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Warping the Word and Weaving the Visual: Textile Aesthetics in the Poetry and the Artwork of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña

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Warping the Word and Weaving the Visual: Textile Aesthetics in the Poetry and the Artwork of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family and my friends.

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Warping the Word and Weaving the Visual: Textile Aesthetics in the Poetry and the Artwork of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña

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The present work explores the presence of Andean textile imagery in the poetry and the visual art of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña with the goal of illustrating how these woven aesthetics enrich the content of the written word and other artistic media by supplementing them with non-verbal, visual and tactile planes of meaning. Through the discourse of the thread, Eielson and Vicuña generate an alternative means of expression that dialogues with the conventionality of human language, the creation of cultural memory and the connection between intercultural groups. To prove this thesis, I approach the authors' poetry and visual art based on theoretical and cultural studies regarding the materiality and the visuality of the text and other media in combination with a comparative analysis of the structural and the design properties of Andean and indigenous cloth products, namely the *tejido* and the *khipu*. In addition to close readings of poems that illustrate how the presence of the textile augments the meaning of the written text, I also illustrate how Andean weaving aesthetics

provide the metaphorical springboard of comparison upon which a critical analysis of their visual art is based.

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Introduction

Weaving words together on the page and fibers together in their visual art, Jorge Eduardo Eielson (Lima, 1924-2006) and Cecilia Vicuña (Santiago de Chile, 1948) play upon the associations between writing, weaving, the visual and the tactile. Their poetic works generate alternative perspectives regarding language, media and cultural memory. While varying characteristics of textile aesthetics appear in their poetic and their plastic opuses, the most recurring figures are the knot in Eielson's opus and the string in Vicuña's artistic production.

In his 2002 publication of *Nudos*, Eielson speculates the signifying properties of the knot with the verses, "Nudos que no dicen nada / Y nudos que todo lo dicen" (322). Similarly, Vicuña addresses the relationship between the string and the word with a verse from her 1997 publication of *Palabra e hilo*: "La palabra es un hilo y el hilo es el lenguaje." With these verses, both authors suggest that weaving and language remain intricately entwined. As a non-alphabetic media, the Eielson illustrates that the knot literally does not *say* anything; however, due to its capacity for storing meaning, it does "silently" perform everything. Moreover, Vicuña's verses which balance like a teeter-totter along the fulcrum of the repeated verb *es* illustrate that words and strings can be contextualized in a homologous relationship despite their obvious differences in form and material.

While Eielson and Vicuña allude to Andean *tejidos* and *khipus* through direct naming or through the use of fabrics in their plastic works, their written and their visual

art also incorporates an often unrecognized layer of textile aesthetics that provides a non-verbal and a non-traditional representation of meaning through spatial, visual and tactile metaphors. This study explores the presence of the Andean textile imagery in the poetic and the visual works of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña with the goal of illustrating how these woven aesthetics enrich the content of the written word and other artistic media by supplementing them with non-verbal, visual and tactile planes of meaning. To prove this thesis, I approach the authors' poetry based on theoretical and cultural studies regarding the materiality and the visuality of the text in combination with a comparative analysis of the structural and the design properties of Andean and indigenous cloth products, namely the *tejido* and the *khipu*. In addition to close readings of poems that illustrate how the presence of the textile augments the meaning of the written text, I also illustrate how Andean weaving aesthetics provide the metaphorical springboard of comparison upon which a critical analysis of their visual art is based.

Although from different generations, with Eielson first publishing in the forties and Vicuña in the seventies, both engage the formal and the aesthetic legacies of the Latin American avant-garde. Additionally, they share diasporic lifestyles due to self-exile, in the case of Eielson, and political exile, in the case of Vicuña. In his birth city of Lima, the young Eielson forms a very close relationship with his rhetoric teacher and mentor José María Arguedas. During his early years of formation, Arguedas introduces Eielson to many of the Peruvian intellectual elite who share with the aspiring poet their knowledge of Andean culture and archaeology. Most associated with the *Generación del cincuenta*, Eielson is generally recognized for his connection to the development of what

has been deemed "pure poetry," or that is, a type of poetry that favors the rigor of intellectual pursuits rather than the social plight of the nation. For the vast majority of his adult life, he rejects Peru opting to travel throughout the Americas and Europe on various scholarships and grants while maintaining a permanent residence in Milan, Italy, where he openly lived his life as a gay artist, until his death in 2006.

Much like Eielson, Cecilia Vicuña also spends the majority of her adult life outside of her native country of Chile where she was born in Santiago in 1948. Coming from a long line of artists in the family, Vicuña studies art formally at the National School of Fine Arts at the University of Chile. During these years of formation in the 1960's, she associates with the counter-culture and forms, alongside her peers, a marginal group of poets and artists called *Tribu No*.[1] During this time, Vicuña is inspired by Henry Miller and authors from the beat generation such as Jack Kerouac; and as a result, her work starts to show a rejection of materialism.[2] In 1973, while completing her studies at Slade School of Fine Arts, University College, London, she finds herself unable to return to Chile after the military coup on September 11, 1973.[3] Although she completes many of her poetic and her artistic creations while residing in other countries

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1 For more information on Vicuña and the litearary and the artistic scene of the young poets of the 1960's in Chile, please see Bianchi (1995).

2 In line with the rejection of materialism, the work of Eielson and Vicuña illustrates strong ties to the minimalist currents of the 1960's which cultivates brief forms in literature and stripped-down volumes in architecture and visual art. With regard to the Chilean context, Nicanor Parra's *Artefactos* and *Quebrantahuesos*, a type of mural-poetry, provide an aesthetic genealogy for the minimalism found in Vicuña's poetry and artwork.

