present for part of the Las Peñas event.

The fact that Bartolina Sisa's body was not "reassembled" like the bones of Tupac Katari is a socio-historical oversight that underscores the continued need for today's women to recuperate and tell the history of Bolivia as it was lived, catalyzed and shaped by their female ancestors. Even if this history has not been constructed to the point that it is metonymically represented in statues or reflected comprehensively in books, the living, breathing females in Bolivia today are witnesses to and evidence of these past events. The women of Mujeres Creando and the Asamblea Feminista as well as countless other feminist groups in Bolivia carry this increasingly visible history on their skin. They experience it in the ghosts that circulate throughout the streets and villages, and they live it on the outside and the inside of their bodies.

During this discussion I have summarized just some of the ways that Mujeres Creando's and Julieta Paredes's spectacles, graffiti, and poetry reveal the inscribed surface, spectral presences, and psychic depths of intersubjectivity. By revealing these three aspects to the body through their aesthetic creations, Julieta Paredes and Mujeres Creando highlight the coexistent differences and similarities that make up a collective social body, making visible another's being as contingent on one's own and viceversa. Their aesthetic creates an intersubjective ethic that I have tried to interpret through Emmanuel Levinas's thoughts on ethics and language. Despite the inability to every fully know the other, the continual gesture toward each other keeps alterity intact while reminding of the trace of the social, prior to systematization, that is intersubjective *saying*.

⁶⁷ Yataris and amautas are the traditional senior healers and advisors in Aymara and Quechua cultures. They both roughly translate as "wise men" and they have been historically male.

Chapter Four:
The Art of Alejandra Dorado: Anagrammatic Identity in the Contemporary Andes

The Art of Alejandra Dorado: Anagrammatic Identity in the Contemporary Andes

*alejandra alejandra
debajo estoy yo
alejandra*

- Alejandra Pizarnik, *Poesía completa* 65

My investigation into the work of Alejandra Dorado, an avant-garde Bolivian visual artist, examines the tensions her multi-media installations reveal between being a disciplined subject in a semiotic system and a restless human in a body prior to and in excess of representation. Combining digital images, theoretical texts, and living bodies, Dorado's installations challenge fixed political identity as metaphorically inscribed on the body, instead demonstrating the internal agency that humans have to keep identity "at play." The anagram is an example of a trope that contests the notion of finite subjectivity in language and simultaneously supports a notion of being human based on infinite combinatory possibility between semiotic systems. The potential for play in the realm of identity politics is an integral component to human rights, and provides protection and resistance to dehumanizing acts of corporeal or psychological violence, two themes that Dorado's work also engages, particularly in relation to gender. As Judith Butler has observed in relation to identity politics, "Possibility is not a luxury. It is as crucial as bread" (UG 29).

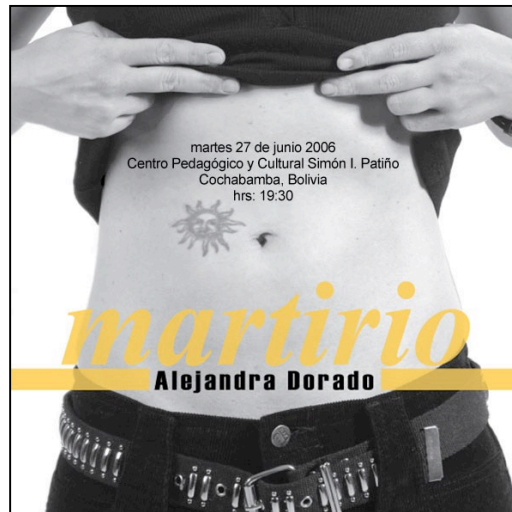
First I introduce readers to Alejandra Dorado and touch upon the importance of the body in her work particularly in the context of Bolivia. Despite her artistic innovation, she has not been researched outside of her country. I then consider some scholarly work that has been done on anagrams in the psychoanalytic and linguistic traditions in order to orient us toward the term before exploring the way that the trope functions in Dorado's multi-media installation *martirio*. In this exhibit, Dorado consciously draws on the work of Michel Foucault to conceptualize tensions that exist between being a legible subject and an illegible human; between confinement in a body and freedom in the imaginary; between personal agency and social constraint. Lastly, I look at the way that Dorado's other artistic projects continue to "play" with gender and sexuality as a way of deconstructing hetero-normative desire in Bolivia. Rebellious, restless, and brave, Dorado compels us to think about the ways we can subvert, through personal and collective interventions, scopic and linguistic regimes that limit spaces of enunciation.

Finding the Artist

My own encounter with Alejandra Dorado began in Cochabamba, Bolivia in July of 2006. Walking along a narrow sidewalk on la Calle España a few blocks north of the Plaza del 14 de septiembre, a black and white poster affixed to an otherwise empty granite wall jumped out at me. The poster was no more than two feet by three feet, a replica of the exhibit cover to Alejandra Dorado's interactive contemporary art installation *martirio*, which was to open later

that week at the Centro de Cultura Simón I. Patiño.⁶⁸ The poster struck me because it was a stark aberration from the images I typically saw on my walk across the colonial part of town. It displayed a bare abdomen that was provocatively charged with erotic desire as well as gendered-ambiguity. The central image of the bellybutton was neither ugly nor beautiful, and in its paradoxical obviousness, laughed at the dressed performance of the myriad people walking down the street, tacitly challenging their conformity to the construction of a material “self.” Underneath our clothing each person’s abdomen looks relatively similar, and yet the bellybutton is the trace of a unique event: a particular subject’s birth and cut from his or her mother. Underneath the surface of the body there is not an essential “self” to be found, but rather a source of potential, socially realized subjectivities. For the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the encounter with another person is the precondition for our notion of self, and our inability to know the other or to fully approximate him or her in words, parallels the inability to ever fully know the self (*Totality and Infinity* 4). And yet, an increasingly global world fosters the illusion of mutual intelligibility, as if liberal or neoliberal subjects were interchangeable regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or class. The encounter on Calle España – me looking at a resemblance that was other than me – was a navel of unknown possibility: of (mis)recognition and the desire to dwell in that moment of encounter.

I later learned that the poster was based on a photograph of the artist’s body. The top of the photograph began just below her chest and the bottom ended just below her belt. The image revealed a slender torso dressed in a black tee-shirt that was raised by her own hands to just below the area where a bra might start, and black corduroy pants adorned by a silver studded belt. The exposed mid-her compositionally and bellybutton, offset by a surreal-looking sun to uniquely inked but of was marked with a and yet visually ordinary of abdomens, those who could already inscription, due to her Alejandra Dorado, artist, I will elaborate below, a constructed selves in Like the anagram or sound or image of changed, our bodies contain DNA traces of the combination of genes of those who went before us. In the moment that the umbilical cord is cut, the person who we are barely becoming is left with a visible bellybutton. This is the mark of a new “origin” of combinatory possibility,



drift of the artist highlighted physically centered two-inch tattoo of a slightly the left of it. She was common skin at once. She bellybutton like you and I alternative to the most due to her tattoo, and for name her as a result of that singular proper name: object, person, body, and as spectrum of socially-dialogue with other subjects. contains a trace of the word what it was just before it

⁶⁸ *martirio* first opened at MAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo) in Santiago, Chile in November, 2005. In 2006, Dorado also installed *martirio* in Santa Cruz, Bolivia at the *Manzana I* art space prior to its third installation in Cochabamba.

particular to our self. And yet this is the same mark that connects us to a collective and tethers us to another body as much as it lets us roam.

To provide brief biographical context to the artist, María Alejandra Dorado Cámara was born in Cochabamba, Bolivia on September 24, 1969 and grew up an only child. Her parents are lifelong residents of Cochabamba. Her father is an accomplished architect and carpenter and her mother a Spanish teacher to foreign exchange students. Dorado initially became involved in the arts through dance, participating in modern dance performances throughout Bolivia beginning in 1979 until she moved to Chile. After studying architecture for two years at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba, Alejandra continued her formal art studies in Santiago, Chile, where she majored in Fine Arts with a minor in painting at ARCIS (University of Art and Social Sciences) in 1998. During her time in Chile, she continued her dance training while carving out her distinct avant-garde artistic niche, pushing the conventions of classic genre confines of painting or drawing and exploring taboo topics in Bolivia, like suicide, early in her career.⁶⁹ After completing her thesis, a photography and collage project that was a precursor to *martirio*, she returned to Cochabamba in 1999, where she has since been a professor at the Private University of Bolivia (Universidad Privada de Bolivia).⁷⁰ She teaches introductory and advanced drawing, illustration, and design technique classes as part of the university's Graphic Design Program, and does outreach work with impoverished youth in order to provide greater access to arts training in the larger Cochabamba area. Dorado's edgy, spiky hair and counter-culture appearance make her stand out in Cochabamba, as do the decisions she has made in personal life: she is unmarried with an 8-year old son and she identifies as bi-sexual. These choices are enough to make her superficially "radical" in a conservatively catholic and closed society. However, the most radical aspect to her work is its ability to unveil the aspects to her humanity that rest beneath the visible surface of a body. I now turn to a discussion of some of her earlier work before turning to *martirio*. I then outline my approach to anagrams and *martirio* to consider just some of the relevance of Dorado's visual games for drawing out the representational tensions that can confine subjects and the agency we have to stretch, reconfigure, and interrupt them, returning perpetually to the embodied space of the human.

