

**NEOLIBERAL DESIRES, SPECTACLES OF MARKET-NATIONALISM, UTOPIAN  
PERFORMANCES: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF GENDERED CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN  
POST-DICTATORSHIP CHILE.**

by

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores neoliberalism as a gendered cultural discourse in post-dictatorship Chile. I argue that the transformation of the developmentalist narrative (characteristic of the Popular Front and the Popular Unity) into a neoliberal narrative during the Dictatorship and the Transition, depended on the staging of a series of spectacles of gender and sexuality that offered new coordinates for subjectivation. Applying a feminist reading to a variety of materials from advertising, *telenovelas*, and media articles, I show how these cultural artifacts work to legitimize neoliberalism, reproduce or reinterpret national memories, and shape particular forms of (social, collective) desire through a narrative of “sexual freedom.” Through this analysis I provide evidence of how what I call “the sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism” recreate the coordinates of heterosexuality, sexual respectability and gender nationalism in post-dictatorship Chile. Freemarketism in Chile then has been sustained by gendered spectacles of “sexual freedom,” while laws and policies that regulate and discipline bodies are still articulated around notions of (hetero)sexual respectability. This leads me to ask how these spectacles and the narratives they articulate are being negotiated, resisted, and transformed through embodied queer and feminist political practices. I explore how activist performance has contributed to the expansion of cultural memories and the emergence of utopian political imaginaries and subjects in post-dictatorship Chile (1990-2013). I approach these questions from an interdisciplinary approach to feminist research, informed by discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, post-colonial theory, Latin American readings of queer theories, and cultural studies. I argue that the queer and feminist activist performances analyzed in this thesis enact femininity in a strategic, rather than essentialist manner, to oppose and subvert the militarized male gaze. These performances offer clues of alternative embodiments (through the aesthetics of horror and pornography, for instance), subjectivities, political projects, and political imaginations, in which the street is seen as a public space and stage for democracy, and subjectivities are based on the “interconnection of bodies,” rather than defined by the notion of individual rights and bodily sovereignty.

## **PREFACE**

I conducted the entirety of this research independently, under the guidance of my supervisory committee led by my supervisor Dr. William E. French from the Department of History, Dr. Jon Beasley-Murray from the Department of French, Hispanic, and Italian Studies, and Dr. Juanita Sundberg from the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. Portions of chapter two were presented at the CALACS Congress 2013 at Carleton University on May 2013. Portions of chapter three were presented at Hemispheric Convergence, Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics in the Americas in November 2012 at Duke University and at the “Performing Utopias” Conference at the University of British Columbia in March 2014.

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A Wally.

## INTRODUCTION

### Snapshot One

Sitting in front of my computer at home in Vancouver where I have been living now for 8 years, I log on to Facebook and find a picture of my friend, Gaby. She is the guitar player in several punk and alternative bands in the Chilean Southern city of Concepción.

We met in 2004 when she was playing in *Flores Marchitas* and I was the bass player in *Rompehogares* after reforming the band I previously fronted, *Penélope Glamour*. In 2004 we organized the first FemFest in Santiago. Based on the principles of the transnational anarcho-feminist festival, LadyFest, which promoted horizontal collaboration and participation as a means of politicization, and individual and collective empowerment, FemFest was inspired by the riot grrl subculture of the Pacific Northwest in the United States. Six female and feminist-identified bands from Chile (*Las Jonathan*, *Lilits*, *Vaso de Leche*, *Golden Baba*, *Flores Marchitas*, and *Rompehogares*) and one from Argentina (*She Devils*) were involved in the inaugural FemFest in Santiago in December 2004. The festival worked on a cooperative model: to play music in the festival, performers were expected to attend meetings where decisions about the festival were made and work at all different stages of the production. We held several long meetings in my big old apartment on *Parque Bustamante* and decided to make it a multimedia event with performances by punk drag queen *Hija de Perra*, (who, henceforth, assumed the role of official MC for FemFest) and feminist performance artist *Señorita Ugarte*. Somebody offered to screen a queer and trans porn film called *Tranny Fucks*, and we all agreed that it was a good idea. This year FemFest is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Gaby currently plays in three bands: *Terror Sonoro*, *Animales Exóticos Desamparados* and *Ellas No*. I look closely at the picture of her. The sticker on her guitar reads “one day sexual morality will fall.”

It’s so odd to be here and be there at the same time.



Figure 1. Performing with Rompehogares in 2004 (left) and at the first FemFest in Santiago, same year.

## Snapshot Two

December 2013. The Chilean presidential election confronts two women for the first time, Evelyn Matthei and Michelle Bachelet. Neither of them represents a feminist agenda, even though Bachelet’s political base represents the broader *Nueva Mayoría* that includes many feminists. Because this is Chile, where there is a tendency towards the extremely surreal and ironic, these two women are both daughters of generals of the air force, and one of these generals (Matthei) is being investigated for his participation in the murder of the other (Bachelet). This is very representative of the promiscuity of the post-dictatorship in Chile, in which perpetrators, victims, collaborators, resisters, and people who claim ignorance of state

terror still share everyday spaces. Even though most of the crimes have been recognized, the political negotiation of the transition to democracy and its dominant narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation translated into mass impunity for the military personnel and agents from both *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (DINA) and *Central Nacional de Investigaciones* (CNI) involved in the atrocities committed in the dictatorship era. I think about the militarized violence that penetrated social life and institutions, and about myself growing up within the dictatorship—the dull, dark and gloomy years of school under military rule. In the end, Bachelet wins the election. And in yet another spectacle resonant with meaning and symbolism reflective of this post-dictatorship era, she receives the presidential sash from the ex-president Allende's daughter, Isabel, who presides over the Senate.

### Snapshot Three

Luckily, during my early adolescence in the mid-eighties, I discovered heavy metal. In Santiago and elsewhere in Chile, metal music and culture, and “thrash metal” in particular, became a big phenomenon among youth across classes. Thrashers and punks would meet every Saturday at noon in the *Providencia* neighbourhood to exchange music tapes, magazines, fanzines, and to talk about metal. Growing up female in Chile was challenging and made me very angry, so at the age of ten I began using heavy metal culture to imagine my own identity outside the boundaries of what was desirable and appropriate for girls in militarized Chile, embracing a kind of empowering masculine girlhood. Skipping school and hanging out in the *Las Palmas* strip to meet kids from every corner of Santiago to talk, joke, and develop friendships and crushes, was incredibly exciting and provided me with a venue to imagine myself in opposition to nationalist militarized femininity, but also outside of revolutionary femininity from the left, as sustained by my parents' generation, the tireless *compañera* in the

Victor Jara and Inti Illimani songs. Like most metal fans, I took refuge and held on to the sounds, lyrics and attitudes of heavy metal culture as if they were personally directed at me, like the song “Metal Militia” (Metallica, 1983):

On through the mist and the madness  
We are trying to get the message to you  
We are as one as we all are the same, fighting for one cause  
Leather and metal are our uniforms, protecting what we are  
Joining together to take on the world with our heavy metal  
Spreading the message to everyone here  
Come let yourself go!

Knowledge of metal music was really the only prerequisite to participating and having any “social capital” in metal culture, undercutting the importance of gender and class and thus offering a more egalitarian frame for friendships and crushes (but this is not to say that metal cultures are unproblematic in all of their expressions, or to deny that some manifestations of metal culture involve glorifying violent and homophobic masculinities). During the violent clashes between supporters of Pinochet and the opposition in *Providencia* around the 1988 plebiscite, in which each group was positioned on either side of the *11 de Septiembre* avenue, the space occupied by us “metalheads” was a third one, not a depoliticized one—as thrashers and metalheads were routinely harassed by police—but one that was politicized outside the extremely narrow coordinates of the left vs. right that we had inherited from our parents through the cold war. It seemed that we could try to define ourselves through other means.



Figure 2. Embracing tomboy metal girlhood in 1983 in Chile (left) and in 2008 in Canada (right).

### Snapshot Four

July 2013. I read in the Chilean press about Belén, the pregnant eleven-year-old girl raped by her stepfather. Belén cannot have an abortion because in 1989, right before formally giving up power, Pinochet made even therapeutic abortions (which are done to save the mother in life threatening situations) illegal. Chilean President at the time, Sebastián Piñera, and his supporters declare that the girl is ready to be a mother, and the girl herself tells newspaper and television journalists that it will be “like having a real life doll.” In Chile, you can access a safe illegal abortion if you are able to pay around Cnd \$2,000 in cash. In 1998, at the age of 23, I was fortunate that my family was able to help me end an unwanted pregnancy by paying for an illegal abortion. The year before, I had had a miscarriage and when my mother took me to the clinic the doctors interrogated both of us, suggesting that I had attempted an illegal abortion. A woman faces a three to five-year prison sentence just for seeking an abortion in Chile. In 2010, while three months pregnant with my younger daughter Guadalupe, I visited Chile and

participated in a street demonstration to decriminalize abortion. My friend, the feminist historian and *performancera* Julia Antivilo, wrote “yo decido” on my abdomen, and the next day I was on the cover of the national newspaper *El Ciudadano*.

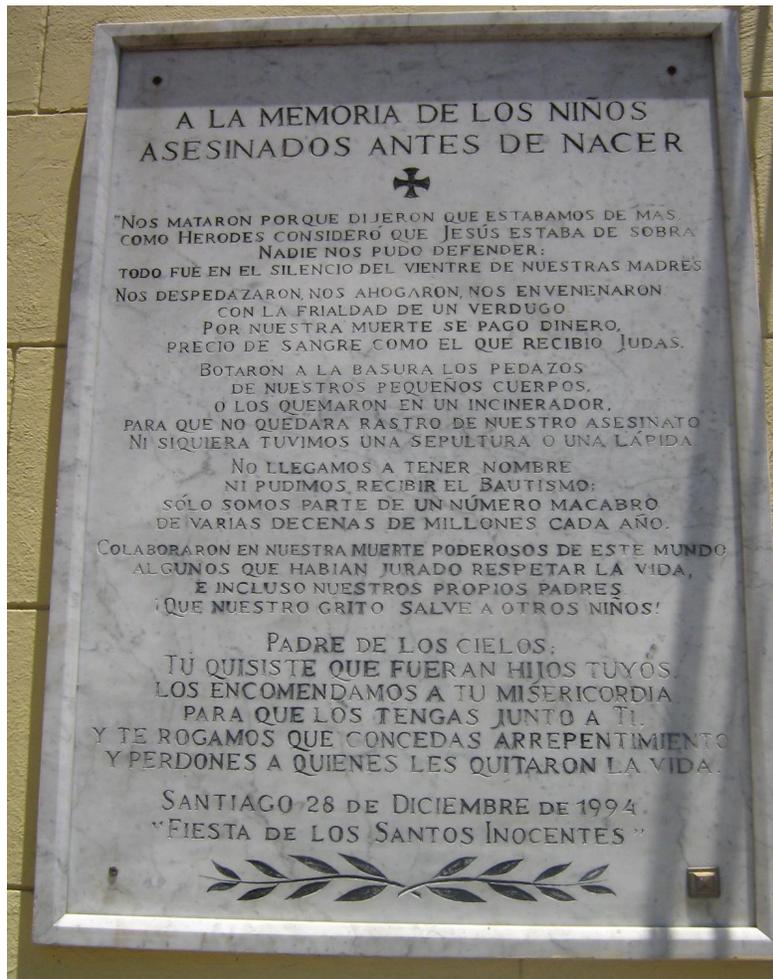


Figure 3. Memorial plaque "In Memory of the Children Murdered Before Birth." Santiago, Chile.

That same summer, I took a picture of a memorial plaque entitled “In Memory of the Children Murdered Before Birth” in a military church in *Providencia*. I find it ironic that some of these passages read as if they are talking about the “disappeared” under Pinochet’s dictatorship:

We were dismembered, we were drowned, poisoned with the cold blood of an executioner. For our death money was paid, a blood price like the one Judas received.

They tossed our bodies in the garbage, or they burned them so that there were no traces of the murders, we did not even get a grave or a tombstone.<sup>1</sup>

### Snapshot Five



Figure 4. René Roberto Acuña Reyes.

This is one of the three pictures I have seen of my uncle René Roberto Acuña Reyes, who was kidnapped and “disappeared” on February 14, 1975. He was a “mirista” like my parents, meaning they belonged to the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, and his *chapa*, or safety nickname, was *Pedro*. Because the universe is surprising and unexpected, time and space folded upon themselves like a handkerchief on September 11, 2009. I was preparing for my comprehensive exams in California, where my Uncle Pedro’s widow Aunt Lucía and her son Roberto reside. Roberto, my favourite cousin, is the son that my uncle never got to meet. At the time of his detention, my uncle was 22 years old and a history student at the *Universidad de*

*Concepción*. I was less than a year old when he was kidnapped and my Aunt Lucía was five months pregnant with my cousin. Within my family, the story initially told to us children was that Rob's dad had been killed in an accident. Later, we learned that he had died heroically and violently. During my adult life, the only fact I really knew was that he had been taken from his apartment and shot while in captivity. When my older sister was attending a private university called Finis Terrae in 1991, she was horrified to learn that the son of Marcelo Morén Brito, one of the agents associated with my uncle's kidnapping, was also attending the university. And on September 11, 2009, while reading for my exams, I came across the complete file of his case, composed of the testimonies by witnesses who saw him in *Villa Grimaldi* and at the DINA Hospital after he was detained. The witnesses reported that he was concerned about his pregnant girlfriend and asked repeatedly about her.

### **Snapshot Six**

In another strange moment of synchronicity, this image from the summer of 2010 in Chile gets recirculated on Facebook in May 2014, calling for a protest demanding the decriminalization of abortion on my 40th birthday. The picture is adorned by the text: "Wednesday, May 14th, 13:00, *Minsal* [Ministry of Health]. *Funa*. Free Abortion on Demand." The protest has been triggered by yet another case involving a minor and an unwanted pregnancy: A seventeen year old patient in critical condition at the Hospital Luis Tisne in Santiago has been denounced to the police by the doctor who admitted her. The prosecution has already pressed charges while the minor lays unconscious in a hospital bed. Feminist organizations react by protesting outside the Ministry of Health, and delivering a letter to the Minister of Health, Helia Molina, while the vice president of the episcopal conference tells the press that reintroducing a debate on abortion would be a "blow to the soul of Chile." This takes place in the context of the public's anticipation of a

possible re-opening of the abortion debate due to the fact that the new ministers of both SERNAM, Claudia Pascual, and MINSAL, Helia Molina, are openly feminist and proponents of reproductive rights. My body is all the way here in Canada, but is getting restaged as a performance all over again in Chile and in the virtual public forum of Facebook, this picture of my pregnant self plastered all over my Chilean friends' Facebook "walls." The image also illustrates an article narrating the incident in the progressive newspaper "El Ciudadano." If, as Diana Taylor suggests, performance is behaviour twice behaved, then this kind circulation enacts another level of performance.



Figure 5. Internet leaflet by the Chilean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence calling for a protest for reproductive rights. May 2014.

### **This Work**

My dissertation argues that neoliberalism is a gendered and sexualized cultural discourse sustained by spectacles of "sexual freedom." In Chile, throughout the post-Pinochet period,

democracy has been conflated with freemarketism, installing a particular version of freedom as sexual liberation, which I argue stands in for actual democratization of authoritarian institutions, laws, and everyday practices. Taking as a point of departure the intersecting coordinates of the body, violence, memory, and popular culture, I explore how feminist and queer activist performance in post-dictatorship Chile (1990-2013) has been instrumental in expanding cultural memories and in enabling the emergence of utopian political imaginaries and individual and collective subjectivities. I ask how these performances challenge the state-sponsored spectacles that flourished through the neoliberal state, built around a militarized male gaze. These spectacles inscribed the female body as a commodity, a property of the state, and a function of producing capital; while at the same time formulating a narrative of sexual freedom. I try to understand how neoliberalism, militarism, and nationalism are being negotiated, resisted, and transformed through post-dictatorship queer and feminist performances, while at the same time weaving in some reflections of my own autobiography in relation to the sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism, the body, and performance as a political practice. I approach these questions from the interdisciplinary field of feminist research, informed by discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, post-colonial theory, Latin American readings of queer theories, cultural studies, and *crítica cultural*.

The snapshots that opened my Introduction mark two central points that guide this work. The first point is the lack of linear temporality in memory and the multiple temporalities and spaces that overlap in our experiences. The second one is the ways the embodied “private” experience shapes and is shaped by our relationship to larger political processes, historical forces, and ideologies. Like most academic work, this thesis is animated by a desire to understand, and make sense of my own experience, which includes having been born into and grown up in a military dictatorship that left behind 40,000 dead and “disappeared” bodies, and subsequently

living through the slow transition to democracy, which began when I was 16 and arguably continues to unfold 24 years after the formal end of Pinochet's rule in 1990.

I grew up an angry girl in the 1980s. For most of my childhood I felt a deep sense of inadequacy: It was 1980 and I was aware I had a different background than most of my classmates and neighbourhood friends, having just returned from exile in Colombia. I arrived back in Chile with an accent. I had recently-separated young leftist atheists as parents, and a family history that did not find recognition in the official narratives. Some of my classmates would even deny the existence of *desaparecidos*, the “disappeared,” scoffing at “all those commies vacationing in Cuba.” Even though I grew up with a relative degree of class privilege and material comfort, I learned early in my life that having a female body marked a particular form of vulnerability. I was sexually molested at the age of five by a male relative, and completely lacked of any interpretation for it, other than a vague perception that it was somehow my fault. At fifteen I was attacked and escaped being raped on the streets of Santiago, later told by a counsellor that I perhaps should not have “dressed provocatively.” When I was a teenager, groping and street harassment were everyday experiences. Far from being isolated incidents, these experiences are common examples of the violent, scrutinizing, misogynistic and homophobic gaze mobilized (though not invented) by the spectacles of market nationalism.

The multiple forms of gendered, sexualized, and racialized violence in the public space in Chile in its entire spectrum, can be read as an everyday policing of heteronormative gender performance, where “proper women,” do not belong in the first place. And while the gendered and sexualized spectacles set up by the *junta* sanctioned this violent gaze, the leftist culture of the opposition defended women's moral qualities and presented their own model of heteronormative nationalist femininity. Moreover, the official memory on state violence of the left, did not even register these everyday catastrophes of queer bodies nor connect them with

larger narratives of gender, sexuality, class, and race, or to the traumatic masculine violence brought about with the coup. In my twenties, I took a painful path to reclaiming my body from these experiences through anorexia, addiction, piercing, and tattooing. At 26, I started performing as the frontwoman of an all-female surf punk band *Penelope Glamour*. Performing my favourite song “*Surfista Asesina*” (2002) in a deep, guttural voice that sounded more like angry screaming than singing, had a healing and cathartic effect on me as I raged,

I am a murderous she-surfer!

I masturbate in the shower and the bathtub!

I make terrorist attacks on TV presenters, singers and artists!

Yesterday I saw Kike Morandé

I beheaded him with my surfboard!

Because he was stupid, homophobic and sexist,

because he made this surfer mad!<sup>2</sup>

While at the time I was not particularly interested in the theoretical aspects of performance, punk performance revealed to me as a practice that allowed me, with others, to inscribe our bodies, identities, and politics, in a meaningful and powerful way.

I left Chile in 2005 to do graduate studies in Vancouver and since then, much has transpired there (and here).

Politically, I wish to contribute to undoing the legacies of militarized violence and neoliberal ideology in Chile, along with their long-term effects on the shaping of gendered subjectivities. My use of the concept of neoliberalism is shaped by recent scholarship that includes Cárcamo-Huechante’s notion of “market-nationalism,” and his description of free markets as both an economic phenomenon and a discourse formation. Despite the commonplace perception of the state and the “free market” as opposites, I draw from authors like William Alexander and Marcus

Taylor who argue that in Chile, neoliberalism and freemarketism were established *through* and not despite an authoritarian state. The production of nationalist neoliberal desire and subjectivities in Chile, as put forward in the concept of “market nationalism” of Cárcamo-Huechante, needs to be studied in terms of how it has been shaped by historicity, competing ideologies, and disciplinary practices upon the body yet never completely regulated by ideological agendas through mechanical and causal processes. I take a leap from Cárcamo-Huechante’s definition and link the ideological works of market nationalism to a gendered, Oedipal narrative, in order to explore connections between critiques of Chilean neoliberalism and feminist critiques of heteronormativity and capitalism.

This research is inscribed within already existing efforts to counter the neoliberal project in Chile and globally, an enterprise that has been undertaken recently by a whole new political generation mobilized by student demands for free public education (under the telling slogan “no more profit”) that erupted in 2006 and continue until today in Chile; as well as by a new generation of “utopian” sexual dissidents and young feminists who are targeting neoliberalism, the gender binary, and sexism all at the same time. Chileans currently live under the violently imposed totalitarianism of the free market. Since the late 1970’s people have witnessed the progressive mercantilization of every aspect of their lives: education, health, the pension system, labour relations, and public spaces. While neoliberalism presents itself as the only possible way to live, in few other countries in the world do citizens live within such a persistent state of vulnerability and precariousness as in Chile. In order to challenge, question, or at least understand the disciplining practices of neoliberalism at work in contemporary Chile, it is urgent that we recognize in which ways we are being interpellated as neoliberal national subjects through certain spectacles of gender, sexuality, and market nationalism. Moreover, my focus on the post-dictatorship era in Chile does not suggest that the historical constitution of neoliberal subjectivities through gendered and sexualized spectacles is a process exclusive to this

particular context. Instead, this work illuminates, through a queer and post-colonial feminist analysis, some of the multiple ways that gender and sexuality intersect with nationalism and neoliberal ideology in the context of globalized capitalism.

I consider queer and post-colonial theories as productive and relevant for analyzing the Chilean post-dictatorship, and reflect on how these theories themselves are reformulated through political practice in this specific context. Instead of repeating the neocolonial gesture of taking theory developed in the North and using the South as the site for conducting field work that will exemplify such theories, I identify the ways that these “subaltern appropriations” push these theories further by articulating *cruces* or intersections between sexual and racial identities with political projects and subjects. My own position as a researcher is in a perpetual state of tension due to this *encrucijada* (which can mean intersection or dilemma), being as I am a scholar from Chile, writing about Latin America from North America, with both the resources and limitations that this entails, and applying theories that seem to have emerged from the North, such as “queer theories,” psychoanalysis, and feminism. However, the cases of performance activism that I document—*Hija de Perra*, *Choras del Puerto*, *el Che de los Gays* and *La Red Chilena Contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual*—offer proof of the ways that these transnational discourses and political identities are not imported uncritically and adopted in universal ways, but rather used to articulate bridges and *cruces* between sexual identities and critiques of the logic of neoliberalism.

I argue for the need to read critically —using the tools of psychoanalysis, post-colonial and queer feminisms— spectacles that are controlled by the neoliberal state along the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship, and to more broadly pay attention to the implications of the imaginaries and narratives that are put forward by this historically situated state formation. The emergence of a neoliberal state in Chile was carried out first under the Pinochet years, and later

achieved consolidation and democratic legitimation through the subsequent governments. While neoliberalism was installed through laws and policies that were interventionist and protectionist of the interests of the elite, mostly expressed in the 1980 Constitution, it soon proved to be an economic model that could work as a model for the state with any government in power in the post-Pinochet years, confirming the Chicago Boys' narrative that the economy needed to run a course independent from politics. Under neoliberal restructuring, the labour market, and not unemployment, is the main structural mechanisms to reproduce wealth and poverty. Precarious, temporary, mobile, unprotected work becomes the backbone of the economic system.

Contemporary forms of advanced capitalism, particularly in the "Third World," are not just based on the production and administration of precarity through flexible labour, micro-credits, and sweat-shops, but, also, as Sayak Valencia has put forward in her study of Mexico, in a necropolitics of slashing, dismembering, torturing, and extermination of bodies. At the same time, Preciado has suggested that what characterized this current stage of capitalism is the political administration of the body, sex, and sexuality. I align with these authors in the thrust to understand capitalism and neoliberalism in their negative dimensions, but also in its productive dimension of disciplining bodies and circulating a historically specific form of neoliberal desire linked to ideas of the individual body and sexual freedom.

My understanding of "desire" is, in turn, shaped by Lacanian theory, as a transindividual force that we get to know only by its effects in the cultural field. Desire is thus not conscious, nor individual, and it cannot be equated with pleasure and happiness, but rather is a drive only partially known to us by its effects. As Mikita Brottman concludes in *High Theory / Low Culture*, most forms of popular culture both reflect and produce a sense of desire, so that by looking at the collective fantasies and anxieties expressed in particular cultural spectacles and discourses, we can speculate about the kinds of (historically situated and socially constituted) desires at work. Inspired by Diana Taylor's concern for the need to critically examine such historically

shaped desires, like in the case of eroticized military masculinity in post “Dirty War” Argentina (1976-1983), I set out to explore the shaping of neoliberal desire through public spectacles in post-dictatorship Chile by looking at aspects of the culture ranging from mass media and popular culture (commercial ads, *telenovelas* and miniseries), to the everyday semi-private spectacles of *cafés con piernas* (“coffee with legs”), coffee shops where male clientele have been served coffee by bikini-clad female wait-staff since the 1990s. Like Taylor, I am interested in exploring militarized masculinities, and the “militarized male gaze” as models for gendered subjectivities in contemporary Chile. I am also interested in Diana Taylor’s analysis of militarized desire in Argentina or the eroticization of militarized masculinity: that we need to understand the historical determinants of our desire in order to find “better scripts.” Indeed, structures of oppression and power can only be transformed through cultural change, by becoming self-reflective of the collective desires that reproduce exploitative social relations: for example, in the Global North the desire for purchasing clothing and personal computer devices supports an exploitative transnational economy based on the cheap labour of young, unskilled, non-unionized, predominantly female workers in the Global South.

Inspired by José E. Muñoz, I look for the utopian impulse of queer political performances (*El Che de los Gays*, *Las Choras del Puerto*), punk drag queen performance (*Hija de Perra*), and the visual activist strategies of a feminist organization in their campaign *Cuidado. El Machismo Mata!* I argue about the possibilities of hybrid and partial political articulations and formulations that go beyond the language of individual rights to assert broader collective subjectivities and utopian desires. Having been trained as a social psychologist in Latin America, the questions I raise are concerned with the relationship between the specific historical formation of the neoliberal state, processes of subjectivation, and embodied power relations. The myth of the autonomous individual, a fiction crucial to the project of Western modernity, has been already challenged by, among others, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxism. Additionally, mechanisms

for self-control and self-surveillance have been historicized and analyzed by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the latter figure further exploring the specific psychic mechanisms of subjection, such as the heterosexual matrix, so that sexed and gendered subjectivities can be seen as power formations in themselves. When I turn to investigate the relationship between gendered and sexualized (and racialized) public spectacles and neoliberal subjectivity, these broader debates about subjectivities as formations of productive power are the backdrop of my analysis.

My interest in activist queer and feminist performance is situated within debates about power, gender, and sexuality in Latin America. These debates overlap with the questions worked by other disciplines. For example, my interest to explore those places in culture that are putting to work different kind of flows of desire that run against hetero and homonormativity, and put forward politicized public bodies, can be also understood as “the orphans, the atheists, and the nomads” described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. As suggested by these authors, psychoanalysis can be used to understand how to break away from “neuroticized territorialities,” the Oedipal structures that shape our psyche around guilt, shame, and a sick love for leadership, instead of reaffirming this complex as a norm like clinical psychoanalysis does. At the center of this conceptualization, for the purpose of my own argument, lays the possibility that dismantling the Oedipal structure of the neurotic could allow for the emergence of collective and deterritorialized subjectivities. While Deleuze and Guattari are not the theoretical focus of my own work, I find that the idea of “deterritorialized subjectivities” they describe in the schizophrenic mind, can be another concept used to understand how these cases of *queer* and feminist activist performance signal certain disconnections and reconnections of the body in relation to structures of power and meaning (most of all, the Oedipal narrative), that can thus enable the potential re-territorialization of subjects beyond the bodily limits of the individual.

When I look at performance activism I am interested in the ways it articulates politics that are similar, yet different from queer activism in North America. Moreover, I ask how these forms of embodiments can pose a critique or a reformulation of queer theory itself. I also aim to align with a kind of feminist politics that is not invested in the category of “woman” in an essentialist manner but rather considers the artificiality and instability of gender identities. I invoke this type of “pheminist” politics of the phony, as in Halberstam’s formulation of “gaga feminism” (2012), in order to understand womanhood and femininity as cultural artefacts to be manipulated and intervened, as well as to trace maps of transnational feminist traditions that have worked and reworked gender identities through a politics and aesthetics of the failure of gender, and the ontological status of the “fake.”<sup>3</sup>

I bring to the analysis a historical approach to processes of state formation and gendered subjectivities with a focus on gender and sexuality. Many recent studies, such as those edited by Wieringa and Sívori (2013), use a historically grounded approach to practices and ideologies around sexuality, particularly in relation to discourses of colonialism, empire, and nation. These feminist analyses are investigating the links between the shaping of desire and nation-building practices, as well as the “spectacular” quality of power as it works at the level of the collective imagination:

The education of desire as a nation-making device reveals the moral quality of politics as spectacle: policing the imagination of the community as a self-contained entity. (17)

In this research, I inquire about the historically situated processes that shape gendered subjectivities through spectacles that, to use the terms of filmmaker Rodrigo Dorfman, “occupy our imagination” by outlining what is possible and feasible in a particular moment. I consider the imaginary and symbolic dimensions of the state, especially in their gendered and sexualized

forms, and how the relationship between the state and individual and collective subjects is imagined and acquires meaning, or makes sense.

In Latin America, Dore shows that within the colonial order, state action rested on the principle that a 'well ordered family' leads to a 'well ordered society.' In this way, through the use of constant analogies in political discourse, the state projected the domestic patriarchal authority to the nation, in order to lend legitimacy to the state. Culturally, the state came to be perceived as a "benevolent father who ruled over and protected his family" and that "rewarded his children when they behaved well and punished them when they behaved badly" (Dore 11). During the transition from colonial to republican societies, when the state disputed the church the authority over family matters, the new kind of secular governance tended to paradoxically strengthen patriarchal authority. Because the republican order was still fragile during its initial stages, the state instilled patriarchal authority within the family as a way to secure its power. In this way, newly formed republics drew on traditional colonial ideologies and values to construct the new state's legitimacy and imagine the nation. Pertinently, McGee notes that if state discourse projects relationships from the familial to the national order (i.e., symbolizing state-citizens relationships as father-children bonds), this in turn means that to transform social relationships and hierarchies we would need to re-imagine and reformulate the gender relationships that are their material and symbolic support in more democratic ways.

My focus is also akin to the recent feminist interest in making masculinities and men visible and in examining the role of women (and the accompanying narratives of femininity) in war, occupation, colonialism, operations of transnational corporations, tourism and nationalist movements. Cynthia Enloe, for example, looking at international politics, advocates for a consideration of how ideologies of gender and sexuality shape political conflicts and global economic decisions, so we can understand how notions of femininity and masculinity create and

sustain global inequalities (Enloe 2). This literature shapes my interest on the local tactical role of discourses of sexuality in legitimizing certain political projects. Finally, I align my research with what Nelly Richard has called *crítica cultural* in contrast with cultural studies, which, according to the author, has become a site to produce knowledge about globalization and neoliberalism without provoking any crisis (“*sin que nada haga crisis*”). In contrast, “*crítica cultural*” is a practice defined by Richard as,

[A]iming to analyze institutional rhetoric, symbolic imaginaries, social discourses and cultural ideologies to dismount the political economy of the neoliberal order signs, and to divert [or shift] the strict governing line of its bureaucracies and technocracies of meaning toward the zones of the uprisings of memory, of desire and of imagination.<sup>4</sup>

Academic practice is in a privileged position to intervene in the social production of meaning, to generate productive readings that connect theories with practices, and to resist systems of categorization that reproduce social, racial, and sexual hierarchies. In that sense, I subscribe to an academic practice that is reflexive of the ways that knowledge is produced and circulated, and, moreover, that seeks to be in open conflict with these hierarchies present in the Chilean post-dictatorship. Like all academic work, the writing of this thesis has also been an embodied experience in which my immigration status, maternity, lack of proper funding for graduate students in my program (reflecting broader cuts for the arts), and federal decisions about childcare, have positioned my academic body in a precarious place in relation to the competitive culture of the neoliberal university pervasive both in Chile and in Canada.

### **Outline of Thesis**

In order to avoid producing “women” as a transhistorical abstraction, the first chapter traces notions of femininity, masculinity, family, and deviant sexualities as mobilized by the state during

the last four political projects of the 20th and 21st century in Chile: the Popular Front (1920-1970), Popular Unity (1971-1973), and Neoliberal Period, which includes the military dictatorship (1973-1990), and the post-dictatorship (1990-present). It also explains the ways that these conceptions of gender and sexuality were appropriated, negotiated, and resisted by different subjects. While investigating organizing processes of women in Chile, Verónica Schild warned us not presume the existence of women as a homogenous political identity *before* their processes of organizing, but rather see their political subjectivities as emerging from those processes in which they negotiate their differences as “women” in relation to race, sexuality, status, religion, and so on. More than trying to give a clean, linear account of the trajectory of gender ideologies, this chapter attempts to map messy layers of meanings along with their continuities and interruptions.

This first chapter also surveys the theoretical influences that guide my understanding of subjectivity and desire, tying into the second chapter, where I explore the notion of spectacle as a key to understanding the conformation of national subjects in contemporary Chile. In this second chapter I develop the notion of the sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism, engaging with examples of the gendered narratives of market nationalism, such as the “potent jaguars,” “la mujer chilena” and the idea of “sexual liberation” or *destape*<sup>5</sup> that emerged first in the 1980s and later in the 1990s. I argue that these narratives of liberation are anchored in neoliberal practices that seek to discipline the body, thus regulating the production of neoliberal desire and marketing nationalism *through* a discourse of sexual freedom. I argue that while *cafés con piernas* could initially be read as spaces of sexual transgression or “liberation,” they have lent themselves to sustaining a militarized male gaze, as well as to reinscribing the body as a site of capitalist exploitation. This leads to the third chapter of this thesis, in which I explore the political potential of contemporary “queer” and feminist performance to imagine alternative ways of experiencing the body, of navigating gender and sexuality, and of becoming political subjects,

whether individual or collective. Finally, I lay out the conclusions of my analysis and outline further lines of study.

## CHAPTER ONE: GENDERED SUBJECTIVITIES AND NEOLIBERAL DESIRES

### Chilean Neoliberalism and “Out Of Place” Bodies

The French-Chilean female rapper Ana Tijoux was performing on a sunny fall afternoon of 2014 in Santiago at the Lollapalooza festival, when from the audience she heard male voices calling her “*cara de nana*” (“maid’s face”), and yelling that she “should go back to the fresh market (*la feria*) where she came from.” Known for her politically-charged lyrics, Ana Tijoux was born in exile to her Chilean parents and, upon her return to Chile, has succeeded in becoming one of the most acclaimed female musicians in Latin America (with three Latin Grammy nominations), North America (with one of her songs featured in the popular series “Breaking Bad” and successfully touring across the U.S.), and Europe. While she has been received with enthusiasm abroad, she has been rather despised in Chile, much like Violeta Parra before she became fetishized as a consumable folklore product for snobbish middle classers in Chile. She responded to the Lollapalooza incident on Twitter the next day stating that, far from feeling insulted, she felt honoured to be compared to “those brave and hard working women,” and later, reflected that “I am that maid’s face, that face that looks like you, small, black hair, I am that face with features that make your class-ashamed class uncomfortable.” Her reaction, in turn, sparked yet another public debate about classism and racism, especially since the Lollapalooza festival is marketed to upper class young adults with enough income to become indebted with tickets that start from Cnd \$107 for a one day pass, to Cnd \$470 for a two-day “VIP pass.” A letter entitled “Open Letter to the Boss’s Son” was published in social media by Emmanuel Ortega Villagrán, who identified himself as “the son of a maid,” and spoke about the hard work, love, dedication, and loyalty that his mother and most maids in urban Chile have given to their employers’ families. He described how other members of his family who worked as maids had

cared for their employers' children as if they were their own, only to be treated as second class human beings who could be showered with paternalistic kindness, but denied such basic labour rights as pensions.