3 During this time, Vicuña's partner is Chilean poet Claudio Bertoni, also a member of *Tribu No*.

such as Colombia and the United States, Vicuña's opus relates to the work of a group of artists that remain in Chile during the military coup called *avanzada* or *Nueva escena*. The literature and the visual art of this generation are characterized by a highly encoded, mixed-media aesthetics that seek to avoid the harsh blow of the political censor's eye. While Vicuña finds outlets for publication and exhibition outside of Chile, her work, like many other artists who remain in the nation during the dictatorship, is censored in her home country. She currently resides in New York City and Santiago where she continues to write poetry, produce films and create visual art.

Throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, scholars take note of Eielson's and Vicuña's large body of poetic and artistic works. While critics of Eielson such Luis Rebaza Soraluz and critics of Vicuña such as M. Catherine de Zegher acknowledge the strong presence of a weaving-metaphor that creates an alternative or a non-hegemonic discourse in the authors' poetry and art, they do not provide an in depth analysis regarding the correlation between the textile and the text.[4] Overall, the absence of this research creates a very large obstacle in understanding *how* this textual-textile metaphor works. What the scholars observe well is the finished verbal product, and what they ignore are the inner workings of the "poetic loom" from which it is created.

With regard to Eielson's opus, critics such as Martha Canfield and William Rowe agree that the recurring form of the knot exists as a metaphor that reappropriates

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4 See Rebaza Soraluz (2000) and M. Catherine de Zegher (1997).

indigenous culture and places it within a modern aesthetic context.[5] Referring to Eieslon's ability to easily capture the aesthetics of varying genres and eras, Martha Canfield states, "La actualidad de su obra reside justamente en este continuo 'desplazamiento' con el fin de crear una especie de red de relaciones interactivas entre racionalidad y magia, entre sagrado y profano, entre afectividad y concepto, entre visual y verbal, entre arcaico y moderno" (Presentación 29). Here, Canfield acknowledges the hybridity in Eielson's work from a global perspective; the Peruvian author-artist combines classically separated contexts such as the archaic and the modern in order to create a new *network* of relationships. To add to Canfield's statement, I propose that Eielson surpasses the mere mixing of diverse artistic discourses. Rather, he employs the aesthetics of the textile to enhance the meaning of other signifying media such as poetry and visual art with a non-verbal, woven layer of significance.

According to William Rowe, Eielson's poetry allows "el acceso a un estadio nuevo: a múltiples e impredecibles *interfaces* entre la palabra y el cosmos, entre la literatura y lo que tradicionalmente se excluye" (86). Here, the key word remains *interface*. As Rowe highlights, Eielson's poetry serves as a meeting place or generative zone between the word and that which words traditionally omit from official discourses. When we relate Rowe's comment to the presence of a non-verbal, woven layer of meaning in the text, it supports the notion that Eielson "silently" weaves meaning which

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[5] For more information see William Rowe and Martha Canfiled in *Jorge Eduardo Eielson: Nudos y asedios críticos* (2002).

normally escapes the field of literature into his work.[6] While in agreement with this notion, the objective of this study remains to examine *how* Eielson creates this interface based on knowledge regarding the physical properties and the aesthetic values of Andean *tejidos* and *khipus*.

In contrast to the ideas of the aforementioned scholars, Ricardo Silva de Santisteban expresses a different view in the prologue of Eielson's 1976 edition of *Poesía escrita*. He maintains that Eielson's latter works such as *Mutatis mutandis* (written in 1954), *Erosiones* (written in 1958) and *Canto visible* (written in 1960) show the decay of language. Unfortunately, Santisteban's argument ignores the presence of the textile in Eielson's poetry. As I illustrate in the next chapter, Eielson's "destruction" of language, or that is, the way in which he signals the conventionality of the words on the page, highlights the text's materiality and links the verbal material to the silent, woven content of the poem that underlies the printed text.

Despite all of these astute, scholarly observations, what remains to be examined in Eielson's poetry and art is how the processes of weaving and the visual/tactile aesthetics of *tejidos* and *khipus* change the meaning of the written words on the page. In my view, the Peruvian author-artist does not merely mention the figures of the knot and the thread as a means of alluding to Andean culture. His opus illustrates his profound knowledge of textile technology, and he utilizes this information to construct literary texts and visual art

[6] For more information regarding the use of textile imagery in the generation of an organic, non-hegemonic Andean discourse, please see Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's 2010 publication titled *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*.

enriched by the metaphoric play inherent to Andean textiles. Until the depth of these textile-textual conventions comes to light, a thorough understanding of Eielson's poetry will remain elusive.

Regarding Cecilia Vicuña's work, scholars such as M. Catherine de Zegher, Juliet Lynd and Hugo Méndez Ramírez agree that the metaphor of weaving plays a central role in communicating a type of cultural awareness derived from the indigenous cultures of the Andes. Zegher proposes that Vicuña uses the textile as a form of "alternative discourse and a dynamic model of resistance" (27). Or, in other words, the employment of cloth and threads, physically in her visual art and metaphorically in her poetry, resists the established hegemony of mainstream print and photographic media. Also approaching Vicuña's poetic and visual works from the margin, Juliet Lynd focuses on Vicuña's use of the *khipu* as a means of "recording or (re)recording the memory of violent, traumatic collective histories" that identify the other (1592). Like Zegher's statement regarding poetry as resistance, Lynd maintains that weaving in the work of the artist represents a means of speaking for those who cannot, and by using art as a "transformative power," Vicuña "denies fixed meanings and privileges creative connections, positioning . . . hope against hegemonic discourses of power" (1592). Although Zegher and Lynd provide insightful readings of Vicuña's opus, I find that their arguments remain problematic because they do not recognize that the technology of weaving, whose purpose is to unify materials, inherently serves as a model of cultural connection. In this light, Vicuña employs a visual and a tactile medium that resists

hegemonic discourses but also suggests a new means of bridging ways of thinking, both mainstream and alternative, in order to build a new awareness.