Encountering Another within the Self

Each of Dorado's exhibits grows out of sets of complex tensions between societal organizing systems and the personal desire to transgress them. The exhibits themselves become microcosmic examples of macrohistorical social antagonisms that transcend the spatial and temporal confines of the present, fostering the exhibits' impact. One of her first substantial untitled exhibits was based on a series of etchings she did both as both part of and outside of coursework in Chile. Alejandra recalls, as she points out one of the etchings that now hangs on her mother's wall, that instead of creating traditional etchings she challenged categorical constraints by experimenting with photography development and photocopying as modern forms of ancient etching techniques. Her impulse to push genre boundaries is only one of the

⁶⁹ Her exhibit *Las alas de Lucrecia* (2001) is the clearest example of this. I elaborate this exhibit further in the chapter.

⁷⁰ Located in Achacolla, a small town on the outskirts of Cochabamba.

ways that Alejandra began transgressing the parameters of artistic typology. By challenging form, she created an avant-garde object that was visually alternative to traditional etchings and began to shape her own artistic identity outside of categorical norms. Moreover, the larger instinct to push art to the point of total self-reflexivity -- to make “etching” think about why precisely it is “etching” -- is one of the defining conditions of avant-garde, and later conceptual art, and presents a challenge to a systematic configuration that would consider her etchings completely “different” rather than quite similar to traditional techniques. From its inception her work has situated itself in a gray area that represents a range of possibilities between categorical binaries, as will be continually probed in this discussion.

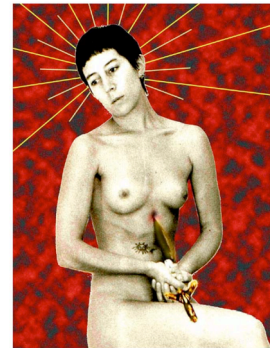
While still in art school, Alejandra also took photos of herself posed in various settings as if she were the Virgin Mary. As her close friend and fellow artist Rodrigo Rada observes, “a finales de los 90s [Alejandra] generó su imagen de *chica mala del arte boliviano* con las fotografías de ella como la Virgen María, mostrándose desnuda en esta relación mujer, cuerpo, dolor, castigo, catolicismo y sociedad actual” (Rada, *martirio* exhibit catalog). Alejandra’s Virgin Mary is not illuminated in a glorious halo of miraculous light, but rather, portrayed in black and white in a dimly-lit, ordinary kitchen. Her Mary is a domesticated Mary, a subversive “ángel del hogar,” standing, fully-naked on top, in front of heavy metal pots. In a country whose citizens predominantly self-identify as Catholic and, moreover, in a city that is considered one of the more conservative in Bolivia, Alejandra boldly subverts the sacredness of the Virgin Mary, whose time spent in a kitchen or anywhere “earthly” was not captured in Biblical narration, and whose image is culturally taboo to reproduce in such a profane context. In seeing these images, I got the distinct sense of Alejandra’s strong self-possession because in order to take on such iconic roles in art (she later appears as Superwoman), a certain amount of self-confidence as well as outright rebellion must prevail.

In the series of her as the virgin Mary as well as in another exhibit titled *Las alas de Lucrecia* (2001), Dorado transforms herself materially, critiquing and mining the limits of her own subjectivity and manifesting the tensions between society’s desires of a singular being and his or her own desires. Jarring in its visceral detail and suicide focus, her 2001 exhibit *Las alas de Lucrecia*, which debuted in Cuba and was then shown in Bolivia, is daring in a way best captured by one of Alejandra’s favorite descriptions of art: “Cuando vas a lo más alto de la montaña y te encuentras totalmente desnudo a las cinco de la mañana recién comprenderás lo que es el arte.”⁷¹ The winged Lucrecia of Dorado’s title has appeared in many artists work before, Boticelli and Rembrandt among them. Lucrecia was a Roman woman married to Tarquino Colatino, the nephew of the king, Tarquino the Great. As the story goes, Lucrecia was raped by Sexto Tarquino, the son of Tarquino the Great, who threatened to publicly announce that she had been unfaithful to her husband and to kill her if she defamed him. Lucrecia, rather than live as a shamed woman, committed suicide, stabbing herself with a knife in the chest, but not before telling the truth. According to legend, Lucio Junio Bento, Lucrecia’s brother and a young leader, pulled the sword out of Lucrecia and displayed her body in public, consequently rallying the town against Sexto Tarquino and catalyzing the fall of monarchy in Rome.

⁷¹ In a recent article in the section ¡OH! of *Los tiempos* in Cochbamba, that ran July 2, 2008, Dorado cites Roberto Valcárcel, a Bolivian conceptual artist, who has described art in these words.

Drawing upon this powerful Middle Age legend, Dorado represents herself as Lucrecia in order to interrogate her own identity through this female martyr while repeating but displacing Lucrecia's history into a contemporary context. Dorado's recapitulation of this feminist martyr illuminates the way that historical narrative can be taken out of context and replaced in a new temporal space, outside of historical contingency. Events, like pearls on a necklace, or signifiers in a chain, can be shuffled around to constantly bifurcate the idea of an origin, based on an anagrammatic shuffling of both images and texts across temporal registers. The traumatic corporeal experience that Lucrecia suffered seems to leave traces on a collective consciousness that enables the memory of Lucrecia to reemerge in a new way, displaced into art that repeats, but *not exactly* throughout history. In this way, it repeats through difference, like the Deleuzian notion of repetition *as* transmutation referred to in the Introduction. The corporeal trauma Lucrecia suffered is transformed into a historical psychological trauma that artists continually try to capture in a signifying system. The process of transmutation functions through an anagrammatic concept – old and new elements sift together to form something *resembling* a never graspable “original.” We will see this anagrammatic play even more explicitly in *martirio*.

Materially, the *Lucrecia* exhibit consists of a series of multi-media collages that were composed manually and then reworked digitally, all of which take Dorado herself as subject. In many of the images she is shown piercing herself with a long dagger in an ironic, postmodern uptake of the original Lucrecia. There are many images of Alejandra with wings, *las alas*, and a smattering of images that come from children's books and scientific encyclopedia, alluding to the scary fairy tales and natural images that seep into our unconscious as we come of age in this world. These images can disrupt thought patterns and haunt the psyche. Dorado captures this by layering them on top of the primary image, often in corners or on the margins of a photograph, as if they are creeping into the artistic space. Based on its ornate imagery and the complex layering to its production, the art reflects a postmodern take on a baroque aesthetic with its ingenious combinations and juxtapositions, and embodies the tension between the corporeal and textual influences on identity formation. For example, Dorado is both physically real and visually “virtual” at once. As one of her textual influences for this work, Dorado lists “Dolor fiero” by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Sor Juana also referred to Lucrecia, another example of artistic expression as an attempt to capture the traumatic corporeal and psychological pain of the past, condensed and transformed into a different present.



LAS ALAS DE LUCRECIA (detalle) (instalación)
Técnica: Fotografía, armado digital, impresión sobre canvas.
2001

Suicide, as we saw earlier in Arguedas's work, is an extreme example of a very literal confrontation with being's finitude. It is the limit of the subject as an agent and the passage of the subject into an absolute otherness through death. In the story of Lucrecia, the ways in which she was made a subject by Tarquino, both through his physical actions and his words, eclipsed her own ability to be as herself in the world. When forced into a situation of living an inauthentic existence or taking her own life, she chooses the latter as the ultimate way out of an environment that does not permit her to speak as Lucrecia but stifled her freedom. Dorado's own articulation of this myth draws out the tension between the expectations of a woman's behavior under the doctrine of Catholicism and the reality of that woman's desires for herself.

The images of Dorado naked, while they may be considered jarring to some more conservative viewers, seem to ask, “well, why not?” in a way that transgresses the limits of proper decorum and highlights the disjunction between reality and representation, prodding viewers to remember that one cannot believe, necessarily, what one sees.

Continuing to sacrilegiously transgress Catholicism’s rigidity while pushing the limits of artistic convention, in another exhibit “¡O! Dolorosa pequeña niña” (2002) Alejandra used the wall of the Santa Teresa Convent, centrally located in Cochabamba, as the backdrop to her exhibit. This convent is one of the oldest in Cochabamba, founded in 1760, and most of the nuns cloistered there never leave its grounds. This very public exhibit included neither a catalog nor a statement of work because it was designed to be self-explanatory and experimental. Alejandra could not predict whether or not people on the streets would participate in it if they were not given any instructions or guidelines, but she wanted to see what would emerge organically from the exhibit’s presence.

This exhibit offers a radical feminist reading of the Roman Catholic Stations of the Cross. Traditionally there are fifteen Stations of the Cross, each one depicting a moment in the final hours of the life of Jesus Christ, as he dies on the cross, is buried, and rises again. However, in Dorado’s version, the stations are transformed into her own as she depicts herself during different stages of her life. She passes through various stages, including her own pregnancy, and multiple deaths and rebirths. The last station, rather than including an image, reads: “La única consecuencia inmediata de una violencia ilimitada es la muerte; pienso que he muerto varias veces. . . Pero la muerte es, también, vecina de lo sagrado.” At the end of the convent wall that was lined with each of Alejandra’s fifteen “stations,” there was a bowl of onions with a knife beside it. The concept behind this component to the exhibit was that the viewers were supposed to invite themselves to cut the onion and shed “domesticated” tears in an ironic twist on reverence. The suffering “Christ” of the Christian imagery is consequently transformed into a domestic, female martyr; the sacred weight of religious imagery is transformed into the profane weight of everyday life as a woman in contemporary Bolivian society in a powerful commentary on the confines and simultaneous resistance to gendered norms.