What does this incident tell us about power relations and subjectivities in contemporary Chile? Why are "nanas" in the position of having to be defended on the grounds of their morals and values to restore their sexual respectability? Why did they lack this sexual respectability to begin with? And what distinguished Ana Tijoux from the other performers at this site of modernity, status, and cosmopolitanism, to make her a target for such verbal aggression from the middle and upper class audience? In other words, by virtue of which narratives are some bodies marked by gender and sexuality as dirty, contaminated, intolerable, and even monstrous? Indeed, Tijoux's body is racialized and gendered in very complex ways that reflect the current dominating cultural coordinates of the Chile of advanced neoliberalism. By calling Tijoux a "nana," the audience members were invoking a deep-seated cultural attitude reflecting power dynamics in post-dictatorship Chile. As poor, mostly rural and/or indigenous women, maids in urban Chile embody class, race, and gender relations that go back to colonial racial hierarchies, to the institution of "*derecho a pernada*" of the landowners over the women of their *fundos*. Maids have been historically racialized and sexualized as "easy" and "available." In fact, I remember when I was a teenager how many of the male classmates in my middle-class high school would brag and compare stories of becoming sexually initiated by a young live-in maid. And even though it is possible to trace those narratives and images that have represented poor and racialized female bodies as sexually licentious in many other contexts, such as the Canadian one, there seems to be something else at stake here: Tijoux's politicized body became an unbearable confrontation for the male audience members who heckled her. I argue that her frequent references to the Popular Unity project and to the figures of Allende and of Victor Jara fueled the contempt hurled at her by the "sons of the boss." Racialized, demonized

working-class women's bodies are acceptable in the context of domestic service, or selling produce at fresh markets, and that is where Tijoux's body belonged in the eyes of her hecklers.

In this chapter I set out to explore the historical trajectory (though not linear, nor inserted in a logic of "development" or "progress") of gender ideologies that allow certain bodies to be affixed to certain spaces, much in the way that Tijoux's racialized body is affixed to poverty and domestic work in my previous example. I am interested in what particular versions of womanhood and manhood in relation to narratives of gender, sexuality, race, and class, are imaginable through different Chilean political projects. I ask then, through which narratives are some bodies deemed decent and worthy of "citizenship," while others are either rendered invisible or hyper-visible as abject, monstrous that stand as warning signs of the limits of what is acceptable for men and women in any given context? To consider the historicity of gender does not equate here with only studying women; rather, as Thomas Miller Klubock indicates, gender history writing aims to analyze Chilean history from the perspective of gender ideologies and their effects in the constitution of historically specific gendered subjectivities, as opposed to a form of writing that pursues the recuperation of the role of women in Chilean society, as if the category of 'women' was a stable and transhistorical object of study. That is, I consider the very category of 'woman' as historically contingent and constructed, and move away from "the history of women" (what some essentialist feminists have called "herstory") to favour the analysis of the historical organization of gender relations and systems, and how they determine femininities and masculinities (Miller Klubock 503). This type of "feminist historicity" can be found already in the works of Karin A. Roseblatt, Heidi Tinsman, Elizabeth Hutchinson, and Margaret Power about Chile and in the work of Diana Taylor on Argentina's "dirty war." All these authors have focused on the ways that individuals and groups negotiate with gender and sexual ideologies in specific historical contexts, illuminating the contradictory effects of state discourse and action in both reproducing and challenging patriarchal gender relations. In a similar vein, Chilean

historian Gabriel Salazar argues that we can never speak about women “in general” but only “in particular,” as the history of women develops differently depending on their position in economic, social and cultural matrices. As a consequence, “women’s interests” are not general or universal but always fractured by the inequalities of a capitalist structure. And the category of gender itself never emerges in a sociocultural vacuum, so it can never be enough to analyze oppression and privilege in any given context without taking into account how class, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability, among other power formations inform gender.

We could push Salazar’s argument further by suggesting that the material or bodily production and recognition of some bodies as “women” is linked to historically specific forms of what Sut Jhally calls “sex categorization”, that intersect with other forms of recognition, so that the category of “women” already is produced by hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexuality, ability, and so on. In this sense, while Salazar indicates that the process of state formation and nation building in Chile has been gendered since its inception, it is important to recognize that the processes by which “women” were even recognized as a category of citizens was also a one that was based on narratives of female citizenship that separated “decent” women (mothers, wives) and attached their respectability to sexuality and reproduction. In fact, the ways women were integrated into the state were based on gendered assumptions of what “women” ought to be by nature: teachers, social workers, nurses, doctors and midwives. Between 1920 and 1960, the development of a state bureaucracy oriented to social action was indeed the institutionalization of what had formerly been the action of elite women and their ‘civic maternalism’ during the nineteenth century. In that sense, the state itself grew in a gendered way, through “a series of public roles of female specialization (...), an emergent national project for middle-class women” (Salazar 165). For example, in 1925, the School of Social Service was founded to transform the charity of elite women into a technical and professional public service.

As a further example of this process, Fiol-Matta's careful research explores Gabriela Mistral's relationship to the Chilean (and later Mexican and Latin American) state cultural politics and how she established a persona that played along with the state's gendered, racialized, and sexualized deployments of "national culture." Mistral contributed to the creation of images of motherhood and nationalist womanhood while in her own life not adjusting to heteronormativity nor of national identity. The fact is that she consciously made her image to coincide with a mythical image of womanhood, aligning it with nationalist discourses of progress and modernization that positioned the image of the female-schoolteacher as a model of exemplary female citizenry and patriotic subjectivity. Why was the state in this political period (Popular Front) invested on Mistral's queer figure, her unequivocally ambiguous sexuality, or straight forwardly, why was the state interested in her female masculinity? How did a masculine lesbian woman achieve the status of the guardian of the Chilean heterosexual family? Fiol-Matta suggests that heteronormativity, racism and queerness are intertwined in complicated ways in her public persona and performance. For example, the image of schoolteacher functions as a sort of transitioning figure between the children's real mothers (with whom the state is in competition) and the state. Also, because as Montecinos has pointed out, children in Chile are all symbolically "huachos" —orphans of father— her image would be fit to be offered by the state a site of constant identification and disidentification for the citizens.

The multiple and complex relationships between gender, sexuality, desire, institutions, and subjectivity has been the focus of significant scholarship on gender and sexuality in Latin America (see the essays edited by French and Bliss in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America Since Independence*). Particular historical contexts enable the specific versions of manhood and womanhood that are acceptable, desirable, and even imaginable for different subjects according to their race, class, place, etc. But as much as subjects are defined by their contexts, they are also "generative of new contexts," as Veena Das puts it. The conditions for

agency—which is not to be confounded with mere voluntarism—have broadly been explored by feminist scholarship, most significantly by Judith Butler. Especially in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* Butler argues that if the subject is constituted by power relations, if there is no subject *before* subjection, then power both *acts on* the subject and *enacts* the subject. Building on Butler's idea of gender performativity and Foucault's notions of regulatory practices and disciplinary discourses, Juana María Rodríguez emphasizes "place" and "space" as sites for the articulation of identities that are critical to understanding performative practices of identity as being situated<sup>5</sup>. Rodríguez's notion regards subjectivity more as a product of discursive practices rather than pre-existing, and of "subjects-in-process" to point at the paradoxical and contradictory character of identities. Every particular space contains pre-existing discourses and readymade narratives in which subjectivity is embodied in a—culturally specific—intelligible way. However, there is no discourse of identity that can fully contain subjectivity; there is always an excess of the subject that resists being contained within the discursive boundaries of identity. Thus, we move through these different spaces learning, sometimes by force, to understand their codes, and rules of meaning. For example, in Diana Taylor's analysis of the protest strategies of the *Madres de Plaza Mayo* in Argentina, it is apparent how performing motherhood in public, in the extremely repressive context of Videla's dictatorship, was a tactic linked to military ideologies that value women as self-sacrificing mothers, the only viable subject position for a woman to embody in the narrative of the military, while “their performance of mothers as activists challenged traditional maternal roles and called attention to the fact that motherhood was a social, not just biological, construct.” (206) In their ambivalent enactment of power, the Madres constituted themselves as politicized bodies, while supporting this politicization according to the gender scripts of the military.

Recent feminist scholarship has paid particular attention to the links between becoming a gendered subject and becoming a subject of the nation, processes through which subjects, both

individual and collective, find their place within prefigured nationalist narratives. Lisa Rofel's research on China analyzed the production of subjectivities under liberal politics and neoliberal economics, the regulatory practices that produce the social field of "desire," and how sexuality functions as one of the sites where desire is imagined and discussed throughout its reconfiguration in China's postsocialist subjectivities. Rofel emphasizes the need to understand and contextualize the historical contingency of "desiring subjects" in China, where state policies are highly involved in their regulation and promotion of neoliberal desiring subjects, even if different generations experience and negotiate the meaning of these transformations in different ways. Rofel points to the explosion of a mass culture and mainstream media that dealt with the anxieties in relation to China's "opening" to transnational capitalism. In a similar vein, Kiera Chion explores the performance of national gendered identities in contemporary China, the national imaginary as a site of conflict and contestation, and the new modes of consumption, desire, and fantasies that this cultural imaginary entails. Chion focuses on how the image of a tomboy girl ("Yuchun") singing in a reality TV show serves as a vehicle for women of different ages to reimagine forms of Chineseness for women and to deal with anxieties brought on by transformations in the economy and society. In this instance, the image of the tomboy provides a sense of temporal continuity and the local cultural means to interpret modernity and futurity by linking such opposites as tradition and the new, the known and the unknown. It also provides a meritocratic fable of neoliberalism in which anybody can reach success depending on their efforts and the right use of opportunities.

As this chapter tries to demonstrate, gender ideologies produce and sustain particular categories that are codified in laws and policies, in which gendered subjects and bodies themselves are produced through interpellation by these discourses. Gender and sexual norms, practices, and institutions regulate and discipline gendered subjects by defining viable and unviable bodies, as well as "out of place" bodies, as the opening example of Ana Tijoux

illustrates. In turn, individual and collectively embodied subjects engage in activism both invoking these gender categories, and attempting to contest, change, or expand their meanings, in order to achieve recognition and rights from the state, as in the case of feminist and transgender activism. When we investigate the conditions for subjectivities and for agency in post-dictatorship Chile applying this form of feminist historicity, it becomes apparent how gendered and sexual narratives are entangled with neoliberalism, or rather, how neoliberalism functions as a cultural discourse that changed the conditions for subjectivity *and* for agency in Chile by creating specific narratives of desire, sexual and social liberation, and the body. A few notable authors who have paved the way for this analysis are Nelly Richard, Olga Grau, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, and Gabriel Salazar.

### **Desire and Neoliberalism**

One of the questions that structure this research are, how is neoliberal desire fostered and reproduced by state sponsored spectacles, whether this form of desire can be undermined through the proliferation of utopian desires, or if rather, this multiplicity is merely functional to the new forms of neoliberalism and its spectacular power. To explore this question, I look at sites and practices where utopian projects, desires, and subjects are already being articulated in open opposition or resistance to neoliberal and heteronormative logics. To discuss desire as the driving force of the social, as well as to identify certain forms of desire present in cultural expressions, in particular, for the analysis of the four cases of performances in Chapter Three, it will be useful to bring up Jacques Lacan's formulation of the realms of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Using this framework, desire can be understood as a transindividual field that pertains to the realm of the Symbolic, with both conscious and unconscious dimensions. Desire can only be identified by its effects on discourse and culture, and neither

discourse nor culture are the possession of an individual. For Lacan, Language, that is the realm of the Symbolic, actually *precedes* the subject, as signifying chains from which subject effects can be derived. Desire is governed by a fundamental lack, which keeps it moving from one object to the next, and keeps the subject desiring, and talking until death, without ever being able to fulfill “it.” Desire, in this sense, does not refer to an individual “longing for” something, a defined concrete object. Instead, desire can be recognized by its twisting effects in interrupting and disrupting the efforts of the Ego in creating the illusions of self-control, autonomy, and “free will” in the individual. In other words, the subject is already structured by desire, so it is desire that precedes the subject, and not the other way around. The disturbing fragmentation and discontinuity of bodily experience is suppressed by the Ego, creating the illusion of wholeness through an image of visual completeness of the body at the “mirror stage.” According to Lacan, subjectivation, the process of becoming a subject and achieving a sense of self, relies on the (mis)recognition of him/herself as an “other,” captured by his/her reflection in the mirror. The Lacanian realm of the Imaginary is composed by identifications, and is, in turn, structured by these complex symbolic webs of desire. The process for becoming a subject in the historical context of Western modernity requires achieving the illusion of the “individual autonomous self” (an Imaginary process), as well as becoming “subject of” or “subject to” particular webs of historically available meaning (a Symbolic process). To be even intelligible as a subject, an individual has to find a place in the predefined registers of language and culture that precede her/him, such as Butler’s heterosexual matrix. In Freudian terms, the subject becomes a subject of the paternal Law, culture and the order of sexual difference by virtue of a lack, a fundamental impossibility to satisfy desire. Desire is not conscious nor does it belong to the individual, since the unconscious is that part, of “concrete transindividual speech that the subject’s disposition lacks in order to re-establish the continuity of their conscious speech” (Lacan 248). This emphasis on the transindividual character of speech indicates that desire actually precedes the individual subject as a historical *effect* of the social production of meaning.

At the core of this formulation is the need to decenter political projects from the individual and from the language of individual rights, to reflect about the social processes that sustain and reproduce this form of subjectivity.

Within Marxist theory, the role of the imaginary is already considered crucial in the works of alienation, as institutions and processes of production become autonomous from their function and exist as if independently of the contingent human practices that sustain them:

Marx knew this. (...) When he spoke of the fetishism of merchandise and showed its importance for the actual functioning of the capitalist economy, he obviously went beyond a purely economic view and recognized the role of the imaginary. When he stressed that the memory of past generations weighed heavily on the consciousness of the living, he pointed once more to this peculiar mode of the imaginary manifest in the past lives as present, where ghosts are more powerful than men of flesh and blood, where the dead clasp the living, as he liked to say. (Castoriadis 132)

Slavoj Žižek, having already applied psychoanalysis and Marxism to the analysis of capitalism and neoliberalism as cultural imperatives, argues that desire is also metonymic, shifting constantly from one object to the next, reproducing itself while at the same time, while at the same time retaining a formal frame of consistency that corresponds with a set of “fantasmatic features.” This is relevant because it is the main form in which ideology “hides” in our psyche. Žižek points this out in *The Plague of Fantasies*, that fantasy provides the coordinates for our desire, or in other words, fantasy “teaches us how to desire” (7), that is, fantasy, instead of being the imagined realization of a desire, is what organizes desire in the first place. Fantasy is radically intersubjective inasmuch as the Lacanian subject is originally split, decentered, and participating of an opaque network whose meaning and logic elude his control (Žižek 10). If ideology is already “hiding” as a form of narrative in the fantasy that organizes our desire, what are the intersubjective fantasies and narratives that organize neoliberal desire, and what can we

learn from experiences of activist performance that enact utopian desires, in terms of what fantasies can possibly organize these forms of desire? How can these experiences question or undermine the narratives that organize neoliberal desire?

In *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Wendy Brown asks questions about the formation of subjects at the crossroads of neoconservative and neoliberal narratives, which function as separate, even contradictory discourses, but also together to produce a particular kind of subject whose psychic constitution seems to trap them in relation to state power: a subject who lacks an authentic desire for an alternative to these regimes of domination. As a political theorist, Brown uses Nietzsche and Foucault to look at the mechanisms of subject formation themselves, rather than the institutional practices that prevent us from emancipating ourselves, thus looking into "the very making of bodily subjects and sociopolitical desire" (xii). Moreover, Brown asks about the political consequences of constructing identities based on the "injury," and of projects that interpellate the state for the redress of that injury, in a context where progressive narratives have lost their utopian sense:

What kinds of injuries enacted by late democracies are recapitulated in the very oppositional projects of its subjects? What conservative political impulses result from a lost sense of futurity attendant upon the break-down of progressive narratives of history?  
(xii)

The "lost sense of futurity" perfectly describes the overwhelming narrative that sustains advanced neoliberalism in post-dictatorship Chile. The economic transformation of the state under dictatorship went hand in hand with a transformation of social relations and subjectivities, transformations that have been characterized as a movement from "producers" to "consumers." This process entailed a project of radical social fragmentation in hopes of guaranteeing and consolidating the new economic system in the long term, a strategy that was pursued through the exploitation of values and ideas of fear, mistrust, competitiveness, and individual hedonism. The

long term effects of promoting these values were reflected on the milestone report by the Human Development Program of the United Nation's of 1998: Despite all the macroeconomic indicators pointing at the improvement of material conditions of Chileans, the report pointed at a deep-seated broad sense of insecurity and "fear of the other," which sociologist Norbert Lechner attributed to the loss of the sense of a collective. I consider the role of state-produced spectacles in reproducing gendered subjects of individualism and meritocracy that prepare the ground to a neoliberal narrative by laying limits of what is possible. For example, following Žižek's reading of "peacekeeping" military intervention in the Bosnian war as "preparing the ground for a different narrative," we can understand the 1973 military coup and its subsequent policy of state violence as a spectacle subordinated to the narrative of neoliberalism. That is, we can consider the role of spectacles in relation to the processes by which certain narratives become dominant.

As global capitalism needs to keep reproducing the desire to consume, marketing strategies have crafted the idea of a universal abstract consumer who has the absolute freedom and the power to potentially acquire anything. A key element in this process is the access to consumer credit systems that created the illusion of democratization of consumerism and offered a quick sense of social integration via purchasing certain products. At the same time, consumer credit has become one of the main causes of instability among the middle and working classes in Chile, enhanced by the transformations of labour relations, the precariousness of social services and supports, and the virtual lack of redistributive policies and mechanisms. While consumerist desire is instilled in all classes through mass access to consumer credit, the majority has been condemned to have their desires for material happiness constantly frustrated and unmet, and are forced to live in a state of constant vulnerability. Moreover, these neoliberal desires have reorganized and reshaped the public space as a consumer space particularly through the proliferation of the Mall as a sign of economic success and modernity in Neoliberal Chile. At the

space of the Mall a permanent, readily available spectacle of eroticized objects is presented to us as if we could reach them through the transparent windows. The Mall is the place to see and be seen, where complicated desires take place in the seduction and consumption of these eroticized objects. I take interest in Moulián's suggestion of consumerism as a performance of class offering working class youth the ability to partake in a simulacrum of class through the purchase of objects that are symbols of privilege (be they Swatch watches or Nike running shoes) serving as a shortcut for social integration (if society is just an aggregation of consumers and entrepreneurs). On the other hand, I am interested in thinking of the Mall as a "stage" for the performance of desirable modern metropolitan consumers/citizens. The Mall is also a place of constant surveillance where private security guards are the gatekeepers of proper performances of class, race, gender, and sexuality that mirror normative citizenship under market nationalism.

But neoliberalism is not a universal set of principles from which a single neoliberal subject emerges in a deterministic way. Chilean Marxist intellectual Tomás Moulián looks at the complex and contradictory social relations and dynamics of consumption and consumerism, and the ways that subjectivities are experienced in the particular neoliberal context of post-dictatorship Chile. Moulián takes a pessimistic Marxist approach in which capitalism seems to have "won" because it has anchored itself in our psyche in the form of consumerism, following the logic intrinsic to desire, that is, the impossibility of its fulfillment. His criticism of consumerism points to the fact that, under neoliberalism, we are enticed to substitute our desire for collective happiness with individual and partial gratifications. This fits the nostalgic narrative that, because of the advancement of neoliberalism in Latin America, the big metanarratives of the previous decades, the grandiloquent discourses of Revolution, the People, and Human Happiness, had to be abandoned and replaced by the more modest and partial gratifications of consumerism. At the same time, Moulián is critical of Marxists who simply dismiss consumerism based on a

moralist judgment of its character as a lustful desire for objects, since a puritan critique of consumerism as a lustful and sumptuous desire emphasizes as its opposite, self-control and austerity as moral virtues. Moulián concludes that desire in a neoliberal context is present, inescapable, and partially pleasurable, yet also linked to our dispossession and fragmentation, and the displacement of other utopian desires. Already in 1995 García Canclini cast a critical eye on looking at consumerism simply as a passive and oppressive practice, proposing a more complicated understanding of consumerism in its political and sociocultural dimensions; he criticized earlier Marxist explanations that overestimated the impact of mass media in processes of cultural hegemony.

In this chapter, I set out to analyze the historical links between gender and sexual ideologies mobilized throughout the twentieth century, and the shaping of subjectivities in post-dictatorship Chile. The periodization of the 20th century here acknowledges the conventional historical distinction of the four dominant political and cultural projects (Popular Front, the Popular Unity, Dictatorship and Post-dictatorship), but align more with periodizations such as Lessie Jo Frazier's that, taking the state as a referent, look at the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship of the "transition governments" as part of the same state formation.

## **The Popular Front and the Popular Unity: Social Crisis, Sexual Crisis**

Throughout the years of developmentalist state policies in Chile, gender and sexual discourses were inscribed in larger liberal narratives of nation building and citizenship where normative ideals of the (orderly) heterosexual family were mobilized as metaphors for the nation. Roseblatt, Tinsman, and Power's research, for example, point to the times in Chile when social, economic, and political transformations have been perceived as crises using the gender/sex system as the main organizing signifier of tradition versus social change, and chaos versus order. The modern nation state historically opposed uncontained sexuality to rationality as a gendered, class-bound, and racialized ideal of citizenship. Karin Roseblatt examines the modernizing project in Chile during the first half of the twentieth-century, analyzing diverse sources such as state archives and fiction to document the project of the Popular Front, the center-left coalition that governed in Chile between the 1920s and the 1950s. This political project was immersed in the logic of progress, modernization, and evolution that influenced most Western processes of nation building. At the same time, it was formulated as a gendered project in which the state drew a line between respectable men (workers), respectable women (housewives and mothers) and the undisciplined "other." A gendered citizenship was promoted by state policies, as wage systems operated upon the presumption of a heterosexual male head of household.

Heidi Tinsman explored the ways that two decades of Agrarian Reform between 1950–1973 shaped meanings about gender and sexuality in rural Chile, showing the ways that discourses on gender and sexuality were mobilized both to enable or oppose political projects with multiple and contradictory effects. Tinsman finds that the Agrarian Reform was a contested negotiation between state discourses (which were already in tension because of internal conflicts within the progressive coalition) and social actors who exercised their agency by accommodating and

stretching these meanings. Tinsman's analysis also understands patriarchy as a series of multiple, local arrangements operating in heterogeneous and contradictory ways, rather than as a universal monolithic system of domination. For example, even though the Agrarian Reform was directed at men, in their roles as heads of households, for carrying out land distribution and technical training, the Reform also promoted the rhetoric of gender mutualism, solidarity, and equality that women invoked to attain their own goals. *Campesino* women used ideals of masculine responsibility circulated under the reform to negotiate and exercise power within domestic relationships. In their everyday lives, *campesinas* negotiated these state-promoted meanings of respectability and equality with their bosses, partners, and children.

The national project during most of the developmentalist era in Chile was formulated around a male subject dominated by rationality, who fulfilled the roles of provider and responsible worker. From the perspective of rural women, these arguments were useful in backing their demands that their husbands fulfill their needs and protection. Thus, for the state discourse behind the Agrarian Reform, it became central to the project of Chilean modernization to discipline unruly sexualities, such as husbands' infidelity, young women's promiscuity, and homosexuality. If marriage was understood as an equal exchange, male and female actors had to play their part adequately and with some degree of reciprocity. Despite this evidence that rural women had agency and mobilized these discourses to negotiate power imbalances within the household, Tinsman argues that they could not, however, do away with meanings over respectable femininity completely.

Altogether, the Agrarian Reform left male authority over women in the household unchallenged, rather relying on a conservative and patriarchal model of family for the creation of the new rural social order. Still, the legacy that the Agrarian Reform left was key to shaping rural activism under Pinochet's dictatorship. Tinsman's research further suggests that the *Unidad Popular* did

not blatantly ignore women's rights, describing a much more complex and nuanced process, in which both feminist men and women struggled to incorporate a more radical transformation of gender relationships into the socialist project, however, pointing out that many actors within the *Unidad Popular*, including Allende, exalted women only as sacrificial mothers, wives and companions, or even daughters. The socialist project had to defend its program to change gender relations and empower women while demonstrating that it was not "anti-family." As previous state policies had reinforced women's economic dependence on men, sexual fidelity was not only a sentimental matter but rather one of economic security for women. Since men were spending extended periods of time in occupations and union meetings—from which women were excluded—*campesino* women and men recall often having confrontations over sexual fidelity.

Margaret Power makes a broader argument about how gender shaped the ways people thought about politics and experienced everyday life during the *Unidad Popular*. While the state mobilized ideas about masculinity to obtain support for their program, the right-wing used pre-existing ideas about motherhood and images of male homosexuality to attack the left.

Tinsman's conclusion is that the *Unidad Popular* era was perceived by *campesino* women as a period of sexual leniency and violence, making it evident that both gender and sexuality were shortcuts signifying a perceived crisis for traditional Chilean values. According to Power, at the time of the *Unidad Popular*, Chileans of all extractions and political beliefs shared long-held core ideas about gender roles, equating a woman with the roles of wife and mother, a selfless and self-sacrificing person whose life revolved around her children and equating a man with the role of a provider who was strong, virile, a protector of women—his mother, in particular—and politically active. Of course, normative ideas did not necessarily reflect the actual practices of men and women. But the program of the *Unidad Popular*, which represented a huge transgression against the socio-economic status quo, was in part understood as a moral crisis,

and particularly as a crisis of traditional gender roles and the natural order of sex. An example is the way the right wing often used accusations of (male) homosexuality to discredit their political opponents on the left. Historically, right-wing and conservative sectors in Chile were effective in obtaining women's support by invoking their roles as mothers and wives, since women's identities were shaped in relation to traditional dominant gender ideologies. On the other hand, the left traditionally focused on organizing and politicizing men through their roles as workers and heads of households, and tended to dismiss women as "conservative by nature".

Under the *Unidad Popular* government, working class women were only indirect beneficiaries of social programs through their husbands. Previous governments of the Popular Front had designed their policies with the model of the male provider in mind, and when male workers often found themselves failing to be effective providers, they were at the same time failing to fulfill adequately the masculine role that the state assigned for them. Under the *Unidad Popular*, policies focused mainly on improving the (male) workers' ability to be their families' providers and to participate in politics, thus allowing male workers to "succeed better" at masculinity. The *Unidad Popular*, in turn, displayed a gender imagery that reinforced these traditional gender ideals, in publications and murals where the workers were visually portrayed as strong muscular men, and in the lyrics of popular leftist songs, where men were the protagonists of the social struggle and women their supporters. A poster that promoted copper nationalization, a move against United State's imperialist practices in Chile, read "Chile wears the long pants: now copper is Chilean."

The discourse of the left wing under the *Unidad Popular* seems to have operated on the premise that socialism was to be constructed by a proletarian male heterosexual subject. For example, the historical research on the leftist press that supported Allende, conducted by Acevedo and Elgueta, revealed some of the characteristics of the dominant discourses on

homosexuality: treated both with humour and symbolic violence, homosexuality was frequently linked to criminality and perversion, and often homosexuals were shown in a dehumanizing light. Moreover, the authors explore how notions of gender (in particular notions of masculinity and manhood) and sexuality (male homosexuality) were key for the legitimacy and credibility of politicians. Throughout the *Unidad Popular*, in continuity with existing narratives of class, gender, sexuality, and race, “perceived sexual deviances” were constructed as monstrous embodiments not only on right-wing discourses, but especially in the leftist press, as it is documented also by Robles in *Bandera Hueca: Historia del Movimiento Homosexual en Chile*.

### **The Neoliberal Project: “La Mujer Chilena,” and the Forced Reconciliation of the “Chilean Family”**

Every symbolism is built on the ruins of earlier symbolic edifices and uses their materials -even if it is only to fill the foundations of new temples, as the Athenians did after the Persian wars.

Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

It is almost a commonplace by now to state that neoliberalism, as ideated by Milton Friedman, was born in Chile. The dramatic transformation of Chilean economic and social life under the authoritarian military rule first and later under the democratic rule of the *Concertación* has been widely documented (Taylor, Solimano, Winn, Nagy-Zekmi and Leiva). What is now ubiquitously called “the Chilean experiment,” conducted by the Chicago Boys in complicity with the Chilean ruling classes, aimed to violently transform a traditionally state-centered developmentalist society into a state-led deregulated economic field open to foreign investment, resulting in the privatization of education, health and the pension system, among other changes, and the

dismantling of systems of social protection and redistribution that for decades had helped to equalize class and social relations in Chile. In fact, the country has even been labelled as “the most neoliberal country in the world” (Sader qtd. in de la Barra 153).

Inspired by Diana Taylor’s reading of the military spectacles in Argentina’s dictatorship (1976-1983), I suggest that in Chile this radical and violent restructuring of labour relations disciplined neoliberal bodies not only through regulatory practices, but also through public spectacles. I further suggest that these spectacles circulated particular desires and shaped particular gendered subjectivities, conveyed by images of “*la familia chilena*,” “*la mujer chilena*,” and the militarized male gaze. Between the 1920s and the 1970s, throughout the Popular Front and the Agrarian Reform, institutions such as redistributive welfare systems and labour institutions had forged conditions for the political constitution of collective subjects who were able to negotiate their power relations with the state, despite the authoritarian origins of the government.<sup>6</sup> These processes were accompanied by nationalist narratives that emphasized collective values and defined a series of communitarian and egalitarian ideals and values. Marcus Taylor highlights that the “Chilean miracle,” heralded as a model for the rest of the world, was a state-led project that dramatically changed the conditions of possibility for subjectivity in Chile. Imposing a neoliberal economy was not then a process that only happened in the realm of formal labour and “the economy” but rather, it entailed the violent imposition of a neoliberal narrative, which translated into a cultural transformation of values (from solidarity to meritocracy) and ideals (from utopian happiness for all to individual immediate gratification).

The narrative of the free market promoted by the “Chicago Boys” was based on the idea of a natural but rational system of exchange between equal subjects in which the state does not necessarily recede, but takes on the role of promoting and guaranteeing the conditions of “freedom.” The overall effect would be the extended commodification of social relations and the

reinforcement of market discipline in shaping the distribution of resources, power, and insecurity within society (M. Taylor 7-8). Part of the project unfolding during the Pinochet years was “to rebuild the country morally, institutionally and materially,” and

[T]o transform the conditions for political subjects, for which [a] more fundamental renovation of social institutions would be necessary: one that could reassert a renewed separation of politics and economics by atomising the collective subjectivities forged in the previous decades, reasserting the rule of the law and the primacy of private property...(M. Taylor 31-32).

Under the rhetoric of promoting “freedom,” government policies after 1982 began a concerted programme of removing obstacles to profitable investment and they aggressively promoted exports resulting in the transnationalization of the Chilean economy, which relied on highly gendered, under-regulated, precarious, and insecure labour (M. Taylor 73-75). Altogether, the transformations in labour relations initiated by Pinochet in 1979 with the *Plan Laboral* and continuing through the post-dictatorship worked to individualize, atomize, and depoliticize Chilean society, in addition to securing a cheap and disciplined labour force and safeguarding the concentration of power and wealth enjoyed by large corporations and *grupos económicos* (M. Taylor 98, 149).

While transforming these narratives, Pinochet and his team of advisors and supporters, in turn, did not invent completely new gender ideologies but rather strategically mobilized the narrative of reestablishing the natural order of the family, gender, and sexuality in order to legitimize the violence of their project. Under Pinochet first and the *Concertación* later, the restructuring of labour relations radically changed the conditions of possibility for gendered subjectivities and gender relations. While state policies of previous decades had aimed at linking citizenship and labour with masculinity, the promotion of neoliberal policies was viewed by male Chilean workers as a threat to their model of masculinity due to the fact that these policies made labour

an insecure situation for workers by, adding to their inability to constitute themselves as collective political actors who could negotiate their own labour conditions.<sup>7</sup> In many of the first constitutional acts promoted by Pinochet, there was an explicit emphasis on the protection of the family, morality, and moral principles.

Similar to what Diana Taylor observes in regards to the “dirty war” in Argentina, under Pinochet’s regime the military discourse mobilized a gendered narrative of the nation as a feminized motherland in need of rescue with a hypermasculine military who would intervene in the interests of national order and values—the family, above all. Moreover, in the context of political military repression and violence, torture was sexualized: men were feminized (sodomized) and women were subjected to sadistic misogynist practices that underlined their failure to be good, proper, decent women to legitimize their punishment by the (masculine) state. Military institutions were coded as masculine and the military government presented itself as a technocratic, rational, and neutral entity in opposition to the feminized (wrongful, corrupted) passion and impartiality of *la política*. The military regime's gendered policies targeted women by outlawing abortion, contraception, tightening codes of sexual behavior for women, and elevating motherhood as a national value.

At the core of the national security doctrine mobilized by the military, women were interpellated as mothers and bearers of the moral values of the Fatherland, ideas that previous governments—both the right-wing and the Popular Front— had used in their rhetoric as well. The military regime mobilized the image of “a patriotic, self-sacrificing mother whose apolitical-feminine-private social behaviour develops solely within the territorial boundaries of her home” (Bunster 488). Through *Cema Chile* and *Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer*—the main institutions used by Pinochet to promote this gender ideology—women were politically activated to be *voluntarias* as an extension of their work at home, and through this ostensibly “apolitical” activity, women

became “public mothers.” In this way, Bunster understood militarization as a process that required the spread of a particular set of rigid ideas about femininity linked to nationalism. However, this set of ideas had long preceded the military regime itself, in the historical antecedent of the upper and middle-class culture of maternal charity.