While Hugo Méndez Ramírez focuses less on weaving as an alternative discourse in Vicuña's poetry, he acknowledges a reconciliatory effort on her part to bridge the theoretical schism between European and Native American cultures (59). Although he does not provide much evidence for this claim, it remains important to highlight his recognition of Vicuña's work as an opus that generates a perspective of cultural connection. Overall, he seeks to contextualize the Chilean author's poetry within the genealogy of canonical Latin American authors such as Vicente Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz. According to Méndez Ramírez, like poets of the avant-garde such as Huidobro, Vicuña affirms the superiority of the metaphor; however, her use of this literary device differs from the poets of the early twentieth century because she draws from an Andean metaphorical tradition where the juxtaposition of words, fibers and landscapes generates meaning (Méndez Ramírez 64). In agreement with Méndez Ramírez, I contribute an analysis of how Andean weaving practices and the cultural meaning embedded in *tejidos* and *khipus* create an interface for Vicuña's poetry in which the word and the string act as homologous entities, thus signaling the roots of a common language and an interconnected planet.

In order to further comprehend Vicuña's literary and plastic opus, an understanding of the mechanics and the aesthetics of Andean textiles remains necessary. As an artist who continually studies the medium of the textile and Andean culture, Vicuña's work enters the contemporary dialogue regarding the *tejido*, the *khipu* and the

Andean cosmovision. Although her poetry and art spring from a subjective place, they intertwine with sources of scientific analysis regarding fiber artifacts. In fact, the author quotes prominent scholars in the field of textiles such as Mary Frame and Elayne Zorn. These studies, which I will address in the following chapter and also in chapter three, illuminate the Andean mode of textile cognition. It is through fiber that Andeans view the world, and in order to fully capture the nuances of Cecilia Vicuña's poetry and visual art, we must follow suit by examining the way in which weavers construct textiles and embed them with cultural meaning.

To conceptualize Eielson's and Vicuña's poetic and visual works within the framework of Andean weaving, I present information in the latter half of this chapter regarding the materials and the techniques employed for creating *tejidos* and *khipus*. For general purposes, I cover key points of textile artist Anni Albers' research regarding the parts and the functioning of the loom which create various weave structures.[7] In addition to this information, Albers' theorization of how fiber material becomes meaningful form through design serves as a basis for examining the visuality inherent in Eielson's and Vicuña's visual poetry. Regarding the construction and the design of Andean *tejidos*, I include the research of Teresa Gisbert, Silvia Arze and Martha Cajías in order to provide a synopsis of the historical values of Andean textiles and to furnish an overview of the materials and the mechanical processes employed for weaving.[8] To supplement this information, the scholarly work of Lynne Meisch, Verónica Cereceda, Mary Frame,

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[7] For more information, see Albers (1965).

[8] See Gisbert, Arze and Cajías (1987).

Pedro Mege Rosso and José Sánchez Parga examines how the design patterns in *tejidos* represent cultural meaning.[9]

Regarding the *khipu*, I incorporate Galen Brokaw's historical study of the device to illustrate its employment and its development in the Inka Empire.[10] In addition, Gary Urton's study pertaining to the parts of the *khipu* and their role in the coding of information within the instrument's structure remains imperative for understanding Eielson's and Vicuña's references to *khipu* in their poetry and in their visual art.[11] With respect to the non-structural elements of this knotted media, scholar Rosaleen Howard provides significant knowledge regarding Quechua narrative, the landscape and the use of the *khipu* thus demonstrating how the knots on pendant *khipu* cords correspond to Andean concepts of space and memory.[12]

Studying Andean *tejidos* and *khipus* based on the knowledge from the previously mentioned investigations trains the eye to recognize the visual textile patterning in Eielson's and Vicuña's poetry and plastic works. Nonetheless, to further examine the authors' poetry and go beyond this surface-level identification, information regarding *how* these signifying, aesthetic elements merge with the symbolic meaning of the written text remains necessary. To illuminate the interface between the textile and the authors' texts, studies by literature scholar Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, theorist Julia Kristeva and

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[9] For more information, see Meisch (1987), Cereceda (1978), Frame (2001), Pedro Mege Rosso (1990) and José Sánchez Parga (1995).
[10] See Brokaw (2010).
[11] See Urton (2003).
[12] For more information, see Howard (2002).

author Tamara Kamenszain highlight the inherent relationship between cloth and writing.[13] Basing her research on Kristeva's theorization of the *thetic* break between semiotic drives and spaces of enunciation, Kruger posits that all written texts abject the functional role of the mother/textile which is to clothe and to protect, thus creating a *thetic* break and passing into the realm of signification. With regard to Eielson's and Vicuña's poetry, these textual-textile theories illustrate the possibility for a metaphorical fabric framework to exist "silently," but visibly, within the body of a signifying, material text.

In conjunction with Kruger's postulation, Tamara Kamenzsain conceives weaving as related to the mother and suggests that the maternal figure of the family instills in her children, both male and female, the artisanal piecing and seaming together of texts as if they were fabrics bound for use in garments. This theory brings about an awareness of the transmission of textile technologies to the text; all authors, including Eielson and Vicuña, work their literature by critically crafting it from material and ingenuity. When the writing process is finished, the material leaves traces of the creative cognition that formed the words on the page. In considering the poet-artists' work, if we examine these muted traces of thought, we discover the textile layer of knowledge in the text that holds a value not articulated by writing.