About a year ago, sitting in Cochabamba, Alejandra spoke poignantly about what it meant to her to conceive of and to carry out this installation, exceptional in its public outreach. She laughs as she explains that one day a nun came out of the convent and inquired as to what exactly was being put up on the wall. Alejandra said, “Yo no sé. Estoy aquí ayudando a una amiga, no más. Creo que es una exposición artística,” to which the nun just looked puzzled. Once the stations were posted, Alejandra spent time watching people experiencing the art in order to see how they reacted to it. And she said that one man, who appeared to be homeless, walked by a few days in a row, contemplating the images seemingly trying to make something of it. After a few days, he went over to the onions and starting cutting them. This was a meaningful moment to Alejandra because he was someone who would most likely not have been present at one of her museum installations. As she says looking back at this exhibit, she firmly believes that with respect to her own work and to other artists’ work, there is always more than one reading, or one way to “experience” it, whether one is seeped in art history or theoretical training or has never spent a day around formal art or in school. The “performative” nature to this aforementioned exhibit is mirrored in other exhibits, something I think is really important to understanding Dorado’s process. Her installations are often contingent on audience members’

active participation for their “realization,” and are moreover, never finished. Like the idea of a community that in its resistance to capitalist systematization is never produced, her art – with some exceptions – dissipates when the audience dwindles. They might carry some of the experience with them, but a product, so to speak, is never achieved.

Untamed Anagrams

Andrea Bachner, a Comparative Literature scholar working on psychoanalysis and the body, wrote an article titled “Anagrams in Psychoanalysis: Retroping Concepts by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-Francois Lyotard” in which she explores the anagrammatic tendencies latent within the rich body of psychoanalytic literature. She emphasizes that although metaphor and metonymy have been the privileged tropes within the context of psychoanalysis, an anagrammatic approach to psychoanalysis opens up new avenues of exploration that reveal the “anagrammar” of the unconscious. Sigmund Freud, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jacques Lacan are all concerned with understanding the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious, and particularly the ways in which one interprets the self through each – both in and outside of the symbolic realm of language. Bachner writes, “The anagram is the site which makes the combinatorial character of sign systems visible. This visibility can be achieved by different means (and their combinations): through a potential incompleteness of the anagram, through a palimpsestic thickening of a text (in its widest sense), through a mixing of units of different sign systems, or through a destruction of the conventional textual units. The anagram as a figuration shows itself to be only the petrified trace of the anagram as a process, a permutation beyond the laws of specific discourses” (6). For Bachner, the relationship between sign systems functions through a combinatorial process that is in excess of the regulatory laws of any one discourse. It is my reading that this combinatorial process opens up new spaces of enunciation for marginalized subjects because it goes beyond one privileged way of expression into a realm of a mixed semiotic. In a setting like Bolivia, where Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní and countless other indigenous sign systems co-exist with Spanish, this concept gains particular cultural valence.

A number of linguists and philosophers have conflicting views on what defines an anagram. For instance, a narrow definition would consider it only as a reshuffling of the letters of one word into another, whereas Saussure believed it also encompassed a shuffling of phonemes, less restrictively. But Bachner favors what she calls an “untamed” anagram. Her broader definition of the concept includes the mixing of words based on letters, phonemes, or even more radically, a mixing that goes on between sign systems. Because I find an “untamed” notion most fruitful for thinking through Dorado’s multi-valent exhibit, it is worth pausing upon Bachner’s elaborated reading of what constitutes an anagram:

(1) The anagram is the product of and the name for a process that consists in a disassembling and reassembling of parts of the same basic material

(2) The anagram is a meeting place of different sign systems and does not have to consist of units of only one of these systems. Transpositions of units from one system to the other are possible

(3) The anagram can consist of parts that can go beyond conventional units of discourse required for the signification of different sign systems

(4) The anagram is the site which makes the combinatorial character of sign systems visible. This visibility can be achieved by different means (and their combinations): through a potential incompleteness of the anagram, through a palimpsestic thickening of a text (in its widest sense) through a mixing of units of different sign systems, or through a destruction of the conventional textual units. The anagram as a figuration shows itself to be only the petrified trace of the anagram as a process, a permutation beyond the laws of specific discourses. (Bachner 6)

Keeping Bachner's definition of an anagram in mind, we will see the way that Dorado's work illuminates an anagrammatic concept of identity formation that hovers between semiotic systems of images, written words, and live bodies, and is contingent on our constant interpretation for its existence, an anagrammatic process itself. As Bachner argues, "Ultimately, the work of interpreting is highly anagrammatical. It is a work of *bricolage*, of disassembling and recombination. On the one hand, this could be seen as its drawback. On the other, it is also its greatest asset. It is thus that interpretation forecloses monolithic totalizations. It is itself a selection and recombination of and forms the basis for another such process performed with the body. Such is the material dialogue is made of" (23). *Martirio* opens up the space for multiple dialogues that disassemble and reconstitute themselves in an ongoing cycle of poetic and corporeal rupture and suture that are less about formulating a monologic totality (whether as an exhibit, as a reflection on society, or as a reflection of the self) and more about forming a range of possible configurations that incorporate and form multiplicities, while still maintaining a common nucleus of being human that connects the one to the many.

***martirio*: Semiotic Rings**

*Antes que las palabras estaban las frases; antes que
el vocabulario estaban los enunciados; antes que las
sílabas y el cómodo elemental de los sonidos estaba
el indefinido murmullo de todo lo que se diría.
Efectivamente, antes de que hubiera lengua, se
hablaba.*

Michel Foucault, *Siete sentencias sobre el séptimo ángel* 13

In *martirio* Dorado combines both the spatial lay out of the installation as well as its component parts of digital photography, ink stamps, excerpted text, and human bodies to create an aesthetic that makes visible the way subjects are both formed and limited in contemporary society, as well as the agency they have to challenge such tensions. The exhibit was first inspired, according to the Dorado, by Michel Foucault's essay "Siete sentencias sobre el séptimo ángel", originally published as part of the Introduction to the nineteenth-century book *La grammaire*

logique, written by the French linguist, Jean Paul Brisset. Brisset originally self-published his text in 1883 and it was subsequently republished with Foucault's piece in France in 1970.⁷² However, bracketing the Foucault for a moment, the textual elements to the exhibit constantly transect the images that form the most obvious component to the installation: forty life-size colored photographs.⁷³ Each of these photos captures the head-to-toe body of unique Bolivian citizens exposing their bellybuttons. At the opening of *martirio*'s installation, Dorado affixes the photos carefully upon the four walls of the exhibit space so that a continual chain of bodies rings the room like a string of words forming a long circular phrase, with no discernible beginning or end. The people captured in the photographs are of various ages, some female, others male; some in *polleras*,⁷⁴ some in jeans; some very light-skinned, others with darker complexions; some young, some old, but all exposing their bellybuttons.

Before continuing the analysis of the exhibit itself, during the process of creating the exhibit, Dorado transgressed the invisible boundaries of social convention, having to ask her subjects to lift up their shirts in order to expose their bellybuttons before her photographic lens. A number of people asked her for payment of some sort which resulted in her doing some kind of portrait shots in exchange for a snap of the bellybutton, indicating the exchange value placed on one's own image. As Dorado says, "sometimes this really was a violation of sorts. Asking a *chola* to show you her bellybutton is like asking her to disrobe completely. That's to say, it's really a big deal..."⁷⁵ Therefore, in the process of creating the exhibit Alejandra transgressed the boundaries of so-called "normal" social convention by pushing others to expose their bodies in ways beyond their comfort-level.⁷⁶ Once Alejandra had taken enough photos, she neither digitally nor otherwise enhanced them because they were not conceived of as an aesthetic



component to the larger project, but rather as a raw register of the physical bodies that make up the Bolivian population. This register mirrors the way in which photography can and has been used to record and monitor the existence of bodies within the nation state, for instance, as in the required photographs for the acquisition of a state id card. The process of assembling the exhibit thus hints at the way that visual representation operates as a way of organizing a polis, connecting the artistic space to political realm.

⁷² *Siete sentencias sobre el séptimo ángel* was edited as an independent book in 1986 first by Fata Morgana in Montpellier, France; however, it was originally published as the prologue to Jean Pierre Brisset's *La Grammaire logique* (Paris: Claude Tchou, 1970). Foucault knew of Brisset's work earlier and published an article on it in 1962 in the June issue of *Nouvelle Revue Française*.

⁷³ Alejandra estimates that she took over 100 photos to arrive at the 40 used in the installation.

⁷⁴ *Polleras* are the thick velvet or brocade skirts associated with the female Aymara population around La Paz or the Quechua population concentrated around Cochabamba and Sucre.

⁷⁵ This is from personal communication with the artist.

⁷⁶ Of course, as Alejandra explains, for her university students it was all too much fun to be part of the exhibit and they were eager to pose before her lens.