The identity of “woman” was strategically mobilized by the military, and invested with a certain transcendental morality (ahistorical and immutable) as opposed to political male action, which was constructed as responsible for the violence, chaos and the corruption of national values<sup>8</sup>. Munizaga and Letelier examine the hegemonizing action of the military regime towards woman [*la mujer*, in the Spanish singular]. Following a Gramscian approach, these authors suggest that the goal of the hegemonizing action is to produce the internalization of power beyond coercion: creating widespread acceptance of a specific project of a social order, resulting in the constitution of subjects with a consciousness functional to the said social order. The hegemonizing action of the state takes place on a pre-existing cultural text, a sort of sedimentation of images and meanings, many times contradictory, and some dating to colonial times, and the heterogeneous cultural and ideological messages of mass media. Appeals to the moral superiority of women would help explain the support that the military regime obtained from some sectors of the working classes, as Loveman points out:

Support for the government within the *poblaciones* and elsewhere also resulted, in part, from General Pinochet’s successful efforts to transform the pre-existing network of mother’s clubs (*centros de madres*) into a clientelistic base of support. Affiliated nationally in an organization called CEMA, headed officially by General Pinochet’s wife, CEMA provided an instrument for mobilizing a feminine social base for the regime. Wives of military officers were assigned to coordinate local groups, distribute patronage, carry out educational programs, and enlist women in the crusade to purify the nation and restore the order and harmony so necessary for family life. These appeals to morality,

patriotism, and feminine virtue, along with material benefits customarily distributed through the CEMA network since the 1960s, garnered significant, if minority, support for the regime from women of all social classes. (296)

Gender ideologies mobilized under the dictatorship stressed women's roles as bearers of the Fatherland's values, drawing a constant analogy between the family and the country as a whole. In this way, gender narratives were key—in discourse and practice—to consolidate authoritarianism. For this very same reason, invoking the conservative discourse of the family has been a recurrent strategy to survive and confront military violence by women throughout Latin American dictatorships. However, adherence to traditional gender ideologies did not necessarily protect human rights activist women from military violence, as Brian Loveman points out:

[S]mall groups of women, partially sheltered against the regime's wrath by the moral umbrella of the Church and partially protected by their status as "women, mothers, and wives," became visible leaders in the struggle against human rights abuses. In practice, neither the moral umbrella of the Church nor the supposedly elevated role of mothers and wives in a society which the military and their civilian allies claimed it was based on the privileged place of the family, entirely protected human rights activists and other women viewed as subversives from hideous psychological torture, rape, and worse in the regime's detention centers (267-68).

The military banked and built on pre-existing meanings about the nation, as subsequent "modernization" processes were constructed as masculine forces that needed to conquer, penetrate, possess the "virgin territories" and dominate the feminized unruly Indigenous populations in order to create the *Patria*. In the context of military repression, the image of the patriarchal family served as a model for society contributing to securing hierarchical power relations and helping make authoritarianism acceptable, as Chilean feminist Julieta Kirkwood

pointed out. As a consequence, national discourses subsume women's bodies, lives, and health under the rhetoric of the “preservation of the family,” in which case the authoritarian state is legitimized in the “private” from a place beyond ideology. Both women identifying as feminist and as non-feminist in *Mujeres por la Vida* seem to have been aware of these connections when they displayed banners that read “Democracy in the country and at home” at rallies and protests against Pinochet’s regime at the end of the 80’s.

Chilean historians such as Salazar and Fernández have demonstrated how since its inception as a Republic, the Chilean political order was exceptionally authoritarian and based on the model of the patriarchal *hacienda*, in which the President is imagined as a paternal protector of his children, the national subjects, and who sometimes needs to punish some behaviors to maintain the family “order.” This aligned the dictatorship’s political violence with a historical tradition of “necessary violence” to protect national security and sovereignty. In this sense, the breakage of the democratic order with the 1973 coup was signified by the military’s narrative as the necessary force to re-establish order, national values, patriotism, and the family, but also, deep-seated gender, class, and racial hierarchies as formulated in the institution of the *hacienda*, which significantly includes the “*derecho a pernada*” described at the beginning of this chapter, through which the *latifundistas* or landowners could have unlimited sexual access to the young women that worked and lived on their land—an ideology very much still alive in Chile, for example, Blofield’s 2012 research showed that most live-in domestic workers experience high levels of sexual harassment from their male employers.

Other studies, such as Nia Parson’s ethnographic research on domestic violence confirm that traditional gender ideologies were intensified during the dictatorship as a key component of the narrative of restoring the order from (sexual) chaos:

Under Pinochet, the Chilean nation was to be imagined as the “suprafamily” with Pinochet the authoritarian head whose “responsibility” is to rein in the chaos caused by the “cancer of communism” unleashed by Allende’s socialist government. All other families were to be based on this national imaginary, which sanctioned the use of violence to attain its ostensible goal of “order in the nation” (Parson 13)

To sustain this argument and carry out the transformation to a militarized and neoliberal Chilean society, politics (*“la política”*) was associated with irrational, corrupted, self-interested and foreign-influenced activity, while the military and the technocratic state led by the “Chicago Boys” was presented as the (masculine) rational, neutral, objective entity to re-organize or ‘modernize’ society and the economy. Pinochet himself often invoked “social peace,” “tranquility,” and “calm” in opposition to “terrorism,” “chaos,” violence,” “depravity,” and “anarchy” in his speeches. Parson also suggests that while the state legitimized intimate violence as a means of control over the “national family” (Parson 14), torture was conceived as a way to punish the embodiment of threatening ideologies, so that attacking the bodies was a way to get rid of the ideas.

Despite the fact that at the level of discourse women were called back into domesticity, at the same time the introduction of extreme neoliberal policies under the dictatorship produced such a precarious situation in the availability of traditional formal male jobs that women were pushed en masse into the informal and semi-formal job market. While the military regime promoted conservative gender roles and elevated mothers and the family to the centre of their project, the re-structuring of the economy pushed middle and working-class women outside their homes and into informal precarious work such as the illegal small-scale commerce of low-value goods and domestic work. The Structural Adjustment Policies implemented by the World Bank, the International Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, transferred the responsibility for social reproduction from a collective subject defined by class relations, to

individual gendered households, by mobilizing long standing gender ideologies of self-sacrificing motherhood, and of the “small entrepreneur” of neoliberalism.

As a consequence, a significant proportion of the Chilean population was forced to rely upon individual, familial, and community-based survival strategies to supplement declining wages, faltering employment and reduced state support [...] mass employment forced increasing numbers of women and children to search for work in the informal sector in an attempt to spread income earning across the family. As such, this [1982-1985] period saw a distinct transformation in the gendered division of labour in Chile [...] (M. Taylor 80)

Moreover, under the dictatorship Chile’s economic structure was re-defined towards exacerbating a gender-divided productive structure based upon the export of primary products with little added value, so that the formal market—agroexport industry, retail and service—came to rely on the employment of cheap labour, mostly young working-class, and peasant women. Heidi Tinsman notices how this proletarianization of women, particularly intensive in the 1990s, had contradictory effects for women working in the main areas of the export economy, such as the agro industry and fisheries. Her research complicates readings of working-class women as passive victims and rather emphasizes the agency and shifts in gendered power relations. In tandem with the mass proletarianization of women, since the beginning of the seventies “woman” became a specific category of marketing. Publicity interpellated women as the primary consumer of products for home (appliances) and of domestic knowledge such as home cleaning, childcare, cooking, personal beauty, and fashion. In this way, “respectable” middle-class female subjectivity in the seventies became closely linked to consumerism and domesticity, while for working class women, mass media invoked a femininity linked with a certain romantic sensibility promoted through popular radio songs, *radionovelas*, and *radioteatro*. With the inauguration of national television in 1969, the 1970’s developed a programming specifically aimed at housewives. In the 1980s, mass media messages continued

to interpellate middle class women as consumers, bombarding them with both images of domestic life and promising pleasure, sophistication, and glamour. In this context, the arrival of the dictatorship did not necessarily introduce any new discourses (“the regime did not invent anything new” according to Munizaga and Letelier), but rather mobilized pre-existing images and meanings, readymade cultural texts with political currency.

Mass media had a crucial role in the cultural works of the free-market ideology to forge a new common sense around the necessary character of profit, private property, and “international competitiveness,” as well as forging a form of neoliberal desire, and shaping a neoliberal “desiring subject,” to put it in Lisa Rofel’s terms. The role of television in the interpellation of women as gendered desiring subjects of neoliberalism, seems linked to the exploitation of a particular version of femininity associated with sentimentalism through *telenovelas*. The desire to consume household products invoked and mobilized pre-existing gender ideologies but at the same time gave new specific meanings to being a good mother, a good wife, and a modern working woman. Marketing gendered campaigns in the 1980s portrayed women in middle class families as the caretakers and equated being a good mother and wife with acquiring certain appliances or consuming certain products. For example, a 1988 commercial for Chilean IRT (*Industria de Radio y Televisión*) advertising household electronics, such as stereos and TVs, presents us with a young, white and clean-cut middle class family. We see the beautiful young wife secretly admiring the efforts of her stressed out, overworked husband, still busy in his office at night. Then we see her the next morning going out to sell flower arrangements so she can get enough money together to purchase a stereo for her husband. This is accompanied by a ballad that goes, “because it’s worth it to struggle, because it’s worth it to have to wait if at the end you will see happiness grow in your family.”<sup>9</sup> The reference to “waiting” seems to fall more under a traditional model of patiently saving to purchase an item, as opposed to the immediacy offered by credit cards, introduced in Chile under Pinochet by Sebastián Piñera in 1979, who obtained

representation rights for Visa and MasterCard and created Bancard S.A. (described in the former President's biography on the government's website under the subtitle "the entrepreneur").<sup>10</sup> This commercial seems to appeal to the traditional work ethic, that posits happiness as a result or compensation for the effort and struggle of individuals. The entrepreneurial efforts of the young wife are paid off when at the end, she makes her husband happy. Gender roles are safely assigned in a stereotypical way, and the nuclear heterosexual family is introduced as the image for success in the Neoliberal State. In this way, neoliberalism as a new form of social relationship (what is unknown) is inscribed in the logic of the family (what is known), offering some sense of continuity through the gendered ideology of the family and invoking some traditional values around the worth of work and money. The increasing marketing of a wide range of household appliances during the 80s was aimed explicitly at women, prefiguring them as gendered desiring subjects through the ideology of a "good mother," which is measured—at least according to these messages—by women's capacity as a consumer. For IRT, marketing to middle classes with newly acquired purchasing power through credit was a deliberate strategy to advertise their household products as smaller, less expensive, and more accessible to this segment of the population.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the authoritarian military rule, the transition to democracy was constructed by conservative sectors once more as a "moral crisis" (Grau et. al), which made it pressing to safeguard the national values in the face of globalization. The reinstatement of the democratic order was received with anxiety and presented as a threat in the same ways that Power and Tinsman describe the fears of a sexual crisis associated with the Popular Unity and the Agrarian Reform, respectively. Discussions of gender and sexuality in the period of "transition to democracy" were embedded in a nationalist narrative about the defense of Chilean values. Linz and Stepan, whose work is devoted to the analysis of different cases of democratization around the world, have noted that in the Chilean case, in contrast to the processes of democratization

carried out in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, the military was legitimated by the strong support it received from the bourgeoisie, a support that largely continued after the dictatorship was over, even when official reports on human-rights violations were issued. In the 1988 plebiscite more than 40% of the electorate voted for the continuation of Pinochet's government, and in the 1989 presidential elections, over 40% voted against the *Concertación*, that is, as Loveman puts it, "the military government from 1973 to 1990 neither existed in a vacuum nor imposed itself with deep roots in civil society" (311). It is not a secret either that the ideological designers of Pinochet's regime (such as Jaime Guzmán, its key ideologue) foresaw that the military regime could only be sustained for a limited amount of time. At some point, a process of "normalization," the return to a democratic political order, would be necessary. Then, as critics of the transition have pointed out, it can be argued that the regime only changed its institutional form because it was planned from the beginning that it would eventually transition from a military dictatorship into a civilian government.

Beyond the continuing influence of the military during the years of transition<sup>12</sup> a deep-seated culture of militarization permeated Chilean society during the first decade of the so-called transition. In March 1994, shortly after taking office as President, Eduardo Frei (the second elected president of the *Concertación*), faced an episode that made evident that the transition was not over, in spite of the official discourse. Sixteen *carabineros* were convicted for the kidnapping, killing and beheading of three communist teachers in 1985. Frei then requested the chief of *carabineros* Adolfo Stange, who was being charged with obstruction of justice, resign, a request that Stange defiantly rejected by invoking the 1980 constitution. Stange finally retired voluntarily in October 1995 and became an institutional Senator in 1998. In May 1995, another incident re-staged and made evident the power that the military still held. DINA<sup>13</sup> director Manuel Contreras received a sentence along with another military officer, Pedro Espinoza, for the killing of Orlando Letelier, a case that was not covered by the 1978 Amnesty Law and which involved

a US citizen (Letelier's secretary Ronni Moffitt). Contreras and Espinoza both defiantly, and with the complicity and protection of the military, resisted imprisonment for many months, and eventually negotiated doing their time in a luxury prison specially constructed for them ("Punta Peuco") and under the custody of military (rather than civilian) guards. If technically the case was a judicial success, with Contreras and Espinoza having been tried and convicted for their crime, symbolically the incident evinced once more the little power and authority that civilian governments had over Pinochet's collaborators. And then, in 1998, by the end of Frei's administration, Pinochet stepped down as army commander and became a Senator for Life in the National Congress. In another example of what Alexander Wilde calls the "expressive politics" of the transition, many members of the congress received him on his first day as a civilian with banners, booing him. For many, this was an unbearable reminder of his impunity, granted by the way that the transition had been pacted a decade before. When some legislators from the *Concertación* made an attempt to impeach Pinochet, Frei's government opposed this measure, fearful that it would result in a political destabilization and would discredit the whole transitional process initiated with the previous administration.

Linz and Stepan note that whether a transition to democracy is over or not, is not an intellectual question, but instead a very concrete political problem. Declaring a transition over, like the first democratic government of Patricio Aylwin did by the end of his mandate (1990–1994), presents a scenario where struggles for further changes are not seen as necessary and therefore not legitimate. In fact, because in the post-dictatorship the situation is assumed to be normalized, much of the remaining political activism is demonized and actors who continue to engage in political struggles are constructed as "extremists." In turn, to claim the end of the transition renders the authoritarian features of democracy invisible or makes them appear as acceptable. In Chile, political actors and intellectuals have long-held conflicting views on the notion of transition, its content, and its evaluation. While the most optimistic insist that the transition was a

completed and successful process, others are more cautious and while declaring the transition over, point at some of its problematic or unsolved aspects. Moderate critics of the transition see it as an unfinished process, but still give the process some credit for "moving towards" democratization.

Finally, more "radical" critics of the transition contend that the only transition that took place (understood as a transit, transformation, movement) occurred under the dictatorship, when Chilean society transited from a state-center development to a free-market economy. Moreover, during the governments of the *Concertación* and its "transition to democracy" there was no significant challenge to the extremely conservative laws that regulated marriage, divorce, and women's reproductive health, no acknowledgment of sexual diversity in their policies, and no substantial challenge to women's labour exploitation nor to the inequality in their access to health and their social vulnerability. After decades of failing to legislate about divorce, only in 2004 was the first Civil Marriage Law passed in congress. However, the notion of the family continued to organize debates around gender and sexuality, and became an important organizing metaphor for reconciliation, setting the conditions for the debate and designating viable ("pro-family") and unviable ("anti-family") political articulations. Furthermore, Parson's anthropological work indicates that the transition's dominant narrative of "reconciliation" shaped the ways that gender violence became sanctioned and normalized in institutions and public discourses. For example, the first Family Violence Law in 1994 emphasized individual responsibility and the importance of reconciliation, completely depoliticizing and erasing the systemic dimensions of the violence experienced by women, consistent with the way that the "Truth and Reconciliation Reports" exposed the victims but not the victimizers, and suggested the need to "move on" to the reconciliation of the Chilean family. The first law against sexual discrimination was passed under Sebastian Piñera's government in 2012, after the intense

activism and lobbying of LGBT organizations in reaction to the hate crime that took the life of 23-year-old Daniel Zamudio.

In 1997, Olga Grau et al. put forward a feminist analysis of the dominant cultural narratives of the transition by reading public debates around gender and sexuality. They concluded these narratives were severely constrained by the logics of transition and concluded that all these debates have been dominated by the image of the traditional family as the suturing metaphor of the wounded social body, and by the identification of traditional gender roles as national values. In the same vein, Raquel Olea explored how government's efforts to introduce laws and policies on gender equality during the first democratic government were equated by conservative sectors to the policies of a totalitarian state, and attributed them to a foreign ideology (feminism) linked to Marxism. Olea et al. examined the tensions in Chile when democratic government representatives were to attend the IV World Women Conference in Beijing in 1995, making visible some of the cultural logics of the "transition." The debates analyzed revolved around the *Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades para las Mujeres*, the official document that stated the government's position towards women's and gender issues published in 1994. Much of the criticism directed at this document pointed at the dangerous ambiguity of some terms it contained, such as "gender" and "different types of families," that the critics argued could potentially be used as disguises for undermining monogamy and heterosexuality. According to Grau's discourse analysis of media texts, the conservative right in Chile explicitly argue that the state's imposing of an ideological agenda of "radical feminism" and "renovated socialism," goes against a "democratic, pluralist, Christian country as Chile" (32), where individual freedom cannot be alienated. The government declared early on that they had no intention of legislating for abortion, the same stance they had taken in the previous conference in Cairo. Within the conservative-religious groups, there were female conservative leaders who made a point of speaking on behalf of the Chilean woman to defend their "natural" role. They accused the state

of intervening in women's individual right to choose their own path, and argued that the state's document would express "a desire of imposing by means of the law, a distinctly liberal lifestyle, linked to a model of womanhood that does not agree with the values characteristic of our culture" (40). These lobbyists also articulated a distinction between "good" (moderate, Christian) feminism and "bad" feminism (radical, based on "gender theory"). Female representatives from the *Unión Demócrata Independiente* ("Independent Democratic Union," populist right-wing party linked to the extremely conservative Opus Dei Catholic faction) and *Renovación Nacional* ("National Renovation") argued that through the concept of "gender," the subversion and elimination of natural differences between men and women was being legitimate by introducing the idea that people, regardless of their sex, can live as feminine, masculine, androgynous and in-differentiated beings, terminology which they defined as monstrous and "malefic." The authors concluded that the demonization of feminism, represented as a totalitarian ideology against family, femininity, and motherhood, does not find a counter position that can respond effectively to this misrepresentation.

The portrait of feminism as monstrous and malefic, in turn, seems to shape the strategies of a new generation of queer feminist activists, who represent their bodies as abject and refuse to accept "woman" as a political identity or as a category for respectability and citizenship. On the other hand, we need to ponder if feminist and queer activist performance are able to articulate a critique of neoliberalism in a context where individual difference and "sexual freedom" are already accepted and celebrated as neoliberal diversity. In fact, the recent approval of a law allowing same-sex couples to become common-law has been regarded as a mere "pinkwashing" of Bachelet's government, one inscribed in the Neoliberal State project. While advanced neoliberalism seems to present diversity as a mere juxtaposition of differences that do not threaten each other nor the larger project of social peace and reconciliation, we then seem to require more mobile and fragmentary tactics. Nelly Richard develops useful insights to

further a feminist analysis of the transition by posing 'the feminine' as a sign of disruption of a masculine economy of representation and an *oppositional political identity* that can be articulated in relation to the context (as opposed to an essentialist identity based on the assumption of commonality of interests between women). Following Richard, a queer feminist analysis of the transition and post-dictatorship in Chile will pay attention to the gender ideologies and power relations they legitimize, along the lines of Grau and Olea's respective analyses, and see feminist practice as always contingent and situated. This kind of analysis would engage in politics in the same vein as Pedro Lemebel's rejection of the representation of a clean, respectable and masculine global gay identity, by showing the multiplicity of particular lived experiences of *locas* and other queers marked not only by their sexuality but also by poverty, ethnicity, and AIDS.

I have provided evidence on how gender binaries shape the narratives of politics (*la política* as feminine), the economy (the technocratic state as masculine), and society (the heterosexual family as a normative model of national citizenship). Moreover, we examined how the subsequent political projects of the 20th century in Chile were consecutively built on normative definitions of heterosexuality, sexual respectability, and motherhood, laying down the available subject positions for gendered subjectivities. These narratives provide the coordinates for subjectivation, and define who gets to be a respectable citizen, or whose lives and bodies are deemed worthy of protection and rights, and whose are deemed unfit, and contaminating to the state project. While most of the projects of the 20th century focused on the expansion of rights and benefits from the state, these always were guided by a heteronormative, assimilationist model of progress in which queer and racialized bodies are constantly depicted as less than human. Moreover, in the National Doctrine that shaped dominant state discourse under the dictatorship, bodies were portrayed as monstrous in a Cold War narrative that deemed Marxist or any other collective-oriented practices such as participating in unions, rural collectives,

student organizations, etc. After the formal end of the dictatorship, the state did not challenge these narratives but rather abided by conservative agendas in the spirit of reconciliation, political stability, and acceptance of the neoliberal economy as a given fact. In the following Chapter, I trace specifically those narratives that organize desire and subjectivity in the post-dictatorship stage of the Neoliberal State, and the role of sexualized spectacles in equating freedom to a form of “sexual freedom” defined by heteropatriarchal norms.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The original text in Spanish reads:

*Nos despedazaron, nos ahogaron, nos envenenaron con la frialdad de un verdugo. Por nuestra muerte se pagó dinero, precio de sangre como el que recibió Judas. Botaron a la basura nuestros cuerpos, o los quemaron en un incinerador, para que no quedaran rastros de nuestro asesinato, ni siquiera tuvimos una sepultura on una lápida.*

<sup>2</sup>*Soy una surfista asesina / me masturbo en la ducha y en la tina/ hago atentados terroristas a animadores, cantantes y artistas/ Ayer ví a Kike Morandé y con mi table la cabeza le corté/ por estúpido, homofóbico y sexista/ por haber hecho enojar a esta surfista.*

<sup>3</sup>Halberstam, J. Jack . *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. Beacon Press, 2012.

<sup>4</sup>The original text in Spanish reads:

*[A]nalizar retóricas institucionales, imaginarios simbólicos, discursividades sociales e ideologías culturales, para desmontar la economía política de los signos del ordenamiento neocapitalista, y también, para desviar la recta ejecutiva de sus burocracias y tecnocracias del sentido hacia las zonas de sublevamiento de la memoria, del deseo y de la imaginación. (Richard 20)*

<sup>5</sup>*Destape*, literally “uncovering” is the term that was used to characterize the end of the Franco’s dictatorship in Spain, emphasizing the opening up of the country to “sexual freedom.” Ever since Foucault’s 1974 *History of Sexuality*, the social sciences and humanities have been forced to reconsider talking about sexuality as a “natural” or given phenomena determined by biological configurations, and begun to understand discourses of sexuality as emerging from specific historical processes that began in Europe in the 19th century and that resulted in our Western modern conception of the (sexed and gendered) self. According to Foucault, judicial and medical institutions produced discourses that defined sexuality as a separate domain or

object of study and defined normal and deviant practices and subjects, justifying a number of institutional treatments, arrangements, and protocols.

<sup>6</sup> Salazar and others have documented extensively the extent to which the state legitimated itself and its oligarchic and corporative interests through military violence and repression from the Constitution of 1833.

<sup>7</sup> Moreover, throughout the Popular Front, the Popular Unity, the Pinochet years and the *Concertación's* Chile went through a restructuring of labour relations that radically changed the conditions of possibility for gendered subjectivities and gender relations in Chile (Winn). With the promotion of neoliberal policies, Chilean workers saw their model of masculinity threatened by the extreme precarity of labour and the inability to constitute themselves as a collective political actor to negotiate the conditions of this labour.

<sup>8</sup> Political activity was deemed as intrinsically harmful, as defined by the discourse of the National Security doctrine propagated by the School of the Americas.

<sup>9</sup> The original in Spanish read:

*Porque vale la pena tener que luchar, porque vale la pena tener que esperar, si al final en tu familia, verás crecer la felicidad. Porque vale la pena compartir las cosas más buenas, sí, esa sonrisa valió la pena.*

<sup>10</sup> “Biografía Presidente de la República – Sebastián Piñera Echeñique” <<http://2010-2014.gob.cl/presidente/>>

<sup>11</sup> The original in Spanish reads:

*A comienzos de la década de los 70 comienza sus operaciones IRT—Industria de Radio y televisión – como una empresa de electrónica con un importante potencial de desarrollo por su capacidad de armar y fabricar productos. Con el desarrollo de modelos de televisores de menor tamaño a los que ofrecían las marcas importadas y un precio competitivo, IRT logra una importante*

*penetración de sus productos, con gran éxito comercial.* From “Nuestra Empresa: IRT, Soluciones Innovadoras.” Web.

<sup>12</sup>Pinochet's constitution of 1980 (approved in a fraudulent plebiscite) meant the imposition of an electoral system that gave the military continuing influence and allowed for the over-representation of conservative sectors in Congress once the dictatorship was over. The effects of a pacted or negotiated transition could be seen later in the democratic government's inability to deal with issues of human rights, and the adoption of uncomfortable official discourses of forgiveness and reconciliation without justice.

<sup>13</sup>*Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional.* Pinochet's intelligence agency, responsible for most of the human-rights violations under dictatorship through *Operación Condor* and *Operación Colombo*.

## CHAPTER TWO: SPECTACLES OF MARKET NATIONALISM



Figure 6. Banner on the site of construction building (left), advertising billboard for late-night telenovela. Pictures by author, Santiago, December 2010.

In this chapter I first address what it means to talk about spectacles, spectacularization, and national spectacles, and what these theoretical articulations add to current debates on neoliberalism. I argue that the transformation of the developmentalist narrative (characteristic of the Popular Front and the Popular Unity) into a neoliberal narrative during the dictatorship and the so-called “transition” depended on the staging of a series of gender and sexualized spectacles that offered new coordinates for subjectivation. I provide examples of these spectacles and untangle how gender and sexuality are displayed to achieve a sense of nation. I explore these spectacles and their specific gender representations that allow a sense of nation

to emerge. Illustrating the spectacular power that is at work in this libidinal affair between subjects and nationalism, in this chapter I argue that spectacles of market nationalism and the free market in Chile work to reinforce the idea that neoliberal democracy is the order representing freedom, presented in the form of endless consumer choices and, more specifically, an order proffering *sexual* freedom and transparency—ultimately sold as a transcendental order that was beyond reproach. These spectacles manage to combine the idea of sexual freedom while reproducing parameters of sexual respectability and heterosexuality. Spectacular power produces ahistorical explanations of how power itself works and grounds its legitimacy in a transcendental aura, so that neoliberal narratives and spectacles present “the market” as an ahistorical entity that surpasses human agency: the market just behaves as it does because it is governed by the natural rules of supply and demand, economic and political forces that lie beyond human practices. Finally, while the military dictatorship emphasized the state as masculine, thus objective, neoliberalism is also presented as a rational, thus masculine order, in opposition to the subjective and irrational sign of the feminine. I will argue that neoliberalism is in itself a sort of irrational faith based on sentimentalism and love.

### **Gender, Sexuality, and Neoliberal Nationalism**

Nationalisms cannot be described as coinciding with any particular ideology, but rather as passions for an imagined community. Benedict Anderson put forward the idea that nationality, nation-ness, and nationalisms are better understood as "cultural artefacts" that aim to promote the nation as an imagined political community, deeply ingrained at an emotional level. It is then imperative to understand nationalist discourses as merged or conflated in different contexts with *varied ideologies* and political ideals. Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger have called our attention to convergences between nationalism, the love of country, and eroticized,

(hetero)sexualized love. And Doris Sommer analyzes national novels to tackle the relationship between politics and erotics in Latin America, arguing that narratives of love have been central to the disciplining of subjects within national projects, marked by conflicts, coming together, reconciliation and amalgamation of different (class, race, region, religious, culture) sectors, producing the effects of suggesting the productive (transgressive and heroic) union of different actors in favor of a national project, and at the same time, creating the effect of (sexual, romantic or familial) intimacy among national subjects, resulting in a "passionate patriotism." While romantic love engenders the nation, nationalism is based on romantic love. Sommer brings together Foucault's "history of the bodies" and Anderson's "history of national bodies," looking for the productive intersection of their claims about sexuality, the self, and national fictions. The result, as said before, is that in modern societies it becomes inescapable for subjects to have a "true sex" that defines the self, as it is to have a nationality. In this way "foundational novels are precisely those fictions that try to pass for truth and to become the ground for political association" (Sommer 124).

Franco, applying Anderson's ideas to Mexico, shows the themes present in early national literature, such as the liberal notion that the natural place of women is the domestic and the private sphere, and how laws are made for men to "protect" women. Modernist literature constructed the female body as the "luxuriously clothed body-as-commodity," where women's act of consuming goods was seen as a sign of a modern mentality, becoming themselves a commodity and a fetishistic object of desire. However, other examples in literature show that women resisted both master discourses of domesticity and capitalist modernization. Other genres beyond literature can be considered in the narrativization of the national romance, such as *telenovelas*, which are a very successful popular phenomena in Latin America and offer excellent examples of the themes around which national identity revolves, through topics such

as kinship and the true origins (for example, dramas about discovering one's own true parentage, or mysteries around babies or children's origins are commonly part of their plots).

Nationalist imaginaries then, need visual representations and symbols that citizens can identify with easily. In this sense, state action cannot strictly be considered the formal gestures by government institutions, but also viewed in its cultural expressions, such as in the form of art and literature. McClintock argues that nationalist imaginaries are also achieved through the display of national symbols in the form of spectacle, theatrical performances that play out the fantasies, desires and anxieties of the political elite, and through the creation of fetish objects that stand as symbols of unity, as a substitute for the myriad differences that are contained in the nation. Even when nationalist discourses are invoked for the inclusion of further subjects of rights, as women and "sexual minorities" have done, these claims always have to rely on new exclusions, constructing normative versions of deserving versus undeserving subjects of rights.

Mosse tackled how modern nationalisms in Europe emerged by the end of the eighteenth-century in close relation with the construction of a bourgeois "respectable sexuality." Because many national projects in contexts of capitalist production have had to address the relationship between demographic and social control, the state defined sexuality as a public matter, an issue of national interest. Mosse traced the historical alliance between sexual mores of decency and the ideology of nationalism by looking at ideals of manliness and how they affected the status of women. Distinctive and fixed opposite sexes became crucial for the idea of the nation, and the nuclear family emerged as a value attached to respectability and nationalism. Moreover, Mosse focuses on definitions of *normal versus deviant* sexual behavior, like masturbation, which was said to lead to homosexuality or insanity. The relationship between *national health* and *heterosexuality* was so firm, that Mosse contends "the masturbator was viewed as a readymade conspirator against the state" (11). For Mosse, the alliance between sexual respectability and

nationalism—"perhaps the most powerful and effective ideology of modern times"—resulted in an extremely strong cluster that was appropriated by not only different but antagonistic political projects, as it could be accommodated to discursively legitimize and promote whatever agenda (9).

Along the same lines, Parker et al. point out that the will to control sexuality—by linking it to ideas of health/disease—was born as an eminently modern phenomenon, hand in hand with anxieties towards industrialization and broader political changes in the nineteenth century. These ideas of national health were both heteronormative and racialized, and as Mosse documents, in nineteenth-century Germany their embodiment was the constant theme of sculptures and other visual representations. In them, notions of race and health were conflated with ideals of beauty through muscular and vigorous (white) bodies that provided a stereotypical model for German masculinity. Since nationalist imaginaries emerged as explicitly heteronormative, visual representations of bodily male beauty had to be emptied of their homoerotic potential, based on the repression—or explicit rejection—of homoerotic desire.

If a passionate brotherhood or fraternal comradeship was promoted in nationalist discourse, on the other hand, male-to-male sexualized relationships were to be carefully policed and contained. The problem is solved, as Diana Taylor notes, by using a symbolic “woman” to mediate between men. Motherhood is framed in the heterosexual family as a service to the nation, and female homosexuality remains largely invisible. However, do these homoerotic overtones disappear or remain in nationalist imaginaries and discourses as a repressed subtext? Queer studies from the social sciences have started building links between homoerotic desire and narratives of nationhood, showing that international politics and the national identity may also be "less heterosexual" than it actually seems. Using a "queer reading," we can then pay attention to the interplay of power, desire and race in the context of homoerotic desire.

However, as Lopez-Vicuña laments, there is still much research to be done on how both homophobia and homoeroticism are constitutive of nationalism and modern identities.

Dore and Molyneux explore the dynamics between state politics and gender specifically in Latin America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Dore points out the ways that elites sought to normalize ideals of femininity and masculinity and to police 'proper behaviour.' Dore considers state politics as "the construction of consent alongside the imposition of authority," defining its primary objective "to enable the exploiting classes to appropriate labour and resources from the subordinate classes." Dore argues however, that we need to expand this definition of state power so it involves "the politics not only of class, but also of race and gender" (7). In this way, state action aims to naturalize a particular social order and particular social relationships through means of coercion but also by constructing consent, sanctioning acceptable and unacceptable gender relations and roles and sexual practices, depending on class, age, race among other markers.

Molyneux notes that in the first half of the century different nationalist discourses included women, at least in their rhetoric, to obtain female political support, at the same time that rigid gender roles were being promoted through education and through the circulation of gender-specific codes of sexual behaviour. Modernizing discourses of women's rights by the beginning of the century at least symbolically and temporarily destabilized gender hierarchies. In response, nationalist discourse resorted to a direct link between the stability of the patriarchal family and national health, inscribing the control over women's bodies, reproduction and sexuality firmly into the national project. Within this project, motherhood was represented as a national duty, the equivalent to military service for men. The figure of the prostitute in this sense, condensed many of the anxieties around women's rights, social disintegration and moral

degeneration attributed to modernity, where unruly female sexual behaviour stood as a threat to the nation and its integrity.



Figure 7. "The Chilean Family" as imagined in "Los Ochenta."

On the other hand, it is important to remember that these mechanisms of invoking the image of the family to maintain exploitative and colonial relations are not exclusive to Chile, but rather can be found in discourses of nation building across Latin America and Europe. Consider for example how the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, invoked the sentimental idea that he would be "heartbroken" if "this family of nations is torn apart," days before the plebiscite in which Scotland was to decide whether to leave the United Kingdom. Moreover, many arguments against the separation of Scotland from the UK emphasized that it would change the Union Jack, a central visual component in the imagination of the "kingdom." In fact, the example of the Union Jack flag is useful to demonstrate why it is important to pay attention to national spectacles, as they have material and concrete effects.

I argue, with the support of my literature review, that the power of nationalist imaginaries in shaping gender, sexual and racial identities is often violent and overwhelming. But subjects can never be completely constituted and regulated by nationalisms, as more local imaginaries as well as transnational identities shape one's multiple and shifting identities in everyday experiences. Many of the authors I have reviewed (Anderson, Yuval Davis and Anthias, McClintock, Mosse, Sommer, Parker et al.) coincide in saying that national identity, race and sexuality are some of the most powerful discourses that define identity: not only are these dimensions constitutive of modern identities—so that it is virtually impossible to imagine a subject that does not "have" a gender or a nationality—but these dimensions also interact, intersect and illuminate each other in multiple ways. National identity, as much as gender and race, can only be defined in relational terms—for what they are not, or in relation to an "other"—and none of them can be defined in general or universal terms, as they are always constructed in situated and specific ways.

The very intelligibility of nations relies on the previous understanding of familial relations, so we can understand the homeland as mothers, the law and the state as fathers, and other nationals as brothers and sisters. The benefits of using this metaphor to prefigure the nation are that differences and hierarchical relationships are represented as natural, and as forming a unity at the same time. The domestic realm of the patriarchal nuclear family, with its gender and age-based hierarchies and division of labour, served in nation-building processes in Europe as microsocial representations of the broader social order that made the abstraction of the nation into something tangible and immediate. Fanon had already realized about the similarities in the symbolic structure of the family and the nation, and specifically the way that nationalist militarism violently invokes the naturalized authority of the father. But as McClintock shows us, Fanon failed to account for the gendered implications throughout his argument. According to McClintock, within political discourse and nationalism in particular, gender difference has been

used as a way to establish differences between members of the same imagined collectivity and between nations. McClintock notes that racial difference and hierarchies can also be represented as natural by prefiguring the colonial order as a family presided over by the authority of the white colonizer, with the colonized members being the children.