Having established the theoretical and the material connections between the text, the *tejido* and the *khipu*, I turn my analysis toward what the intersection between the word and the cloth means within a poetic framework. To do so, I relate the textual-textile

[13] See Kruger (2001), Kristeva (1984) and Kamenszain (2000).

paradigm with poetic theory of the twentieth century including, but not limited to, Hugo Friederich's research regarding the concept of empty transcendence in modern poetry, Susan Stewart's examination of poetry's appeal to the tactile and the visual senses, and Roland Barthes' inquiries into the semiotic and fashion.[14] In line with the figure of the knot, Eielson often employs tension in his poetry, or that is, the oppositional pull between words of polar meanings. As Friedrich illustrates in his study of modern poetry, this type of poetic dissonance forms an integral part of the genealogy of modern Western poetics which starts in the nineteenth century in France and continues into the twentieth century as well. Susan Stewart's research on the senses of poetry provide an essential perspective regarding the play of visual and tactile elements in Vicuña'a poetry. Moreover, Stewart links motion and time in poetry to the sense of touch thus facilitating our comprehension of Eielson's and Vicuña's highly rhythmic pieces of visual art. Finally, Roland Barthes' study of semiotics and the language of fashion offer valuable perspectives with respect to Eielson's and Vicuña's work because it describes the authors' negotiation of meaning in order to step beyond the materiality of the written sign and access the type of metaphor-made knowledge that lies in the non-verbal textile framework of the poem.

In addition to poetic theory, I also support the close readings of Eielson's and Vicuña's written and visual works with philosophies regarding Andean art, abstraction and the use of the image in Andean culture. Thomas Cummins's research on Andean *quero* vessels demonstrates how abstract design plays a key role in the formation of

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[14] See Friedrich (1967), Stewart (2002) and Barthes' "Elements of Semiology" (1964), "Writing Degree Zero" (1953) and "History and Sociology of Clothing" (1957).

camay, the notion in which all material objects embody the cosmic energy of their creation. Furthermore, César Paternosto's investigation regarding the origins of abstraction in art suggests that the design of geometric forms derives from weaving practices and posits that the abstract art of the twentieth century borrows many aesthetic forms from Amerindian cultures. Focusing on the realm of Andean art and the transmission of knowledge, scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui theorizes that the image serves as a means of communicating cultural information extraneous to the official forms of written media. In this light, she emphasizes the necessity of critiquing Andean cultural products from a perspective that treats visual art as a covert means of preserving and creating new cultural memory. Overall, the analysis of these three scholars provides us with a means of viewing Eielson's and Vicuña's poetic and plastic works through the playful metaphoric lens of Andean culture.

In chapter one, I contextualize the Andean *tejido* and the *khipu* within their respective historical eras, and I address the methods of their fabrication and the meaning of common design motifs. Additionally, I examine the relationship between the text and the textile with the goal of illustrating the inherent connections between both. Lastly, I address the notion of agency in weaving and *khipu* production in order to acknowledge the blurred gender roles that each poet-artist takes on through the metaphorical handling of the *tejido* and the *khipu*.

In the following chapters, I focus my analysis on exposing the textile aesthetics in Eielson's and Vicuña's poetic and visual works in order to show how their *tejido* and *khipu* based designs interact with other media and enrich the metaphoric capacity for

meaning in each work. Chapter two includes an examination of three of Eielson's collections of poetry titled *Mutatis mutandis* (1967), *Tema y variaciones* (1976) and *Nudos* (2002) with the purpose of illustrating how metalinguistic references and the visual experimentation of verses supplement the significance of the written words on the page with a non-verbal, woven discourse. Chapter three includes an analysis of Cecilia Vicuña's poetic volumes *Palabra e hilo* (1996), *PALABRARmas* (1984), *La Wik'uña* (1992) and *I tú* (2004) in order to show how the interface between weaving and writing generates a place of enunciation where linguistic forms and meaning merge. Finally, in chapter four, I address Eielson's and Vicuña's visual art dealing with the *khipu* imaginary with the goal of illustrating how the device continues to serve as a relevant media for remembering the forgotten Andean cultural memory of the past while simultaneously crafting new intercultural aesthetics for the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

Chapter 1: Jorge Eduardo Eielson, Cecilia Vicuña and the Andean Textual-Textile Imagination

THE ANDEAN TEXTILE: MATERIAL AND METAMORPHOSIS

The textile derives from a process that deals directly with the transfiguration of a material object. In order to create cloth, the weaver collects raw fibers, twists them into threads and then weaves them together according to a fixed design called a weave structure. With the development of textile technology, these patterns evolve and become more intricate. One of the most excellent examples of this metamorphosis of product and process occurs in ancient Peru. Textile artist Anni Albers, who has studied the textile history of this region extensively, claims that the ancient Peruvians employed all known weaving methods and that their inventiveness of weave structure, the formal treatment of the fabric piece and the use of color surpass the achievements of all other weaving societies (21). While it is important to signal the advancements of the early Andean and Mapuche weavers, it remains imperative to remember that despite the evolution of textile technology, cloth still retains elements of its primary materials that remain linked to the earth (sinew and plant fiber) and the cosmos (the universal cycle of animal and plant generation).

Of animal and vegetable origins, the fibers used in weaving contain the physical properties best suited for twining and spinning. Referring to this concept, Albers states, ". . . the manipulating of threads does not demand much physical effort, unlike the case where a resistant material has to be forced into shape. Weaving deals with a submissive material" (22). Here, although Albers points to the malleability of the fibers used in

creating textiles, she does not acknowledge the influence that the so-called "submissive material" holds on the artist who manipulates it. Even though the hands of the weaver change the form of the soft matter, the repeated act of weaving and the incorporation of its products in society transform the cognitive processes of the humans who create and use them. In this manner, a textile way of thinking shapes the way in which the weaving-minded view the world. So, from this perspective, the fiber material used in weaving does not remain wholly "submissive" even though the weaver exercises control over it through the repeated actions of twisting and interlacing.

In order to manufacture a piece of cloth, the designer must carefully choose the raw material and select a weave style. Albers affirms this concept by stating, "The structure of a fabric or its weave—that is, the fastening of its elements of threads to each other—is as much a determining factor in its function as is the choice of the raw material. In fact, the interrelation of the two, the subtle play between them in supporting, impeding, or modifying each other's characteristics, is the essence of weaving" (38). As Albers illustrates, the interface between fiber and weave pattern determines the production and the outcome of the textile product. This precise artistry of interrelated substances and forms, much like the relationship between the word and writing, remains the essential quality that drives the performance of the cloth.