At the center of the exhibit space, Dorado installed a small table with a square glass-box placed on top of it. Inside the box, at its base, lies a small photo of Alejandra's bellybutton illuminated from below. The same tattoo visible on the exhibit's catalogue and accompanying posters is partially visible, revealing the artist's identity to those intimate with her physical inscriptions. Directly above this glass a transparent thread hangs from which dangles a small photo of Dorado, in swim gear, including a bathing cap and goggles. She is posed as if launching herself from an imaginary diving board directly toward the bellybutton (her bellybutton) in the lit up box. The artist dives into the shadowed depth of her *ombiligo*, "the door of birth and the place of deathly return," as described by the artist in her exhibit catalog. This self-reflective component to the artist's exhibit symbolizes the artist's need to mine the unknown aspects to herself – that in part include her unknown birth and death – through the artistic process. What part of Dorado is the martyred body of *martirio*, given up to an audience, and what part of her remains intact throughout the exhibit? *Martirio*, as much as it was created for and with others, maintains a personal element that hinges upon the simultaneous desire for self-annihilation and rebirth through art. We saw this same process, in a very literal way, in Arguedas's last novel. By including an aestheticized image of herself in the exhibit, Dorado "the artist" is able to separate herself from Dorado, a person in the world. This gesture is important for it draws attention to the distance between one's lived, embodied experience and the subsequent aestheticization of it in a political realm, the distance in which political power resides.⁷⁷

The visual components to the exhibit play off of the various textual elements that transverse them, creating a complex semiotic game. On a table next to the aforementioned glass box and "diving" artist, there are wood stamps, each representing a letter of the word *martirio*. Anyone in the audience can pick up a stamp, dip it into the ink, and then imprint the massive photos with it. While there are no instructions, the presence of the stamps invites audience participation. Having installed this exhibit three times between 2005-2006, Alejandra chose to use different colored ink at each showing so that the exhibit could auto-record itself, again, mimicking the concept of a registered archive of the bodies that circulated through the exhibit space. In Chile, at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, the audience was bolder and much more participatory, as evinced by the ubiquity of black letters. In Santa Cruz, at the second showing, the ink was a deep indigo hue and does not demonstrate as strong a participatory presence. Returning home last, in Cochabamba the ink was red and is stamped even less frequently than it was in Santa Cruz. I will explore the significance of the stamps and their lettered imprints more thoroughly below.

The fourth component to the exhibit is a meticulously placed paragraph extracted from Foucault's aforementioned "Siete sentencias sobre el séptimo angel."⁷⁸ The selected text extends itself around the exhibit, running along the ground, in a large enough font-size to be easily

⁷⁷ F.R. Ankersmit elaborates this concept of political power as a fundamentally aesthetic project in *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 1996.

⁷⁸ This essay has never been published in English. It is available in its original French as an Introduction to Jean Brisset's book and has been translated to Spanish and published by Arena Publishers in Spain, under the same title.

legible from wherever one stands in the space. The paragraph that Alejandra chose from the larger text (which is about 3000 words) is as follows:

El demonio = el dedo mío no. El *demonio* presume de dos dedos-dedos de dos-, dado el dedo de Dios, su sexo... Invertida, la palabra *demonio* da: la *monda* = una mondadura = un mundo de altura. A lo alto del mundo = yo empino el mundo. El demonio se convierte así en señor del mundo en virtud de su perfección sexual... En su *homilia* él se guiaba por su *ombligo*: su *ombliguía*. La *homilia* es la mira del *maligno*. De un mar *igneo*, ven tú, el *más digno*: el maligno es una criatura del mar, de un *mar tibio*. Ahí salta y sortea el *martirio*. Con mi salto al *mar me tiro*.

This ludic text, which is only one of many anagrammatic structures Foucault includes in the “Siete sentencias” essay, plays continuously with words and the various phonemes that compose them, as each semantic unit is deconstructed and reconstituted into something resembling its previous form, yet now transposed into a new word-scape. As Foucault plays with each phoneme and its myriad permutations, an empty center to the paragraph still holds, enabling readers to make sense of it. This empty center is the common, empty nucleus of decipherable language that brings us, literally, full circle within the exhibit space and puts us in dialogue with each other as our bodies mingle and our mind mixes images and words together over the course of the paragraph and our circling around the room. Freud has written, “There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unraveled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown” (Freud 525). The center of the paragraph is this Freudian knot, the navel, meaningless if it were not symbolic of the contract it establishes between self/other, and text/body that it creates, and for the *aporia* of intelligibility that it symbolizes.

The paragraph by Foucault included in Dorado's exhibit continually mutates and reconstitutes itself from beginning to end. Once it has gone through a number of permutations, the traces of its starting point are still present despite the metaphorical distance they have traveled. Like the experience of reading Foucault's text, as a viewer reads the text and circles the exhibit space, she or he never returns to the same starting point, but to the measure of his or her



own displacement. It is the distance between the “original” position of the body and text and the new position where the aesthetic effect of the exhibit resides. As the sounds and syllables are rearranged in the paragraph, new images might appear in the viewer's mind, images that are prompted by the cognitive synthesis of the text but reflected visually in the exhibit itself. Recalling the image of Alejandra with goggles and her bathing suit, diving into her aesthetic self, a viewer might hear and simultaneously see, “mar me tiro” ([to the] sea I throw myself) which of course originated in

the Foucault text with the word *demonio* and then became itself gradually through the words

ombligo > ombliguía > homilía > maligno > igneo > más digno > mar tibio > martirio > mar me tiro. Likewise, with the shifting of sounds and letters, the devil (el demonio) becomes the ombligo, this tiny mark left on the very “beginning” of the human body, only to then become an uncontainable sea, an expansive body of water that stretches as if endlessly toward the horizon line. There is play on the distinction, as well, between the corporeal and the textual. Do we see a red body (or any other colored or imagined body) when we read the word *demonio*? Do we feel an uncanny evil presence lurking in the space? What does an “evil presence” even sound or look like? And how fast that body or presence dissipates in language from its seven-lettered self into countless new permutations, a combination of images, sounds, and figures. The experience of being a body in this semiotic artist space mirrors the way identity is constructed in society, between a bare life and the political aestheticization of it into a subject. Regardless of how it is changed politically, something resistant to representation remains: the will to change, the will to mutate, the will to move from where one is placed or places oneself in a language system.

As an assertion of the agency we have to transform the self and the other through representation, Alejandra opens the *martirio* exhibit catalog with the following paragraph, which begins midstream:

. . . el lenguaje de la imagen que circula por todos los estratos: sociales, culturales, económicos; el eje: el ombligo, abierto a todas las transformaciones. El texto se descompone en su forma más primitiva para re-agrupar la idea muchas veces, idea que se une en un ‘eje erótico’ profundizando y llevándonos a los más íntimo [‘el demonio’ o ‘el alto del mundo’]. El juego sigue con un hilo sintáctico [martirio] en el que el espectador participa dejando su marca y volviendo así al lenguaje. ‘El recorrido y la repetición del azar de la lengua’; recorriendo la imagen, recorriendo el significado. ‘El arraigo del significado en la naturaleza del significante’; ambos fundamentados en la semántica, tanto de la imagen como del texto: en conjunto, la plástica. ‘El simbolismo hermético de los signos’; el ombligo asexual, el ombligo andrógono: puerta de nacimiento. (*martirio exhibit catalog* 1)

This citation is saturated with multivalent images, such as the “door of birth,” an inscription symbolizing a traumatic moment but also a completely unmemorable one for him or her who that is born. I am translating the Spanish *ombligo* as bellybutton, recognizing that there is not a more informal word in Spanish and so both navel as well as bellybutton would function as possible translations in English. However, given the overall playful nature to the paragraph and the exhibit itself, this choice is more fitting. The *ombligo* is the first written mark on the body of all humans, regardless of gender, and simultaneously is a physical symbol of our entrance into society as an autonomous being, cut from our biological mother’s body, but still dependent on a larger social body for our sustained existence. As the cord is cut, the body that contains the self begins to come into contact with other bodies, whose DNA sequence are complexly different than his or her own, but whose bodies are able to be deciphered as *alike* and *different* to and from one’s own at once. In Alejandra’s reading, the bellybutton is the “erotic axis” that provides entry either into the most sublime of heavenly experiences or the darkest recesses of evil: the spectrum of high and low that is being a human with desires. Regardless of whether or not those

desires are socially approved or subversive, they are part of being human. As humans, we are metaphorically open to all transformations, as the “root” of any word begins with human agency. Like the words mingling and mixing in the paragraph, Dorado moves from the text to the body to the text again, demonstrating the constant interplay and interstitial relationship between legible and illegible bodies.

