

Editors' Forum

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Trans-border Friendships and Strategic Inclinations: Some Insights on the Molecular Emergence of Subversion in Chile

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Abstract: In the last 30 years, Chile has crowned itself as one of the most singular, sophisticated, and cruel reference points of the global neoliberal laboratory. This article delves into the conceptual thinking of that laboratory by investigating the formation of an emotive-financial consensus based on the operation of institutionalizing sadism and a masochism of merit that profits from the affective destruction of collective intelligence. It situates this dystopic Chilean reality within the broader Latin American context, where the delicate administration of crisis and fear exposes the affective inclinations of persistence and resistance.

Keywords: dystopia, neoliberalism, financialization, Chilean politics

1 Of Dystopia or Politics-Catastrophe

Consider that at some point everything happens as if it required another image – another form of approximating that political reality that everywhere haunts the territory called Chile. It is as if that desert that was set up during the dictatorship and organized in the nominally democratic continuity did not allow itself to be apprehended by well-known periodizations. It is as if the devastation that accuses those bodies that are under that implacable neoliberal imperative – “work or die” – requires a kind of evocation or provocation. It is as if the insistence of those organized bodies – perhaps, in those forgotten but also possible for a long time in 2004, 2006,

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2011, and so many other times in many partial and fundamental struggles – solicit a more radical image, a kind of rupture that would dialog with, at the same time, the global economic-political organization of which this tiny state is an expression.

One thing seemed clear: that under any circumstances, this was not about a defective model that ruled and rules over this tiny country. Another thing seemed clear: this was also not about pure exceptionality – as if the Washington Consensus had not been exported elsewhere or its macroeconomic measures had not been put forth to lecture other countries that dared to disobey the tyranny of comparative advantages (or any of their euphemisms).

What is, then, this desert, this devastation? It is an institutionality that has made the void official, and as such, has also made official the savage race to *save yourself*. The privatization of everything, including water, and therefore, the plundering of both human and non – human nature, does not constitute a unique kind of organizational model. Rather, what it seeks is to do is to articulate an anthropology. It seeks to establish a symbolic universe, to assemble a world, or to put it even better, to administer its ruins.

The thing is that, on the one hand, verification only requires listening. And, on the other hand, to establish a relationship. Both Pinochet, but also Jaime Guzmán (the feared ideologue of the Chilean constitution), were absolutely clear in their intentions. Already in 1974 Pinochet pointed out that the “guiding principle of the relation between government and citizenship ... is one that does not give gifts nor hands out anything, but rather, helps those who demonstrate personal effort” and insisted that he would replace the lie of the *handout* for the *truth* of a life solely authorized to sell its labor-power (Pinochet 1984, 32). Thus, institutionalization of the void: lives have value only abstractly, in their bareness. And it is there that they are also Pro-Life, which is to say, they are Pro-Life in relation to the sadistic institutionality that offers only the possibility of selfish confrontation – that which they call *effort* and which is part of the symbolic justification of the organization of catastrophe. Moreover, even during the time when he was brought to popular justice, the ideologue did not tire of saying that things had been done so well with the approval of the 1980 constitution (which was approved during the years of official state terrorism), so that, even if another group would eventually govern the country, this group would not be able to change much of anything. And, to his satisfaction, those that governed the country after him did not even want to change much – having built or affirmed their own privileges *on the grounds of the model* and not *in spite of it*. That is what they have called the *insofar as possible* [*en la medida de lo posible*].

And, now, to put this into relative effect. That this is not about an exceptionality means that this is a singular expression of a global conflict. Such conflict is, literally, the repositioning, through various modes and intensities, of patterns of accumulation that went off track in the mid-twentieth century. The generalization

of privatization came hand-in-hand with the liberalization of markets – which meant nothing other than the unrestricted access to the stock market, to finance. Seen from this point of view, financialization appears as an expression of the limits of the industrial mode of accumulation – partly because of political confrontations and partly because of the exhaustion of a strictly material economy that would begin to be seen in the 1970s as planetary destruction. In this sense, the so called liberalization of financial markets *makes the catastrophe profitable*. This is demonstrated in the ways in which everything is allowed to become marketable insofar as there is a *democratic* expansion of abstraction in the form of stocks.