From a broader perspective, this unique relationship between fiber and form parallels the poet's labor of word choice and writing style. That is to say, at the frontier where technique meets the verbal material, poetry exists, and each element of its construction plays an important role in the impeding or the dissemination of its content.

For example, in metered poetry, the "rigid" and the formulaic structuring in combination with word choice creates a tension that holds the text together tight like a piece of cloth with a very high thread count. With regard to this concept, one cannot help but think of the exuberant sonnets and *romances decasílabos* of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz whose arrangement of the most cultured words creates almost impenetrable poems. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the interplay between a very open construction and a less impenetrable vocabulary, such as occurs in the Mexican poet José Juan Tablada's visual poem "Li Po," creates a flexible gauze-like text in which the blank space communicates just as much meaning as the words on the page.

While printed lexicon remains the primary raw material for the non-oral poet, cotton, camelid fleece, sheep's wool and silk remain the most preferred for weaving. Since silk worms and sheep are not native to the Andes region, cotton fibers are often used for warp threads (Gisbert 31).[15] Due to the varied native population of camelids such as the vicuña, the alpaca and the llama in the Andes, and with the introduction of the sheep by the Spanish colonizers in Peru and in the Mapuche region in Chile and Argentina, the inhabitants of these areas cultivate a diverse range of wool threads.[16]

In the historic Inka Empire and the present day Quechua and Aymara regions, each type of fleece carries its own prestige and category of employment. Although no longer in use today, prior to the Spanish conquest, the finest yarn made of alpaca

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[15] Sheep were brought to the Americas by the Spanish colonizers in the 16th and 17th centuries, and silk was unknown to the Andean and Mapuche weavers.

[16] The vicuña is a small, wild camelid that inhabits the high planes of the Andes. It has never been domesticated for the harvesting of its fleece.

produces the clothing of the Inka (Gisbert 49). One step down from the vicuña wool is alpaca hair. This animal supplies most of the fibers for the majority of common use textiles. Next in line in quality from the alpaca is the hair of the llama; however, it remains interesting to note that Teresa Gisbert defines a hybrid type of camelid wool called *wari*. This substance exists as the mixture between alpaca and llama fleece. If the resulting product carries more characteristics of the latter than the former, then spinners denote it as *llama wari*, and should the reverse occur and the hair takes on more properties of the alpaca, then it is termed *paqowari* (Gisbert 49). In the Mapuche region of southern Chile, sheep's wool is the most prominent type of fiber used in textile production.

After collecting the fibers, weavers then manipulate them into a form which allows for interlacing. They twist them into threads thereby increasing greatly their elasticity and strength (Semper 215). In the Andes, weavers remain quite aware that the direction of thread spinning plays an important function in weaving. By manipulating a tool for twisting fibers, the *rueca* in Spanish, the *puska* in Quechua or the *qapu* in Aymara, weavers construct Z or S spun threads (Gisbert 48). If rotated to the right, the raw material on the device develops a diagonal axis tilted like the line of the letter *Z*, and if spun to the left, the reverse line of direction forms in a diagonal as shown by the letter *S*. According to Gisbert, the direction of string spin represents specialized cultural information. In the Andes, Aymara speakers call S-spun yarns *lloque*, and they believe that this thread contains magical and ritualistic properties (Gisbert 49). It is often found

on the borders of clothing and combined with Z-spun yarns in order to produce a fish-bone effect called *espina de pez* (Gisbert 49).

In addition to the direction of the thread spin, weavers also pay special attention to the thickness and the strength of the strings they produce. For example, in the Mapuche region of southern Chile and Argentina, the weaver differentiates the width of the thread depending on the intended function of the cloth. As a result of this need for varying classes of yarn, two types exist: the *domokal* and the *wentrukal* (Mege Rosso 13). The former is referred to as female wool because the string produced from it is very thin and delicate. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the *wentrukal* thread, or the male wool, remains much thicker and more readily resists the wear and tear of daily use.

Once twisted into its secondary form based on the directionality of its axis, the process of string production does not necessarily terminate here. In order to produce a thicker and stronger product, weavers twist two smaller yarns together to make a larger one. This technique, called plying, also shows a consciousness of Z and S spin patterns. For example, two Z-spun strings plied together form an S-spun yarn, and if the artist plies two S-spun threads, then the resulting product has a Z-axis (Urton 62).

Following the spinning and the plying of the cotton or the wool, the weaver may then choose to dye the fibers. An element more important to design than structure, I will only briefly address color as an added step in the processing of the raw material. In her research, Teresa Gisbert recognizes two methods for changing the pigment of yarn; both Andean and Mapuche weavers employ them. The first means, called *ikat*, involves dyeing the strings before they are woven, and the second method, called *planghi*, consists

of binding a pre-made piece of cloth in such a way that certain sections of it remain unexposed to the dye when the textile is dipped into the dyeing agent (Gisbert 36).

After the raw material passes through spinning, plying and, perhaps dyeing, it now stands ready for its next major metamorphosis which requires the use of another tool, the loom. Not more than a mere frame that holds the interlacing warp (vertical threads) and weft (horizontal threads), the technology of this instrument remains perfectly apt for the purposes of weaving and has not changed significantly since the early days of its invention. Its construction consists of two parallel, horizontal bars that hold the warp strings in place. The physical placement of the loom decides its name. For example, depending on its attachment points and spatial orientation, it can be vertical, horizontal or oblique.