Moreover, in Alejandra’s reading, the bellybutton is metaphorically the door of birth, through which the body enters the domesticity of a societal archive, like the register of photos that ring the exhibit symbolize. Part of the traumatic experience of being born is the violence of the proper name that is bestowed upon us through language – written or non-written, according to Derrida. Jacques Derrida’s reading of such violence in the seminal “Writing Lesson” in *Of Grammatology* considers the obliteration of the proper as even prior to writing, “When within *consciousness*, the name is *called* proper, it is already classified and is obliterated in *being named*” (109 original emphasis). No matter who we might think we are, behind our countenance, our hair, our sexed or asexed bodies, we will be classified as a gendered subject, and assigned an identity by others at birth. And who we are as represented in a sign system will never quite add up to the person that exists internally. Much like looking at a photo at the mirror stage, the image reflected back to a child both is and is not him- or herself at once. As Dorado expresses in the quotation she provides in her exhibit catalog, the bellybutton might be a hinge between our physical bodies and representational poetics itself. It could be read as the disconnection between existence in language and existence in a bodily form that is never fully grasped, like being human itself, for it is always slipping away from what it just was “called” or “named.” The cut on our bodies, the violence and simultaneous pleasure that discourse inflects, is a reminder of the opening in language, the space beyond it, where a common knot symbolizing our finite being sits that is outside the discourse of power that can push and pulls on subjects, regardless of geographic location.

Personal Agency and Collective Constraints

As referenced above, Michel Foucault’s *Siete sentencias sobre el séptimo ángel* was written specifically for the linguist Jean Paul Brisset’s book, *La grammaire logique*. In this book, Brisset criticizes what he sees as a futile and impractical search for an “original” language in the world, but instead conceives of the origin of any language (and specifically in his case, French) as existing as it presently circulates today. An “origin” in the sense of a primal point of departure is negligible for Brisset, because he philosophically views any given language as constantly permutating – doing and undoing itself – in the moment of the now. To this end, his text as well as Foucault’s contains innumerable anagrams used to reflect the constant reshuffling of language and its continual return to an “origin” that has now been displaced by whatever permutations it underwent from even just a moment ago. Foucault’s introduction to Brisset’s text includes five to six anagrammatic passages like the one I included above, all of which move from one word to another through the addition of phonemes or their reordering in a string of visual and aural echoes.

I would argue, by including this text in her exhibit, Dorado implicitly asks a viewer to make connections between the words that circle the floor of the exhibit and the bodies in the photographs that mimic the same chain of signifiers that makes up the text. Each body, as a

result of its close proximity to the others that surround it, is affected by its placement in this contiguous chain of signifiers. The connection between the text and the bodies draws attention to the way that a written or an oral narrative affects whatever a viewer looks at, as in some cases one might move one's eyes from a photograph, to a word, back to a photograph, thus anagrammatically mixing two different sign systems in a combinatorial process of meaning-making that travels up and down between each register. Moreover, such a strategy subverts the privileging of either one and makes the play between them a site of emergent possibility for new subjective enunciations.

Standing before each photo a participant in the exhibit can perform his or her own anagrammatic game. Grabbing hold of whatever stamp he or she chooses, not only is there a chance to create new words, phrases, or figures out of the letters of *martirio*, but spectators can also mix the letters with the representative "bodies" of the photographs, creating tattoos of sorts on the surface of another. The letters gradually begin to obscure the body, muddling its detail behind a screen of ink. The choice of stamping adds a dehumanizing element to the anagrammatic play on the surface of the skin because a stamp invokes the transgression of one human's gesture onto the surface of the body of another's. And the stamps resemble the mechanized assembly line that lacks the intimacy of handwriting or even a simple touch of the skin by the other. To stamp someone, an audience member has to press the letter with some vigor onto the image.

after they were stamped, about the body from mean that in some cases, stamped the same letter very dark imprint on the bellybuttons and torsos the background as the



Looking at the registered bodies the stamps reveal something which they originated. By this I someone seemed angry and had many times in one spot leaving a photograph. The images of the contained in the photos fade into lettered layer becomes more

prominent. Once the lettered layer is thick enough, the physical details of the person as well as what is written upon him or her, mix and mingle in an anagrammatic visual/textual game. The title of the exhibit itself, *martirio*, becomes distorted as viewers rearrange the letters upon the bodies, demonstrating further the effect of one person on the ideas (and body) of another. All of this points to the ways in which representational systems can distort reality and obfuscate possibility in a deceitful sheen of fixity, but also the way that combining visual and text can create a new "register," beyond the Foucault, beyond the photographs, and beyond the artist herself, one that stems from the agency of the collective.

As a whole, *martirio* also symbolizes the paradoxical tension between personal agency and collective constraint involved in being a human in the social world. As Judith Butler has so aptly put it, getting at the tensions between social determinism and agency, "If I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility" (UG 3). Although each person who enters the exhibit can leave his or her personal mark on the collective scene, the materials with which he or she has been provided limit his or her creative possibility. There simply is not a letter "f", for instance, and so that is not a possibility of enunciation within the very real material conditions of the exhibit. At the same time, the letter *o* for instance, was used as if it were a round object by some of those who

stamped the photos, pushing the *o* out of one semiotic system and into another where it came to represent an egg or a round ball, based on the placement of it on the photographs. To summarize, the exhibit enables improvisational play and invention, while still setting limitations, somewhat like Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* – as referenced in the Introduction – a novel in which readers have agency to choose their own page-order, but yet, are confined by the material conditions of the book, which only permit certain possibilities.

While Dorado's exhibit *martirio* makes visible the power that lies in the distance between one body and another, between a text and its permutations, between an artist and her aesthetic image, it simultaneously demonstrates the personal agency each viewer has to contribute to the collective artistic creation, within the material confines of the scene. While Dorado talks about the conceptual nature to *martirio*, some of the theories she puts forth in that exhibit extend themselves to more concrete commentaries on gender and sexuality, two themes to which I now turn. Growing out of complex tensions between societal organizing systems and the personal desire to transgress them, the exhibits themselves become microcosmic examples of macrohistorical social antagonisms that transcend spatial and temporal confines.

Gendered Power Dynamics: The Seeing and the Seen

RAMIRITO. *Querido Ramiro. Not his real name. But a tattoo written across her lower abdomen. Who is she? Written on a woman named Maria's pelvic area. Below the name, a penis, inscribed above her genitals. Below each breast, an "R", and another one, right in the center of her sternum. She was his for a time, kept in the kitchen, not seen for weeks on end and fed by him when he felt like it. She was forced to have sex. She was actually legally married to him. He is in prison. She is free. But her body carries the marks of her psychological martyrdom. Ramirito>>Martirio.*⁷⁹

The conceptual approach to "play" as it operates between semiotic systems in *martirio* extends itself to Dorado's exploration of gender stereotypes and their subversion in contemporary Bolivia. Dorado's artistic analysis of gender is more complicated than looking at simple male and female binaries, but encompasses the subtleties that underwrite such generalizations. In her exhibit *Castigadores domésticos moderados* (Moderate Domestic Punishers), Dorado frames the story of Lola Cruz, a woman who is currently being held in a Santa Cruz prison for killing her husband, in a visual, oral, and tactile space that renders visible the physical and symbolic violence that affects both men and women in Bolivia and beyond. By Dorado's account, Lola Cruz's life was one of constant hardship: she was led to believe that her mother, who she only saw sporadically, was actually an aunt for much of her childhood because her mother did not want to accept parental responsibility. Later, when living with a biological aunt,

⁷⁹ Based on a newspaper article I found in La Paz titled, "Ramirito: Una historia de violencia femenina" that ran on May 4th, 2008 in *La Prensa*, one of La Paz's principal newspapers. Coincidentally, the letters of *Ramirito* also form the word *martirio*.

her uncle attempted to molest her numerous times. After this, Cruz chose to live on the streets because life there seemed a more promising fate than staying with her family. Once in her teens, and not all together surprisingly due to her upbringing, Cruz entered into a string of unhealthy relationships. As she recounts in a series of interviews that Dorado conducted with her, her first two husbands physically and mentally abused her and had no interest in playing active roles in her childrens' lives. Her third husband had a closer relationship with her children, even though none of them were his, but had consistent drinking problems. In the heat of what was an increasingly typical argument, during which Cruz's husband had come home drunk and was yelling at both her and the children, Cruz aggressively defended herself with a knife. By her account, she never meant to kill him, but rather to protect herself and her kids.

After hearing about Cruz's story in the papers, Dorado decided to construct an exhibit that would create a dialogue along the gray edges between reality and its representation and that would open up a space through which viewers could experience the underlying hypocrisies and ambiguities to gender dynamics in society. The exhibit rotates around various forms of traumatic violence – whether corporeal or psychological, obvious or implied – and while it does not put forth a solution it raises a number of important problems for discussion such as the abuse of military power within nation-states, the continued subservience of many women in the domestic space, and the contradictory space of the hetero-normative institution of marriage and procreation. In order to plant tensions in her audience's mind, Dorado uses four primary components to create the exhibit: a video, a series of portraits of women, a series of portraits of men, and photographs of scars. In its installed form, the exhibit engages the senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch, combining all four in a way that does not privilege any of them but mixes the sensorial threads to create a fluid narrative with multiple interpretations. Temporally and spatially, as was the case with *martirio*, the exhibit does not have to be experienced in a certain order, but rather, it is up to the viewer to choose a path, and to interpret the content that Dorado has provided.