The “insofar as possible” which Patricio Aylwin spoke of, through the pact that governs the transition, ends up being that of the insertion into global accumulation through financialization, which feeds off an institutionalized void – an egoism-turned-anthropology with which the administrators of the massacre meant to erase the political imagination of a life form that exists beyond the mandate of producing value for another, which is to say, of bare life (Agamben 1998). Financialization allows them to sustain accumulation under the condition of catastrophe and organizes the institutional grounds that not only oblige, but also valorize, through a kind of masochism of merit, the handing over of lives to the global processes of extraction of value, and increasingly, to the very financialization of existence that has been ruined by debt, thus benefiting the elites whose deterritorializing lives plunder these territories to their heart’s content through the impersonal form of *stocks* [*acciones*].

The transitional president – who should be considered more a symptom than a single person – sets up an emotive financial consensus that blocks, or attempts to block, the possibility of being affected, both by the unresolved history that the transition pretends to forget, and by the plundering that is signified by entering into global financial markets. And if the *national security* component of the *Concertación* (i. e. the political coalition formed during the transition) resembles that of the dictatorship, this is because the deployment and exercise of its power is, like always, deployed to quell many instances of resistance that take place in spite of the attempt to integrate the perpetuation of the administration with the devastation of territories. These resistances nonetheless persist and organize themselves in a more or less explicit manner as a clandestine network of contagions that, in their affective inclination, would make for the emergence (here and there) of unlikely alliances. This is to speak of dystopia and not of Apocalypse, therefore, not so much because people faced the end of the world, but rather, the administration of its devastation; and also because what was seen was not uniquely the unbridled search for saving *the* world, but rather the experimentation or the rehearsal of the creative potential of worlds (in the plural).

2 The Insurrection That (Always) Arrives

The credit-based truce that was deployed during the 1990s, by virtue of a dystopic institutionality, began to crack in the early 2000s in a number of ways. One of those ways was due to the insurrection which had already been announcing itself in other parts of the world. It was already in Chile. Nonetheless, there had to be a kind of rehearsal of forms of sensitization [*sensibilización*] which would confront the financial emotive consensus that sustains (and sustained) the administration of the devastation within the institutional framework of big “P” Politics [*La Política*]. The big events that begin to take place in the streets during the early 2000s would become singular moments of experimentation for the collective potential of the student-based occupations [*tomas*] in 2006 and 2011, given that, in some ways, it is around these forms of contestation (which marched straight to the heart of the transitional truce by attacking *profits*) that there was the affective inclination toward unlikely alliances as well as a new affective sensibility in relation to a common interiority.

To defend nature, to contest the institutionalized impoverishment through health or education, to confront the guaranteed pauperization in old age through the pension system, to question the patriarchal constructions in all of the institutions and practices... All these seem to delineate the certain interiority of that which persists. In other words, of a common discontent in its multiple expressions; of a uniform discontent as the *Stimmung* of dystopia: politics-catastrophe. The possibility of such persistency, or even better, of the persistence [*per/durabilidad*] of a sense of the common as an affective inclination to being together and to persevere through other means that are not those of the official administration of discontent, which is to say, the strategic becoming of the inclination that is always in play.

In effect, it was in the face of those experiments that new forms of de-sensitization are simultaneously developed – forms which are, at the same time, forms of re-sensitization of the old. The generational rupture that confronts the epoch of the credit-based truce has ended up, after 2011, attempting to indict once again the institutional politics that itself is the catastrophe. The best intentioned of these, which expresses itself in the *Frente Amplio*, appears to be – insofar as it supports a political imaginary that does not express an aspect of open confrontation – is the mode of indicting explosive violent confrontations. That is, violent more because of their radicality than because of their specific methods, methods which emerge in the midst of unlikely alliances and having in common all the problems with education, extractivism, pensions, and patriarchal violence, among others. They have become a constituent spirit that, in this sense, indicts the very institutions that administer the ruins.

This is a question that is shared in other places that, in spite of the asymmetry between the creative potential from which they emerge and the channels through which they want to redirect it, would open the way to another channel of de-sensitization – this time, a conservative one. The multicultural [*multiculti*] discourse, appearing to be so open and inclusive that it even doubts calling itself *anti-neoliberal*, does not seem capable of bearing with more confrontation. It opens up through the clamor of those bodies that have found themselves in the streets or alongside others at occupations and throughout the territories, precisely because this discourse both separates and is separated from an imaginative potential – given that their condition is one of reincorporation into the institutions that are being repudiated (Berardi 2016). This is a generalized frustration that, as the global economic crises from 2008 demonstrated, the infrastructure which plunders the globe, albeit fragile, furthers the emergence of movements with a confrontational discourse that situates the return of traditional values through whatever methods are necessary with the sole aim of resolving the problem of those left vulnerable by the financialized extraction of value. *There is no room for all of us* is what the ascending fascism will say in an attempt to avert those trans-border friendships that had opened up in each one of the singular points of expression of the dystopian *Stimmung* that, without a doubt, overflows territorial borders.