In Latin America, Dore shows that within the colonial order, state action rested on the principle that a 'well ordered family' leads to a 'well ordered society.' In this way, through the use of constant analogies in political discourse, the state projected the domestic patriarchal authority to the nation, in order to lend legitimacy to the state. Culturally, the state came to be perceived as a "benevolent father who ruled over and protected his family" and "rewarded his children when they behaved well and punished them when they behaved badly" (11). During the transition from colonial to republican societies, when the state disputed church authority over family matters, the new kind of secular governance tended to paradoxically strengthen patriarchal authority. Because the republican order was still fragile during its initial stages, the state instilled patriarchal authority within the family as a way to secure state power. In this way, newly formed republics drew on traditional colonial ideologies and values to construct the new state's legitimacy and imagine the nation. Pertinently, McGee notes that if state discourse projects relationships from the familial to the national order (i.e., symbolizing state-citizens relationships as Father-children bonds), this in turn means that to transform social relationships and hierarchies we would need to re-imagine and reformulate the gender relationships that are their material and symbolic support in more democratic ways.

## **Neoliberal Passions, Market Nationalism, Spectacular Power**

Consider the 2013 U.S. film *The Wolf of Wall Street*, directed by Martin Scorsese. The film is a fictionalized account of the real life Jordan Belfort, character portrayed by Leonardo di Caprio, who made a fortune in the stock market through various means, including violence, corruption, and crime (in fact, almost all of Scorsese's filmography can be read as a romanticized apology for capitalism, and of the mafia structure of the corporate world). Our hero is unapologetically presented as a self-made man, who starts poor and with an "ordinary looking" wife, to build an empire of wealth and influence and marry an aristocratic, younger, and whiter (and, as we are to understand, formerly less attainable) wife. This is a sentimental account, though, in which we are made to sympathize with Belfort as he and his "tribe" of mostly male workers indulge in a constant orgy of cocaine, alcohol, and sex as forms of tribal-like rituals that create very meaningful homosocial bonds. In a key scene, after being confronted with imminent legal charges by his father and his lawyer, Belfort is supposed to announce his stepping down from the firm in front of his associates. However, at the last minute Belfort changes his mind and exhorts his workers in a highly cathartic moment reminiscent of Jimmy Swaggart or other public "charismatic" religious ministers. Neoliberalism is not just a technocratic set of economic policies, but mostly, a sentimental, romantic narrative that requires us to develop a sense of "faith," irrational love, and devotion.

The preaching of the virtues of the freemarket, as formulated by Friedman opened the path to market nationalism in which the emotional investment in the national project is mediated by a narrative of recycled signs (such as "the Popular" and "Revolution," terms that are exploited by

the Opus Dei inspired *Unión Demócrata Independiente*, U.D.I.). Moreover, the national space was reconfigured in the social imaginary as an even field of opportunity, in which successful subjects are creative, autonomous individuals who can advance themselves through their own efforts. Through this narrative, Cárcamo-Huechante argues, the economic “structural adjustment” that took place under the dictatorship produced a subsequent “cultural adjustment” or symbolic shift in which the nation-state is imagined now as a nation-market and Chile becomes a logotype, a corporative sign that needs to be promoted. Re-imagined in the context of the global market, Chile itself becomes a brand, its geography a list of exploitable and marketable natural and human resources, where subjectivity is dependent on the ability to participate as a citizen-consumer under the neoliberal illusion of freedom and autonomy. Neoliberal market nationalism depends then on instilling a desire for belonging to a competitive and successful community. The best example of this is the narrative that Chileans needed to undergo every “sacrifice” so the nation could remain competitive in the global market when policies of labour flexibilization were implemented. In this context, expressions of social unrest are frequently condemned and criticized in public debates and mainstream media narratives as generating “bad publicity” in the international press for Chile.

Based on Cárcamo-Huechante’s analysis of Milton Friedman’s speech in Chile in 1975 and Joaquin Lavin’s book *La Revolución Silenciosa*, we can further understand neoliberalism as a cultural discourse belonging to the genre of a “preach,” *una prédica*. Friedman’s speech is presented as a technocratic discourse of “illness” versus “recovery” as prescribed by a doctor, or a father, in which this position of “prescriber,” the superiority of the doctor’s knowledge, is framed within the neocolonial hierarchy North-South. Freemarketism, as a key narrative of neoliberal doctrine, operates as a sort of “sermon” that presents the economy as masculine through a language of technical and scientific rationale as opposed to the feminized “ideology.” This gendered dichotomy pits ideology—guided by passion and, thus, feminine and subjective—

against the economy, which, by contrast, is viewed as rational and objective, and, thus, masculine. Despite this representation of the economy as the terrain of the rational and technocratic that provides neoliberalism with scientific truth, it appears that the freemarketist narrative requires the blind belief in the abstract entity of the market, that is, of the market as the “invisible hand” that regulates exchanges between equals. In this sense, freemarketism can be seen as a religion of believers that presents itself as a mere description of “the way things are.” In “The Essence of Neoliberalism,” Pierre Bourdieu conceives neoliberalism as a form of religious and utopian doctrine:

Thus we see how the neoliberal utopia tends to embody itself in the reality of a kind of infernal machine, whose necessity imposes itself even upon the rulers. Like the Marxism of an earlier time, with which, in this regard, it has much in common, this utopia evokes powerful belief—the *free trade faith*—not only among those who live off it, such as financiers, the owners and managers of large corporations, etc., but also among those, such as high-level government officials and politicians, who derive their justification for existing from it. For they sanctify the power of markets in the name of economic efficiency, which requires the elimination of administrative or political barriers capable of inconveniencing the owners of capital in their individual quest for the maximisation of individual profit, which has been turned into a model of rationality. They want independent central banks. And they preach the subordination of nation-states to the requirements of economic freedom for the masters of the economy, with the suppression of any regulation of any market, beginning with the labour market, the prohibition of deficits and inflation, the general privatisation of public services, and the reduction of public and social expenses.<sup>1</sup>

Freemarketism presents the market as a sacred, pontificated, transcendental entity, complete with the image of the angel of freedom breaking free from the slavery of communism. This is

significant if we consider, again, that progressive narratives had been pre-empted of their utopian character.

A key assumption of neoliberalism is that the free market is the most efficient mechanism for the production and distribution of goods in society. (...) This view is fixed with an unencumbered access to the marketplace to provide cost-effectiveness, competition, and innovation, resulting in lower prices and more choices for the consumer, greater profits for the successful entrepreneur, growth for the economy and greater benefits and opportunities for all. Despite evidence of the contrary, the “everyone benefits” fiction persists. One might observe that *like a religious orthodoxy, the idea of free market as an impersonal, god-like force inspires religious-like fervor in its proponents.* (Alexander, 21, my emphasis)

In the context of market nationalism, the social libidinal investment with the nation-market that helps sustain and legitimize neoliberalism as a dominant mode of relationship is mediated by spectacles. Nationalisms have historically depended on how spectacles of the nation can capture the image of the nation as a whole, as “[n]ational representations are performed through public spectacle, each nation having its own genealogy of performance, often with specific gender connotations and representations” (Radcliffe 96). At the same time, the growing “spectacularization” of everyday life under neoliberalism is mostly apparent in the primacy of television, and the proliferation of hypermarkets, malls, and shopping centers as the spaces for social life; as Cárcamo-Huechante notes, “[t]he subject becomes the object of a spectacularized economy of varieties, of object-brands that massively pounce on cars (and minds) of a consumer subsumed in the fiction of the options.” It has already been explored how the neoliberal restructuring that began with the dictatorship transformed the available narratives by which subjects were able to find meaning and identity, including a new imagination of the community of belonging, from the *nation-state* to the *nation-market*. We must then shift our

thinking about contemporary nationalism in Chile from a state-centered perspective to one of “market nationalism,” in which all the passions associated with the imagining of a community of belonging are articulated around the referent of the (national and transnational) market society, and where everyday life is now mediated by a number of brands, logos, and publicity images. As Cárcamo-Huechante argues, in this new scenario the social field of desire itself is mediated by market nationalism, which in turn guarantees the reproduction of a particular subjectivity functional to the neoliberal order.<sup>2</sup>

Neoliberalism operates in a spectacularized way in which the dominant order of the “free market” is seen as governed by natural rules that subjects should abide by, rather than as a system produced by concrete human practices. I draw a parallel between the notions of the spectacle with *montajes*, which translates from Spanish as “set-ups.” During the years of the dictatorship in Chile, *montajes* took the form of staged confrontations between the CNI and “*extremistas*” or “*subversivos*” to justify massacres of political dissidents or activists. The staging of events and then propagating them as true events to implicate dissidents in seemingly nefarious acts became a regular practice in which many newspapers like *El Mercurio* and *La Segunda* (from the Agustín Edwards group) and television stations such as *Televisión Nacional* became actively complicit. In *montajes* the staged events are presented as truth in the same way that spectacles present a formulation of what is possible or, even, *imaginable*.<sup>3</sup> I, therefore, put *montajes* and spectacles within a continuum of practices that generate meaning and support particular configurations of power and narratives of “truth.”

## Spectacles of the Subject

The notion of spectacle is present in a diverse body of literature that pertains to my question about desire and subjectivity under militarization and neoliberalization of society in Chile. Guy Debord's interpretation of the notion of spectacle emphasizes the alienating and isolating character of the spectacle of commodities. In *The Society of Spectacle* (1990) Debord argued, following a Marxist analysis, that in industrialized societies the modes of production are organized in such manner that the workers are separated from their product, thus from themselves as well as from other workers. The "spectacle" works as a notion that describes a mode of social relations that is dominant in highly industrialized societies, where workers experience pseudo-integration with themselves and others through the consumption of images (publicity) and of commodities. That is, through consumerism, fragmented commodities return to fragmented subjects. Debord also notes that the central commodities of industrialized societies are products that deepen social isolation, such as cars and TVs:

What links spectators is nothing other than an irreversible linkage with the same center that keeps them separated. The spectacle reunites what is split, but it reunites it only as already split.<sup>4</sup> (Debord 29, my translation)

The debordian spectacle involves a world dominated by commodities, where the Earth itself is unified as a global market. In the spectacle, only commodities appear, while the production process disappears. When commodities have colonized the whole of social life, then that historical moment can be described as the spectacle. While this formulation is useful to understand the repressive and alienating aspects of spectacles, as well as their specific historical connection to capitalism, the debordian spectacle is not politically useful for taking into account human agency in the form of resistance or critical viewership, nor does it even leave room for any ambivalence in the process of alienation by the spectacle.

Other formulations of spectacle, such as the one Ann McClintock puts forward in *Imperial Leather*, emphasize the historical connection with the forging of modern gendered nationalisms, understanding spectacles in relation to nationalist narratives. McClintock's argument is that national time was domesticated under the European Enlightenment through a process in which "history, especially national and imperial history, took on a character of a spectacle" (92). Projected onto national space, national time became national history in the shape of a spectacle. McClintock argues that national collective identity is experienced and transmitted through spectacle, a theatrical performance of invented community and that: "...the single power of nationalism since the late nineteenth century, I suggest, has been its capacity to organize a sense of popular, collective unity through the management of mass, national commodity spectacle." (102) McClintock argues that if nationalist imaginaries are achieved through the display of national symbols as a spectacle, these theatrical performances frequently play out the fantasies, desires and anxieties of the political elite. I consider it useful to build an analogy between Lacan's mirror stage as a key moment for the constitution of the subject and the fiction of the Ego, and public spectacles as the mirror stage of the social collective from which the fiction of the nation as a whole emerges by offering a unified image to project collective fantasies and create a sense of continuity. National identity is then an Imaginary process that is at constant threat of being disrupted by the Real, the radical fragmentation of interests and identities covered over with the idyllic image of the "Chilean family." In this sense, spectacles produced by the state tend to reflect the anxieties of social disintegration imagined and signified as "sexual chaos."

Feminist cultural theorist Sue Thornham emphasizes the historical links of the spectacle to the emergence of the city, the public space, and the practice of looking as a regular and gendered activity (the figure of the modern *flâneur*). Thornham points to the links between spectacle and the shaping of subjects as gendered consumers: "the department store can be dated from

virtually the same moment (the 1850s) as the great exhibitions, part of the same expansion of public space and spectacle,” as department stores “drew on the conventions of theatre and exhibitions and were visited as tourists attractions” (Nava qtd. in Thornham 138). What the spectacle managed was to create women’s identities as consumers, as subjects that were put on the “public space” under the code of domesticity.<sup>5</sup> Diana Taylor uses the notion of gendered spectacles as a key to explore how militarism and neoliberalism are inscribed on the body under conditions of state terror. Like McClintock, Taylor outlines “spectacle” as a central component of national imaginations, since it offers universal canonical narratives for interpreting specific historical situations; presents a version of the world as inevitable and natural; and interpellates the audiences in a way that shapes the viable subjectivities in that context. Like Thornham, she conceptualizes the militarized male gaze as already gendered and gendering. The ability to produce and control national public spectacles then translates into the power to manipulate desire and control the gaze.

Spectacles participate not only in the Imaginary level by providing a unified image for the nation as a subject, but also in the Symbolic, which organizes meaning. Taylor describes the ways that masculinity is performed in the spectacle of militarism in Argentina’s “Dirty War,” where the *Junta* enacted an old script of male individuation carried out *on* and *through* women’s bodies, such that the female presence seems to mediate the Oedipal drama (in the role of mother) and to guarantee that the homosocial bonding of militarism is framed as heterosexual. Taylor’s analysis is particularly useful for understanding the visual power tactics of the military dictatorship led by Pinochet in Chile. The 1973 coup was very much a gendered spectacle as it offered a display of weaponry in strategically relevant sites in Chile that presented the coup as a war, “as dramatic and traumatic as possible,” as Naomi Klein notes. Declassified CIA documents state that following the coup, some 13,500 civilians were arrested and put into detention camps, and “[i]nside the National Stadium, death replaced football as the public

spectacle” (89). The coup and its aftermath can be read as a public spectacle of militarized masculinities and feminized vulnerable bodies. Pinochet himself exploited the spectacular dimensions of power, performing absolute power (he declared himself the Supreme Chief of the Nation) through military pomp and ceremony, “never missing an opportunity to put on his Prussian dress uniform, complete with cape” (91). While the military performed militarized masculinity, the left had, in turn, been historically trapped in the same “bad scripts” of disputing the military’s true masculinity by feminizing their opponents. Tentatively we could say that in the neoliberal state, spectacles of national identity shape subjectivities by installing a militarized male gaze as a model of subjectivation. In Lacanian theory, the “male gaze” operates as a concept that explains the subject position of being-looked-at that produces both anxiety and pleasure and that, in contrast to the stage mirror which is an Imaginary process, is a process situated at the level of the Symbolic. Subjects are then overdetermined, and inescapably subjected to discourse and to the Law of the Father, which organizes desire and the forms of subjectivity that emerge from this relation to the Symbolic.

Spectacular power in the case of contemporary neoliberal Chile does not follow the model of spectacle of torture in pre-modern Europe described by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (the public spectacle of the absolute power of death over subjects’ bodies), but rather, these spectacles display the range of possible and imaginable possibilities of inhabiting the world as bodies marked by gender, sexuality, race, class, and ideology, and of what is normal, accepted, expected, tolerable, and appropriate (more like the state power of life through biopower). At the same time, as Taylor points out, spectacles interpellate us as participants, making us participants of a particular way of looking, and finding our place within the national drama, shaping our imaginations and our sense of belonging in a community, part of a larger whole.

From the conceptualizations of spectacles discussed, I want to focus on how spectacles organize the gaze, shape social imaginaries, and how they articulate gendered subject positions. Spectacles provide a screen on which the idea of the nation can be projected, and on which individuals and collective bodies can inscribe themselves as subjects, or recognizable members of a community. Since some readings of Psychoanalysis are bound to reproduce the idea of an overdetermined subject, I bring in another set of literature that challenges the exclusive focus on the alienating dimension of spectacles, in lieu of highlighting the agency of spectators in interpreting, negotiating, transforming, and creating meaning. The concept of human agency is key to understanding how human practices do articulate disruptions to the power structures that subject them, including social imaginaries, the symbolic systems specific to their cultural contexts, and Language itself. Like Judith Butler discusses in *Bodies That Matter*, agency cannot be conceived as a pre-given property of individuals, but rather, agency is frequently articulated across individuals who conform to historical subjectivities. To resist an ahistorical structuralist reading of Psychoanalysis and instead introduce historicity and indetermination, Jacques Rancière suggests that there is no passive spectator who can be conceptualized as a blank receptacle for a flood of images, extremely susceptible to ideological manipulation. Being a spectator is not something negative or oppressive in itself, since meaning is always produced in an indeterminate way and cannot be completely calculated in advance. This understanding opposes Debord's formula that the more a subject contemplates his or her own dispossession, the less he or she lives. Rancière proposes that we understand viewing as an action in which spectators are also "active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them," "who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story" (13; 22). In this way, we should reject the left-wing melancholy that anticipates any kind of social critique to be already absorbed by the logics of capitalism and the free market, as even acts of protests are already framed as ("youth radicalism") fashion, commodities, and spectacle. Instead, he presents an approach based on a different set of assumptions: "that the incapable

are capable; that there is no hidden secret of the machine that keeps them trapped in their place...there is no fatal mechanism transforming reality into image; no monstrous beast absorbing all desires and energies into its belly; no lost community to be restored. What there is are simply scenes of dissensus, capable of surfacing at any place and at any time.(...) It means that every situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification" (48-49). Aesthetic experience could be politically effective not so much in terms of offering a convincing rhetoric of what should be done as an agenda for emancipation, but as far as it can "change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable, and the feasible" (Rancière 72).

Since there is no direct and/or transparent relation between the artist's intentions and their effects on the audiences, this poses a challenge for all sorts of aesthetic actions and "political art" that seek to have an emancipatory effect. This fundamental indeterminacy is politically appealing, as we can start thinking about art, popular culture and media as possible venues to open up political subjectivation through the multiplication of connections and disconnections between signifiers. The potential for cultural change through "televisionary activism" has been explored by Cymene Howe in Nicaragua:

It has become increasingly important to Nicaraguan advocates to produce particular images of sexuality and gender in the performative and entertainment venue of television. In a place where the state and church are invested in quelling both sexual rights (with antisodomy laws) and gender activism (by repealing abortion provisions), there may be a certain urgency for these forms of advocacy media. I have suggested these techniques are "televisionary." These interventions diverge from more classic activist projects in Nicaragua that center on programmatic policy change. Instead, they aim to shift cultural values with their media messages. (69)

Howe does not merely romanticize these tactics, but perceives them as full of contradictions, for example, containing both a democratizing and a normalizing impulse, and in tension between the global transnational identities and local meanings of sexual and gender politics. To explore the gendered and sexual narratives of a *destape* or *sexual/social liberation* that accompany neoliberalism and freemarketism, I look at spectacles of freedom and transparency, present in the emergence of *Sabor Latino* in the eighties and *cafés con piernas* in the nineties. I also consider attempts at producing a national cultural memory through the figure of the family in the telenovela “*Los Ochenta*,” and in the miniseries “*Los Archivos del Cardenal*.”

### **Spectacles of Freedom, Transparency, and Transcendence**

It should not come as a surprise that “Free” was the name chosen for the Chilean version of Pepsi produced by *Compañía de Cervercerías Unidas* between 1986 and 1994, after a licensing conflict with the multinational Pepsico. “Free” was marketed at the end of the eighties to middle and upper class youth as the company sponsored mass rock “Free concerts” with Argentinian and Chilean bands such as *Soda Stereo* and *Charly García*. In its first TV commercial aired in 1986, we hear an enthusiastic male voiceover saying “the new cola drink is here, is young, is free, it’s Free” (*es joven, es libre, es Free*). Using the English word “free” as the name of the brand also invoked the obvious ideological connection to the U.S. as the epitome of what the “free world” meant in the context of the lingering Cold War at the beginning of the nineties in Latin America. The commercial ad featured Chilean pop band *Enggrupo* and was filmed in the popular middle and upper class beach of *Reñaca*. The jingle used for the ad was an adaptation of the song *Demoliendo Hoteles* by Charly García, in clear association with *Rock Latino*, a style that in the 1980s represented transgression and resistance to the hegemony of English spoken rock and became most popular during the war between Argentina and England over the

Falkland Islands. The idea of “freedom” that this product put forward in its television ad was one of youthful effervescence and music, emphasizing individual success and modeling the characters and aesthetics of North American eighties movies, with clean-cut white actors in stylized fashion that suggested access to the consumption of individual “style” and fashion.

The 2013 Chilean film “No,” Patricio Larraín’s fictionalized account of the political campaigns for the 1988 plebiscite, interestingly suggests that the marketing strategies that were used for the “Free” drink ads, mime and everything, were literally the same ones employed to develop the marketing of democracy as freedom. Paraphrasing a line in this film, which the protagonist uses to present his marketing ideas to clients, “to understand the full significance of this message we have to be aware of the social context”: 1986 was a historical moment when a broad segment of the Chilean youth (particularly in *poblaciones* and university students) was highly politicized and had just begun participating in street protests in Santiago. It was the year when the clandestine armed factions of the opposition, such as the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*, peaked in their ability to destabilize the regime, as was apparent in the failed attempt to assassinate Pinochet. However, my point is not to suggest that the marketing campaign for “Free” was thought out as a deliberate way to distract the population, but rather, that we can look at this commercial ad as participating in broader spectacles of freedom that linked the “free market” to democracy in the context of a repressive state facing more open opposition from a variety of sectors of society.

Historically, it seems that it is the right wing that has capitalized more on the notion of “freedom” in Chile. Take for instance the CIA funded nationalist right-wing paramilitary group *Patria y Libertad*, founded in 1970, or the freemarketist think-tank *Libertad y Desarrollo*. The military coup itself was narrated as a tale of freedom/liberation from communism. Conservative aristocrat lawyer and journalist Rafael Valdivieso Ariztía, in his 1988 *Crónica de un rescate*

(*Chile: 1973-1988*), describes how the military coup “saved Chile from communism at the time when it was ready to close its fist over whatever was left of freedom and democracy.” The author argues that the military intervention was only the first step to save the country from communist slavery, and that the “new regime” was faced with the task of “rescuing the country from complete economic ruin.” Furthermore, he argues that the military were urged to “substitute chaos with order” and invokes “national progress and evolution” as the driving force of history, asserting that “[t]he new Government, discarding many people’s apprehension, also rescued values that seemed lost: economic freedom and the trust in private initiative, with which it opened broad paths to collective progress.”<sup>6</sup> The conflation here of “economic freedom,” “private initiative,” and “collective progress,” seems to be key to the legitimation of the coup as a liberation from communist slavery. Valdivieso’s narrative is obviously embedded in nationalist terms, declaring that the armed forces had reacted with “the patriotic commitment of restoring *chilenidad*”; describing Allende’s government as contaminated by a dogmatic foreign Marxist ideology and the *Unidad Popular* as under the direction of “foreign mercenaries.” More interestingly, in a subchapter about the presidential residences of Allende, the author insists on making associations between sexual deviance, moral corruption, and the government of the *Unidad Popular*. For example, Valdivieso assures readers that large amounts of fine foods, wine and liquor were found inside Allende’s residence “El Cañaveral” along with many pieces of female clothing, Marxist readings and pornography, and that a Chilean journalist had compared the residence with the palace of an Egyptian king inasmuch as it was a monument to lust and degeneracy.

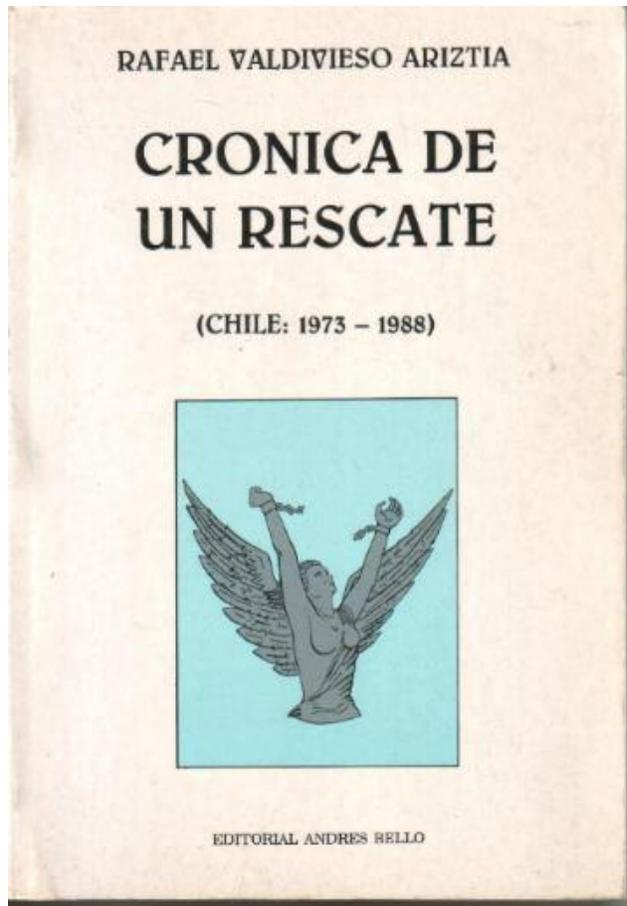


Figure 8. Cover of Valdivieso, the "Angel of Freedom" was also pressed on ten peso coins with the date September 11th, 1973 next to it.

The association of communism with totalitarianism and sexual deviance has been a constant in the discursive strategies of the right to demonize and dehumanize what they see as the "internal enemy." Moreover, there is the direct link between these narratives and the kind of state discourse analyzed by Roseblatt by which citizenship was gendered inasmuch as it was constructed around gendered ideas of sexual respectability. The sexualized spectacles of market nationalism consist of the constant affirmation of stereotypical gender roles and explicit (hetero)sexuality, a proliferation of heteronormative sexualized images that articulate a masculine militarized gaze over a naked female body.

Very aware of the monopoly of the concept of “freedom” by liberal discourses, Wendy Brown's argument is also a critique at the simplification of freedom as only an economic concept, and of democracy as the realization of individual consumer choice.

Historically, semiotically, and culturally protean, as well as politically elusive, "freedom" has shown itself to be easily appropriated in liberal regimes for the most cynical and unemancipatory political ends. (Brown 5)

To this abstract liberal freedom, Brown opposes historicity as a form of reading the complex relations between the actual practices of freedom/unfreedom and what it means in every particular context. Unfortunately, we have too many examples of this: the right-wing in the U.S. deployed the concept of freedom throughout their terrorist campaign in Nicaragua, the deregulation of environmental protection policies as well as the exploitation of humans and animals as a “free enterprise,” and for the privatization of basic rights as private commodities that can be sold for arbitrary prices in the "market." Because of this abstract quality, the concept of freedom has been mobilized to benefit capitalist exploitation and to discipline subjects who are their own oppressors, it is then imperative to reintroduce a sense of historicity but, also, to understand freedom as a concept that is always embodied at the intersection of multiple regimes of privilege and oppression, and situated in specific cultural and social norms:

Liberal freedom, fitted to an economic order in which property and personhood for some entails poverty and deracination for others, is conveyed by rights against the arbitrary state power on one side and against anarchic civil society or property theft on the other. As freedom from encroachment by others and from collective institutions, it entails an atomistic ontology, a metaphysics of separation, an ethos of defensiveness, and abstract equality. (6)

According to this liberal argument, there is the "good freedom" (imperialistic, individualistic, and entrepreneurial) and "bad freedom" (irrational, deadly, selfish). Freedom in liberal terms, is understood as access to individual liberties and satisfactions, free from the influence and control

from the state: "...freedom, finally, is a matter of consumption, choice, and expression: an individual good rather than a social and political practice" (13). Brown understands the tactical role of discourses of freedom to "mask" processes of intensification of state disciplines of biopower. Because of the right-wing's appropriation of the concept of freedom, the left seems to have altogether abandoned it from its discourse, focusing instead on a rather narrow concept of "equality." The right wing has traditionally seen the state as a threat to (individual) freedom, and leftist thinkers in the West appear to be too busy defending the state from those attacks, instead of contesting this narrative of freedom itself—by, for example, by pointing at the ways that the biopower techniques and disciplines of the state seem to have rather expanded and not receded:

[T]he Right's 1980s rhetoric about "getting government off our backs" actually masked the steady expansion of state powers and retrenchment of citizen rights achieved through both foreign and domestic policy. (18)

On top of this, the language of the left of equality and of individual rights (for racial and sexual minorities for example) precisely counts on the state to redress their "social injury," further deterring progressive movements from questioning the relation of subjection to the state to begin with.

At the level of the state discourse, in the neoliberal state the concept of rights that organized public policies for most of the twentieth century was progressively replaced with the notion of neoliberal freedom. In the context of the Chilean student's movement (2004-present) is paradigmatic the tension between discourses that invoke the "right to education," and the ones that defend the principle of "freedom for teaching" as articulated in the 1980 Constitution, which creates conditions for imparting education as profit-making initiatives. Any attempt to make the state a guarantor of the right to education, is seen then as a violation to the principle of freedom by an interventionist, totalitarian state, which will prevent individuals from choosing their

providers of education (in a similar way than the Tea Party in the U.S. campaigned against “Obamacare” as a violation to the right of consumers to choose their health providers). This is the same narrative behind the current Chilean pension system (*Administradoras de Fondos Mutuos*), created by “Chicago boy” José Piñera in 1980, in which private companies invest our funds in the stock market, and individual workers are made to feel they are investors and stockholders themselves.

In the context of the early transition in Chile, “freedom” had a particular, very concrete meaning for Chileans who opposed the dictatorship: freedom from military repression. And for a great many people, the most visible aspect of freedom was the end of repression and censorship. For a portion of the opposition, it also meant freedom from state violence and capitalist exploitation. But the transactional nature of the transition translated into the continuation of the institutional power structure left by the 17-year dictatorship—the 1980s Constitution, designated MPs, and all the economic institutions, laws and policies that structured the neoliberal state. This meant that during the transition the meaning of “freedom,” in progressive discourses, was going to be necessarily constrained by Aylwin’s famous “measure of what is possible,” the discursive repertoires available to talk about freedom, which centered on the idea of freedom as the end of censorship, and the end of arbitrary military state power. It is only with the perspective afforded by the passage of time that we can appreciate the competing meanings of democracy during the transition. Freedom, which was narrowly defined as the end of censorship and repression, progressively was resignified as the multiplication of consumer options and the abstract power of individuals to choose. This transition of the term freedom itself, I argue, was achieved by linking democracy to images that evoked the idea of sexual freedom.

Additionally, throughout the transition, the new language to talk about the state emphasized transparency as a key value for democracy. The “No” television campaign for the 1988

plebiscite emphasized democracy as an open and transparent order, in opposition to the arbitrary and secret decision-making processes under the *Junta*. In the first broadcast of the campaign, Patricio Aylwin, president of *Democracia Cristiana* and leader of the coalition of parties for democracy, explained to audiences that “we democrats work in the light of the day, we understand that nations’ governments, what the Romans called the public realm, is of everybody’s interest and must be done *in everybody’s sight*” (my emphasis). Aylwin offered a narrative that combined social justice, peace, economic growth, human rights, and freedom, but, especially, emphasized transparency as the main value of democracy. The first civilian governments of the post-dictatorship were particularly invested in creating spectacles of transparency as attempts to erase the bloody traces of the violent past as well as to assert the “neutral” and technocratic character of the neoliberal democracy model. The simulacrum of transparency, which aimed to make Chile a marketable product abroad, to attract investors, and to reinvent our identity as a modern and developed country, was most evident at the Expo Sevilla in 1992. Offering an international stage, the exposition provided the governments of the transition with a venue in which to perform Chile's modernity and "clean act," which they did by representing the country with a piece of an actual iceberg.

Furthermore, neoliberal discourse placed transparency as a principle of effective management that needed to be adopted by the state, which, as the antagonist of “the market,” is by definition bureaucratic, slow, and heavy. Of course, as Marcus Taylor demonstrates, in Chile this dichotomy between “the state” and “the market” is not so clear-cut, since the establishment, consolidation, and perpetuation of neoliberal economy was a state-led process. Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulián argued in 1997 that the transition could be seen as a sort of transvestism, where the dictatorship was seen as getting to “dress with democratic garments,” involving a process of whitewashing, where the narratives of oblivion and consensus were imposed over a perplexed, traumatized, and still fearful civil society. Oblivion was necessary,

Moulián pointed out, because the past was presented as incompatible with the future, so that in order to live together as a society we need to forget, forgive, and “move on.”<sup>7</sup> Whitewashing consists of a series of operations aiming to re-found Chile without the recent history of political and social confrontations, conflicts, and violence.



Figure 9. Spectators of "La casa de vidrio." Fondart, 1999.

Transparency, as a central value to democracy, was linked through sexualized spectacles to a militarized male gaze during the transition. Democracy becomes the order where female bodies are made vulnerable by this “transparency,” as they can be scrutinized and colonized by a male gaze. An illustrative example on the centrality of transparency in transition discourses was the 1999 state-sponsored (through Fondart) project *La Casa de Vidrio*, “the glass house.” This art installation, developed by two architects of the *Universidad Católica*, consisted of a transparent one-bedroom apartment located in a highly circulated strip of downtown Santiago. A 21-year-old acting student, Daniela Tobar, was hired to live there and perform all her daily activities, including showering, going to the toilet, cooking, and sleeping at plain sight of the passers-by.

Quickly, it became a spectacle that attracted and promoted voyeurism of a female, young, attractive body by mostly male pedestrians, making it also virtually unsafe for Tobar to continue with the project after two weeks. When a male actor took over the project, the project lost the attention of the public and the media covering it. This version of transparency as voyeurism, or rather, a male gaze over the feminine body, organizes the dominant narratives of the transition.

### **The Sexualized Spectacles of Freemarketism**

Between 1981 and 1982, amidst economic recession, state of siege and repression, even before the first public protests against Pinochet took place, the successful but short-lived variety show *Sabor Latino* under the direction of Sergio Riesenberg was broadcast on national television showcasing performances of a number of vedettes, mostly from Argentina and Spain. The show achieved record audience ratings (80 points) but lasted only a year on the air and was abruptly cancelled under the pressure of the Catholic Church. In 2005, over twenty years after its cancellation, the Chilean series “ExpedienTV” dedicated an entire episode to *Sabor Latino*, in the context of a number of television programs that have begun to make public their archival footage of the last forty years (see for example, “*TVN 40 Años*” and “*Chile: Las Imágenes Prohibidas*”). In it, *Sabor Latino*’s director Sergio Riesenberg admits that the *junta*, anticipating the economic recession that was about to hit the country as a result of violent Structural Adjustment Policies, gave him the order to develop a “high impact” show. Pinochet and his advisors had realized the broad reach of television after the unprecedented success of the *telenovela*, “*La Madrastra*,” by the Catholic Television Station and the *Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar*. The latter had been particularly instrumental in providing the military dictatorship with an image of international credibility, normality, and economic prosperity within and outside of Chile. It is also important to mention that, in 1981, the context within which

Chileans lived was that of a seven-year sustained curfew; people in Santiago had stopped attending variety shows such as the *Bim Bam Bum* (the most popular theatre/vaudeville spectacle in 1970), bars, and even movies. The street as the space outside the house became signified as dangerous, a space in which one could be suspected of, or blamed for transgressing the boundary that divided the respectability of the private family domicile from potentially criminal, politically subversive activities out on the street. While the streets came to be portrayed as dangerous and the private home was held up as the sanctified place for decent family men and women, conservative gender ideologies were mobilized and reproduced by the *Centros de Madres*.