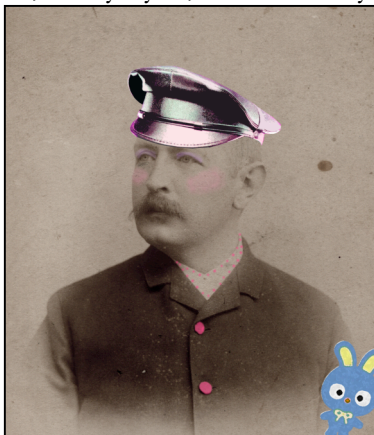
The video component, which runs in a ten-minute loop, flashes images of different women sitting alone in chairs, backs turned to the camera, facing the corner of whatever room they are in – usually, a kitchen. These women appear to have been “castigadas,” or punished, banished to the corner of a space that has traditionally been “theirs,” and tend to look middle-aged, based on clothing and hair color or style. The fact that Dorado is videoing them, however, now makes an invisible reality suddenly repetitively visible on the screen, consequently exposing an aspect to women's lives that is not typically discussed in society. The women's physical position in the video cues a number of possible readings. On the one hand, their hidden faces symbolize shame and convey a fear of being seen. Backs to the screen, the women are also metaphorically “faceless” and therefore instead of representing a specific person, stand in for the possibility of any woman's domestic situation. Moreover, they are totally still and silent, corporally and psychologically petrified, as if turning away from an unnamed and displaced fear.

The entire video is filmed in a very muted color, pastel-like, with a rose-colored overlay to everything. This pink color, integral to the entirety of the exhibit, is a purposefully clichéd nod to the female gender, but also symbolic of open wounds. This same bright pink hue is the only intervention of color in the video and the entirety of the exhibit, enhancing its valence. Dorado seems to be hyper-feminizing the exhibit as if to imply that this hyper-colored pink world, is what being female sometimes feels like: it can be too cliché. Lastly, as the images slowly

move across the screen, six to seven minutes of Lola Cruz's recorded story run as the only audio component to the exhibit. The audio is actually in the voice of Alejandra but reading verbatim what Cruz said because the quality of the digitally recorded interview was not clear enough. Cruz talks about the traumatic experiences she has lived. Cruz's imprisonment is the most literal punishment of the exhibit's title, but as a whole, the idea of collective punishment is implied.

The second component to the exhibit is a group of portraits that appear to represent Victorian era military men. The photographed portraits of the men are small, no larger than 8x10 inches, each a black and white print displayed in a stand-up, antique frame. As the Bolivian art critic Pedro Alborno notes in the catalog, they are "men with a victorian air, embodying social virtues thought to be positive for their virility – detachment, stoicism, lack of expression, dignity..." (*Castigadores domésticos moderados*, exhibit catalog). The portraits of the men are clustered together on the floor of the exhibit room, surreptitiously surveying the space (and both the visitors and the portraits of the women, to be discussed next) from one corner of the room. The viewer almost does not notice them, and in fact can ignore them for a time, but will probably feel their presence emanating from the shadows. In thinking about Michel Foucault's concept of the panopticon as elaborated in *Discipline and Punish*, from which the gaze of the disciplinarians can see those whom they discipline while those disciplined cannot see them, Dorado ironically reworks the dominant gaze of surveillance from above by inverting the hierarchical spatial order attached to predominantly male and military scopic regimes.⁸⁰

In addition, Alejandra mockingly added details to each portrait. She added bright pink rosy cheeks to the men's faces, and other putridly pink details, such as a flower on a lapel or a ribbon on a hat, pink buttons on a military jacket, or a cute bunny peaking out of a corner. Each stoic, steely-eyed, and seriously dressed man has been turned into a *cursi*, effeminate version of

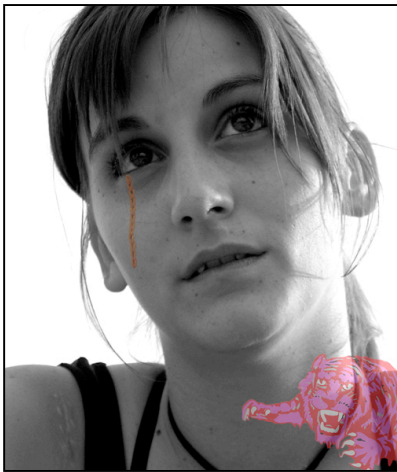


himself. This forced stylization of the men recalls some earlier work Alejandra did in "Una imagen amable de mí misma", where she effeminized Simón Bolívar and other military heroes. We must remember that in the context of Lola Cruz's history, Alejandra wanted to parody the *machista* attitudes of Bolivian males, and to draw attention to the fact that such attitudes are historically embedded in the nation's imaginary, exemplified in her choice of antique portraits instead of contemporary images. The use of antique photographs ironically emphasizes the antiquity of such an attitude, while granting modern-day viewers the benefit of the doubt that they may have outgrown such positions. At the same time, the

photos mock the military institution by causing viewers to see its stoic heroes as no more than what they are: an aestheticized image. Because the additional details are so obviously "artificial" they draw attention to the act of representation itself and the possible emptiness behind it, undermining more obvious models of masculinity that circulate in society, such as the statues to which I referred along the Prado of La Paz in my previous chapter.

⁸⁰ For elaboration of the concept of scopic regimes, there is a large body of literature. For instance, see David Michael Levin's *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*, where he links human suffering to particular modes of seeing.

The third component to the exhibit consists of a series of enlarged portrait photographs of diverse women, all captured in black and white, and taken very close-up in comparison to the male portraits. The visual proximity to the women creates an intimacy between them and the viewer that is lacking between the viewers and the physically and spatially remote men. If the men seem stoic, these women seem vulnerable. Unlike the men, these women are contemporary women with haircuts and clothing that evoke the present moment, symbolically hovering at the viewer's horizon line with much more prominence than the vintage photos on the ground. The women are captured in intimate detail: the lines around their women's eyes are visible, their dimples, their dry lips, or their high cheekbones. As Alejandra explains, she wanted them to look "themselves" – so the women are neither smiling nor frowning, they simply "are." However, in most of the eight images I detect a slight impulse to grin, if only ever so slightly, almost like the Mona Lisa, part of the playful element to the space Dorado creates. While serious in its overall tone, there is a base layer of parody and laughter to the entirety of the work. The materiality to this set of images is intriguing. Each of the women's photos is printed on a plastic latex material that resembles the standard white shades one would find on the windows of an ordinary house. This material reflects the "domesticity" to the exhibit, a subtle insinuation of the ways in which the female blends in with the household space. She borders on being disembodied, flattened like a decal onto the plastic of the shade.



Years before conceiving of this exhibit, Alejandra saved pieces of her hair from a fairly substantial cut that she used in this exhibit (her enthusiasm for collecting things comes in handy at the most unexpected moments). She transformed her hair into a macabre type of human thread and embroidered it onto each of the portraits, using variegated "styles" of stitching. After her meticulous handiwork with this hair-thread, it appears as if each woman is at once crying and/or has a significant scar or stitches below her eye. When pondered up close, the stitching on each woman's face is intricately unique, and yet from afar, the stitching almost looks like an identical railroad track on each woman's face. In summation, the threading poignantly captures the simultaneous ubiquity and particularity to domestic violence. Each woman's face is scarred and distinct from any other woman's face, but the difference is indiscernible from a distance. This tension between uniqueness and similarity provides a powerful critique on societal attitudes toward domestic violence: Alejandra hints at a collective capacity to gloss over domestic violence or to simply pull down the shade and ignore it. And yet, it is marked painfully right before our eyes. Moreover, the use of this human material as transformed into an artistic tool is an example of the transformation from subject to object that confronts us with our own end. Dorado herself uses one of the limits of her own body to create a community of women, echoing Nancy's notion of finite being as a necessary condition for community.

These large "shades" of the women are each adorned by a cartoon animal that has been digitally added on to each portrait in one of the lower corners, making the women all the more life-like in juxtaposition to these decals. The cartoon intervention is a bright pink animal, an image that stands in for the imagined male perpetrator of the violence inflicted on the women.

The bright pink color of the cats matches the same pink detailing on the portraits of the men that face them, thus creating a dialogue between both sets of portraits. Animal decals exactly like those Alejandra chose frequently adorn urban mini-buses throughout Bolivia – which are exclusively driven by men – and therefore their significance resonates with a popular, urban audience. The male cat is the root of the parody, as his bubble-gum and purple hues seem no match for the scarred yet still standing women. In fact, the women in the photos are entirely oblivious to these “male” cartoon characters (wolves, dogs, tigers, jaguars) and are steadfast in their gaze outward. Additionally, the cartoon intervention maps a representational immaturity to the animated men especially when contrasted with the serious black and white images of the women. When these cartoon figures are coupled with the portraits, the male’s iconographic stature is literally and metaphorically reduced to a pop-culture register, emphasizing the emptiness behind the false representational weight of masculine identity.