In addition to these instruments, another type of device used in many of the textile achievements of present and of Pre-Colombian Andean and Mapuche weaving is the back-strap loom (Albers 20). To use this very portable tool, the weaver utilizes a string to attach the top loom bar to a tree or some other fixed structure; then she drapes a strap attached to the lower bar around her back that allows her to keep the warp strings that span between the two bars tight. Other than its value for being compact and transportable, the back-strap loom remains very unique because it allows the weaver to manipulate the tautness of the threads by leaning forward or backward from a seated position.

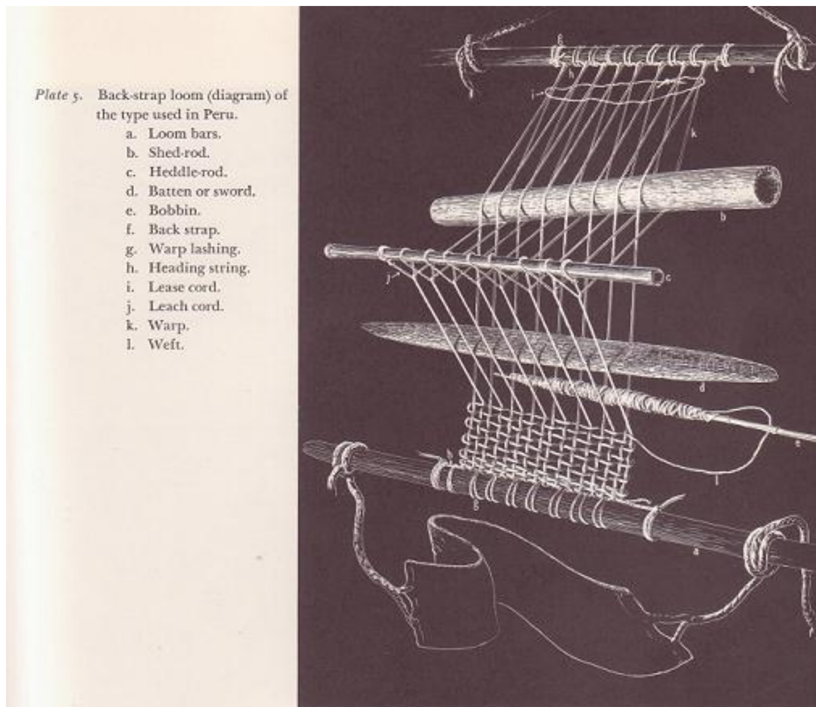

Illustration 1.1 Diagram of a back-strap loom used in Peru[17]

Once the loom, regardless of style, is loaded with warp strings, the artist then uses another set of tools to insert and beat the horizontal yarns into place. Utilizing a stick or other cylindrical material called the bobbin or shuttle, the weaver maneuvers the new thread perpendicularly through the warp strings. Subsequently, the hands that manipulate this weft thread employ another tool called the batten or sword to beat it down into place so that very little space remains between the top thread and the last one inserted. In order to incorporate these threads into the warp with more ease, various rods called the shed rod and the heddle open the warp strings at different intervals allowing for the weft on the shuttle to pass through the opening with greater speed (Albers 24).

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17 See plate number 5 in *On Weaving* by Anni Albers (1965).

While interlacing both warp and weft with the aforementioned tools, the weaver carefully considers the desired weave pattern of the textile, or that is to say, the interval and the frequency in which the yarns cross each other. According to Albers, three major models exist: the plain weave, the twill weave and the satin weave (38). Variations of these three exist, and they can be balanced or unbalanced depending on the number of strings moving over and under each other at a time. A basic construction allows for an even number of warp and weft threads to cross each other; for example, one weft string moves over one warp yarn and then under the next one. With the twill structure, "successive filling threads move over one warp thread or over a group of warp threads, progressively placing this thread or group of threads one warp thread to the right or left of the preceding one" (Albers 40). Therefore, a piece of cloth produced in the twill method appears to have diagonal lines across it. This type of weave may be balanced or unbalanced if the warp strings remain thicker than the weft yarns (Albers 40). As for the satin weave, it always remains unbalanced because it can only show warp or weft filling (Albers 41). In this type of construction the weaver leaves either the warp or the weft strands very long so that they float over the corresponding perpendicular set of strings, and in turn, this gives the finished textile a very smooth finish (Albers 42).

With regard to the specialized types of weave composition in the Andes, Teresa Gisbert's research highlights the preferred patterns and variations among them. For the construction of the textile, *el tejido llano balanceado* (balanced plain weave), *la gasa* (low thread density gauze) and *la sarga* (twill) remain the most popular (Gisbert 30 and 34). Variations among these styles include *urdimbre vista* or *trama vista*, warp dominant

or weft dominant weaves (Gisbert 30). In addition to the first set of horizontal strings, Andean weavers frequently insert a supplementary weft into the fabric in order to produce design elements, and when this occurs, the warp and the primary weft or *la trama de enlace* consist of cotton yarns; meanwhile, the supplementary weft consists of wool fibers (Gisbert 31). Although we find examples of both the basic and the twill weaves in Andean and Mapuche weaving, the satin, believed to have originated in Asia, is not employed in this region. Despite this exclusion, highly intricate composite weaves such as double, triple and quadruple weaves whose layers interlock on the sides of the fabric are included in the repertoire of the ancient Peruvians (Albers 50).

In addition to the previous construction methods mentioned, other textile structures exist that do not involve "weaving" in the proper sense of intersecting two sets of threads at right angles. Although different from the three main textile construction patterns, examples of these products such as braiding, crocheting, knitting, lacing and netting are often found in use with woven textiles; for example, a twill poncho may have a braided edge. In the classic sense, braiding occurs when the threads intersect diagonally in relation to their edge or when they form radials around a center (Albers 38). On the other hand, when only one yarn is used to construct the final product, knitting or crocheting occurs, and when strings wind or loop around each other, a lace or net is produced (Albers 38). Acknowledging the existence and examining the structure of these "alternative" types of textile construction will remain important for the analysis of *khipu* structure.