One key to understanding the relationship between the interests of the junta and the broadcasting of *Sabor Latino* as a sexualized spectacle is the fact that the *junta* explicitly supported the broadcast of this show not despite but expressly because it was acutely aware that the show would stir public debate and controversy. Not surprisingly, the day after the first broadcast of *Sabor Latino*, which featured a close-up shot of Maripepa Nieto's monumental buttocks, there were headlines in all newspapers announcing the Chilean *destape*. This word, which translates as "uncovering," had been initially used to refer to the end of Franco's dictatorship in Spain. The result was then a nationwide public debate on what should be the limits of this *destape*, understood as a sexual liberation. For historian Sergio Durán, who has recently published his research on the transformation of television during the seventies and eighties,<sup>9</sup> while the sexual *destape* in Spain was seen as antagonistic to the Franquista dictatorship, in Chile the dictatorship saw the broadcasting of the televisual spectacles as somehow instrumental to their ideological project. Instead of signifying the end of military rule as it did in Spain, the supposed Chilean *destape* that *Sabor Latino* heralded seems retrospectively more a simulacrum of freedom during one of the harshest periods of the dictatorship. In 1979, the Plan Laboural had completely restructured labour relations and by 1982 the economic

recession provoked by the Chicago Boys' shock treatment of the Chilean economy abruptly put millions of Chileans in extreme poverty. In the short period between 1981 and 1982, as reported by the Human Rights Commission, "the total number of known arrests that took place in Chile during the first nine months of 1982 comes to 5,345, an average of 19.5 per day."<sup>10</sup> While a state policy of labour precarization, systematic abduction, torture, and death was in place, the sexualized spectacle offered by *Sabor Latino* outlined a narrative of sexual freedom and liberation. In fact, Duran sees the broadcasting of *Sabor Latino* as sitting at the breaking point between the extreme neoliberal policies that created the short perception of an economic boom and the economic recession:

It [*Sabor Latino*] was a milestone. It was the peak of a moment in television because the dictatorship was going through a good moment economically and could promote itself (showing) that the model was working out, people had more access to consuming goods, and television was reflecting that with the millionaire budgets of these shows, broadcast live from luxurious venues with very important international guests. *Sabor Latino* represented the highest point of this, and also the point in which this begins to change. By 1981 there was not enough budget to produce such shows at the same level than before, and that led to seeking out vedettes from Argentina and Spain.<sup>11</sup>

The historian explains the apparent contradiction between the strict sexual morals of the military and the contents of *Sabor Latino* as something that the junta was willing to allow only because it was such a commercial success. While Duran still views *Sabor Latino* and other television shows produced under the Pinochet years mostly as instruments of evasion or distraction, I argue that the specific contents of the show are actually key to the disciplining of subjects under neoliberal Chile. *Sabor Latino* was instrumental to the dictatorship, not only in terms of its implicit narrative of sexual liberation, but also in terms of what it sanctioned as acceptable kinds of desire, what it said about gender roles and about class and race, heterosexuality, and homophobia.

I suggest that the content of *Sabor Latino* needs to be considered in its productive relationships with the practices and narratives of the military dictatorship, as well as in its practical convergences with the neoliberal order. The show can further be seen as a screen where sexual and racial fantasies and desires about a national project were projected. From the point of view of feminist cultural studies, there is no piece of popular culture that does not lend itself to the analysis of gendered cultural norms and desires in a particular context in time and space. In a 1975 article entitled "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey uses a psychoanalytic framework to understand the gendered politics of looking,

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/ male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle, from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.<sup>12</sup>

Paradoxically, while the name *Sabor Latino* ("latin flavour") exploited a tropicalizing sexual imaginary, the vedettes invited were usually from Spain (the most immediate European referent for Chileans) and Argentina (the country that prides itself in being "the most European," along with the "whitest" within Latin America). In this sense, the show could have been reflecting some fantasies about the whiteness of the country, the desire to "whiten" the nation, a male homoerotic/homophobic anxiety, as well as male desires and fantasies about a particular version of femininity. *Festival de Viña*, *Sabor Latino*, and *Vamos a Ver*, were all shows in which Chile appeared connected to an international circuit of high level foreign artists mostly from North America or Europe rather than Latin America. Given the fact that *Sabor Latino* was launched by the National State Television (TVN) in a period in which the country was under

strict military control, I argue that there are discursive convergences and practical mutual benefit between this show and the accompanying narratives of “freedom” (of the Market) and “liberation” (from Communism) sustained by the military under Pinochet:

Conducted by Antonio Vodanovic and directed by Sergio Riesenber, the variety show, recorded in the Casablanca hall of the Crown Plaza Hotel, aimed to broadcast a show similar to the ones offered by *teatros de revistas*. The goal, especially taking into account the political situation in Chile, was quite transgressive, but could result in success. Sabor Latino, through time, became a real cult space and *a synonym of transgression and audacity amidst an extremely repressed social and political climate*.

Today, many remember [Sabor Latino] nostalgically, since it announced the more liberal times our country would live in, from the 90s onwards, with the arrival of the recovered democracy.<sup>13</sup> (My translation and emphasis).

The broadcasting of this show at the beginning of the 1980s has been often read in terms of (sexual) transgression in a political context of absolute political repression, and explained as “announcing the more liberal times of democracy,” as in the quote above extracted from the website *Guioteca*. Discussions about *Sabor Latino* frequently associate dictatorship with repression and prohibition, and democracy with sexual freedom. I argue that this association of “free market” with “(sexual) freedom/liberation” seems to be at the core of neoliberal democratic legitimation in post-dictatorship Chile.

In the context of a complete lack of options for entertainment and television programs, and of the violent silencing of any dissident voice, the emergence of shows like *Sabor Latino* can be read as the sanctioning of a militarized male gaze over the terrorized and feminized population. Let us consider, additionally, a practical convergence: at the beginning of the 1980s, the main star of *Sabor Latino*, the Spanish vedette Maripepa Nieto, was romantically linked with Alvaro Corbalán, chief of the CNI.<sup>14</sup> While this “private” and subjective affair may be dismissed by

historical analyses, I argue that these occurrences need to be considered part of the feminist critique of the distinction between private and public. The broadcasting of the show did not represent a threat nor did it go against the economically neoliberal and morally conservative agenda of Pinochet's regime. On the contrary, it was functional to the military domestic ideology, to the illusion of the economic boom, but mostly, to the illusion of a Chilean *destape* during the dictatorship. Riesenberg himself openly admits that the show could have not benefitted more from all the publicity provided by these national debates about a supposed *destape*. Additionally, it presented the appearance of a more democratic military government as they seemed to be facing something that they did not approve of, but were lenient enough to allow it to be discussed in newspapers. The show tried to be reinstated in 1987 but after three episodes, this time faced the firm opposition of not only the *Movimiento Teocrático*, but of the wives of the junta and their associations.

Despite its abrupt end, *Sabor Latino* sedimented a narrative marked by an ambivalent relationship between the narratives of military ideology (sexual repression) and neoliberalism (sexual freedom), equating dictatorship with sexual repression or censorship, and democracy with the neoliberal version of sexual freedom. This association was expressed en masse on an occasion that soon became a national joke when Pope John Paul II visited Chile in 1987 and met with hundreds of thousands of young Catholics in the *Estadio Nacional*. During the event, the Pope asked the masses of young people if they were ready to reject the false idol of consumerism. The youngsters replied "yes!" The pope asked again, are you ready to reject the false idol of power, and the thousands of voices replied in tandem again: "yes!" And are you, asked the Pope, ready to reject the false idol of sex and pleasure? After a moment of suspense, the thousands of voices replied in tandem again, this time with an emphatic "no!" This episode made the Pope very upset, and also made manifest that sexuality, as a discourse about the individual, can function as a site to articulate resistance and power. It then revealed how the

youth at the event saw sexuality as a liberating narrative vis-à-vis the recent years of military repression.

After the 1988 plebiscite results officially ended military rule, at the beginning of the 1990s, a twofold process characterized public discourses: On the one hand, morally conservative groups, such as the leaders of the Catholic Church and of the right-wing political party *Unión Demócrata Independiente* (affiliated with Opus Dei), appeared to defend national values and the continuity of conservative discourses on gender and sexuality expressed in the laws and policies on divorce and abortion, among other issues. On the other hand, it was these very same right-wing groups, like the economically ultra-liberal *Renovación Nacional*, that were directly responsible for the proliferation of hypersexualized television programs and mass media images. In 2010, two decades after the formal restoration of democracy, over 90% of the newspapers in Chile were owned by just two of these conservative right-wing conglomerates. Television channels were governed by a strict, market logic, including the state-owned station *Televisión Nacional*. The two other major channels, previously owned by the Catholic University and the Universidad de Chile, were privatized in democracy, the former of which came to be owned by the multinational corporation Time Warner, and the latter by the Luksic group (Solimano 2012).

The direct successor of *Sabor Latino* in the post-Pinochet years, according even to Sergio Riesenber, was *Morandé con Compañía*, which started broadcasting in 2001 through the private station Megavisión, and became another ratings sensation (it is still running successfully today, at the time of my writing). Host Francisco Javier “Kike” Morandé is a businessman from a traditional landowning upper class family, and a board member of the historically aristocrat *Club Hípico*.



Figure 10. Morandé con Compañía.

The show, produced by Morandé’s company *Kike 21*, exploits a raunchy and misogynist sense of humour, marked by sexualized images of female bodies and systematic homophobic references. The show became such a popular phenomenon that it was dubbed “the People’s late show.” Comedy routines usually involve a queer character and/or an “ugly” woman (marked by her age, weight, or race) getting ridiculed by the interaction with Kike, who is always surrounded by young, voluptuous, scantily clad women. Through these interactions we are

taught about gender roles and sexuality, while at the same time we are offered the idea of sexual transgression, or liberation. One of the most popular characters of the show, “Tony Esbelt,” performed by actor Mauricio Flores, is one of the many homophobic characterizations of queer subjects in the show. Through the interactions between Kike, who embodies the correct, “natural” masculinity, and “Tony” who embodies a “failed” queer masculinity, audiences quickly learn who is doing the laughing and who is being laughed at, what is the norm, and what is deviant. The authority of Kike’s voice, articulated by the privilege of being an upper-class man, seems to also draw from performing a form of nationalist (hyper)masculinity consistent with the militarized model of manhood, violently homophobic and misogynist, yet respectable. Through pointing at the “failed” gendered subjects such as the “ugly” (old, poor, racialized bodies), feminine men, and the masculine women, these spectacles are able to articulate sexual freedom (the access to looking at women) and narratives of sexual respectability. The *jaguar chileno* is owner of a sexual freedom that allows him to access female bodies and retain his respectability as long as his desire is heterosexual and that he asserts his masculinity.

While *Morandé con Compañía* was broadcast at night, implying an “adult” audience, the show *Mekano*, which had some common characteristics with both *Sabor Latino* and *Morandé con Compañía* was broadcast every weekday afternoon, aiming broadly at a younger audience including both children and teenagers. *Mekano* featured young dancers whose bodies were presented in a highly sexualized way. In 2002 the show started reaching peak rating records by making popular Brazilian rhythm and dance *axé* and forming the “Team Mekano” dance group. The show developed an audience who followed closely the daily gossip and live romantic drama surrounding the young dancers. Both *Morandé con Compañía* and *Mekano* were produced and aired by Megavisión, a television station that began broadcasting in 1990, the main shareholder of which until 2008 was Ricardo Claro, a recognized ex-financier of *la DINA*,<sup>15</sup> the main

intelligence agency of the military regime responsible for most gruesome kidnapping, torturing, and killing under Pinochet's rule.

I identify the lines of convergence between *Sabor Latino*, commissioned to Riesenberg by TVN under the *junta*, with *Morandé con Compañía* and *Mekano*, produced by Ricardo Claro, as located in the visual emphasis on sexualized women's bodies and the assertion of a hyper-masculine male gaze, in which women's bodies are the constant focus of desire and scrutiny. Since the transition in Chile was imagined as "coming out of a curfew," the broadcasting of these shows, that hypersexualized the bodies of young women and men, reinforced a particular notion of liberation in which the opposition between sexual repression and sexual/social liberation were now associated respectively with the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship.

In 2003, Chilevisión, a privately owned station that belonged to the right-wing and neoliberal *Renovación Nacional*, started broadcasting a "talk show" oriented to teenagers called *El Diario de Eva*. With time, this show became the public platform for *pokemones*, a working-class youth subculture that flourished in Chile at the turn of the millennium, also linked closely to *Mekano's* spectatorship. They borrowed the androgynous aesthetics from punk, gothic, and *anime*, such as dyed hair and piercings, but instead of being associated with the musical styles linked to those youth cultural trends, *pokemones* preferred "reggaeton" music. *Pokemones* became a mass-culture popular trend and adults frowned at their sexual practices that start with dancing and end in "ponceo" (a sort of semi-public queer orgy). Steinberg analyzes their appearance as a direct response to socialization in ultra-neoliberal Chile and its doctrine of "freemarketism." At the turn of the millennium, *pokemones* were hedonists, claimed to be apolitical, and seemed to understand sexual liberation as social liberation:

(...) Pokemones are at once radical and inevitable. Radical because they are shocking Chilean society to its core. Inevitable because they are the darlings of a booming

neoliberal economy, which has provided them with all the material accoutrements necessary to be Pokemones. Yet along with sexual rebellion, these teens are also defined by their consumerism, a characteristic that neatly conforms to Chile's free-market ideals...In fact, Pokemones main meeting spots is outside the television studio where their favorite program, "Diario de Eva," is filmed. The channel is owned by right-wing presidential candidate Sebastián Piñera, a billionaire businessman who, incidentally, made much of his fortune by helping bring credit cards to Chile.<sup>16</sup>

While pokemones public practices of "rebellious sexuality" were perceived as examples of sexual freedom, at the time of my writing the Chilean educational system still lacks a consistent sexual education program, and teenagers cannot access emergency contraception, let alone abortion. According to a report by Human Rights Watch report from 2011, Chile has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy, with 1 in 6 births attributed to adolescent mothers. Teenage pregnancy is disproportionately concentrated among the low-income population, and mothers face stigmatization, are unable to finish their education, and face multiple barriers in the workforce.

The supposed "sexual freedom" predicated on the narrative of a *destape* during the transition neither translated into legal and cultural changes, nor even less violence towards sexual minorities: in 1993, the case of the intentional fire set in the gay nightclub "Divine" in Valparaíso, in which at least twenty people died, was dismissed before a suspect was found. Ten years later, in 2003, Karen Atala, a judge by profession, lost custody of her two daughters when her ex-husband took her to court because she was a lesbian. The Chilean Supreme Court established that Atala had chosen her sexual orientation "over" her responsibility as a mother. Atala then took the case to the *Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos* (CIDH), which in 2010 recognized that the Chilean state had violated Atala's human rights. I argue that through the mobilizing of a debate about a sexual *destape* during the dictatorship, *Sabor Latino*

managed to conflate "free-market" with "sexual freedom" in the public eye, in the same way that *Morandé con Compañía* and *Mekano* did later in the transition, as public debates focused on the limits of morality in television and brought into question issues of national identity and national values in the face of globalization. This narrative of progress, of loosening repression, gives meaning to the transition from *neoliberalism under dictatorship* to *neoliberalism under democracy* and is consistent with the abstract teleological models of the transitology literature.

### **Cafés con Piernas: Gender and Sexual Scripts of Neoliberalism**

I turn now to ponder how the emergence of *cafés con piernas*, appearing in Santiago's downtown in the early years after the end of the dictatorship, also made possible certain claims about sexual liberation that were now framed in the narrative of democracy and of the economic success of the nation. These shops were aimed at urban men working in the business and services sector, operating on weekdays during office hours, closely in sync with business and with productivity. I argue that *cafés con piernas* rely both on dominant conservative gender and sexual ideologies that cater to an implied form of male heterosexual desire and on market nationalism that present Chile as a successful tale of male potency and social/sexual freedom.<sup>17</sup> As such, they can be viewed as spectacles themselves. The website description of *Barón Rojo*, the most popular and renowned *café con piernas* in the nineties, reads:

It was created in 1994 as a meeting point for business executives and celebrities...

[g]iving the Chilean woman's beauty a leading role. From its beginnings until today, it is considered a point of reference that has triggered the creation of more shops of its kind, creating more than three thousand jobs. With its leadership, Barón Rojo has turned into an iconic tourist attraction of Greater Santiago, becoming a mandatory stop for thousands of tourists from around the world. The most attractive girls are the hostesses

each day at Barón Rojo, a contribution to tourism in the most thriving capital of Latin America.<sup>18</sup> (My translation)

This description condenses and conjures many of the gendered and sexualized meanings attached to market nationalism in Chile, such as “the Chilean woman,” as well as some frequent discursive references to economic success, such “the creation of jobs,” and “clients.”

References to “the Chilean woman” in singular terms has the effect of imposing a univocal homogenizing meaning to all the possible signifiers attached to the notion of women. If “Chile” becomes a trademark to be promoted and advertised on the global stage, the “Chilean woman” seems to be a normative ideal through which the rhetoric of market nationalism works. This particular formulation of the “Chilean woman” can be seen in the “whitening” of women who work as *cafeteras* to try fitting into an imagined ideal of traditional, heterosexual, femininity: blonde, voluptuous, sweet, warm, servile. The “Chilean woman” that these women are performing, does not have an original, and it exists only as a signifier with subject *effects*.

As we reviewed in Chapter One, historically the notion of the “Chilean woman” (*la mujer chilena*) has been invoked by competing political projects that claim the transcendence of some kind of “authentic” national femininity. In the neoliberal state this particular form of national femininity is promoted in *cafés con piernas* when considered as a sexualized spectacle of market nationalism. We also discussed how, while the right-wing has derived their political legitimacy from a sense of “moral superiority” and sexual respectability, the competing political sectors have tried to follow this model by presenting themselves as morally superior, sexually respectable, or clearly within the norms of the sex/gender binary. This “politics of respectability” has to be evaluated now in the light of how it interacts with the neoliberal narratives of sexual freedom described in this chapter, and with the strategies of queer activists who refuse to follow this kind of politics or even comply with the sex/gender binary, which is the subject of Chapter 3.

The quote from Barón Rojo also contains the idea of promoting Chile in a touristic sense as “the most thriving capital of Latin America.” Cárcamo-Huechante recognizes how the narrative of national progress is signified as masculine under neoliberal ideology when he analyzes this metaphor of the South American “jaguar” circulated to promote the Chilean economic model. The image of the “Chilean tiger/jaguar” circulates as a metaphor of the success of the economic model, a gendered signifier of (hyper)masculinity and sexual potency and prowess:

This image of the jaguar-country, in its symbolic load of power and aggressiveness, carries a strongly masculine figuration of the nation...freemarketism, from this perspective, configures a hegemonic pattern not only in economic terms but in terms of gender (a masculine domination). Through the hyperbolic representation of Chile as “the South American Jaguar” a competitive, aggressive, and masculine figure of the national subject is set to circulation, in the age of freemarket. (Cárcamo-Huechante 36)

The targeted regular client of *cafés* is the downtown *ejecutivo*: men working at an office downtown, running errands or going for a cigarette. Since *cafés* aim at different class-based categories of *ejecutivos*, an *ejecutivo* can mean anybody from an insurance salesman to a doorman, and that the only common factor is that they are all “men in ties” (*tipos con corbata*) with some access to credit or cash, supporting the gendered subject that is prefigured as the clientele of these shops. Furthermore, the narrative about the end of the dictatorship that opposes curfew to *destape* serves to explain the success of these shops: they are perceived as a sexually transgressive (freeing, liberating) experience. Overlapping cultural discourses about gender, class, and race in Chile that date to colonial times construct women through a good/bad dichotomy: as virgin-like women *only* to love (the “pure,” mother figure), or as “whore”-like women *only* to have sex with (lower class and/or racialized women). This dichotomy is crossed by class and race so that racialized and working class women are seen as sexually available (as discussed in the colonial “*derecho a pernada*” and the subsequent widespread and broadly tolerated practice of male employers of sexually abusing and harassing domestic workers).

Women working in cafés in this sense could represent simultaneously the “whore” they would like to have sex with (regardless of whether they have actually had a sexual exchange), while also offering maternal characteristics by consciously performing warmth, understanding, and nurturing. By reading online forums of the *cafés*’ patrons, it is apparent that many men also establish affective relationships with the women working in them, investing emotional energy in them; many patrons often talk about “falling in love” with the *cafeteras*, bringing them presents, following them if they change employers, and having platonic romantic relationships with them.

From the perspective of the promoters of this business, women working in *cafés* are fulfilling a role of “social containment” for males in contemporary Chile, functional and even beneficial for the current social order (rather than disrupting or destabilizing it), by offering men illusions, fantasies, and hopes, as one can appreciate in the promotional video “*Las Memorias del Barón Rojo (Café con Piernas de Santiago de Chile)*.”<sup>20</sup> The off-camera voice of the male narrator opens by referring to Santiago de Chile as a site of productive enterprise, a center of activity and business, in which *cafés* offer busy men an opportunity to “relieve their stress.” This narrative openly links men to productive labour, while presenting women’s labour as *cafeteras* in an essentialist manner, as an expression of their universal nurturing nature. Later in the video, a woman’s off-voice describes how women working in *cafés* find pleasure in the attention they get and that it plays out in their own fantasies of being desired, admired, and watched. This idea of offering “equal” access to sexual fantasies for both men and women, however, is based on a particular version of what a woman should be and look like, and what female desires should be. The subject position for women, from which to derive pleasure, is then the act of being watched by a man, on whom they can, however, exert a degree of agency.

It is also apparent that *cafés* constitute an attractive opportunity for some women, offering well-paid work in the context of the already precarious current labour market in Chile. The neoliberal

economy offers working class, young and/or rural women precarious and low-paid jobs as domestic workers or seasonal agricultural workers. Working at a *café*, along with sex work, would stand out as a more lucrative possibility, even if as equally exploitative as any other job in the formal labour market, be it factory, clerical, or retail work. I refuse to view the *cafeteras* either solely as victims of sexual exploitation within the neoliberal economy, nor as success stories in the free market, even though it remains a topic needing further exploration to attend to the narratives of *cafeteras* themselves and how they make sense of their experience.



Figure 11. Dark windows provide the clients of cafés with privacy.

Discussions of the emergence of *café*s in Santiago in the media have often referred to a broader context of “liberation,” linking them to the emergence of the gay movement and the concept of “sexual diversity” in public debates at the beginning of the nineties in Chile. This idea of openness of the nation marking the beginning of democracy and globalization is also the context for the emergence of the “Pokemon” youth culture and their semi-public sexualized activities, most noticeably “ponceo.” This perception of going from suppression, repression, and

restriction, best exemplified in the *toque de queda* (curfew) and *apagón cultural* (“cultural blackout”) under dictatorship, to the a situation of “less repression” could easily suggest that *cafés con piernas* and *pokemones’* ponceo are spaces or stances of gender and sexual transgression. Against this narrative of sexual liberation that surrounds the emergence of *cafés*, I argue that we need to pay attention to the “proliferation of discourses” on gender and sexuality, the relationship between these discourses, the production of gendered subjectivities, and the articulation of political possibilities.

In a proper Foucauldian turn, the case of *cafés con piernas* can be used to explore complex and historically shifting narratives of social and sexual liberation as they are articulated under the cultural discourse of neoliberalism and freemarketism in post-dictatorship Chile. If the dictatorship was marked by “negative power” characterized by repression and prohibition (the “power of death”), the post-dictatorship seems to be more accurately described as marked by the “power of life,” bio disciplines, micro managements of the body, and regulatory practices. Foucault challenges the “repressive hypothesis” that maintains that because sex is repressed, we ought to talk more about it. Instead of denying the existence of repression, Foucault looks to situate it in a broader analysis of power, discourse, the regime of power/ knowledge/ pleasure that regulates, norms, and produces human sexuality, and argues that the tactics of power cannot be reduced to its negative elements such as prohibition, rejection, and censorship<sup>21</sup>. In a similar way, if we look at the dictatorship only in its negative elements of “sexual repression” we will miss out on the positive elements of power, such as production of a particular male gaze, into which both men and women are socialized. This gaze produces “woman” as an artefact of desire, again a projection of male desires onto individual women. By virtue of enacting this form of womanhood and performing this form of femininity, the comforting women behind the *cafés* function as a counterpart for the production of neoliberal masculine subjects.

Some gendered analysis of *cafés* already suggest that they offer venues for reenacting fantasized traditional relationships, or even more, that they attempt to (re)produce the lost object of “woman.” Chilean anthropologist and social researcher Devanir da Silva, who conducted a three-month ethnography of *cafés con piernas*,<sup>22</sup> partially shares the perception that they emerged in the context of a recently repressed society. Da Silva recognizes that the dominant narrative in the post-dictatorship suggests an opening (*apertura*) in terms of sexuality. Da Silva asserts that women have broken with their traditional roles of taking care of men and that, because of this, *cafés* supplement the fantasy of a mother/wife serving men as they come back from work, yet stopping short of qualifying as prostitution. Men thus have access to a socially tolerated world of fantasy, flirting, and romance that supplement those traditional ideal gender relationships that are “no longer possible” in the contexts of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy. Significantly, Da Silva argues that men consume not only voyeuristic experiences but also romance, and play into heterosexual romantic scripts in their relationship with women, involving themselves emotionally. Men can go there during work hours for “little secret escapades” of sexual and love fantasies that can go unnoticed by partners such as girlfriends and wives, as well as bosses (as opposed to going out at night to a “strip club”). Significantly, *cafés* are spatially distributed downtown in a scattered way so that they do not constitute a zone, but rather have a presence in the everyday route of “busy men,” who can stop by for 15 minutes and then continue on their way. Because of this spatially scattered distribution, the routes of the *cafés* correspond with those of work, as opposed to being concentrated in a particular area as a *barrio rojo*, a recognized zone of sex trade. Of course, in Chile few men would be want to be seen going into a *barrio rojo*, especially during working hours. Instead, he could be just stopping for coffee on his busy workday. What is perceived as transgressive about the sexualized “nightlife” (for a society, which, in theory, is traumatized by the curfew of the former era) is transferred into the daytime. Then, *cafés* can be seen as a space of gender socialization for men, a stage for the construction of masculinity under the coordinates of

neoliberalism and the post-military order. Da Silva noticed that many shops exploited the use of mirrors, not only to offer men the possibility to stare at women's bodies from different angles but more importantly, the access to see themselves in a situation of conquest and romance. This is also consistent with Diana Taylor's perspective, in which successfully achieving traditional heterosexual masculinity requires the "staging" of a romantic script. In this sense, *cafés* as a cultural phenomenon are linked both with the assertion of hegemonic masculinity, as well as with its crisis. As a practice defined as male and masculine, going to *cafés* is a gendered affair and publicly recognized as such. The space of the *cafés* is constructed as an eroticized space in which young attractive women are not only visually available, but play along with a particular fantasized script for men.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, *cafés* are the staging, as Da Silva's research suggests, of a simulacrum of traditional gender relations in Chile. *Cafés* would then provide a stage for reinforcing traditional gender roles in a context in which these relations are being threatened and challenged.

I argue, then, that if hegemonic masculinity is perceived as in crisis at the end of military rule, then *cafés* reinscribe working class women's labour into the realm of domesticity, and capitalize on the eroticized female body in the larger logic of neoliberal exchanges, while providing spaces of gender socialization, heteronormativity, and homosocial bonding for men. Even though at the most explicit level the only recognizable desire is heterosexual, and there is actually a script of exaggerated heterosexuality at play in *cafés*, Da Silva's research suggests that there are all kinds of desire circulating in them. This means that even if the most visible desire is the staged romance between male clients and female workers, this does not preclude the fact that there are some female clients, that some of the female wait staff are lesbians, that there can be sexualized relationships between female workers, and that some of the interactions between the male clientele are shaped by homoerotic desire.

Despite a complete deregulation in regards to labour rights, in the licensing of the approximately 150 downtown *cafés con piernas*, the City of Santiago initially issued permits of “coffee on the go,” and later in 2005 the city then came up with specific bylaws to regulate the transparency of the windows and the attire of the female staff, determining what would constitute the limits delineating what was acceptable and what was immoral. The main point with which the city took issue was not the working conditions for the employees, but rather the fact that many of the cafes had dark windows. It is significant in this context that then Mayor of Santiago, *Unión Demócrata Independiente*’s Joaquín Lavín, stated that “Chile is mature enough for windows to be transparent,” a quote that became the headline of the news story published in the raunchy newspaper *La Cuarta*. Lavín advocated for transparency, while owners and workers argued that making the *cafés* visible from outside was detrimental for business, as narrated in *La Cuarta*:

Tasty Pamela, from the café *Macumba Azúcar*, whispered sensuously to our newspaper’s ears that “this is like a refuge for a lot of people who come and have an affectionate relationship with us and, because of that, do not want to be seen greeting us with a kiss or holding us. If the windows are transparent many are not going to come, afraid of their wives and bosses.”<sup>24</sup>

In this context, regulating only the windows of the *cafés* could be read as a spectacles of transparency, while what happens in them could be seen as staging scenes of heterosexual conquest and romance that enable scripts of neoliberal potent (hyper)masculinity. Most importantly, for the sake of my own argument, the sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism (from *Sabor Latino*, *Mekano*, and *Morandé con Compañía*, to *cafés con piernas*) seem to act as a counterpart in the shaping of a male gaze that mirrors the militarized surveillance over the feminized population under military control. I suggest that this militarized male gaze operates as a psychological mechanism to discipline and normalize certain gender relations from the dictatorship onwards, underpinning the gendered narratives of national economic success that surrounds them; and the persistence of the militarized male gaze perpetuates the symbolic and

material existence of the cultural artefact of “woman.” As the historical sources demonstrate, none of these gender ideologies were new, but formed part of the cultural text over which military gender ideologies of feminine domesticity and the authoritarian patriarchal family were promoted. This analysis then suggests that as spectacles that sanction cultural ideas about gender and sexuality, they functioned as a counterpart to the construction of a particular masculinized subjectivity shaped by that militarized male gaze. The sexualized spectacles of market nationalism consist of the constant affirmation of stereotypical gender roles and explicit (hetero)sexuality, a proliferation of heteronormative sexualized images that articulate a masculine militarized gaze over a naked female body. One of the most striking aspects that stands out from the readings of public discourses of “freedom” is that it emerges as a concept *during* the dictatorship, first as freedom from totalitarian and enslaving communism, later as freemarketism, and then as a sexual *destape*. The neoliberal idea of freedom as a sexual *destape* was prefigured in dictatorship and then exploded to signal the democracy, economic boom, and political “openness” and “freedom” at the beginning of the nineties.

### **Spectacles of National Memory: “*Los Ochenta*” and “*Los Archivos del Cardenal*”**

In this section I engage with two cases taken from *telenovela* conceptualized as state-sponsored spectacles. *Telenovela* is a genre key to understand the narratives with which Chileans have imagined themselves as a community in the post-dictatorship. They have been key in producing a unified image amidst political conflicts, regional fractures, and internal conflicts based on class, ethnicity, culture, etc. *Telenovelas* in Latin America, in contrast to North American soap operas, always have a predetermined number of episodes, and provide the viewers with closure through a definitive ending, while a soap opera can extend itself indefinitely. Perhaps thanks to these features, *telenovelas* can sometimes help nations make

sense of a violent and/or traumatic past by presenting a coherent version of the nation's history and memory. *Telenovelas* can also offer interpretations of the nation's internal differences and help to deal with fantasies and anxieties around issues of national identity, ethnic origins, modernity versus tradition, etc. One of the key elements for achieving this unified image of the nation is the use of the metaphor of the family; in fact, in *telenovelas*, family and nation are constituted in relation to each other through analogies between the domestic time of the family, and the historical time of the nation. *Telenovelas* also frequently present gendered and sexualized metaphors to narrate historical and social issues, such as the nation's origin, identity and how a community imagines entering modernity and globalization. Moreover, conflicts frequently revolve around social structures that make a love relationship difficult or impossible.<sup>25</sup>

Although, for the past three decades, *telenovelas* have dominated prime time programming in Chile, there has clearly been a revitalization of the Chilean *telenovela* since the end of the dictatorship and throughout the 1990s. During this period, high-quality productions were continually released by the main television stations, including Canal 13, the Catholic station, and Canal 7, the state-owned station, that were in competition for audiences and ratings. Indeed, *telenovelas* have been identified as a site for the articulation of national fantasies, anxieties, desires, as well as of ideological agendas, and have progressively become a relevant object of study to understand Latin America's symbolic and cultural life. In their more traditional versions, *telenovelas* presented a stereotypical and decontextualized melodrama, however, since the 1990's they have progressively evolved into more complex plots, including social and political conflicts, as well as sexual, gender, and social norms. Chilean *telenovelas* are not only watched massively by a diverse audience, they are also discussed regularly in local newspapers, and trigger everyday debates, so that *telenovelas'* viewers, far from being merely passive consumers, participate and engage actively in the social production of meaning.

I chose to look at the historical *telenovela Los Ochenta* (“The Eighties,” Canal 13, 2008-present), written and directed by Chilean actor and director Boris Quercia, because it is set in the nation’s bicentennial in which it was produced, situating itself as an authoritative voice on the nation’s historical memory of the most controversial period of recent history in Chile. The plot follows the ups and downs of “the Herrera family” in that decade to offer a fictionalized account of how the neoliberal restructuring of the economy and of social relations was experienced by this working/middle-class family. The protagonist Juan Herrera (Daniel Muñoz) and his close friend Exequiel Pacheco (Daniel Alcaíno) are shown at the beginning of 1982 employed in a medium size textile factory, in fact one of the most important industries under the developmentalist policies that dominated most of the 20th century in Chile. The plot then follows up with the 1982 recession, when the company has to shut down, leaving Juan and Exequiel suddenly unemployed. Exequiel starts supporting and participating in union efforts to respond collectively to the crisis, but is soon identified by secret police infiltrating the union meetings, who take him in a car and beat him up. A period of extreme precarity follows for Juan. He is shown evidently depressed, questioning his sense of identity and masculinity by not being able to provide for his family, especially when his wife Ana (Tamara Acosta) decides to start an informal business selling small amounts of merchandise purchased across the border in Mendoza, Argentina. Exequiel, on the other hand, quickly employs himself as a *vendedor ambulante*, an informal and illegal seller of small cheap merchandise imported from China. These transformations experienced by the protagonists are clearly meant to parallel the transformations experienced by the middle-class that had benefitted from the previous decades of Popular Front and Popular Unity rule. Furthermore, the political polarization of the dictatorship years in Chile is represented in gendered terms as Claudia (Loreto Aravena), the oldest daughter of Juan and Ana, becomes politicized (via sleeping with a “revolutionary hero” type of male character) and becomes a supporter of left-wing activism, while her brother Martín (Tomás

Verdejo) goes into military school and gets indoctrinated in anti-communism, causing a rift between the siblings.