The fourth component to the exhibit is a series of photographs that Alejandra took years prior in Cuba. Each photo captures a visceral, raw scar of a recently-performed cesarean section. The graphic photos invoke physical discomfort and pain, an integral part of their ability to affect viewers. Alejandra enhanced the photos digitally, making the skin around the wounds a more exaggerated, bubble-gum pink tone than they originally were, again, uniting the



components of the exhibit through the repetition of color. The wounds themselves are about five to six inches in length and are stitched with a visible dark-colored thread (these wounds really were stitched-up in the hospital, not like the case of the shade images where the women’s tears/scars were added synthetically). The skin that is pulled together by the stitches looks very tender and slightly curled on either side of the stitching, opening the wounds to a few different interpretations. If I did not know their origin before seeing them, it is not implausible that the sewn-up slit of the photos could be representative of a vagina. The fleshiness of the skin on either side of the stitching as well as the magenta color of tender skin folds contributes to this reading. Moreover, the

unsettling images of the stitched wounds also recall an image that appears various times in Argentinian writer and Dorado influencer, Alejandra Pizarnik’s *La condesa sangrienta*. This gothic horror story retells the life of Erzébet Bathory, a countess from seventeenth-century Hungary whose exotic sexual appetites caused her to prey on young girls, purportedly killing 650 of them over the course of her life. Before she would kill them, she tortured them extensively and: “si la condesa se fatigaba de oír los gritos (of the girls) les cosían la boca” (Pizarnik 285). Dorado’s wounds more abstractly resemble the sewn together lips of a mouth, representing the silence that women have kept historically and fearfully continue to keep, regarding domestic violence – whether it be male to female, female to female, male to male, or anything else in between. These sewn “lips,” when juxtaposed with the audio-video that reveals the backs of women and makes audible only the voice of one, creates a palpable tension between the silent and the enclosed, and the simultaneously open and visually-crying female body.

Dorado printed the digitalized photos of the cesarean section scars as large 2.5ft x 2.5ft stickers that she then stuck flat onto the exhibit floor, passively encouraging potential visitors to

step on them. When examined up close, each of these “scars” has some kind of object on the brink of falling into it – plastic wedding figurines, miniscule houses, or “families” similar to those pawns used in the game of *Life*. With this enhancement, the scar represents a swallowing up of the metaphoric debris from a happy marriage or an idealized domestic life. In addition to the corporeal metaphors already explored, the fact that the plastic figurines used come, in some cases, from board games or children’s toys represents the capricious role that fortune and play have in shaping life as we may plan it as well as again referring to the rosy-colored fantasy-land one sometimes lives in prior to the realities of life post-honeymoon. With respect to this component of the exhibit, women are potentially implicated in their own self-destruction based on their inability to see beyond the pink wedding cake and tenuous sheen of “forever” to a sometimes less brilliant reality of post-marriage and children.

There are two final elements that while understated contribute to the overall impact of the exhibit. The first is what Alejandra refers to as the *heladitos* (little ice cream cones) component and is the most obviously ironic element to the *Castigadores domésticos moderados* experience. At the opening of the exhibition, trying to mimic a wedding reception, Alejandra passed around a tray of bright pink confectionary ice-cream cones (this “ice cream” is not actually frozen cream, but more of a meringue or marshmallow-like substance that does not melt and is sold just about everywhere in Bolivia). Visitors to the exhibit were welcome to take one of the *heladitos* (these were particularly beautiful ones in a bubble-gum pink with white and green detailing) as a “party favor” of sorts, marking their exhibit experience. This parodic gesture deconstructs the superficial happy wedding while highlighting – in hyper-color, no less – the grim reality that results after the wedding flowers have wilted, the sweets have been devoured, and the guests have gone home. The favor is also symbolic of the material exchange that happens in art installations, as viewers take a piece of the larger project with them.

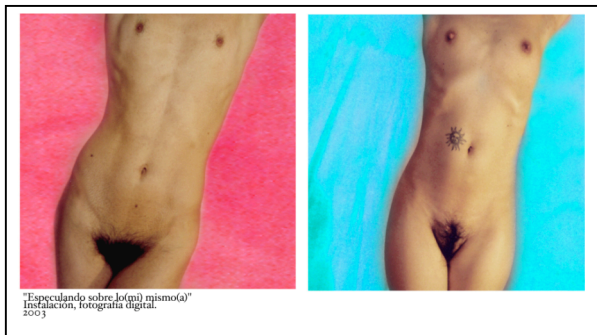
Lastly, in another corner of the exhibit, there is a heap of coiled pink rope that Dorado dyed the same deep pink hue reflected in the rest of the exhibit. This cotton cord is called *maipe* and it is a material that, Dorado explains, artists use to clean up when working with paint. Dorado dyed the rope the deep rose color to go with the aesthetic of the exhibit. It was symbolically supposed to resemble blood or entrails, capturing the eviscerating corporeal effects of domestic violence or the psychological effects of a failed marriage or relationship. On top of the rose cord pile, Dorado put a plastic “couple” that would normally go on top of a wedding cake, to again, when coupled with the *heladitos*, deconstruct the often idealized perception of marriage.

Experienced as a whole, this exhibit is rebus-like, consisting of diverse components whose relational tension contributes most significantly to its revelatory nature of the ambiguities of gender, sexuality, and power. The meaning of any one component, like phonemes of words and identity itself, is contingent on its articulation with the image or an audio component next to it. These discrete pieces can constantly be rearranged, mixed, and added to or subtracted from in an ongoing story of emergent interpretation. Out of the play of the diverse components, a primary commentary of the exhibit is that women and specifically women’s bodies, are the form and surface that carry the symbolic burden of failed partnerships, the physical labor of giving child-birth and its accompanying physical scars, or the assumed responsibility of maintaining the domestic space. As Pedro Alborno writes, the exhibit is “una meditación sólida y minuciosa acerca del poder y su expresión dentro de las relaciones de género mediada por los usos y abusos

del cuerpo, del discurso, de las instituciones y de las representaciones” (*Castigadores domésticos moderados*, Exhibit Catalog).

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Rossana Barragán, and Marcia Stephenson – to name but a few – have explored gender formation extensively during the first half of nation formation in Bolivia. For instance, in her book *Gender and Modernity in the Andes*, Stephenson talks about modernity’s relocation of subjects “in terms of their cultural, racial, gendered, and spatial identities”, delving into the relationship between physical space, such as the domestic space, and epistemological space (Stephenson 1). My reading of Dorado’s art goes beyond this, into the realm of being a desiring human being. Sexuality as it happens outside of heteronormative gender roles is a social factor that remains unexplored in large part because of its historical invisibility within Bolivian society, but that does not mean that it is not present in various ways. While such invisibility is not still the case in other South American nations, the same cannot be said of the historically conservative central Andes: Ecuador, Bolivia, and to a lesser-extent, Peru. “While Bolivia shares a boundary with four countries in which homosexuality is more openly tolerated – Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Chile – it remains a landlocked country in cultural as well as geographical terms. Legally, homosexual behavior between consenting adults is not illegal and not subject to criminal prosecution of any kind. And yet, homosexuality is still considered a perversion” (Albornoz, *HGLR* 15). Dorado’s use of digital photography enables her to play with gender and an implied sexual imaginary in ways that while perhaps seemingly conservative to certain audiences, are transgressive in the space of Cochabamba and Bolivia at large.

Lastly, in a separate photographic series she did, Dorado plays with the notion of her



own gender, further opening spaces of enunciation and play for emergent queer subjectivities. If “gender likewise figures as a precondition for the production and maintenance of legible humanity” (*UG* 11) by playing with the stereotypical blue and pink associations of girl and boy and the physical appearance of the body, Dorado here imagines a gendered identity that stems from our ability to “play” with externally inscribed

categories as an assertion of agency and effrontery to cultural norms that etch gender onto the body as if it were a fixed category. The title of the two photos “Speculating on the same” or “Speculating on myself” – Dorado offers both – subordinates difference and individuality as secondary to similarity and doubt around one’s own male or femaleness or both. Dorado uses her imagination to combine parts of her own body and other bodies digitally to demonstrate the inventiveness that is part of gendered identity and the power of technology to enable us to play with virtual aspects of self that otherwise would be excluded from representative spaces of the nation. Only at the beginning of her career, Dorado provides a provocative look at the way that art can deconstruct concepts of fixed gender and sexuality so that viewers might reflect on their own ability to imagine, and even perform, themselves anew.

Conclusion

Bolivia, a land-locked, geographically extreme, and culturally complex space, is the poorest nation in South America. Cochabamba, which is Quechua for “swampy plain” is certainly not the first space academic critics would think to go to find information out about new theorists, new avant-garde artists, or new feminisms. It is certainly more obvious to look to Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Santiago or Bogotá, not to mention Paris or New York for innovative artistic trends. However, in places like Cochabamba, there are many artists like Alejandra Dorado developing projects whose message and impact would go far beyond the limits of their nation and region if there were simply more access to them.

Dorado’s installations and work have traveled in a very limited way outside of Bolivia and yet they put forward concepts, like the anagrammatic concept to identity, that when seen in an artist like Kiki Smith’s work, result in New York Times spreads, international awards, and MOMA exhibits. José María Arguedas, a Peruvian novelist, won the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega prize for his writing in 1968, when the world was seeing revolution unfold on a near global scale. Throughout his career and in his acceptance speech, he spoke out against the colonial legacy that would make Peru a source of inspiration for the creation of European arts, but not a place of emergent thinking. To Arguedas, the diversity and cultures of the Andes were not metaphoric paint for others’ canvases or examples to be probed in support of other first-world nations’ theories. Arguedas concluded his acceptance speech by saying of Europe, ““En técnica nos superarán y dominarán, no sabemos hasta qué tiempos, pero en arte podemos ya obligarlos a que aprendan de nosotros y lo podemos hacer incluso sin movernos de aquí mismo” (*Obras completas* V, 14). Alejandra Dorado has taught me so incredibly much about art, identity politics, and being human.