Attacking the immanent and imminent corporeal verification of devastation – both through the de-sensitization of progressives as well as the properly conservative reaction – consolidates a libidinal infrastructure of plunder and surrender that slowly deploys hunting apparatuses [*dispositivos de cacería*] upon dissident bodies in order to establish a return to traditional values of the (not so) new right-wing within the realm of desire.

3 Affective Inclinations and Their Strategic Emergence

The attenuating reaction coexists at the same level as those collective processes through which the rehearsals of persistence and resistance propagate in the face of the imminent/immanent credit-based ruins. Therefore, one may challenge the historical exigency that attempts to cut people off from the analytical models of social conflict, which themselves are closed off by transcendentalization of social conflictivity, that is, by organizing separation, reaction and resistance. One may assume, in contrast, a (dis)position of strategic self-reflection that is situated at the limits of its own possibilities. In this sense, one may move toward putting forth a

militant analytic that is implicated in the potentialities of contingent convergence between the most unusual expressions of discontent.

A convergence of the most singular collective intelligences appeared as splinters for more than a decade in their respective (dis)positions by expressing a series of rehearsals and a pragmatics which is very much alive by common discontent. Communalizing, as such, the (in)dignity – that closure of the quotidian experience through which the neoliberal post-dictatorship confiscates bodies and territories amid the financial administration of its own ruins.

Only then – in the living experience of quotidian conflictivity, in the living experience of the ruin that inhabits this world – one may speak of an affective inclination that is transitional in order to express the unusual links through which the trans-generational fracture was re-vindicated in the streets in relation to its own fable: the narrative of democratic consensus based on a civic therapeutic of financial redress to neoliberal violence, imposed by the dictatorship, and which ended up sophisticating the progressive management of the “Concertación” in its various realizations.

To speak of a tremor is to speak of a rippling shockwave that moves through the corporeal – corporative medium through which that functionalist affection was normalized – that same one that for decades circumscribed the social pact, that simulacrum of the antagonism between the right and the left. An affective removal [*remoción*] that was capable of making sentient the very subtle programming through which the emotive administration of the pact of reconciliation was set up in the very heartbeat of “political life.”

Such inclinations express a trans-generational clash that unsettled the material and sensitized corpus through which the emotive pact was made, a reconciliation made through a placing-in-common the discontent or the exhaustion in relation to the neoliberal imperative of self-managing the total privatization of life – the institutionalized void or death.

From the right to education, to the right to life, the affective inclinations erupted in the streets and unfolded in their eminently sentient trans-generational yet unlikely, unsettling, and disruptive power [*potencia*], thereby exposing in their own misery the limits of the emotive-financial consensus behind the transition, and at the same time, the limits of the *official* register of institutional politics. These trans-generational alliances happened like an untimely assault on the frigid tongue of institutional officials, placing at the center of gravity *catastrophe politics*, the very strategic challenge of another kind of politicization. In concrete terms, the question of the possibility of “occupying” [*okupar*] the *moneda*¹ once again

1 Translator note: *La Moneda* palace is the seat of government in Chile which was infamously bombarded and burnt in the September 11, 1973 coup d'état. “La moneda” also means “the coin” in Spanish.

emerged; “occupy” it not to bombard it or burn it down, but also not to make it functional it, rather, to probe the possible limits of a *strategic mockery*.

The challenge of mocking *la Moneda* put into play a “new offensive” based on exploring the strategic form of a confrontational practice that was capable of exposing the sentient limits of a governing emotive closure through which the transition’s credit-based truce operates on an unconscious level. A sentient offensive that is both analytic and strategic, as well as the de – programming of the *dystopic Stimmung* through which the libidinal infrastructure of a generation was institutionalized. Such was the surrender of a generation, of an epoch, of an episteme, in other words, of the “*insofar as possible*.”

The emerging strategy of the affective inclinations removed and exposed – from that knot in the throats of different epochal experiences of the *fabulous* transition – the explicit coalition [*concertación*] between the left and the right based on the “traditional values” which bared the norm of corporeal-corporative self-capitalization of the open wound of the *coup* from 45 years ago. In this sense, it placed at the center of politicization its impossible saturation, and with that, the presupposed challenge of apprehending, in a sensitized form, the distinct impacts and affects through which the credit-based closure of everyday life is differentially administered. Here one may speak of politicization as a task of articulation and alliances, of a clandestine network of contagion that attempts to place in common the strategies and everyday efforts through which people persist in the face of the very ruins of “the possible,” attempting to try out collective practices that could erode and de-program the financial therapeutic.