*Los Ochenta* producers made a conscious effort to contribute to the national imagination, and to forge a memory of the collective past through constant reference to national sports, natural disasters, and national and international economic and political events, such as the Pope's visit in 1987. They also placed special attention on recreating the visual details of everyday life of the working and middle classes through use of archival footage from television. It worked convincingly in creating a narrative about the nuclear family as an allegory of the Chilean nation, getting through all the conflicts and staying together despite their different political orientations (Claudia versus Martin), as has been characteristic of the literature of post-independence nations in Latin America (See Doris Sommer). Rodrigo Bazaes, who took over as the new director in the fifth season, seemed very explicit about this point, when he said:

[I]t will recover the candidness of the first seasons and we will get to see the "b side" of all the characters, using the great metaphor of a country that stands at a crossroads, and has to look back in order to reinvent itself.<sup>26</sup>

Many critics saw in *Los Ochenta* an opportunity for historicizing the present and understanding the violent past of the dictatorship years, for it addressed quite explicitly events of political repression while at the same time it had a very positive public reception and review.<sup>27</sup> However, the reading of the Herreras' experiences as a universal story of "*la familia Chilena*" that stays together throughout their differences made it possible for even the traditional, right-wing and conservative newspaper *El Mercurio* to praise and choose *Los Ochenta* as one of the best TV shows in 2008:

What everybody feared was going to be a series about ugly fashion, bad music, and hard times, turned out to be the television event of the year, because it told something much more simple, universal, transversal and emotive: the story of a Chilean family.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, events of political repression and violence could be exploited as some kind of sensationalist “action” genre by the very producer of the show: “The choice this year is to return to the nature of the series and that probably last year acquired a more action-police flavor, because of the circumstances that surrounded the case of Claudia.” *Los Ochenta* seems to work as a narrative of national conflict and reconciliation through the allegory of the family, in which moralizing gender ideologies, and respectable heterosexual identities are reproduced quite uncritically.

On the other hand, *Los Archivos del Cardenal* (“The Cardinal’s Archives”, TVN, 2011 to present) directed by Nicolás Acuña and written by Josefina Fernández, uses the format of contemporary popular forensic police dramas in North American shows such as C.S.I. to present in every episode a fictionalized version of true cases of human rights violations under the dictatorship that the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* received and investigated. I chose this miniseries/*telenovela* because, like *Los Ochenta*, it enjoyed high ratings while addressing a topic normally not viewed as entertainment by most Chileans. After all, why would Chileans want to watch a show about the horrors of torture and disappearances in their leisure time? Fernández, already a writer for other successful late-night *telenovelas* (“*Mujeres de Lujo*,” *Chilevisión*, 2010), has openly admitted to being inspired by the U.S. show “Law and Order,” and that she wanted to write something along those same lines about the dictatorship’s crimes. “*La Vicaría*,” as it was known, was attached to the Catholic Church hierarchy and with the support of the cardinal of Santiago documented human rights claims and started a formal judicial case on behalf of the victims. The series follows the work of the lawyers, social workers, journalists, photographers, and administrative staff working at the Vicaría. Additionally, there is a website (“*Los Casos de los*

*Archivos del Cardenal*”), associated with the School of Journalism of the Universidad Diego Portales, where each case that inspires an episode is documented extensively. In particular, in *Los Archivos* we are able to appreciate the broad range of civilians who supported and promoted the regime via their ideological support of a free market and neoliberalism, complete with a reference to the Chicago Boys. And, for the first time in Chilean television, we see characters that elaborate extensively and in-depth on the subjectivity of the agents that perpetrated the violence, their stories, and contradictions. One example of this is the character Mauro Pastene (Iván Álvarez de Araya), a fictional character based on the real life agent of the *Comando Conjunto* Andrés Valenzuela, “El Papudo,” who sought asylum at the *Vicaría* and collaborated in giving important information about the modus operandi of that murderous unit.

The dominant narrative of the transition of moving forward, forgetting, and forgiving the divisive past, especially after the release of both Rettig and Valech reports, had presented the past as an exhausted issue throughout the 1990s. In the format of a night time action thriller, of remarkable high production values, *Los Archivos* made Chileans want to hear and learn in detail what had been otherwise resisted as something that we have “already dealt with” during the post-Pinochet era. Because of the popularity of telenovelas in Chile, episodes were widely discussed in *matinales*, as they were in everyday spaces like work and school, and commentaries from a wide range of figures were published in newspapers. By providing a fictionalized account it suddenly seemed possible to talk about it in a somewhat different way. The left wing middle-class family at the centre of the drama is headed by *Vicaría* lawyer Carlos Pedregal (Alejandro Trejo) and fierce opposition journalist Monica Spencer (Paly Garcia), who are less conservative compared to the Herreras in *Los Ochenta*. Their daughter, Laura (Daniela Ramirez), a social worker at *La Vicaría*, on the other hand, resembles the daughter Claudia in *Los Ochenta* in many ways. Both are in their twenties, thin and attractive, university-educated, (hetero)sexually active, and involved romantically at some point with a young guerilla hero. As

an interesting counterpoint, in *Los Archivos*, “reconciliation” is presented as much more complex, if not a rather improbable and already failed project, for example by showing the incommensurability of the narratives between the Sarmiento and the Pedregal-Spencer family, and the dramatic effects on subjectivity that torture can have both on the perpetrator and the victim of violence.



Figure 12. "Los Archivos del Cardenal"

Beyond the drama and action revolving around the political situation, the series follows the love triangle between Laura, Ramón (Benjamín Vicuña), and Manuel (Néstor Cantillana), based on the actual story of Alvaro Varela Walker, a *Vicaría* lawyer from a right-wing family who fell in love with a co-worker who was dating a “*mirista*,” a militant belonging to a leftist revolutionary group. The melodramatic tension of this triangle could in some ways parallel how the resistance and opposition to Pinochet at the time “flirted” both with the legal ways and the strong-arming ways of putting Pinochet out of power. In one episode, *Vicaría* lawyer Carlos Pedregal asks, “Can somebody tell me how are we supposed to combat a criminal dictatorship with legal

arms?” while in other episodes Ramón questions Manuel’s violence as a means of struggle. The character of Carlos Pedregal is admittedly based on Jose Manuel Parada, a sociologist who worked as the head of the *Vicaría* investigations on human rights claims, and who, along with Manuel Guerrero and Santiago Nattino, was the victim of the case known as “*caso degollados*” in 1985. The three murdered communist professionals were involved in uncovering and denouncing the operations of the *Comando Conjunto* after Valenzuela begun collaborating with the *Vicaría*. *Los Archivos* received funding and support from the National Television Council and from the *Corporación de Fomento al Comercio* (CORFO), the association of business owners. At the well-publicized and covered launching of the series, the Executive Director of the National Television Council, Mauro Valdés, expressed a clear and deep commitment to the production, and praised its role in promoting dialogue about the nation’s controversial past.<sup>30</sup> *Los Archivos* explicitly addressed torture as a systematic state practice under Pinochet, as well as the impunity with which these crimes were committed. I was initially puzzled by the apparent contradiction that this show should be the star of the state television station, TVN, in 2011, under Sebastián Piñera’s right wing government, and that CORFO was one the main funders of this project. I found clues to understanding this in an interview with Víctor Montero, the actor that plays the violent and cruel C.N.I. agent “El Troglo.”

There is morbidity in wanting to see how far it could have gone. People want to see the soft-porn of Chilevisión and how far we go torturing with electricity. They’d rather see the representation of reality rather than reality. How terrible to admit it.<sup>31</sup>

In the same ways that representations of political repression in *Los Ochenta* are presented as police-action scenes, representations of torture can also be consumed as “just” television, or as Montero points out, as the equivalent of the soft-porn of Chilevisión, just a spectacle of transgression. After all, scenes of torture are ubiquitous these days in all kinds of movies ranging from horror films like “*Saw*” (USA, 2004) to the children’s animation “*Toy Story*” (USA, 1995). Is our gaze as audiences being shaped by a male gaze, in which scenes of rape and

torture are frequently presented as entertainment so that we inadvertently have learnt to identify with the torturers? What are the political consequences of these complicated relationships between gaze, desire, and pleasure? There is no guarantee whether these scenes of torture are going to inspire any predetermined set of politics, but representing and restaging the scenes of torture can be read as a form of memorialization and monumentalization of the past that could reinforce the perception that torture only pertains to the past, and not the present, rendering invisible the fact that torture is still a systematic state practice.

As expected, the airing of this show with such solid support from the state channel TVN and the National Television Council triggered a negative response from some of Pinochet's supporters, such as Senator (RN) Carlos Larraín, who complained about the romanticized characterization of leftist activists as victims at a high-level meeting at the presidential palace. In July of 2011, after the airing of the first episode, the newspaper *La Segunda* published four responses to the show from Pamela Pereira (a human rights lawyer), Alberto Cardemil (RN Diputado, who worked as *Subsecretario del Interior* for Pinochet between 1984 and 1988), Lorena Fries (an historian) and Miguel Schweitzer (a lawyer and dean of conservative university Finis Terrae).<sup>32</sup> I found these four statements to be quite representative of the discursive repertoires in Chilean society about the traumatic past. Pereira confessed to not being able to watch the show because it would bring back disturbing memories. Cardemil accused the series of misusing public funds for a series that completely undermined the government of Piñera, as well as lamenting that the project was "tied" from the previous administration. Fries praised *Los Archivos* as an example of public television's role of contributing to the state's aim of guaranteeing people's human rights and preventing these atrocities from being committed again. Schweitzer's opinion was that productions that "insist in reopening the wounds of the past," work against the national goal of reconciliation. Pereira and Fries represent common discursive positions among progressives and leftists: as painful as it is, the past needs to be

remembered, and the state can act as an “educator” of human rights. Additionally, what seems implied in these statements is that the effects of a traumatizing past determine an injured subject that needs to get redress from the state, as discussed by Brown. Likewise, Cardemil and Schweitzer’s statements condense the right and conservative discourses in relation to the recent past: it needs to be forgotten for the sake of reconciliation. At the same time, Cardemil uses a common accusation that generates suspicion towards the state; that is, by suggesting the misuse of public funds and generating fear by depicting the state as abusive and arbitrary.

If we consider these shows as belonging to the realm of the archive, of the official “grand” national memory, then we can claim that, they can, at least, contribute to complicating the readings of the past that frame our understanding of the present. In conclusion, both *Los Ochenta* and *Los Archivos del Cardenal* participate in the contested field of archiving an official memory of the national past. I find it significant that this process of archiving is, in both cases, done through Oedipal narratives in which gender and sex binaries are safely located within a heteronormative frame. That is, that official national memory is articulated through a gendered narrative of the heterosexual, nuclear, respectable family. In fact, the only reference to alternative sexualities in *Los Archivos* is the characterization of gay and bisexuality as a symbol of foreign degeneration and moral decay at the CIA agents’ party. In both shows, revolutionary femininity is not only framed within heterosexuality but also rather middle-class, educated parameters of beauty, attractiveness and “taste.” The left’s narrative about the brave, tireless, and beautiful *compañera* or the revolutionary male has broader referents as well within Latin America. However, it is still quite transgressive in the context of the extremely conservative laws that regulate women’s bodies, and especially their sexuality, that these young female characters’ decisions about their sexuality seem to already be infused with a sense of egalitarianism and the autonomy of women, which was present at least at the level of discourse, in the culture of the left in the 1970s.

If neoliberal nationalist desire still appeared to dominate the spectacles of (sexual) “freedom” during most of the post-dictatorship, state sponsored television productions such as *Los Ochenta* and *Los Archivos* appear as a way of presenting more complex readings of the past, making it possible to multiply the available interpretations. These television productions, given their successful ratings, are able to reinvest (in a libidinal sense) political projects via popular culture, and generate new imaginaries of the past that can potentially enable new subjectivities. This confirms that the past is alive, dynamic, and in constant dispute in post-dictatorship Chile. It also demonstrates how *telenovelas* and television can assert a national project, represented in the allegorical figure of the family at the centre of both series, while at the same time exposing the difficulties of this enterprise. However, I suggested that these shows seem to still be trapped in Oedipal narratives of gender respectability that even present “revolutionary femininity”, as discussed with the characters of Claudia (*Los Ochenta*) and Laura (*Los Archivos*), as tied to models of heteronormative sexuality, attractiveness, and taste.

In this chapter, I have discussed the staging of a series of different kinds of spectacles that function to reinforce the neoliberal narrative of freedom as “free market,” “sexual freedom,” and individual “freedom of choice.” I considered spectacles of transparency offered by the exhibition of the iceberg in 1992; the spectacles of sexual liberation in the series of television shows that emerge first in the 1980s, then throughout the 1990s, and into the millennium (*Sabor Latino*, *Morandé con Compañía*, *Mekano*, *El Diario de Eva*); and the spectacles of economic success, heterosexuality, male potency provided by *café con piernas*. I have argued that these spectacles articulate a militarized male gaze and reinscribe female bodies in neoliberal exchanges within a narrative of progress and modernity. I have provided evidence of how, “the sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism” lay out the scripts and narratives for subjectivities to recreate the coordinates of heterosexuality, sexual respectability, and gender nationalism,

reproducing both gender binaries and market nationalism. On the other hand, I argued that *Los Ochenta* and *Los Archivos*, along with other historical miniseries and telenovelas, constitute spectacles of national memory that actively participate in the efforts to resignify and expand the archive of cultural memory, but that become trapped in Oedipal heteronormative scripts of subjectivation. Altogether, from these diverse forms of spectacles, we can identify some of the coordinates of subjectivation critical in the formulation of what is possible in terms of political subjects and projects—heterosexuality, sexual respectability, and gender nationalism—that provide a range of possible, imaginable gendered subject positions within the narrative of neoliberalism and market nationalism. In the spectacles of sexual liberation provided by *Sabor Latino*, *Morandé con Compañía*, and *café con piernas*, “woman” is presented as an image, a “prop” for the consolidation of a particular kind of masculine militarized gaze, and a particular kind of nationalist masculinity linked to sexual potency and productivity—“el chileno jaguar,” the masculine successful subject of neoliberalism. His counterpart “la mujer chilena” is imagined as a beautiful woman and as a mother, thus as having moral superior qualities, and contributing to the development and progress of the nation both as a modern mother and worker. Finally, “la familia chilena,” either conservative or revolutionary, is the necessary vehicle to articulate a national memory of the past in the case of the spectacles of national memory offered by *Los Ochenta* and *Los Archivos*. Conversely, we are presented with the abject subject positions that are constructed in opposition to the previous ones, for example, the humorous and/or perverse homosexual, the “ugly” women (who do not conform with heterosexist, racist, and class-based concepts of beauty), the bad mothers (who abort), and the poor (who fail to succeed in the neoliberal economy).

## The Universal Masculine and the Particular Feminine

My first daughter, Ramona, was born in Canada in 2008. Only two months later, I found myself unwillingly politicized by motherhood. My partner at the time, Francisco, was shopping for pants at the “hip” store H&M, when Ramona got hungry and started crying. Without giving it too much thought, I lifted one side of my shirt and started breastfeeding her. A couple minutes into it, a store clerk approached me and announced discretely that I was “offending other customers,” and to my dismay, asked if I could please come to breastfeed at one of the changing rooms. Finally the manager came to talk to me and escorted me, along with other clerks with radios, to the changing room. I left the store crying and feeling humiliated. As I got home, I posted a public letter on Facebook that ended up in the hands of “lactivist” Veronika Polanska, who organized a performatic protest at the store: a “nurse-in.” About fifty mothers came with their babies and breastfed inside the store. The event was well covered and discussed widely in the news and on the internet. I did not attend the nurse-in, as Ramona as had just got her first set of vaccinations, and we were already exhausted and overwhelmed with the sudden public exposure and criticism. I was astonished to read reactions of disgust at the sight of public breastfeeding on online forums, comparing it to masturbating or urinating in public. This was a stark example of how public scrutiny of women’s performance in public spaces is very much shaped by a neoliberal double standard in Canada too. Moreover, as I found out reading the comments on the nurse-in, my body was already as female, racialized, and a women’s studies graduate student, all of which made me suspect in many people’s eyes.

According to one commentator who wrote a column in the Vancouver Courier just a week after the nurse-in, “the controversy raised serious questions about the rights of private businesses versus the whims of retail consumers.” The author is so explicit about the connections between

this apparent bodily transgression to the neoliberal space of the store, that I find it worth it to quote him at length:

The protest was dubbed a "nurse-in," a spastic eruption of X-chromosomes in a clothing store known for two-for-one T-shirts and Madonna-inspired design. Lactating protestors, many with suckling baby in hand, held placards that read "Babies for Breastfeeding" and "Get a room? Human rights mockery." The controversy made national headlines and served as a rallying cry for breastfeeders everywhere, who feel slighted by society's paternal squeamishness.

Of course, when H&M staff asked Manuela Valle to take her baby (and her breast) to the change room, they did nothing wrong. *As a private business, H&M reserves the right to handle its customers within the confines of Canadian law. That's Capitalism 101.*

According to Section 8 of the B.C. Human Rights Code, a person must not be denied any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public because of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex or sexual orientation. Nothing in there about breastfeeding. *Valle apparently knows this, which is probably why she threatened to contact the B.C. Human Rights Commission, a quasi-judicial organization that specializes in groundless cases based on political ideology.*

H&M's error lay not in the realm of legality, but rather in the court of public opinion. Valle tapped a populist sentiment amongst her lactating sisters that threatened H&M's bottom line. Capitulating made good business sense. H&M also set a dangerous precedent and exposed itself to future aggrieved groups of all stripes and persuasions that may choose H&M outlets to practice their own brand of necessity. Imagine a group of Salafi Muslims

kneeling before Allah in H&M's men's clothing section. Or a woebegone narcoleptic who seeks shelter at H&M for his afternoon nap.

No matter what future controversies await H&M, nothing will match the *brute force* exerted by legions of lactating women. Valle and her band of breastfeeders demonstrated the awesome power of maternal instinct while exhibiting a zeal rarely seen during public protests. The women—powered by hormonal intuition as old as life itself—seemed uninhibited by intellect or social mores, and unswayed by cultural inventions such as *business sovereignty and consumer choice*. *Their impulse to protest wasn't medieval, it was prehistoric.*<sup>33</sup>

My interest in this excerpt lies in the gendered binary presented in the opposition between, on the one hand, the rational market, “business sovereignty,” and “consumer choice” as masculine; and, on the other hand, the hormone-infused, unreliable, reactive-sexed bodies of lactating women. One is the future, the other, prehistoric. Another gendered binary implied here is nature (feminine) versus culture (masculine). Along the same lines, the technocratic criterion of capitalism is opposed to the subjective partiality of “special interest groups” such as fundamentalist Islamists, narcoleptics, and feminists. To surrender to the particularities of such groups is perceived as “dangerous,” disturbing the self-characterized neutrality and impartiality of private business. In this way, even though the federal laws protect the right of a mother to lactate when, and where, it is convenient for her, the neoliberal discourse overrides that right by elevating private property and the universal principle of “the market,” over the prehistoric and particularistic principle of the feminine.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Essence of Neoliberalism," in *Le Monde Diplomatique (English Edition)*. December 1998. Web.

<sup>2</sup>Cárcamo-Huechante, Luis. *Tramas del mercado: imaginación económica, cultura pública y literatura en el Chile de fines del siglo veinte*. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2007.

<sup>3</sup>"Interrogan a Agustín Edwards for el Título "Exterminados Como Ratones"" *La Nación*. September 23, 2013. Web.

<sup>4</sup>In the Spanish original:

*Lo que liga a los espectadores no es sino un vínculo irreversible con el mismo centro que los mantiene aislados. El espectáculo reúne lo separado, pero lo reúne en tanto y en cuanto está separado.* (Debord 29)

<sup>6</sup>El nuevo Gobierno, desechando las aprehensiones de muchos, rescató también aquí valores que parecían perdidos: la libertad económica y la confianza en la iniciativa privada, con los que abrió anchas puertas al progreso colectivo.

<sup>9</sup>*Ríe cuando todos estén tristes: el entretenimiento televisivo bajo la dictadura de Pinochet*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2012.

<sup>10</sup>Thorne, Ludmilla. "Human Rights in Chile" *The New York Review of Books*. February 3, 1983 Issue. Web.

<sup>11</sup>The original in Spanish reads:

*Marcó un hito. Fue el clímax de un momento de la televisión porque la dictadura estaba pasando por un muy buen momento económico que le permitía promocionarse de que su modelo estaba funcionando: la gente tiene más acceso al consumo y además la televisión da cuenta de eso con estos grandes programas de presupuestos millonarios, emitidos en vivo desde algún local muy elegante, donde vienen invitados muy famosos. Y Sabor Latino representó el punto máximo de esto, y también el punto en el que*

*empieza a cambiar. El '81 empieza a haber menos plata para este tipo de programas. Por eso es que en lugar de traer a los artistas más famosos se recurre a vedettes de Argentina y España.*

<sup>12</sup> Mulvey, Laura 1975 "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" *Screen* 16.3 Autumn 1975 pp. 6-18. Web.

<sup>13</sup> The original in Spanish reads:

*Conducido por Antonio Vodanovic y dirigido por Sergio Riesenberg, el programa de variedades, grabado en el salón Casablanca del Hotel Crown Plaza, pretendía transmitir un show similar a los ofrecidos por los teatros de revistas. La idea, sobre todo tomando en cuenta la situación política chilena, era bastante transgresora pero podía resultar un éxito. "Sabor Latino", con el paso del tiempo, se transformó en un verdadero espacio de culto y en un sinónimo de transgresión y audacia en medio de un ambiente social y político extremadamente reprimido. Hoy muchos lo recuerdan con nostalgia pues anunció los tiempos más liberales que viviría nuestro país, a partir de la década del 90', con la llegada de la recuperada democracia.*

<sup>13</sup> Fuentes, Jorge. "Sabor Latino: El Primer Destape Sexual Televisivo Chileno." *Guioteca*. December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Web.

<sup>14</sup> Central Nacional de Inteligencia, which took over for the DINA in 1977. In the article "Cristina Tocco: Un CNI me invitó a cenar y me asusté," published by *La Nación* on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 (Web) the vedette reveals the connections between Sabor Latino and the CNI.

<sup>15</sup> Buscaglia, Christian. "'El Mocito' de Manuel Contreras: Ricardo Claro era un millonario que financiaba a la DINA." *El Mostrador*. July 11, 2012. Web.

<sup>16</sup> *"Los Archivos del Cardenal" es una de las series que más nos enorgullece presentar como Televisión Nacional. Nos sentimos orgullosos porque es un homenaje a una de las instituciones más valientes de nuestra historia: la Vicaría de la Solidaridad. (... ) Esta historia se enmarca en uno de los períodos más complejos vividos por nuestro país, pero también*

*corresponde a un momento donde la valentía de muchos por defender principios fundamentales de nuestra república -como el respeto a los derechos humanos- significó luces que enorgullecen hoy a los chilenos y que, parados hoy, sin duda nos hacen más fuertes como país. (...) Tomar nuestro pasado, en especial aquel que es polémico, es sin duda parte esencial de nuestra misión. Con esta serie queremos promover y acompañar el diálogo al interior de las familias sobre el pasado que nos tocó vivir, y sobre los hombres y mujeres que se esforzaron porque tuviéramos justicia, paz y pleno respeto a los derechos humanos.*

<sup>31</sup> “El Lado Oscuro de Los Archivos del Cardenal” *La Hora*. August 12<sup>th</sup> 2011. Web.

<sup>32</sup> “Cuatro juicios políticos a Los Archivos del Cardenal.” *La Segunda*. July 22, 2011. Web.

<sup>33</sup> “Lactating activists milked H&M” *Vancouver Courier*, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Web.

## CHAPTER THREE: PERFORMANCE, CULTURAL MEMORY, AND UTOPIAN IMAGINATIONS

What we do is transform protest into a festive party. We have to open the faucets of creativity, of popular ingenuity, of collective memory. We have to rescue our traditions and our cultural forms for the battle. We have to reinvent those forms of action where people are not the spectators, but protagonists.

Superbarrio (qtd. in Camnitzer 72)



Figure 13. *El Che de los Gays* and “Salvador Allende” pose together at a march for International Worker’s Day, Santiago de Chile, May 2012. Courtesy of Victor Hugo Robles.

At the 2012 march for International Worker's Day, a queer version of *Che Guevara* marched in the streets of downtown Santiago de Chile and posed beside a risen-from-the-dead Salvador Allende across from the presidential palace. During the winter of 2011, a crowd of 4,000 high school students demanding free quality public education dressed up as zombies and performed a mass flashmob of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" across from *La Moneda*, the site of the Chilean presidential authority. In June 2012, half-naked bodies of blindfolded men and women in torture *parrillas*<sup>1</sup> were covered in fake blood outside a theatre where Augusto Pinochet was being honoured. A couple of times every year, pictures, shoes, and clothes are hung in the middle of the *Plaza de Armas* to indicate the bodies of dead women killed by male violence. In this chapter, I would like to highlight the political potential of performance as an embodied practice of "stubborn memory" (to use Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzmán's term), a practice of resistance and subversion situated on the borderline of what Luis Camnitzer calls "politicized aesthetics" and "aestheticized politics" (68) that aptly points at the collective trajectory of bodies that have been left out of the grand narratives of the Chilean post-dictatorship. I use Diana Taylor's definition of performance as an embodied practice that transmits cultural memory and identity, and articulates what cannot be wholly conveyed by text, narrative, or discourse. Taylor argues that the relevance of performance lies in its possibility for cultural agency, whereby individuals and collectives become protagonists and politicized subjects of their own social drama.

In this chapter I analyze four performances by feminist and queer activists: *El Che de los Gays*, by Victor Hugo Robles Fuentes (b. 1969); *Hija de Perra*, by the late Víctor Hugo "Wally" Pérez Peñaloza (1980-2014), feminist street performance collective "*Las Choras del Puerto*"; plus the visual strategies of the feminist organization *Red Chilena Contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual* in their campaign "*Cuidado! El Machismo Mata.*" These performances build on a history

of interventions in public spaces carried out under the dictatorship in Chile, such as the public staging of the *cueca sola* by the *Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Association of Relatives of the Disappeared) or the disruptive appearances of *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (“The Mares of Apocalypse”) in the late 1980s, but they can also be situated within the context of a revitalization of public space in the 1990s and within current forms of feminist thought. I am interested in what these cases of performance are articulating, what kind of cultural memories they are helping to shape, and what subjects and stories are emerging from them. I argue that these performances can offer a critique of the legacies and continuities of neoliberalism and militarism in the Chilean post-dictatorship, by transmitting the embodied knowledge of experiences and stories omitted from the grand narratives of the post-dictatorship. They can also be viewed as a contribution to the (re)articulation of political imaginations (utilizing the street as a public space for the practice of democracy) and subjectivities (putting forward the body both as a fiction and as a site of political agency and power). The questions that guide this chapter are: Can queer and feminist activist performances disrupt some of the dominant neoliberal narratives of the post-dictatorship, or interrupt the reproduction of neoliberal desire? How do these performances allow us to map the existence of alternative subjectivities? What do these performances say about the body itself; what kind of embodiments do they propose?

*Las Choras del Puerto*'s street performances point at the structural violence on and systemic oppression of female bodies, challenging narratives of individual “freedom” as promoted by neoliberalism, and politicizing the female body from an intersectional perspective that crosses gender with class, race, and sexuality. I use José E. Muñoz's notion of queer performances as worldmaking practices to analyze the performance of *El Che de Los Gays*, whose embodiment of the mythical hero, I will argue, enacts futurity displayed as a subjectivity that resists the traumatic temporalities sustained by both the left and the right wing in post-dictatorship Chile.

To analyze the visual strategies of the protest campaign “*Cuidado. El Machismo Mata!*” I consider the potentiality of the notion of “ghosts” that challenge a teleological and linear trajectory of bodies based on the binary of their presence/absence, the coexistence of multiple temporalities in the present, as well as the affective connections with political identities and projects that are located in the past. Last but not least, I take interest in how the performance of *Hija de Perra* articulates hyphenated and provisional identities through the aesthetics of pornography and horror, as alternative ways of understanding the body and subjectivity. I will trace some of the referents to activist performance in Chile up to the emergence of more contemporary forms such as *Las Putas Babilónicas* within the students’ movement and the strategies deployed by CUDS, *Colectivo Universitario de Disidencia Sexual* (“University Collective of Sexual Dissidence”) and discuss the problem of traumatic temporalities as a context (or cultural text) in which viable subject positions emerge in the post-dictatorship.



Figure 14. *Hija de Perra*, *El Che de los Gays*, Vicente Ruiz and “Salvador Allende” marching at a protest, Santiago de Chile, 2012. Courtesy of Victor Hugo Robles.

## ***Escena de Avanzada and Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis***

In the context of the 1980s, with the country under strict military control, the constraints put on public expression were such that performance remained inscribed in the realm of art even if it took place in public spaces, as Nelly Richard describes in *Márgenes e Instituciones*. The *Colectivo de Arte de Avanzada*, CADA, kept their distance from a kind of art defined as subordinate to a single, totalizing ideological message, as practiced by the communist *Brigada Ramona Parra*; instead, their art actions were incomplete gestures that required interactions with spectators in daily life to acquire meaning. The harsh repression of any expression perceived to be even remotely political forced artists to use ephemeral bodily gestures and to avoid the use of pre-coded images in their actions. Precisely because the authors were recognized as “artists” and their performances and interventions were understood only as “artistic,” they managed to get away with these *cruces* between art and politics. *Para No Morir de Hambre en el Arte* (1980), for example, involved the coordination of several simultaneous actions: The distribution of one hundred litres of milk among poor families in Santiago; publishing a page in a magazine; playing a recording about Chile’s poverty and marginalization in front of the United Nations’ headquarters; placing in a box with the cartons of milk a copy of the magazine and the recording at *Centro Imagen* art gallery; and ten trucks driving from a factory to the museum and, upon arriving, encountering a white banner announcing the temporary closure of the museum. According to Richard, if milk means nourishment, the lack thereof was used here as a signifier of poverty and hunger, of deprivation under the dictatorship, in short, to foreground the lack of nourishment, of freedom of speech and association, and of justice. It is important as well to recognize how it is also gendered (mother’s milk), and the same time a reference to Allende’s policy of a “half-litre of milk for each child.” In this way, we could think there was an impulse to counter the hypermasculine military with the feminine gesture of feeding, nourishing,

Another performance, *Ay Sudamérica* (1981) consisted of dropping off 400,000 flyers with a text that was, at the same time, printed on the page of a magazine.<sup>2</sup> Finally, *No +* (1983) was an intervention on the walls of the city with “No +” so that some of the statements were completed as “*No + hambre*,” “*No + muerte*,” “*No + dolor*” (No hunger, no death, no pain). According to Richard, these works of the *escena de avanzada* addressed—through different avenues—the ideological uses of the body. For example, the performances by artist Carlos Leppe, poet Raúl Zurita, and feminist writer Diamela Eltit, all of whom were affiliated to the *escena de avanzada*, showed how different ideas and representations of what is normal and deviant are constantly inscribed upon the body, or as Leppe put it, the body understood as a tissue of quotations (209). Through the use of parody, mimesis and simulacrum, these artists made reference to the wounded and violated social body; pointed at the bodily excess that escapes and resists language; and challenged a transparent relation between the body and the self. Moreover, artists from the *escena de avanzada* all manipulated and played with categories of sexual difference and the body in their work (Zurita postulated that the subject was so fragmented that it never achieved a complete sexual identity, either as female or male). Artist Lotty Rosenfeld, also associated to CADA, described her work as “exposing the operations of official power and the conflict zones in which bodies are submitted to margins and borders” and embracing fugitive identities and hybrid embodiments that transgress surveillance and capital (219). The performances by CADA required, however, an audience that could read the coded political subversive potential of art in the context of the dictatorship.

*Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (Francisco Casas and Pedro Lemebel) appeared just in the junction between dictatorship and democracy—during the last year of the dictatorship, but post-plebiscite, when the expectations about the scope of the changes to come with democracy were still very high. Some of the performances they carried out include the “Refounding of the

*Universidad de Chile*" (1988), in which they entered one of the University's campuses, in which there was still a strong military presence, riding naked on a white mare. This identification with the feminine as a sign of opposition to the hyper-masculine military was quite explicit, and Francisco Casas stated that he and Pedro Lemebel reinvented their bodies to become a female body through their performance in order to bring back the body upon which violent crime was committed, "to denounce the rapist and homicidal fatherland." In this way, they were already enacting a queer femininity, not attached to female bodies. Even though each one of their performances is well documented and explained on their own website, it is significant and revealing that in "Memoria Chilena," an online archive of popular culture of the *Biblioteca Nacional de Chile* created under the *Concertación*, the *Yeguas'* performances are described as "mythical" and "poorly registered," suggesting their actions consisted too much of random homosexual eccentricities than of embodied radical political practice.<sup>3</sup> Even admitting the difficulties of "archiving the repertoire," this omission is characteristic of a national official narrative that compulsively erases all the messy parts to turn it into a smooth plain surface without any fissures or protuberances. What kind of national histories could be traced if we focused instead on those fissures themselves, on the political subjects and practices that do not fit neatly and nicely in the official archives of national history?

At the beginning of the 1990s in Chile, coinciding with the "return to democracy," performance was re-inscribed into the context of protest in public spaces like the street and the *plaza*.<sup>4</sup> About the same time, the streets of Santiago saw the re-emergence of *teatro callejero*, made popular by the late Chilean theatre director Andrés Pérez. The year of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival to America, in 1992, Vicente Ruiz, who had a key role in the underground art scene in the 1980s with his *Fiestas Spandex* in Matucana 19, carried out a performance with actress Patricia Rivadeneira, who was staged as crucified and wrapped up in a Chilean flag, referring to ethnic and sexual minorities. This ubiquitous representation of

marginalized and oppressed minorities as a female (frequently naked) body during this period of “transition” points to the perception of state power in Chile and the military as masculine institutions, as well as the ways that military repression feminized civil society.

## Occupying Feminism

Protest tactics in the streets through the 1990s, particularly by human rights and feminist activists across Latin America, were profoundly impacted by the performances of the human rights activist group *Madres of Plaza Mayo*, in Argentina, after they inaugurated "public grieving and public suffering as political praxis" in the seventies and eighties (Bergman and Szurmuk 391). While political activism in contemporary Chile is clearly influenced by the Argentinian *Madres* and the local *Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos*, influences from outside the Latin American region, like the politically vocal punk rock band Pussy Riot, in Russia, are appearing in more current expressions of activist performance, such as the march for the legalization of abortion that took place on July 25, 2013 and culminated in the occupation of the Catholic Cathedral of Santiago de Chile.<sup>4</sup> The transnational influences on protest tactics and methods of political action seen in Chile can be found in many examples, like when we compare the recent “flashmob” approach to protest in the student movement with the Argentinian *escraches* (collective action of public shaming of ex-torturers) by human rights organization H.I.J.O.S.

Even though I am making a distinction between art performance that takes place in spaces sanctioned for that purpose and the kind that irrupts more visibly in the streets, some performances are not so clearly located on either side. For example, on December 2013, the website of feminist photographer Kena Lorenzini documented the performance “Habeas

Corpus” by artist María José Contreras, which Lorenzini consigned in her blog as “the first post-dictatorship intervention at the *Palacios de Justicia*” in Chile.

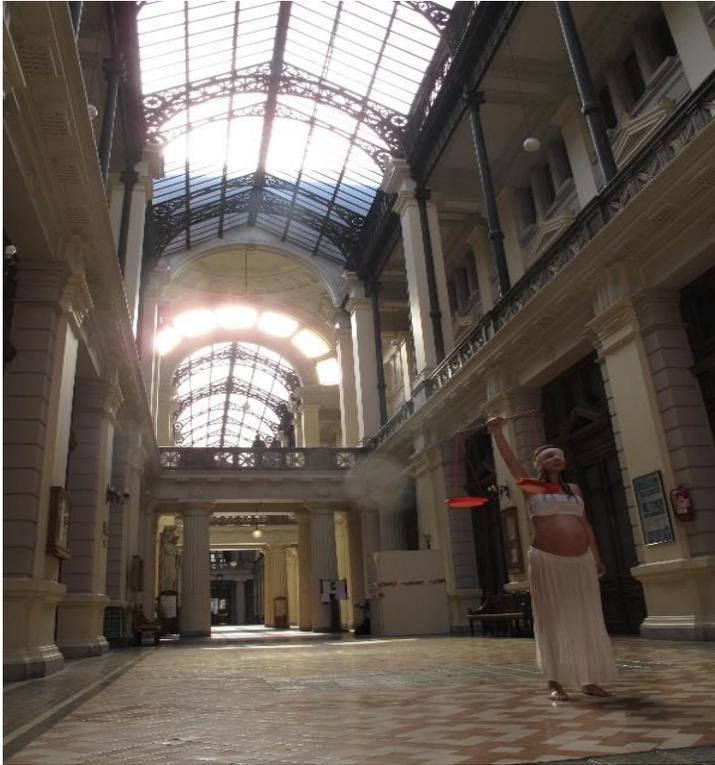


Figure 15. Performance by María José Contreras, picture by Kena Lorenzini.