In conclusion, Dorado’s multimedia installations bring critical insight into the multiplicity of representational registers that order and place subjects in language, in visible form, and in space. However, through the use of an untamed anagram as a strategy for the undoing of fixed subjectivity, she underscores the human agency that each body contains to “play” with semiotic systems in ways that reveal their inherent flexibility and movement. While her artistic spaces are contained, the participatory power she hands over to her audience has the potential to make average viewers more aware of the ways that they are either complicit with a given system of representation or the ways that they might move this way or that to catalyze even incremental change. Luis Tapia, an innovative contemporary political theorist from Bolivia has pointed toward what he sees the need for the location of a *núcleo común* to forge a new governmental model that draws on the multiple political models that exist in the country.⁸¹ The *núcleo común* of Dorado’s exhibit – the bellybutton and the ever renewable ‘origin’ of languages as they circulate and constantly *become* – is a source of common potential for imagining spaces of avant-garde resistance again all over again. There is a so much underneath a name, Alejandra.

⁸¹ See Luis Tapia’s *La transformación pluralista del estado*. Alvaro García Linera, Luis Tapia Mealla, Raúl Prada Alcoreza. La Paz : Muela del Diablo, 2007.

Project Conclusion

*Au bout du petit matin, le morne
famélique et nul ne sait mieux que ce morne batard
pourquoi le suicidé s'est étouffé avec complicité de son
hypoglosse en retournant sa langue pour l'avaler;
pourquoi une femme semble faire la planche à la
rivière Capot (son corps lumineusement obscur
s'organise docilement au commandement du nombril)
mais elle n'est qu'un paquet d'eau sonore.
--Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal**

The discursive sign and the motile body meet in Martinican Aimé Césaire's much acclaimed poetry collection *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), published the same year as Vallejo's *España, aparta de mí este caliz*. Like the ombligos, hombligos, y cordones umbilicales of César Vallejo, José María Arguedas, Julieta Paredes, and Alejandra Dorado, Césaire's *nombril* collides an inscriptive name with a moving body, drawing attention to one of the central paradoxes to modernity and the avant-garde, experienced by a Martinican confronting an alienated self in a land that both is and is not his own. He tries to name the uncanny sense of arriving to a place that is both home and foreign but the language moves, underground, like the plants that populate Césaire's collection. The embodied trace of the navel symbolizes a potential epistemological opening, as we consider the written archive as it meets a moving body. Césaire himself, similar to Vallejo, believed that poetry did not come from its style or its form alone, but from its direct connection to the feeling and thinking body. Written while in exile, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* is a celebration of movement, of inventive word coinages, nomadic thought patterns, and eclectic punctuation. It is truly representative of the rhizomatic form as it moves across the page following prosaic itineraries without destination and opens up new perspectives through its deep engagement with obscure and arcane words that formulate long knotted strands.

Departing from the central metaphor of the navel, throughout this project, I have drawn attention to the porous walls between poetry and performance in order to create alliances between artists along the edge of language and at the border of the body. Like Césaire, how does the group of artists in my dissertation put forth a shared "mode of perception"? How do they shift a "mode of perception" through the constant enmeshment of written and performative registers? In his book on the dynamics of location and movement in an age of globalization, *Routes*, James Clifford asks, "How are people fashioning networks, complex worlds that both presuppose and exceed cultures and nations?" (*Routes* 11), and situates "location," as an "itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations" (11). He also plays upon the concept of a root and a route, reconfiguring travel as a broad notion that can capture such terms as "diaspora," "borderland," "immigration," and "migrancy." Through this project I have concluded, like Clifford, that movement is a central characteristic to the avant-gardes. I approach the unique relationship between roots and routes as espoused by the various artists of the project through Deleuze's notion of the rhizome. The rhizome navigates between

the etymological idea of the root of a word, as well as the way that such a word travels as it moves within our personal and collective bodies. My consideration of the avant-gardes as growing in this manner thus lends itself to thinking about other postcolonial and neocolonial settings where a leftist aesthetic continues to emerge along the edges of writing and the body. How can the rhizome serve as a new model for multiplicities across time and space?

I was initially, and continue to be, drawn to installation art and performance pieces in the Andes. Through the process of this project's evolution, however, I came to realize that the embodied gestures that intrigued me in Alejandra Dorado's and Julieta Paredes's work were equally present in the writing of José María Arguedas and César Vallejo. The way that Vallejo and Arguedas's words "vibrate" is a result of the body's encroachment upon their writing. As mentioned in the chapters, Vallejo and Arguedas stutter and stammer in various ways in their works, highlighting the role of the material body – the tongue, the teeth, the lips – in shaping the formation of words and sounds, as exemplified by Vallejo's *Vusco voluvver* (Trilce IX). Their personal embodied difference emerges in their words themselves, collapsing distinctions between performance and writing and drawing attention to their complementary forms and mutual constitution. In this same way, Dorado's exhibit *martirio* and Paredes's graffiti also mix corporeal gesture directly with writing. In *martirio*, participants must move toward the photos on the walls in order to stamp the long photographs with ink. The movement of participants' hands and arms is recorded on the visual register, serving as an undercurrent to the visible games of the stamps. In Paredes's graffiti, the occasional dip or rise in a word on the wall records the motion itself of her body, adding additional sensorial impact to the content of her words. This corporeal trace serves as an underlying register to the more obvious words on the surface of the wall, reminding us of the motility behind writing and the ephemeral events that shape the space of the city as much as writing.

Walter Benjamin has used the word "phantasmagoria" to capture the powerful but deeply illusory quality to the world of urban commodity capitalism. He explains that capitalism looks so real that we move through it "as if were given and natural, when in fact it is a socioeconomic construct" (*Work of Art* 5). Each of the artists of my project interrupt this notion by breaking through the surface of sign systems by including the physical body as a "phantasmagoric" trace that can puncture the surface of what might seem to be given to us as unbendable or fixed. When Dorado plays anagrammatically with the word *martirio*, she draws attention to the agency that each person has to affect the collective creation of the language in which we express ourselves as subjects. Likewise, when she creates a chain of bodies in her visual register, she draws attention to the way that mechanical reproduction can duplicate our bodies into flattened, written upon images of a multi-dimensioned person. She also implicates her audience in this process of capitalist "branding" when she invites them to stamp the photos. However, simultaneously in this process, Dorado parlays the way that the movement of our personal bodies *and* words can affect others. This intervention awakens audience members to their agency to move or gesture toward the other, not to just fix him or her with his gaze. As Benjamin concludes, "[i]n everything is preserved the potential space of play that would make it possible to become a site of new, unforeseen constellations. The definitive, the characteristic are avoided. No situation appears just as it is, intended as such forever; no form asserts its own 'just so, and not otherwise,'" (Benjamin 7). So too does Dorado emphasize the inherent play between the word and the body that enables inventive identity to continue.

Returning to Césaire, his particular experience of coloniality is presented in his *Cahier* as a dual process of both cultural alienation and of renewal. Not only a committed poet but also a statesman, Césaire's *nombril* presents us with the cut that coloniality has created between embodied experience and language, between singular being and collective affect, and between placement and movement. The journey back to the *pays natal* is as much an inward journey toward the self as an outward journey toward a cultural identity for diasporic Africa. Literary critic Doris L. Garraway has recently written a piece on Césaire that, similar to the work done in this project, seeks to disentangle the singular from the universal in relation to his concept of negritude. As Garraway writes, "Negritude is not a fixed object but a process through which Césaire comes to problematize both black essentialism and the very idea of racial particularism itself. The point, for Césaire, is not to opt for a constructivist model that evacuates both race and subjectivity, but rather to move toward the universal "human" for which particularism is both a negation and a fundamental condition of possibility" (71). The paradoxical exploration of *un humano nuevo* requires a careful navigation of the particularities and universalities to the *rhizogardes*.

Looking Ahead

As this project moves forward, I see two primary directions in which it might grow. On the one hand, the rhizmoatic avant-garde community I have theorized in the Andes is much larger than the four artists with whom I have worked thus far. I have done additional research into the poetry and visual art of José Carlos Mariátegui, Alejandro Peralta, Magda Portal, and Gamaliel Churata – among others. I hope that by adding their works to this project, I will be able to expand and strengthen the ideas articulated here. Such additions to the project would also entail a much deeper engagement with the concept of multiplicities and movement through continued work with Deleuze and Guattari. How does my concept of a *rhizogarde* enable us to consider both the temporality and the spatiality of the avant-garde in new ways? And how is such a reading particularly relevant to the Andes?

Secondly, another line of research I plan to further develop is my interest in the nascent performance arts communities in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. While there have been poets, novelists, and dramaturgists in the region for centuries, I am continually drawn to those "unofficial" performance artists: the graffiti writers, the notebook scrawlers, and the street performers whose interventions into the *archiescritura* of capital cities serves as a constant phantasmagoric presence to more official forms of art or writing. In this sense, I plan to develop the grow the last two chapters into a project on new media developments in the Andes through further research into graffiti, performance, installation art, and film as they shape the region. I will be particularly interested in the way they open up discussions on gender, race, and sexuality. While new forms of media have characteristics of the historical avant-gardes, they also open up new venues of expression for groups that have been wittingly or unwittingly quieted within national cultures. The seeds of possibility for alliance building continue to spread, and I continue to be restless and unquiet before the work at hand.

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