High school students and university students have been able to interrogate the organizational infrastructure of inequality in Chile through educational practices that go beyond the public – private dichotomy by asking about the affective cost of total privatization. Students and retirees converge in the demand of an education that is not financialized and in the possibility of untying the pensions system that structures the singular Chilean neoliberal model in relation to other regimes throughout the globe. Women and gender non-conformists from urban spaces instigate campaigns of solidarity against persecution and harassment of Mapuche women, ancestral authorities, and activists that defend Mapuche territories. In other words, encounters and alliances that make possible trans-border corridors, mechanisms of embodiment and dis-identification at the same time, through which positional coordinates are exchanged while a certain self-reflexive practice about everyday strategies and artifactualities [*artefactualidades*] of production are used to “persist in the face of a reality that is so *charcha*.”²

2 Translator note: “Charcha” is a colloquial word that is both, in this case, both *undesirable* as well as of *bad quality*.

4 The Anomalous Power [potencia] of Trans-border Friendship and How It Is Hunted Down [su cacería]

The Latin American reality has sown broken lives throughout its territories. The Pacific Alliance that Chile has promoted internationally – along with Colombia, Mexico, and Peru – makes evident the extractive investment as well as the infrastructural conditions of the current financial devastation: 30,000 people disappeared and a new form of internal war in Mexico; thousands of false positives in this war that is founded on the surreptitious death penalty of social leaders and indigenous people that, from 2016 until today, has left more than 320 people murdered in Colombia; the unveiling of a corporative plot by the political elite that forewarns an investor's paradise which feeds off of the sophisticated production of spaces of social crisis in Peru.

In these days, both in Chile and in Argentina, the libidinal infrastructure of plunder and surrender has made its objective to neutralize the trans-border corridors that – between the years 2008 and 2018 – allowed for the construction of zones of political experimentation and coalitions of care at the borders of institutional politics and the energy of the revolt that pronounced themselves more than a decade ago in the streets of the country. Today, Macarena Valdés (“La Negra”), environmental activist, and Santiago Maldonado (“El Brujo”), anarchist artisan, are the names of those murdered in August of 2016 and 2017, respectively, as they sought to “inhabit the limits” [*“habitar las lindes”*] – which is to say, to inhabit the territories and cross the borders that delimit them (Deleuze and Guattari 2002). Their names resonate in the context of the street mobilizations that transversally connect in their memory the power [*potencia*] of agitation that sustain women and gender non-conforming communities, Mapuche communities, and the movements for the defense of water and the defense of territories.

Today, once again, the world mourns in the wake of another murder, this time Alejandro Castro – a union leader from the fishermen's union in Quintero – who was murdered in the struggle against the intolerable industrial contamination that has killed too many, has sickened young girls and young boys, has produced cancer in adults, and even produced unintended abortions. Alejandro, after being threatened by the police, was found “suicided” in quite strange circumstances similar to those of Macarena Valdés, whose murder eventually had to be recognized as such after a somewhat independent autopsy was carried out.

These murders demonstrate the mutation through which what the infrastructure of plunder and surrender now incorporates physical threats and the

production of fear as a new tactic within its repertoire – all of which further reinforces the institutionalizing sadism that doubles-down on the masochism of merit. All together, these operate as a *Pro-Life* device [*dispositivo*] of classification that administers the sacrificial immobility through which the conflict produces surplus value; through them, trans-border bodies are condemned to death and any convergence between those that persist dissipates the performativities of the Chilean neoliberal dystopia; at the same time, they cultivate the conditions of a *desiring reification* of the nationalist identitarianisms that become ever more present and socially legitimate in the Southern Cone.

Macarena Valdés, Santiago Maldonado and Alejandro Castro must carry on in their bodies an anomalous power that everywhere threatens the norms of the regime of libidinal attenuation which plunder the country, to demand its surrender, to thereby stimulate fundamentalist identitarianism. The memory of the common speaks of trajectories that have challenged the functionalization of privileges, by the affective inclination of experience of poor women in the city toward the sensitizing of Mapuche women, as well as the opening of alliances between kids, youth, women, gender non – conforming communities and men around the devastation of the territories and of their molten bodies. By actively constructing a practice of self – defense that concentrates upon the possibilities of multiplying zones of care and experimentally new space – times of revolt, by rehearsing new strategies and artifactualities that make possible a sustainable duration, which is to say, a persistence of anemic intensities that are at play in the moment that bodies end up in the streets, end up in the borders of their functionalization and isolation, where no body, after this encounter, is ever the same.

(Translation by Alejo Stark.)

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