Contreras stated that her piece addressed the role of this institution during the dictatorship and interrogated the politics of memory and forgetfulness. Indeed, the unruly presence of a female pregnant body in the institution that represents the law, dressed as Justice herself, adds more than one layer of meaning to this performance. While the female representation of Justice (as a blindfolded woman that, on the one hand, holds a balance and, on the other hand, a sword) is a rather abstract woman, the performance by Contreras portrays the embodied nature of “womanness,” marked in this case by pregnancy. This adds another layer of meaning that speaks to the precarious status of women’s bodies due to the absence and restriction of reproductive rights in Chile.

A wave of contemporary feminist performances that have taken place in spaces at the edge of the public and private, and that in different ways expose and critique gender and sexual ideologies, include: Julia Antivilo, a feminist historian and *performancera*, who exposes the persistence of colonial narratives of gender and sexuality through her work, and advocates for female pleasure as a political category of feminism; Eli Neira, whose performances of *poesía acción* in underground cultural events and squatter houses (“*casas okupas*”) reflect on the body as the site where all ideological, economic, and regulatory practices are inflicted; and *Señorita Ugarte*, who quite literally exposed the technologies of gender by exposing herself in a street window getting groomed, shaved, and finally getting a permanent tattoo that reads “nobody is born a woman.” Chilean philosopher Alejandra Castillo has conceptualized as *ars disyecta* this type of feminist artist practice that addresses the ways through which “woman” as a cultural artefact is produced through the script of romantic love, and as interpellation of the male gaze on women’s bodies. This directly invokes Luce Irigaray’s attempt to deconstruct the object of “woman” and the feminine masquerade as specular projections of the male gaze and male desire onto the female body.

Another Chilean example of protest through performance is the political action taken by the CUDS, *Colectivo Utópico de Disidencia Sexual* (previously *Colectivo Universitario de Disidencia Sexual*). Their academic activism and performances are driven by the belief that sexual authoritarianism can be transformed through what they denominate “sexual terrorism,” rather than through gender reformism. CUDS situate their activism and theoretical production within feminism, while seriously questioning the political effectiveness of organizing around the stable category of woman (see the texts compiled in *Por Un Feminismo Sin Mujeres*). Their performances have been carried out in both academic spaces, such as university colloquia and symposia, and in public demonstrations like marches and rallies. I find significant their symbolic

occupation in the Winter of 2012 of the old *casona* that houses the historical La Morada, where several feminist projects and networks have developed for almost thirty years. It is significant because it points at the reformulation of feminist from a non-essentialist perspective. As Francisca Barrientos explains in her article “*La mujer como piedra de tope: Una mirada al fracaso del feminismo*” in *Por Un Feminismo Sin Mujeres*:

To position oneself politically beyond the identity boundaries and become a monster dissident sex that locates discursively outside of gender, that is, beyond heteronormativity, it is necessary to take yet another step. (...) It is not enough to rebel to become *mujeres malas*, it is imperative to renounce to the very idea of being a woman (CUDS 33, my translation).<sup>5</sup>



Figure 16. Performative action by CUDS, occupying "La Morada."

Other expressions of contemporary young feminist groups in Chile that base their politics on the recognition of intersectionality, and away from gender essentialism, include the *Asamblea de Mujeres Revolucionarias*, whose call for an annual commemoration of the International Day Against Violence Against Women on November 25th on their Facebook page is illustrative of a younger feminist sensibility:

A young woman dies in an illegal abortion, a gay man is beaten up by nazis, a transvestite is raped by the police, a woman faints in pain in a waiting room, a boy is forced to stand up and not cry, in the street they yelled fucking whore at her, the girl cannot date, don't have anal sex, the party is macho, get yourself fixed if you want to be a militant, he touched you because you provoked him, you are a faggot because you were raped and you liked it, go home to cook, you think you are the prettiest but you're the sluttiest...and so on, gender violence continues in the everyday, in institutions, in the streets, and in bed.<sup>6</sup>

In this call for action, they directly point at the multiple ways that gender, sex, race, class, ability, and other power relations intersect, producing patterns of privilege, oppression, and violence. The illegality of abortion subjects female bodies—particularly those belonging to working class and rural women—to an extreme state of vulnerability, while it socially sanctions the idea that women's bodies do not have a worth on their own, but only insofar as they are procreators of future citizens whose *in utero* rights override those of the mother to make her own reproductive choices about unwanted or dangerous pregnancies. Moreover, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia make public spaces unsafe and precarious for all non-normative genders and sexualities, while strict gender norms are violently policed on male and female bodies in everyday spaces. The claims of this feminist network emphasize the intersectionality of oppression and the interconnectedness and productive relations between capitalism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, racism, misogyny, transphobia, etc.

In a similar vein, the *Colectiva Trans Tortillera La Paila Marina*, formulate a practice of trans feminism embedded within a project of social justice, decolonization, and anti-capitalism, while using performance as a protest practice. Using the metaphor of the “seafood soup” (*paila marina*), that gathers different kinds of anatomies—both surgical and biological vaginas—they advocate for a politics not based on biology, but on the commonality of a political identity between trans women and lesbians, and a political practice based on the premise of the “failure” of gender, rather than on gender essentialism. The performance element of their political practice came about from the need to dispute with homophobic and anti-choice groups about the use of public space, and the need for increased visibility for their ideological campaigns.



Figure 17. Action outside the Catholic Cathedral of Santiago, where Evangelical groups were holding a "Prayer for the Family." July 2013.

Another influential referent for young contemporary feminists was the visit to Universidad de Chile of the Spanish philosopher Beatriz Preciado in 2002, which included a series of lectures to packed rooms of graduate students about her ideas developed in *Manifiesto Contrasexual*, as well as an overpacked Drag King workshop for graduate students at the headquarters of the MUMS (*Movimiento Unificado de Minorías Sexuales*) in which I participated. Preciado put forward the idea of a counter-sexual contract, in which bodies are to be recognized as “speaking bodies,” able to access all the historically available signifying practices. Within this contract, “[bodies] renounce not only a closed sexual identity determined by nature, but also the privileges that they could obtain from the naturalization of the social, economic, and juridical effects of these signifying practices.”<sup>7</sup> Preciado recognizes sexuality as a productive site of discourses and technologies that produce the sex/gender system with its binary categories (“man” and “woman”, “heterosexual” and “homosexual”). Additionally, desire itself is a result of sexual technologies, though these results are never simple. Preciado suggests the political project of developing embodied practices of resistance focused on the displacing of heterosexual genitality and reproduction through practices of “countersexuality,” technologies of resistance, and sexual counter-disciplines.

Further feminist and queer academic exchanges and activist collaborations, such as with anarchist Argentinian poet and queer philosopher Leonor Silvestri’s notion of “*pornoterrorismo*”, have continued to explore gender, sexuality, and desire through the perspective of “post-porn,” “countersexuality,” and “sexual dissidence.” In sum, the transnational exchange and the local interpretations of concepts such as “queer,” have triggered an extremely rich and heterogeneous postmodern strand of feminist thought and activism in Chile, expressed in an abundance of academic and activist events, gatherings (*encuentros*), workshops, etc. Outside of academia, another expression of this form of feminist activism and performance is the popular *tropipunk* music group Kumbia Queers, a transnational collaboration of members of

Argentinian punk band She Devils and the Mexican surf band *Las Ultrasónicas*. While *cumbia* is a popular music genre that traditionally was characterized by sexist lyrics, epitomized by the band Kumbia Kings, Kumbia Queers reappropriates the music in the context of a female queer performance. This rich new theoretical and activist platform of feminist political practice frames the use of public performance as a strategy of visibility, cultural change, and cultural memory. By adopting Bloch's "utopian hermeneutics" to look at cultural imaginations, we can discover the utopian impulse in these unsuspected places in culture that provide new venues for changing the available subject positions, and discursive repertoires, to enunciate other subjectivities in the face of *traumatic temporalities*.

### **Traumatic Temporalities and Utopian Performances**

At the beginning of the millennium, when the contemporary forms of post-modern feminist activism and academic practice described above began to take place, public discourses, laws, and policies on gender were still dominated by the narratives of the post-dictatorship Chile discussed in Chapter One. These narratives were characterized by the trope of the "Chilean family" as a site for the articulation of gender, (hetero)sexuality, and nationalist ideologies, a symbolic constellation that the governments of the *Concertación* were not able to challenge, but rather mobilized for the purpose of cultural memory, as seen in Chapter Two. Early in the transition, it became apparent how cultural memory was a site of permanent contestation, and that "the dictatorship," far from having a universal meaning, had multiple, conflicting interpretations and even different terms to name it, such as "authoritarian government" and "military regime." Moreover, the performativity of the past—the ability of the past to "do" things in the present—made memory and memorialization, and more broadly, the problem of temporality—how the past, the present and the future and time are understood, key for the

articulation of political subjects in the present. For example, both the triumphalist discourses of the center-right and the defeatist/apologetic discourses of the center-left in the post-dictatorship seemed to be *done* with the past, foreclosing any substantial discussion on the model of society and economy that was secured under Pinochet first and under the *Concertación* later.

Throughout the 1990s and onwards, the undeniable "reality" of capitalism, the market, and neoliberalism were presented as the *only possible reality*, making it imperative to adopt a pragmatic approach to political practice. Enrique Correa for example, a key socialist ideologue of the *Concertación* declared in 2008 that Chile managed the most successful transition from a dictatorship to democracy in Latin America, and attributed this success to the fact that his generation was driven by a "political realism" when they recognized "capitalism as a reality, liberal democracy as a great regime, and negotiation as the best strategy as opposed to confrontation" (*Qué Pasa*, 12, my translation). Moreover, Correa stated that the present political practice consisted of conciliation and an accommodation of diverse interests rather than the confrontation between antagonistic political projects—Correa says he and his socialist comrades believed in a confrontational approach in their "more fervent ideological years." With this remark he dismissed any project of radical social transformation as dated and naïve, and put himself in a position of retrospective maturity, from which he felt it necessary to explain and apologize for his youthful radicalism. In fact, within this discourse, the "radicalism" of the project of the *Unidad Popular* led by President Salvador Allende (1970-1973) is presented as an infantile, immature feature of the youth in the past as opposed to a mature and adult "realism" of the present. The presentation of political radicalism as a sign of regression or backwardness has in fact been a pervasive narrative in the post-dictatorship for both the right wing and the center-left coalition of the *Concertación*. From this perspective, which aligns with that of the right wing, looking at the past is damaging for national reconciliation, unity and progress. The past is deemed conflictive, "political," and divisive; thus, it needs to be forgotten and overcome. Like

Ann Cvetkovich, I, too, resist this use of “national trauma” to reinforce nationalisms, when trauma is constructed as “a wound that must be healed in the name of unity” (16). That is, when nationalisms are predicated on the basis of a national trauma, when these national traumas render invisible other forms of violence and trauma, and when national histories tend to erase other histories, when one trauma story is used to suppress another.

The political relevance and power of temporality has been addressed by many Chilean intellectuals from the left, pointing out how the difference between the terms "transition" and "post-dictatorship" is not insignificant. The first term implies a movement (from) dictatorship (to) democracy, whereas the second designates a moment where it is retrospectively possible to look at the whole process of the coup, dictatorship, and post-dictatorship as part of the same movement: first the violent implementation and consolidation of the neoliberal model, and later its democratic legitimation. In a similar vein, Thayer argues that neoliberalism and globalization, as inaugurated by the coup, never stopped happening, but rather constitute the everyday event of contemporary Chile, expressed in urban marginalization, class discrimination, and the violence of the educational and the health systems. As Thayer insists, the "post" in post-dictatorship does not mean “what happened in the past,” that is, it does not denote the preterit. Torture itself cannot cease to happen, and "[n]ot to insist on the relationship between the coup, torture, dictatorship and contemporary triumphalism would be to become an acolyte of the continuum of violence and progress" (39). Furthering Thayer's interpretation of the transition, Levinson postulates that the 1973 coup not only never ceased to happen, but rather struck with all its horror in the post-dictatorship, when the possibilities for articulating different political projects were radically foreclosed and the ideology of the free market was imposed as a consensual reality, and, precisely, presented not even as an ideology anymore, but just as what *is*, or what "goes without saying." In this new scenario, to challenge the reality of the market economy means actually *not to make any sense*, to literally be *out of time*. The coup then, really

just hit with all its strength *after* the actual violence took place, when their victims found that there was no possible discourse available to account for their experiences.



Figure 18. "Los volvimos a desaparecer" ("We disappeared them again"). Street stencil, Santiago, 2010.

Nelly Richard, one of the most prominent and influential critics of the transition in Latin America, suggests that we cannot identify a clear-cut division between the dictatorship and the transition. In consonance with Moulián, Richard sees the democratic governments as merely the new managers of the inherited political and socioeconomic order, rather than as its re-founders. Moulián and Richard agree with Thayer that the true "transition" operated in the transformation from a state-centered society to a post-state economy, where the state is not the subject but the object of the economy. While I share the perspective of the continuity of socioeconomic projects between the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship, the way that recent history has been narrated by the left-wing in Chile remains problematic, in that it determines a wounded, victimized subjectivity that positions progressive forces as the losers and the defenders of capitalism and neoliberalism as the victors. From this perspective, we are put in a position of endlessly lamenting the loss of the traditional referents of politics—in particular, "the People" and the State.

The dominant discourse of the left about the past seems to be constructed almost as a mythical narrative that sanctifies and sanitizes the martyrs, and leaves us in a state of constant mourning. Following Richard, Thayer, and Levinson, post-dictatorship practices of memory tend to monumentalize and memorialize the violent past, helping to construct a form of national history in which the past is what has ceased to happen. This relationship between a traumatic past, narrative, memory, and agency has also been extensively investigated in Chile from the perspective of social psychology. Working in the context of mental health services for the victims of the political repression, Isabel Piper observed that the narratives that construct the past as a wound (*“la retórica de la marca”*) determined “scarred” subject positions, and argued that when subjectivity is seen as overdetermined by a traumatic past, it leaves little political potential for those construed as wounded and scarred subjects. I am interested precisely in the ways that activist performance both exposes the “wound,” while allowing for the emergence of politicized subjectivities.

In “Ephemera as Evidence”, Jose E. Muñoz outlines how queer performances and performances of queerness are a kind of ephemeral and invisible evidence, which point at the “lives, powers, and possibilities” of minority groups whose existence has traditionally been erased from historical visibility. This idea was already developed in *Cruising Utopia*, where Muñoz suggests that queer acts and performance already enact the potentiality and possibility of other worlds as well as other temporalities that are not linear (see also Halberstam’s critique of “straight time” versus queer time).<sup>8</sup> Relying on Bloch’s use of hope as a hermeneutic to combat the force of political pessimism, Muñoz conceived utopia as “a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what *can and perhaps will be*” (Muñoz 35, emphasis original). According to Fredric Jameson (2005), “Bloch posits a utopian impulse governing everything future-oriented in life and culture—and encompassing everything from games to patent

medicines, from myths to mass entertainment, from iconography to technology, from architecture to eros, from tourism to jokes and the unconscious.” I use here Muñoz’s idea of the “utopian performative,” that performance’s temporality is futurity, and that performances exist in the present but linger in our memory, illuminating our future to find alternative understandings of temporality which allow us to envision historical possibilities for agency, and enable other kinds of memory (98; 104).

Minoritarian performance—performances both theatrical and quotidian—transport us across symbolic space, inserting us in a coterminous time when we witness new formations within the present and the future. The coterminous temporality of such performance exists within the future and the present, surpassing relegation to one temporality (the present) and insisting on the minoritarian subject’s status as world-historical entity. [...] These performances are thus outposts of an actually existing queer future existing in the present. (56)

### **Performance as the Return of the Repressed**

If memory is the work of introducing a narrative, or imposing sense and meaning to experience, performance can be understood as what Richard calls “the conflict of narrating what cannot be narrated,” especially when we try to place within the representational logic of language experiences such as torture, which in itself involves the loss of sense and identity. The repressed in psychoanalysis is what comes back as a typo, a slip, a failure, a mistake. Using this Freudian idea as a point of departure, Nelly Richard understands performance as expressing what cannot be said through words within the discourse of the transition, what it fails to account for: the lapsus, the cuts, the failure of language. I agree with Richard when she argues that the experience and memory of violence cannot be inscribed in the transitional

surfaces of representation or translated into the clean, coherent official discourse of the post-dictatorship. Transitional politics have managed to subordinate the practices of memory to their official representation in the Rettig and Valech Reports and to its monumentalization in memorials which relegate dictatorial violence as something that happened in a faraway past, as opposed to something that *continues to happen* (poverty, discrimination, police repression, the denial of justice, etc.) now, under the legitimation of a democratic system.<sup>9</sup> Adding to this point, Williams gestures towards the residual affective world that cannot find itself representable in the clean, transparent surfaces of the Chilean post-dictatorship official national narratives, nor in the archival memory. This affective excess unsettles the post-dictatorship as "an affective world of signification that remains senseless (for democratic hegemony), and ungraspable for the order of disciplinary reason and for institutional knowledge as a whole," and "a world of residual affect that has been included into democracy as democracy's zone of (necessary) exclusion" (286, 288).

As Richard acknowledges, the challenge continues to be how to weave a memory of mourning with "critical readings that can generate a future," a kind of memory that can intervene in the present by interrupting the transparency and linearity of the narratives of the neoliberal democracy. While formal political practice had been, for most of the post-dictatorship, constrained by the dominant narratives of reconciliation and of "democracy within the measure of the possible," street performance has been politically effective, not so much in terms of offering a convincing rhetoric of what should be done as an agenda for emancipation, but as far as outlining the existence of other subjectivities, as well as being able to "change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible" (Rancière 72). Activist and protest performances seem effective as they can generate multiple and scattered "scenes of dissensus" that can open up new forms of political subjectivation through the multiplication of connections and disconnections between signifiers.

The Chilean secondary students proved this with the irruption of the students' movement under Bachelet's first government (2006), emerging in the public space as a political and social movement whose claims for a free, universal, quality education system fell completely outside of the measured agendas of the *Concertación*. With a frontal attack on profit, the core value of capitalism, and with an understanding of the complex political dimensions of identities, they articulated their demands and analyses taking not only class into account, but also gender and sexuality.<sup>11</sup> The use of performance as protest deployed within the students' movement (or "*revolución pingüina*"), for example, had the ability to both intervene in the present while changing or keeping dynamic the readings of the past. Making the "past" (the project of socialism) seem "new," the past confounds with the future. The students' movement has managed, since then, to completely change the collective imaginaries of what is possible, so that the profound transformations that the students have been demanding are now part of a more concrete agenda within a new political constellation that includes a second presidential period for Bachelet, and four ex-leaders of the student movement in Congress (Camila Vallejos, Karol Cariola, Giorgio Jackson, and Gabriel Boric).

The double meaning of "repression," in the Psychoanalytic sense as the disruption of the unconscious to the illusions of continuity and coherence of the Ego, and as *political repression* is relevant in discussing the idea of the return of the repressed. Under the latter, what returns are the utopian ideals that were embodied in the mutilated, burned, disappeared bodies. They return embodied in a new generation that disrupt the illusions of continuity of reconciliation and national unity of the post-dictatorship, take for example the Chilean students' flash mob of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" in June of 2011. As part of the varied and creative range of the student movements' protesting tactics, they interrupted and stopped the regular circulation in public spaces, occupied them with their bodies to express a political message in a pleasurable,

collective way (coordinated dance), and suffered, in their bodies, the repression that came as a consequence. We should not dismiss the significance of the spectacle of 4,000 adolescents pretending to be raising from their graves across La Moneda to demand free public education: It is not only as if the dead and the disappeared were rising from their (non-existent) graves, but also they were bringing back the project of public education and consciously opposing the main core premise of neoliberal ideology, profit (*"el lucro"*), since the students were protesting the educational model installed under Pinochet's rule that made it possible to profit with public education.

As they re-created Jackson's iconic moves in front of La Moneda presidential palace, the students said the zombie motif was an appropriate metaphor for the Chilean education system, which they described as "rotten" and "dead."<sup>14</sup> At the same time, it seems like we are also talking about the return of repression itself. As one of the student movement's leaders, Camila Vallejo explained, the post-dictatorship generation has realised that political repression is far from being "something of the past":

The police tortured many students during the protests and continue to do so. It is systematic repression—just the other day, a march was brutally repressed. The abuse of power is very common among the police and there is no regulation. It is a system of repression that has not disappeared in the post-Pinochet era. There are attacks against all kinds of human rights—the right to gather, the right to protest, the right to organise. They don't let us walk freely in the streets, they have even attacked our offices, high schools, universities. We are young—we did not live through the dictatorship—but we're aware of what happened from our parents, from books. We thought that this repression had gone, but by questioning the political order, we discovered that they are willing to use these weapons again.<sup>15</sup>

This certainly seems like a rather horrifying realization, similar to Luisa Valenzuela's short story "Other Weapons" analyzed by Lessie Jo Frazier. The way that Valenzuela's story is narrated takes us from the familiar ostensibly safe domestic space to the ominous discovery that this space of intimacy and desire has been structured (and gendered) by state violence.<sup>16</sup>

### **Perverse Intimacies and Public Bodies**

The "perverse intimacies" created by the transitional politics (which exchanged justice for "social peace") have shaped a particular form of subjectivity in which every day is lived with fear, an experience that my long-time friend, Chilean environmental biologist Celeste Silva, expressed on her Facebook page, and I reproduce here with her permission:

It is strange to have to live together with full-on impunity; at my workplace there are two gentlemen who work in logistics, one of them belonged to the *Comando Conjunto* and the other one was a *boina negra*, worked as security for Pinochet and Ricardo Claro...nice co-workers! And you have to say hello and be respectful everyday...there is no choice...I find it hard to contain myself, especially when the other day one of these old men drove me to pick up a colleague in *Maipú*, and he was complaining about how vulgar this neighbourhood was. I wanted to yell at him, lumpen, class-ashamed, when with his indigenous features he insisted "that is why I live in *Las Condes*," and I thought that I don't want to know where he got the \$\$ to live in such part of the city, considering his expertise in the *Comando Conjunto*.<sup>17</sup> (April 2014)

In the context of the Chilean post-dictatorship, where state violence over the population has become systematic and routinized, in a social order that imposes reconciliation over justice, where precariousness is justified by market-nationalism, what subject positions become available within these narratives? What kinds of subjects and embodiments emerge from these

perverse intimacies? I pose this question, not in the sense of suggesting that victims of violence are perverse or monstrous themselves. Instead, I consider the position of the last girl in the “slasher” films (a popular genre U.S. movies in the 1970s and 1980s characterized by the exploitation of violence, sexuality, and gore) that Lessie Jo Frazier puts forward as a possible image for agency and subjectivity in a “space of death.” This subject survives the horror of violence and, at the end, is able to react against this violence by taking up arms as a monstrous embodiment herself (as in “Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” 1974). For example, in the protest outside Teatro Caupolicán, where an homage to Pinochet was taking place, protesters dramatized a scene of torture. Since the practice of torture happened in closed and private spaces, defining perverse intimacies between torturer and tortured body, this performance dismantled those artificial boundaries between the public and the private, and between the state and the body, to make the public statement that in Chile torture was (and still is) a systematic and standardized procedure of state violence inflicted upon the body.

As Coco Fusco has argued, the body is the most suitable material for political performance, as it is also the material and concrete site where political power has been (violently) articulated, within particular coordinates of race, class, gender and sexuality in Latin America. The body can be seen, then, as the stage for the individual and the collective to come together, and the support for social reproduction and sexual domination. If the body is the site where political regimes are articulated, then Fusco sees performance practices as able to deconstruct particular versions of the body in order to address the violence of the discourses that constitute them. In *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler discusses how many political communities are conflicted about needing to invoke the idea of the sovereign body to sustain our claims for integrity and self-determination, even though the experience of, state violence, for example, in any of its forms makes it clear that there is a public dimension of bodies,

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency; the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well. Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. (26)

The performances discussed in the following section interpellate the state through the use of public space and of the body as the substrate, maybe precisely because the presence of the state in the public space has primarily been in the form of violence over bodies, in particular, because under Pinochet the state has also often blurred the public/private divide through state terror and the invasion of the "private" but, also, because of the continued systematic forms of violence that neoliberalism inflicts on bodies.

### **The Politicized Female Body: *Las Choras del Puerto (Valparaíso, 2008-2009)***

*Las Choras del Puerto* ("The Port Mussels") from the coast city of Valparaíso define themselves as a "feminist guerilla" group and have specialized in carrying out unexpected performances in public spaces. Their name plays with the double meaning of the word "chora" (literally "mussel" in Spanish) which is used to refer to female genitalia, but also "*choro*" and "*chora*" are also used to denote someone with "an attitude", with "street knowledge", and/or from working-class extraction. The protagonists of the performances are four characters (the four *choras*) who wear masks, wigs, and handkerchiefs in their public performances. The gesture of dressing in black and wearing handkerchiefs brings into the present the idea of the mourning of the victims of violence in the past, but their mourning can also be extended to the victims of the current economic and political model, which creates violence and exclusion for a large part of the

population. On *Las Choras'* website, the description of the four characters emphasizes the marginality of the female subjects that have been denied by the official discourse in the post-dictatorship. In this sense, their politicization of female bodies uses an intersectional understanding of gender oppression under neoliberal policies of precariousness: The poor, domestic workers, queer, trans, and indigenous women; sexually and politically active women, unruly subjects of a heterosexist, racist, and exploitative model.

The bulk of their performances were carried out between 2008 and 2009, but their website shows that the collective remained active after these dates, with the last entry dated June of 2013 at the time of this writing. The name of their first public performance translates as "A trail of roses with thorns, or shove your roses up your asses" and took place on International Women's Day (March 8th, 2008); it consisted of returning the red roses that the government was distributing to passing women. Gathered in front of the offices of the Woman's National Service, they spread the red roses that they collected, and extended a series of slogans like "On international women's day, we don't want roses, or breakfasts with the military, or packages of numbers." By taking on the most emblematic symbol of the *Madres*, the handkerchief, the *Choras* seem to be connecting their actions to the tradition of women's activism for human rights in the Southern Cone.

It is a different historical context than Videla's Argentina, and the *Choras* do not necessarily risk their lives with their performance like the *Madres* did. However, the military ideology of gender that sustains a binary between "indecent women and public as bad" versus "decent women and private as good" is still pervasive. *Las Choras del Puerto* introduce a radical twist to the embodiment of motherhood in relation to the *Madres*, as they defy the definition of sanitized, respectable, and "decent" victims, and instead, position women's bodies as subjects of desire, agency, and resistance. Still, feminist tactics of organizing around the vagina (*Choras*= vagina)

may prove problematic or at least limiting. *Las Choras del Puerto* do imply that we are talking about "vaginas in resistance," if I may; however, in their second performance (April 4, 2008) they called for a massive vasectomy of men if women were not given access to free emergency contraception, bringing back the vagina as the foundation for feminist politics, and therefore excluding the chance of meaningful alliances, be it with queer women who do not wish to define their political subjectivity around their vaginas, or be it with queer, trans, gay and straight men. This results from a politics constrained by the "natural body" as the fundament for feminist politics. However, their performance successfully politicizes a female (public) body beyond the image of the suffering, self-sacrificing mother.

In their third action, in May 2008, *Las Choras* enacted a parody of the military parade and inaugurated their own feminine monument in the middle of *Plaza Sotomayor*, which represents the symbolic centre of the Chilean *Armada*, dominated by a tall phallic statue surrounded by several male military heroes. In their counter-parade, *Las Choras* unveiled a female statue that would stand provocatively across from the patriarchal memorial monuments to remember women and their fights and struggles ("*inaugurar una estatua signada en femenino, dedicada a las mujeres de armas tomar, justo frente al monumental memorial de los patriarcas*"). Their fourth action, on July 10, 2008, focused on the free distribution of birth control pills under the slogan "Little pills instead of little flowers," in reference to Viña del Mar as *ciudad jardín*. In a fifth action, *Las Choras* delivered an open "letter" asking the Mayor of Valparaíso to follow-up on his commitment to distribute emergency contraception. The sixth action consisted of the distribution of a Christmas card that read the following message: "Dear She Santa Claus, this year *Las Choras* demand the end of neoliberal patriarchal celebrations, the commemoration of past and future women's struggles, and the overflow of desire for pleasures and rebellions..."



Figure 19. Christmas Card by Las Choras del Puerto.

In this card, we now see the *Choras* adopting more specific forms of womanhood, including a pregnant character and another one resembling a working-class tomboy, hip-hop female masculinity. Additionally, "She Santa" is represented as a queer embodiment, a body that does not allow for a reading of sex and gender in terms of a binary. The masks, aside from being a strategy of anonymity, appear now to represent the "masquerade" of womanhood developed by Joan Riviere in 1929, in which femininity is seen as a performance. Invoking a history of women's agency through *hechicería* and *brujería* in Colonial America, in March of 2009 they performed a witchcraft ritual conjuring against capitalist exploitation, for the legalization of marijuana, access to sexual education, birth control and contraception, against heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia, and against femicide and rape.<sup>18</sup> The last two actions registered on *Las Choras* website focused again on reproductive rights. The seventh action was a *funa* (public denouncing of a torturer) styled protest, in which they exposed the

lawyer behind the lobby to pressure the *Tribunal Constitucional* against the decision of distributing emergency contraception into the hands of every city (*municipalidades*). The eighth and last action registered was around the commemoration of the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America on September 28, under the slogan *Yo tengo poder, yo aborto* (“I have power, I abort”).

The performances by this group explicitly aim to formulate a critique of the government's official discourse on gender equality as complicit with an essentialist and (hetero)normative definition of women that is functional to a neoliberal project. Even though working-class women and *pobladoras*, along with middle class professional feminists, had a crucial role in mobilizing against the dictatorship, the governments of the *Concertación* have systematically failed to promote basic reproductive rights for women, and more broadly, to intervene in the many now private/privatized realms where women are discriminated against. One of them is the health system. The ISAPRES system created by Pinochet in 1981 promoted an approach of “individual responsibility” to health in which women, whose income is already significantly lower than men,<sup>19</sup> are penalized for being of childbearing age, while all the costs associated with pre- and postnatal care are also directed solely at the mother. Grau et al. (1997) document how the creation of the institution to address women’s issues, SERNAM (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer*) in 1990, faced the conservative moral panic that this institution was going to be infiltrated with “foreign feminist ideology.” In the context of the larger logic of transactions that dominated the transition, SERNAM was founded with the express condition of excluding lesbian issues, abortion, and to formulate women’s issues only as long as women were conceptualized in the woman-family dyad and within the logics of the neoliberal economy. In this discursive context, the existence and value of the female body outside systems of economic production and sexual reproduction are not recognized, and women's bodies have been deemed only a vehicle of production and reproduction. For this reason, the performances of the *Choras* effectively offer a

subversive counter-narrative through the affirmation, in the public space, of women as active sexual subjects of pleasure and politics.

Their performances successfully point to the tension between “freedom,” as formulated in the narrative of neoliberal individual autonomy, and “agency,” as the ability to control one’s reproductive capacity, and to access information and technologies that enhance decision making for female bodies in relation to pleasure. While freemarketism presents “freedom” as the lack of constraints, and presupposes society as an even field of opportunity, “agency” is defined around the understanding of structural constraints that lie at the intersection of several power structures of privilege and oppression. Moreover, *Las Choras* put forward an anti-neoliberal female body, a body able to disrupt the order of globalized capital, a body not valued socially for its productive and reproductive capacity, that does not lend itself to purposes other than to produce social justice, and individual and collective pleasure—a politicized female body, a body in resistance. Thus, through these performances, marginalized subjects emerge as politicized bodies, and the existence and cultural memory of minoritarian subjects is made visible.

### **Futuristic Kitsch: *El Che de los Gays* (Santiago, 1997–Present)**

*El Che de los Gays* (“the Che of gay people”) is the persona created by Victor Hugo Robles in 1997. Robles is a journalist and the author of *Bandera Hueca: Historia del Movimiento Homosexual in Chile* (Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2008), an activist in the *Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual* (MOVILH) since 1991, and the producer of the first LGBT radio show “*Triángulo Abierto*” broadcast in 1993 on the feminist station *Radio Tierra*. As an activist, he campaigned for the abolition of article 365 of the criminal code that penalized sodomy in Chile, and formally demanded the Catholic Church authorities to remove him from their files, annulling his

membership within the institution. Robles defines himself as a “political activist who uses aesthetic, performative, and mass media resources to express, expose, and popularize messages of social transformation.”<sup>20</sup> His performance actions have interpellated, provoked, and unsettled the Chilean gay movement as much as they have the traditional homophobic and *machista* culture of the Chilean left. While an activist in the MOVILH, Robles’ and transvestite activist “Michelle” from Valparaíso performed a “transvestite takeover” (*toma travesti*) of the main headquarters of that political organization, denouncing the exclusion and marginalization of *travestis* and lesbians from the MOVILH’s processes of decision-making and representation. As a consequence of this irreverent gesture, Robles could no longer pursue his work as a broadcaster on *Radio Tierra*.

The performance actions by Robles put forward a politicized homosexual body within a broader commitment to social justice and human rights. His appropriation of the image of Che Guevara seeks to rescue the imaginary of the Cuban revolution, which has been denied and expelled with shame from the measured political discourses of the new “renovated” left of the post-dictatorship, with the exception of the Communist Party. In Robles’ self-produced documentary, *El Che de los Gays: Una Loca Revolución*, Robles describes and explains how during his “pink exile” from MOVILH, as a journalism student in the left-wing university ARCIS, around the time Guevara’s body was discovered and being exhumed in 1997, Robles acted on the impulse to graffiti red lips on the mural of a heroic Che Guevara on the school’s walls. Nobody reacted, so Robles decided to take this further by becoming the embodiment of Che himself. But as Robles points out, his embodiment was a queer one, or as he puts it, “effeminate and ludic”:

I don't seek to preserve anything intact. I seek to subvert everything. My character is a revolutionary metaphor, a reinvention of Che that turns the homophobia of Latin America on its head—Cuba of the 1970s being an emblematic example with its Units to Aid Production where homosexuals were put in "rehabilitation." The character aims to

subvert structures with liberating imaginaries and contemporary sexual-political metaphors, wherein homosexuals, lesbians, and transsexuals are accepted as free citizens with guaranteed rights.<sup>21</sup>

Before becoming *El Che*, Robles had already carried out a number of performances in the form of unexpected interventions at public events. In 1996, he unfolded a Chilean flag with a hole in the middle—a Chilean term for queer is *hueco*, meaning “hollow” or “hole”—at the Socialist Party Congress’ homage to Francois Mitterrand, as part of his campaign for the decriminalization of homosexuality. Later, in 1998, he interrupted the official inauguration of the *Feria del Libro*, which was filled with politicians from the *Concertación*, by getting on the stage to dance *cueca*, the traditional folklore Chilean dance, invoking the *cueca sola* performance by the organization of relatives of the disappeared (AFDD), in which women dressed in black (the colour of mourning) danced the Chilean national folk dance, their male dance partners starkly absent. He yelled out *juicio a Pinochet!* (“bring Pinochet to trial!”), confronting the democratic governments in their complicity to secure Pinochet’s impunity in Chile. Subsequently, at a public event commemorating Labour Day, Robles stripped naked to protest the complicity of union leaders of the *Central Única de Trabajadores*, the national workers union, with the neoliberal policies of the *Concertación*.