THE KHIPU

In Quechua, the word *khipu*, signifies *knot*, and a series of these on a system of cords comprises this textile media designed to store information. Most surviving *khipu* come from the Inka period; nevertheless, wrapped, unknotted, cotton *khipu* from the preceding Wari period also exist (Brokaw 17). While many scholars believe that the Spanish seek and destroy all of the *khipu* in late 16th century, scholar Galen Brokaw states that there is not enough evidence to suggest this (24). Colonial accounts show that the Spanish colonizers use *khipu* interpretations as a means of gaining information about the existing population and the status of the economy. In addition, Brokaw points out that the *khipu* is used for Christian ecclesiastical purposes in the conversion of the Quechua speaking natives (25).

Similar to the textile production previously discussed, the raw material and the methods of its metamorphosis drive the cultural use of the finished product. Cotton and camelid wool are the preferred resources for *khipu* construction, and the *khipukamayuq*, or *khipu*-makers, spin strings with intention of directionality, S or Z. After this step, the strings may be dyed or left to keep their natural color; this decision depends upon the type of data the media records. Next, the maker plies the strings to form larger cords. According to Urton, most *khipu* have S-plied cords (two Z-spun threads plied together), while less have Z-plied (two S-spun threads plied together), and fewer have mixed S and Z plied cords (62). When finished, the designer assigns a position for each cord, and the resulting structure consists of one main cord, several pendant strings, subsidiary strings and top strings (Urton 5). If viewed spread out with the main cord in a horizontal

position, we see that it acts as the "backbone" of the device because all of the pendant cords hang underneath it, and the top cords splay out above it. Within this design, each pendant cord also serves as lesser branch to which the subsidiary strings attach. In this way, the construction of the *khipu* mimics a community of roots, and we could go as far to state that it resembles our skeletal and cardiovascular systems as well.

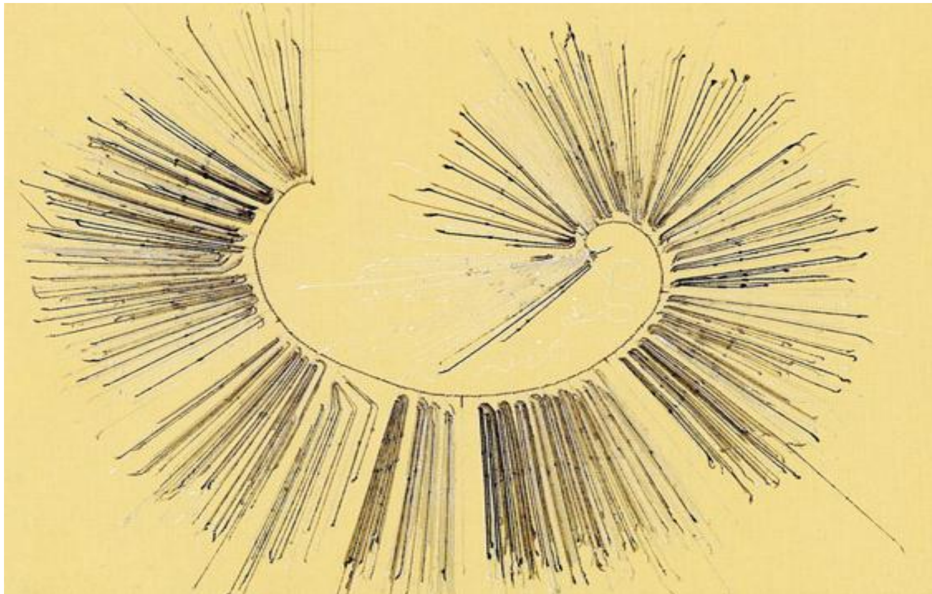

Illustration 1.2 A *khipu* from the collection of the Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino

Since the connection between the cords is what holds this textile media together, the manner of attachment using knots remains essential to the understanding of *khipu* structure. Pendant cords attach to the main cord by forming a half-hitch knot around it (Urton 70). In order to do this, the designer opens one end of the plied cord and passes the other end through the opening so that it will "catch" on itself around the body of the main cord. As a result, on one side of the knot, the observer sees the opening of the pendant cord; this phenomenon is called *recto* (Urton 70). On the reverse side of the

half-hitch, the viewer notes the cord's "tucked-in" appearance; when this happens, the knot is classified as *verso* (Urton 70).

Once established the first connections between the main and the pendant cords, the *khipukamayuq* now turns his attention to the style and the placement of the knots that will occupy the spaces of the top cord, pendant cords and subsidiary strings. According to Urton, three categories exist: figure eight, long or single knots (56), and these exist in the shape of S or Z depending upon the slant of their axis (75). As suggested by their names, the figure eight takes on the shape of the numeral, and the long knot remains lengthier due to the increased number of times the cord wraps around itself before being pulled tight. Of course, the single knot, perhaps the simplest in form, involves the mere looping and tying of the cord around itself only one time.

As colonial accounts show, the knot exists on the *khipu* in order to convey or classify some type of information. In this way, it remains clear that the structure of the device deals directly with its intended function; therefore, although these items used for accounting are not "woven" on a loom, they exist as parallels to their frame-locked cousins because, as I show in the following section, it is the internal structure of the *tejido* and the *khipu* that communicates a great part of the message intended for the textile reader.