The performances of the *Che*, which use the stage provided by marches, political public events, and street protests, were initially received with suspicion or open hostility by the traditional male leaders of the left (such as sociologist Tomás Moulián) who perceived these performances to be trivializing the seriousness of the party. Robles’ *Che* persona directly challenged the gendered dichotomy between (masculine) “serious political practice,” and (feminine) performance. This dichotomy separates politics as a discrete event (such as participating in elections) from political practice as the everyday unavoidable reality of bodies that are at all times immersed in complex

networks of power. Within the gay movement, this dichotomy is reproduced as a hierarchy, embodied by the leader of the MOVILH, Rolando Jiménez, a clean-cut and masculine figure representing serious, real, important politics, and “then, there are us, the *locas*, with a more playful exercise of politics,” Robles reflects, pointing out that this dichotomy is something inherited from the dictatorship, when Pinochet represented politics as a feminized activity in order to demonize it. In this context, Jiménez is a model of male, masculine, respectable formal politics in contrast with the politics of trans bodies and feminist performance. (Robles jokingly poses the rhetorical question: If Jiménez deems himself the “political arm” of the gay movement, should the role of working-class *locas and travestis* be the “artistic arm”?)

I read Robles’s performances as a form of “queer” practice. I use this term cautiously, acknowledging that the notion of “queerness” can convey varying political nuances depending on the context<sup>22</sup> and that we risk homogenizing specific political practices by using the term “queer” without recognizing the specificity of these contexts. I seek regional conceptualizations of queerness; contemporary Argentinian philosopher Leonor Silvestri argues that the term “queer” is only useful if understood not as a global homogeneous political or sexual category, but rather as a practice of deconstructing sex/gender binaries and stable categories. Silvestri acknowledges that the academic appropriation of the term “queer” may tame its political potential and suggests we do not invest ourselves in any stable category of identity. The reason I am comfortable applying the term “queer” to my reading of Robles’s performances is because they suggest or gesture outside of homonormative definitions of male gay respectability, using the category of *loca, hueco, maricueca*, all terms that have a particular history of falling outside normative definitions of gayness. I am additionally wary of the use of the term “queer” as an English term that does not carry the same subversive potential when it is introduced in academia without a proper Spanish translation. Robles’ relationship with MOVILH has always been in tension with these homonormative definitions of neoliberal, respectable, middle class,

clean-cut gay males that exclude lesbians as well as working class, HIV positive, sex workers, and transgender subjects, thus the name of his self-produced documentary: “*una loca revolución*.”

Robles interventions aim at positioning the homosexual body in the public space as a creative, provocative, politicized and proposing body, and putting the queer demands and vindications on the agenda of the progressive political sectors. In this sense, we can recognize some convergences between Robles’ performances and those of *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis*, in terms of embodying queer genders and sexualities as political subjectivities. However, while *Las Yeguas* developed more crafted and elaborate installations that addressed the context of the Pinochet era, *El Che de los Gays* carried out more spontaneous actions that addressed the specific context of the politics of transition and the post-dictatorship.



Figure 20. "Te molesta mi amor" ("My love bothers you"). Performative action during street protest. Picture by Javier Godoy Fajardo, courtesy of Victor Hugo Robles.



Figure 21. "Venceremos" ("We shall prevail"). Performative action during street protest. Courtesy of Victor Hugo Robles.

Inspired by Muñoz's "anti-antiutopianism," I argue that the performance of *El Che de los Gays* challenges both the political pragmatism that tells us that we should only look to the future and not to the past, and the political pessimism that leaves us at an impasse of being "stuck" in the endless continuity of a violent past. By resignifying the image of the Che through the aesthetics of baroque and kitsch, Robles' performance poses queerness as a form of desiring that moves beyond the tyranny of the "here" and "now," suggesting that queer acts and performance already enact the potentiality and possibility of other worlds. Queerness is deployed as a *possibility*, as Robles emphasizes the possibility of going from a wounded position, to becoming a "threat" to the social order that inflicted that wound in the first place. In an interview given to Carmen Oquendo-Villar to the website of E-misférica, Robles contends:

I use utopian, defeated, chastised, and suffering images of prophets crossed by politics and Christianity who never won institutional power, but who left a message of hope and

transformation. I use them because I want to liken them to contemporary homosexuals, degraded and suffering, whose civil rights are not guaranteed, contemporary transvestites who are beaten and murdered, and lesbians who are stigmatized by the system. More than mounting an image of proud and happy gays, I deploy an image of a discriminated and stigmatized homosexual, a distorted subject who is a threat to the heterosexual social order.

I further argue that Robles' presence at public events effectively points at the *cruces*, the intersections, of leftist ideology and sexual body politics. More importantly, as Robles points out, these *cruces* are important because under Pinochet's dictatorship, sexuality was marketed to gay people within a neoliberal narrative, and the body became merely part of the logic of the market, reducing gay sociability to the hedonist space of the gay discotheque. *El Che de los Gays* presents a queer politicized body in a conscious and deliberate manner, resisting the neoliberal narrative by playing with the signifiers associated with homosexuality in Chile, such as *patitas de chancho*, *maricueca*—all derogatory names—and reappropriating them with a recognizable cultural symbol of politicized subjectivity (epitomized by the image of the *Che*). Robles is also aware that there is a risk of being silenced, co-opted, consumed, exploited, and fetishized if the performance character is read only in his "eccentricity" and otherness. Against that sort of "othering" reading, I see the effectiveness of Robles's performance lies not in being othered as deviant or pathological, or even "exotic" (especially within North American academia) but, on the contrary, he is able to invite his audience to perceive themselves interpellated as public bodies immersed in webs of political power.

## The Ghostly Persistence of the Bodies: “*Cuidado! El Machismo Mata*” (Santiago, Valparaíso and Concepción, 2007–present)



Figure 22. Memorial action for the victims of femicide in Chile (2007-2008).

The *Red Chilena Contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual*, which has coordinated several organizations since 1990, has carried out the campaign *Cuidado! El Machismo Mata* (“Warning! *Machismo* Kills”) since 2007, developing a long-term research-based activism towards a more politicized reading of violence against women that could link individual practices in relation to dominant narratives and cultural norms. The public installations of this campaign have deliberately tried to establish associations between the killing and disappearance of bodies under the military dictatorship—deemed politically motivated—and male misogynist violence against women—deemed private, or domestic, thus “nonpolitical.” Invoking a tradition of making the bodies of the *desaparecidos* reappear through pictures and cut-out cardboard silhouettes, they mark the ghostly persistence of these murdered women, and present the victims of male violence with similar visual strategies as the ones used to denounce the military’s crimes: along with marches in the public space, they carry out performative actions such as the installation of women’s shoes with tags identifying the victim’s name and age and the perpetrator’s

relationship to them. In what sense can these interventions in the public space be considered performances? What kind of embodiments and formulations of the body are at stake?

In “Theorizing Queer Temporalities,” Dinshaw puts forward the idea of the existence of affective communities across time, as well as the coexistence of multiple temporalities in the present, considering ghosts as the ontological status of bodies that are not here and now anymore. This is useful because, if military violence in Chile used the extermination of physical bodies to extinguish an economic, social, and aesthetic project, the idea of an ontology of ghosts works to explain the affective persistence of those bodies, *and* of that project (Diana Taylor calls this “hauntology”). Moreover, Freccero points to “queer spectrality as a phantasmatic relation to historicity that could account for the affective force of the past in the present, of a desire issuing from another time and placing a demand on the present in the form of an ethical imperative” (184). Freccero also notes that the body is conceptualized in Western thought as contained in a linear teleological narrative, and instead argues for an understanding of the presence of the past in the present in the form of a haunting, of the “cohabitation of ghostly past and present.”

Building on this notion of the affective force of the past as an ethical imperative in the present, we can rethink how a diversity of strategies that aim at bringing those bodies to the present—as ghostly presences—can represent not only the mourning of their disappearance, but rather, mark the affective persistence of a radical project of social justice as a disruption to the logics of neoliberalism in the post-dictatorship. Along similar lines, Muñoz suggests that,

The double ontology of ghosts and ghostliness, the manner in which ghosts exist inside and out and traverse categorical distinctions, seems especially useful for a queer criticism that attempts to understand communal mourning, group psychologies, and the need for a politics that “carries” our dead with us into battles for the present and the future. (46)

The display of shapes of women's bodies, pictures, and the project of a "memorial" of women who are victims of male violence, are all part of a strategy to situate violence against women within the discursive context of human rights, to politicize violence against women, and to point to the connections between male violence, gendered cultural norms of self-sacrificing mothers, and violent masculinities inherited from the dictatorship. For the women's and feminist movement under Pinochet's dictatorship, the connection between state violence and the private had been a central element of analysis and political demands (see Julieta Kirkwood *Ser Política en Chile. Los Nudos de la Sabiduría Feminista*). During the transition, that demand got reduced and displaced into the concept of violence within the family, putting "the family" at the center of the problem (as opposed to women's rights); making the subject of violence invisible; and making the victims the focus of intervention (Frazier, Parsons). This perspective on violence, which leaves the social construction of masculinities untouched, underlines the relevance of re-politicizing male violence and of re-introducing the analysis of the social, economic, and cultural factors behind it. Particularly relevant to the Chilean context are the connections between violence and militarized masculinities. For example, in one of their banners for the campaign, reproductive rights are asserted in opposition to the militarized ideology of motherhood, which as reviewed in Chapter 1, was mobilized, but not invented by Pinochet's dictatorship.



Figure 23. "No to mandatory maternal service."

In this way, the campaign *Cuidado! El Machismo Mata* seems highly effective in making such connections between the “public” and the “private,” and has raised the visibility of violence against women by introducing a more complex analysis that shifts the focus from individual personalities, pathologies, and predispositions, to bring it to the realm of state practices, nationalist ideologies and gender norms. The *Red* is making multiple connections—between motherhood and nationalism, masculinity and violence, women’s rights and human rights—that challenge gender cultural norms dominant in the post-dictatorship.

However, the articulation of a political agenda around the concept of “femicide” excludes in practice the opportunity to also make connections between male misogynistic and homophobic violence. Finding these common grounds is key for a feminist practice that does not want to become fixed in a political identity defined by anatomy, and that allows for a further understanding of the connections between misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia as well as other regimes that establish hierarchies between bodies, such as racism, ableism, and ageism. The *Red*’s activism aims to problematize conceptions about masculinity and femininity that support power relations based on violence, and the devaluation of women. But by affirming “women” as the political subject of feminist politics, these strategies disregard how violence is determined not only by gender, but also structured by other power relations, such as class, race, ability, and sexuality. Additionally, through the practices of memorialization victims of male violence, in comparison with the “political martyrs” of the left, still have their human rights somewhat attached to their respectability.

## The Monstrous Embodiments of *Hija de Perra*

I first saw the drag queen persona *Hija de Perra* (“Daughter of Bitch”) around 2002 at one of her usual stages: as a go-go dancer in a rockabilly show, where my friends *Los Kanibales Surf Combo* played while *Hija de Perra* danced frenetically to their music. Soon after, *Hija de Perra* became a regular number in many underground punk and alternative parties, as well as in some academic events, and political acts such as *marchas*. From 2004 until her untimely death in August of 2014, *Hija de Perra* also became the official MC for FemFest, a DIY feminist festival of which I was a cofounder.

This character, developed and performed by Víctor Hugo “Wally” Pérez Peñaloza, embodied a radically perverse female subjectivity: a bizarre, nymphomaniac, murderous woman who was featured as the lead character in the independent Chilean gore film *Empanada de Pino* (2008) by Edwin Oyarce, a.k.a. Wincy. In the film, set on the fringes of Santiago, (of the *ferias*, and *poblaciones*) *Hija de Perra* is a woman who makes a pact with the devil after losing her beloved husband, *Caballo*. To bring back her lost love, she has to make and sell *empanadas* made out of human flesh: *jugar y olvidar*, “to play and forget,” she repeats to herself before she endeavours to kill, after playing in her neighbourhood soccer games. This reference to cannibalism could be read as a parallel to the perverse intimacies between victims and their murderers and torturers: just as people in the film buy human-flesh *empanadas without knowing*, we go about our daily lives *without knowing* if the doctor examining us in the hospital was a torturer or a killer during the Pinochet era.



Figure 24. Scene from the film "Empanada de Pino" (Chile, 2008)

I argue that *Hija de Perra* took to the extreme the gender norms of the female body as defined by a male gaze and the narrative of sexual freedom placed by neoliberalism, while at the same time contaminating the transparent surfaces of the post-dictatorship with dirt and bodily fluids. Unlike other drag queen performances, *Hija de Perra* did not aim to embody a beautiful, perfect woman, but rather a grotesque reflection of what the male gaze desires and constructs as femininity. In this sense, *Hija de Perra* embodies the exaggeration of norms for performing femininity to the point of absurdity, more along the lines of "Divine" from John Waters' films than RuPaul, if we were to identify a North American counterpart. But as Roger Lancaster's ethnographic work in Nicaragua has already suggested, transgender performances can both deconstruct and/or re-stage normative gender identities. As a result, Lancaster warns us against reading all transgendered and transexual practices as *already* subversive, while making an argument against a global agenda of international gay politics based on a unitary gay identity imported uncritically from an urban, middle-class, North American context (homonormativity). In

sum, Lancaster's work reminds us that identities are always contingent, and a product of specific practices. In this sense, my reading of *Hija de Perra's* performance attempts to move beyond celebrating the transgressive qualities of queer embodiments in an *a priori* and universalizing way by examining how elements of this performance help destabilize narratives of the subject and the body that are functional to the neoliberal order.

*Hija de Perra's* live performances regularly included a number of biological women who performed as drag queens and assisted *Perra* with her activities, complete with prosthetic breasts, vaginas, and strap-on dildos. This mingling of bio-female and male bodies had the effect of exposing the artificiality of feminine identities and female bodies: the use of prosthetics could be read as presenting the body not as "natural," but rather as highly mediated by historically situated discourses, technologies, and disciplining practices of sex and gender. "People love fake shit. There is a taste for the fake tit. I have no idea why, we would have to ask Marlen," Wally tells *The Clinic*, in reference to Marlene Olivari, one of the most emblematic female figures of *Morandé con Compañía*, who underwent heavily publicized breast augmentation surgery. In addition to prosthetic genitalia, simulated bodily fluids also made an appearance in the performances of *Hija de Perra* with her sidekicks *Perdida* ("Lost") and *Las Zorras Rameras* ("Slut Foxes"). Their performances regularly included dancing and singing to lyrics of their band *Indecencia Transgénica* ("Transgenic Indecency"), which made reference to the pleasures of sharing fluids such as blood, feces, and urine with a sexual partner, and of transmitting and contracting STDs. These performances often utilized fake bodily fluids as props. For instance, *Hija de Perra* would spread fake menstrual blood out in the audience or pretend to discharge feces in *Perdida's* face. I argue that the use of real or fake bodily fluids that come outside the body signifies the interconnection of bodies and the permeability of bodily boundaries. I am further interested in how this overflowing of fluids, the ones that have no social value and no economic worth, can be read as bringing back what is repressed by the official

discourse and ideology of the transition in Chile, which tried to erase the blood (representing the dead and the tortured) and the dirt (representing poverty, rurality, underdevelopment and indigeneity) from its national identity. In fact, *Hija de Perra* often made references to *la inmundicia*, the filthiness, as her goal, her energy, her realm. I read this obsession with “filth” as a statement of class in *Hija de Perra*, as well as an allegiance with female deviant sexualities that have been deemed as “sick,” “dirty,” and “filthy,” and a gesture against hierarchies or racial purity.

Many times performances began with *Hija de Perra* and the other drag queens performing domestic work in very submissive ways while complaining out loud about abusive husbands, and then slowly moved into the characters engaging in bondage-like activities, such as whipping and riding each other or members of the audience, playing with the signifiers of passivity and aggression. The use of excess (excess of violence, of desire, of make-up, of blood, etc.) at the same time, expressed that which could not be contained by technocratic narratives of economic success and social mobility. I argue that *Hija de Perra*'s performances could not just be consumed by a male gaze either as sexualized femininity or as part of the repertoire of humorous homosexual characters in mainstream television, but instead they projected the persona of a vengeful character who challenged heteronormativity, class definitions of appropriateness and taste, and gendered definitions of decent and indecent women.

To analyze the use of gore within *Hija de Perra*'s performances, it is useful to consider broader discussions about the aesthetics of horror in relation to subjectivity. Mikita Brottman applies a Lacanian analysis to horror films and arrives at an interesting reflection about the cultural function of explicit scenes that display open, mutilated bodies. Noel Carroll, in his book *The Philosophy of Horror*, classifies such scenes as containing examples of *interstitial imagery*, which is horrifying because it defies categorization—neither inside the body nor out, neither part

of the body nor wholly alien, and therefore terrifying because of its essential otherness. A Lacanian analysis raises several similar interesting issues about the relationship between horror films, fiction, and subjectivity, leading to the conclusion that horror is held to be so offensive precisely because it leads to the dismantling of our notion of psychological coherence, and a questioning of the nature of reality itself. (...) From a Lacanian perspective, these visions of split and broken bodies represent graphic depictions of subjects *in process*, ultimately suggesting, as in pornography, possibilities of other selves, of different stories, different bodies (Brottman 127, emphasis original). Looking at the Chilean post-dictatorship, Lessie Jo Frazier considers the position of the last girl in the “slasher” films (a popular genre U.S. movies in the 1970s and 1980s characterized by the exploitation of violence, sexuality, and gore) as a possible image for agency and subjectivity in a “space of death.” This subject survives the horror of violence and, at the end, is able to react against this violence by taking up arms as a monstrous embodiment herself (as in “Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” 1974). At the same time, emphasizing the partial and the fake can contribute to the undoing of some of the main mechanisms that support modern gendered subjectivities: the myth of the natural, whole body, and the myth of genitalia as the sole location of sexuality. Reading the performances of *Hija de Perra* through the use of gore allows us to articulate a critique of a key mechanism of political subjection and domination under neoliberal post-dictatorship Chile: the imaginaries about the individual body.

As I have already suggested, the kind of embodiment that *Hija de Perra* performs can potentially be read through Lessie Jo Frazier’s idea of perverse subjectivities. This genre of performance, instead of presenting respectable sanitized victims as figures to publicly mourn, puts forward a rather monstrous embodiment engendered by state violence and neoliberalism. Frazier builds on Taussig’s notion of the “space of death” as a site of both production and destruction of subjectivities in the context of the Chilean dictatorship, a space where acceptable and unacceptable—perverted and monstrously embodied—subjects are defined. She points out that

this space can be perpetuated or dismantled by practices of memory, as it is a contested field, critical for struggles over political power. According to Frazier, "[i]n authoritarian regimes of state terror, the space of death is a patriarchal, bourgeois, and domestic space" (Frazier 262). Since the Chilean transition governments have promoted "reconciliation" instead of justice, they have failed to address effectively how terror continues to shape and structure social life. Opposing "political" practice to "national security", the military constructed political subjects discursively as contaminated by ideology and a threat to the continuity of the nation. Under this doctrine, a relationship between heterosexual masculinity and violence was produced, through the promise of security in both the domestic (house) and the public space (nation). Torture itself represented a cult of masculinity and "security personnel who refused to torture were themselves interrogated about their (homo)sexuality and allegiance to the fatherland" (Frazier 264). The narrative that needs to be challenged then is precisely the demonization of political practice and the gendered distinction between deserving and undeserving victims that it supports.

By embracing Frazier's perverted subjectivities as a subject position, it may be possible then to reclaim a post-dictatorship subjectivity and agency in terms of a subject "who is able to look in the mirror to assemble the pieces of her memories, reconnect them with her scarred body, unpack the structure of domestic discipline and the story imposed upon her, and ultimately, by recognizing the gun, reclaiming the capacity to act" (Frazier 2007, 277). Frazier's idea of embracing monstrous embodiments is useful for understanding how the performances examined above, in particular *El Che de los Gays* and *Hija de Perra*, articulate political subjectivities from the experience of terror (the "wound") while recovering a rejoicing view of politics, an unrestrained embrace of idealism, a guiltless and unapologetic reclaiming of the body, and the re-appropriation of a futuristic project of society not constrained by a totalizing present.

If *El Che de los Gays* and *Hija de Perra* are the “daughters” of *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis*, they have also given birth to their own offspring within the students movement, *Las Putas Babilónicas*, from the traditional and academically prestigious all male *Liceo José Victorino Lastarria*, who, on their Facebook page, classify themselves as a political organization whose mission is to “dominate the world:”

Also known as The *Fornicarias* Cousins, the Filthy Whores, The Scissors Sisters or the Bulimic Valkyries. We are a social-artistic collective composed by students of the Liceo José Victorino Lastarria assumed as homosexuals who face the world as proud *locas*, taking as referents Lemebel, Harvey Milk e *Hija de Perra*. Scandal is our form of protest against a heterocentric and machista society. We do not seek equality but look at the world in defiance, with spiky heels, without asking for tolerance we embrace difference...and that is our revenge. For the ones that were before, for the ones that are one, and the ones that will come.<sup>24</sup>

In Chapter Two I described how the sexualized spectacles of market nationalism shape a male gaze, and circulate neoliberal and heterosexual desires. I argued that these spectacles are key for the Imaginary and Symbolic processes of inscribing individuals and collectives as recognizable subjects. In this chapter, I have argued that the cases of performance analyzed interrupt the scripts of gendered subjectivities based on female respectability and individual (hetero)sexual freedom to participate in the (sexual) market. Furthermore, these performances are also pointing at the way that their bodies have become monstrous and malefic under the militarized male gaze. I read a utopian desire present in these performances in trying to stretch meanings and create alternative imaginations for identities and politics. However, I am also cautious of attributing performance itself, as a strategy, an absolute emancipatory value: recently, an anti-choice group “performed” the death of unborn babies in front of La Moneda, suggesting that this strategy can be mobilized in any political direction. It is crucial to be clear

about this: The notion of spectacle that I developed in Chapter Two tried to convey the theatrical dimensions of the state in its project of neoliberal individual (sexual) freedom. I use the concept of performance to distinguish efforts that come from marginalized subjects, subjects that have been deemed monstrous, abject, and that could potentially destabilize meanings and imaginaries that reinforce nationalisms, neoliberalism, and heteronormativity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Literally “barbeques,” iron bed frames used to electrify victims of torture by the DINA and CNI.

<sup>2</sup> “...el trabajo de ampliación de los niveles habituales de la vida es el único montaje de arte válido / la única exposición / la única obra de arte que vale; cada hombre que trabaja para la ampliación aunque sea mental de sus espacios de vida es un artista.”

<sup>3</sup> *Las “Yeguas” pronto se transformaron en un mito. Eran el terror de los lanzamientos de libros y de las exposiciones de arte. Irrumpían y nadie sabía qué podían terminar haciendo. Incluso se pensaba que, más que un dúo, las “Yeguas” eran una legión. Pero, en definitiva, las intervenciones del dúo no fueron más de veinte y existe escaso registro de ellas: sólo algunas fotografías de Paz Errázuriz y unos pocos videos.*

<sup>4</sup> “Marcha por un Aborto Libre y Seguro terminó dentro de la Catedral de la Santiago en plena ceremonia.” July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013. *The Clinic Online*.

<sup>5</sup> The original in Spanish reads:

*Para posicionarse políticamente más allá de la frontera identitaria y volverse un monstruo sexo disidente que se ubique discursivamente fuera del género, es decir, más allá de la heteronorma, hace falta dar otro paso. Hay que apropiarse del lenguaje y enunciar nuestras disconformidades. No basta con rebelarse para que nos digan que somos mujeres malas, es necesario y urgente renunciar al hecho mismo de ser mujer.*

(CUDS 33)

<sup>6</sup> The original in Spanish reads:

*Una joven muere por un aborto mal hecho, un gay es golpeado por los nazis, una travesti es violada por los ratis, una mujer desfallece de dolor en la sala de espera, un niño es obligado a pararse y no llorar, en la calle le gritaron maraca culiá, la niña no puede pololear, no tengas sexo anal, el partido es macho, lígate las trompas para entrar a militar, te tocó el poto porque lo provocaste, erís maricón porque te violaron y te quedó*

*gustando, andate pa' la casa a cocinar, te creí la más linda, pero erí la más puta... y así suma y sigue la violencia de género, en lo cotidiano, en lo institucional, en la calle y en la cama... ¿QUÉ MAS LE TENEMOS QUE CONTAR PARA QUE DESPAVILE? (sic)... Mejor déjese de patillas y venga a remediar su mal...25 DE NOVIEMBRE TODXS A LA CALLE, MARCHA CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA HACIA LAS MUJERES, 20:30 HRS. PLAZA ITALIA.*

<sup>7</sup> Por consiguiente, [los cuerpos] renuncian no sólo a una identidad sexual cerrada y determinada naturalmente, sino también a los beneficios que podrían obtener de una naturalización de los efectos sociales, económicos y jurídicos de sus prácticas significantes. (Preciado 13).

<sup>8</sup>Halberstam, Judith. "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies" from *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> In 2003 President Ricardo Lagos created the Commission on Political Prison and Torture under the direction of Monsignor Sergio Valech, which issued a report known as the "Valech Report."

<sup>10</sup> As announced by the first post Pinochet president Patricio Aylwin in 1990, which anticipated his government's cautious attitude towards the military and the right-wing.

<sup>11</sup> Eloísa González: "Asumirme lesbiana fue una decisión política." *El Mostrador*, October 18<sup>th</sup> 2012. Web.

<sup>12</sup> Consuelo Banda and Valeska Navea, editors of *En Marcha. Ensayos sobre arte, violencia y cuerpo en la manifestación social* (Editorial Adrede, 2013)

La dimensión estética de las distintas manifestaciones es, sin duda, uno de los asuntos que interroga a las disciplinas respecto al estatuto, la valoración y el rendimiento que puede ser pensado a partir de ellas (...) Desde el momento que se piensa la manifestación social como un escenario en el cual la creatividad, la masividad y

efervescencia política confluyen y poseen una notoriedad nunca antes vista, se vuelve necesario cuestionar el potente carácter de exhibición de estas “muestras de descontento” en cuanto a lo público e irónico de ellas. (8)

<sup>13</sup> “Chile 'Thriller' Protest: Students Stage Michael Jackson Dance For Education Rally” *The Huffington Post*. June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Web.

<sup>14</sup> Franklin, Jonathan. “Protesters’ Stories: Camila Vallejos and Chile. ‘We never in our dreams imagined it would grow so big so fast’” January 13, 2012. *The Guardian*. Web.

<sup>16</sup> Valenzuela’s short story “Other Weapons” is discussed by Lessie Jo Frazier “Gendering the Space of Death: Memory, Democratization and the Domestic” in relation to how state militarized violence structures the space of the domestic.

<sup>17</sup> Es raro tener que convivir en plena impunidad; en mi pega hay dos señores que trabajan en logística, uno de ellos perteneció al comando conjunto y el otro fue boina negra, escolta de Pinochet y trabajó con Ricardo Claro...lindo el personal! y hay que saludar y ser respetuoso cada día...no queda otra...me cuesta contenerme, sobretodo cuando uno de estos viejos me llevó a buscar a una compañera a Maipú y se quejaba de lo picante que era la comuna según él. Tenía unas ganas de gritarle, lumpen, desclasado, cuando con su cara de indígena insistía "por eso vivo en Las Condes", yo pensaba "no quiero pensar de dónde sacó la \$\$ pa vivir en dicha comuna, considerando su expertise en el comando conjunto"

<sup>18</sup> *“Ingredientes para el Conjuro”*

*Para curar de la crisis y de la explotación unas gotitas de rebelión*

*Para aguantar la triple jornada*

*legalización de la marihuana*

*Condomes y pastillas de anticoncepción*

*porque más que mera reproducción*

*el sexo es goce y pasión*

*Hombres, mujeres, travestis, transgéneros,*

*heteros, gays, bis y lesbianas*  
*a derrocar la heteronormatividad*  
*y a vivir e irrumpir según se nos da la gana*  
*Unas ramitas de flores pectorales*  
*para no creer en las falsas promesas electorales*  
*Polvo de estrellas y rayos de luna*  
*para que en Chile por abortos clandestinos*  
*no muera ninguna*  
*Mucha educación sexual*  
*para que las niñas se dejen de embarazar*  
*Rosas en ramilletes*  
*para meterse a Reyes por el ojete*  
*Hojas de libros con esdrújulas*  
*para que los políticos no pierdan la brújula*  
*Pastillas de Levonorgestrel*  
*que ayuden a las mujeres*  
*a tener sexo por placer*  
*Un manojo de maldiciones*  
*para la tropa de beatos santurrones*  
*deje que las mujeres tomemos decisiones*  
*Unos dientes de ajo y mucho valor*  
*para espantar al feminicida y al violador*  
*Unas hojitas de borraja*  
*para tirarle en la cara*  
*a los curas care'raja*  
*Un supositorio*

*para que el aborto*

*se practique en consultorios*

<sup>19</sup> Pedro Lemebel articulates a critique of the indiscriminate use of the category of “queer,” in “*Contra la Teoría Queer. Desde una Perspectiva Indígena.*” Lemebel’s rejection to queerness lies that in the risk of denying those to wish to retain some political identities, such as Indigenous Woman in Lemebel’s case.

<sup>20</sup> The original in Spanish reads:

*También conocidas como Las Primas Fornicarias, Las Putas Cochinas, Las Scissors Sisters o Las Valkirias Bulímicas. Somos un colectivo artístico-social compuesto por estudiantes del Liceo José Victorino Lastarria que se asumen homosexuales y se enfrentan al mundo como locas orgullosas, tomando como referentes a Lemebel, Harvey Milk e Hija de Perra. El escándalo es nuestra forma de protestar ante una sociedad heterocentrada y machista, no queremos ser iguales a los héteros, como Simonetti, no, miramos al mundo con mirada desafiante y con los tacos afilados, sin pedirle buena onda ni tolerancia, abrazamos la diferencia... y esa es nuestra venganza. Por las de antes, las de ahora y todas las que vendrán.*

## CONCLUSIONS

I have developed the argument that “sexualized spectacles of neoliberalism” mediate the conditions of possibility for gendered subjectivities in post-dictatorship Chile. Applying a feminist reading to materials from advertising to telenovelas to media articles, I showed how a narrative of “sexual freedom” works to legitimize neoliberalism, reproduce, or reinterpret national memories, and shape particular forms of (social, collective) desires. I turned to the popular *telenovela* to talk about the possibilities and limitations of transmitting an alternative memory through the heteronormative official history. I considered how *cafés con piernas* function as a counterpart to the construction of a particular masculinized subjectivity shaped by a militarized male gaze.

I conclude by arguing that queer and feminist activist performance offers alternative forms of embodiments (i.e., through the aesthetics of horror and pornography), subjectivities, political projects, and political imaginations, based on the “interconnection of bodies,” rather than on their individual rights and bodily sovereignty. By exposing how bodies are constrained by historical discourses and political regimes of biopower, the performance pieces I have examined challenge the narrative of the self-governed autonomous body of neoliberalism and suggest a critique of the natural and whole body. Outside the grand narratives of “the big trauma” of military violence, these performances point at the traumatic nature of everyday violence, the “small everyday traumas” experienced on the body at the intersection of neoliberal, heteronormative, sexist, racist, ableist, and transphobic regimes. I argue that these queer and feminist performances generate new kinds of cultural memories and intervene in the creation of Cvetkovich’s “archives of feelings” (2003) and political communities, creating their own legacies and lineage, outside or at the margins of the official memory.

Moreover, by pointing at the continuity of collective bodies, the performances challenge where one body begins and another ends. Despite the narrative of the self-sufficient body, humans have no chance of developing subjectivity or even of physically surviving without connection to other humans, to animals, or to non-human devices. The bodily fluids and the bodies “inside out” of gore, the partial and connected bodies of pornography, the bodies of ghosts of the past in these performances, all participate in the blurring of their temporal and physical boundaries of the self. Moreover, while spectacles of neoliberalism and freemarketism promote the idea of the body as a realm of the private and the individual, the performances I have discussed make painfully evident the public dimension of bodies. The bodies here are not free agents in an abstract world of equal opportunities, but bodies inserted in structures of privilege and oppression marked by their class, race, gender and sexuality.

The effectiveness of these performances is both attached to their sense of being “extraordinary” events that disrupt everyday normal life, while at the same time showing their accessibility as political practice. Moreover, since there is always some portion of the bodily experience that resists signification—a surplus, an excess—through performance these sites of excess, those discursive cracks, points of failure and non-sense of experience can be used as points of entry for articulating political subjectivities outside formal politics, not despite but *because* of this affective force (again, the “wound”).

While dominant discourses have denied any trace of their (now embarrassing) political affiliation to Marxism, performances by *Che de Los Gays* and *Red Chilena* articulate alternative temporalities, bringing into the scene affective connections to the past or “hauntologies,” based on the rejection of the dominant time of transition/reconciliation/post-dictatorship, a version of time that implies progress and evolution, one that punishes any resistance and ridicules it with statements like “get over it” and “move forward.” Feminist, queer, post-modern sensibilities

emerged at the turn of the millennium in a cultural context still dominated by public discourses invoking “*la mujer chilena*” and “the Chilean family” as the suturing metaphor for the post-dictatorship. These performances, and the utopian desire that inspires them, go far beyond the political institutional logics of the first four governments of the *Concertación*, which established the “reality” of neoliberalism as the only possible reality.

Some of the cases of queer and feminist activist performance analyzed here manage to bypass the pragmatic logic of what is possible under the current legal, institutional and economic order inherited from Pinochet, and quickly create images in the public space that can change the “cartographies of the feasible,” as announced by Rancière. Additionally, even though these performances exist outside the registers of official memory, or sometimes appear as an eccentric anecdote in them, they contribute to creating alternative cultural memories, and document the existence of queer and feminist legacies. This points to the need to pay further attention to the multiple forms of memorialization that take place in popular culture, that recreate particular forms of gender scripts, and to investigate and document these other traditions of political practice, based on ephemeral gestures and actions, that have the potential to question and deconstruct not only gender scripts but its connection to neoliberal exploitation.

The performances I have highlighted in my discussion tend to display the sign of the feminine *strategically*, rather than essentially, to oppose a militarized male gaze. For example, *Hija de Perra* exposes the horror of the feminine masquerade inherited from militarism and exacerbated by neoliberalism. By embracing abjection, monstrosity, perversion, and reclaiming the meaning of these terms as an oppositional strategy to political identities based on respectability, these performances transcend the logic of sanitized victims and the distinction between respectable and indecent, deserving and undeserving victims. These abject, perverse subjectivities are constituted from the place of wounding, the scar, for their bodies have been broken and then put

together again by ideologies and regimes of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. Finally, the cases of performance considered here point at a particular appropriation of queer theory that poses important questions to the theory itself, by resisting the easy formulation of discourses on sexual identity and diversity in neoliberal terms that sustain neoliberal exchanges as the only possible social relationships.

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