EMBODYING KNOWLEDGE: TEXTILES AND WRITTEN TEXTS

The *way* in which humans record and transmit information affects the manner in which they process knowledge. In support of this notion, scholar Galen Brokaw states,

"If writing effects a cognitive transformation in the modes of thought of those who employ it, then it stands to reason that other dominant forms of semiotic or communicative media would correspond to different cognitive transformations" (8). Here, Brokaw refers to writing as a technology whose use brings about a "cognitive transformation" in the brain, and he claims that if the use of a written alphabet changes the way humans think, then other technologies, do as well. Accordingly, if the use of a written alphabet trains users to perceive speech as a system divisible into sounds, syllables and words, in the Andes, the employment of textile media trains the brain to process information like fibers, yarns and cords. Regarding cognition and weaving in the Andes, José Sánchez Parga states:

> Más allá de las potencialidades hermenéuticas que ofrece una 'lectura' de los textiles andinos, queda pendiente todavía un desafío antropológico: interpretar y decodificar en las culturas andinas un 'pensamiento textil'. De la misma manera que se ha llegado a la reconstrucción de un 'pensamiento cerámico' en algunos pueblos primitivos, y a un 'pensamiento arquitectónico' como el estudiado por Panofsky (1957) al relacionar el gótico medieval con el método escolástico y la organización política de la naciente monarquía capeta, nos parece así mismo viable la elaboración de un pensamiento textil andino . . ." (13)

In the previous comment, Sánchez Parga suggests that beyond a mere "reading" of cloth products, a mode of thinking based on the fabrication and the use of textiles called the *pensamiento textil* exists. This poses a challenge for anthropologists because in order to

push past the surface level interpretation of what Andean textiles "mean," an analysis of the *tejido* and the *khipu* through the lens of the *pensamiento textil* is crucial.

Further investigation by textile scholar Ed Franquemont confirms the existence of cognitive channels that stem from textile production. Referring to Andean weavers, he states:

> . . . their notions of good, proper, and beautiful have also been shaped by the nature of textile processes. As weavers fashion cultural statements of fiber, the act of working conditions their minds to think in significant ways. . . . Led by their hands and eyes to new perceptual skills, Andean weavers are able to produce their traditional fabrics because they think differently from most other people. (31)

With the previous quote, Franquemont enriches Sánchez Parga's comment regarding the *pensamiento textil* because he notes that the process of *work* conditions the mind of the weaver. As a result, the mechanical procedures of weaving influence cultural perceptions of "good, proper, and beautiful." Therefore, it remains arguable that the most essential raw material of the textile is not the fiber but the human brain. The mind's spark of creativity invents a technology, and, in order to perfect the method conceived, it adapts itself fully to the science born from within. As each generation of textile thinkers emerges, the cognitive power of the brain remains better equipped for processing thoughts in a manner that resembles the production of cloth, and as a result, deeply embedded cultural notions that pass through this "textile cognitive filter" over time shape human perception of the environment and the culture at hand. Overall, this process is

cyclical. The brain, having conceived the textile, seeks to materialize it, and by making this idea physical in form, the brain changes its cognition over time in ways that reaffirm the concept it generates. The result of this change in reasoning motivates the weaver to continue producing textiles and the cycle repeats. Since weaving remains heavily linked to cognitive processing, it is also deeply intertwined with knowledge, and as a result of this relationship, the textile, whose very nature exists upon thinking, cannot be separated from the informational intelligence of its creators. From this perspective, we infer that woven products exist as the physical manifestation of human thought.

In correlation with the notion that the textile evidences the materialization of ideas, literature scholar Kathryn Sullivan Kruger states, "Regarding this four-way relationship (literature/text/text/textile), the production of fabric as a metaphor for the making of a text occurs across cultures and across time. It functions in various ways, but always contains within it the notion that the text constitutes a 'material' object, a woven fabric that may be unraveled at any time" (31). Here, Kruger highlights the basic tenet shared by the text and the textile: materiality. Both exist as products that are created by connecting smaller elements which possess meaning exterior to their form. During the process of compilation, these minute parts link together; and as a result, the knowledge they represent merges to generate a global meaning for the entire product. Due to the interlacing of these components, i.e. words and strings, an informational *surface* forms.

By now it becomes clear that the limits between the textile and the text remain quite blurry. Regarding this concept, Ed Franquemont states, "Bolstered by great support from governments and religious institutions, Andean weavers stretched the limits of fiber

art to encompass domains we entrust to mathematics, literature, and precious metals, as well as the more ordinary functions of cloth" (30). Here, Franquemont highlights the versatility of the *tejido* as a media which interlaces with conceptual spheres other than fashion such as literature, mathematics and the craftsmanship of precious metals. In his statement, the phrase, "stretched the limits of fiber art," illustrates the elastic nature of the textile's informational surface. Or that is, as a flexible material, woven products can literally *be extended*. In this way, the physical suppleness of the *tejido* parallels the elasticity of the amount and the type of information that it holds whether textual or mathematical.

Basing her analysis on Julia Kristeva's theory of the *thetic* break between the semiotic and the signifying, Kathryn Sullivan Kruger shows how the text and the textile remain inherently linked.[18] I quote:

> The *thetic* break between the text and textile occurs when the weaver/author, who has already entered into the realm of the Symbolic, abjects the maternal function of the textile—to clothe and protect—in preference for its symbolic material and function. This process of abjection reproduces, metaphorically, the weaver/author's own abjection from the mother. *The newly abjected text (as with all texts since) still retains traces of the textile, of this maternal bond.* These traces are

[18] According to Kristeva in her 1974 publication of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the *thetic* exists as the rupture between the semiotic (drives and their articulations) and the realm of signification (propositions of judgment and positions). When this division or *thetic* break occurs, the subject and its object are identified (43).

> described chiefly in two ways: first, through the author/personae projection of desire for the maternal body, which is somehow veiled, refusing to be captured within the text but always referred to by the text; and secondly, in the text's self-reference to its own fabrication.
>
> (37 emphasis mine)

Here, Kruger theorizes that the differentiation between the textile and the text occurs when the author and the weaver denounce the "maternal" utilitarian functions of the cloth which are to dress and to protect. As a result, the new product created from this shift takes on symbolic properties. Even though it now remains alienated from the caring functions of the mother fabric, the written text shows its bond with the cloth through its desire for the mother and through its own referentiality. In this way, all texts preserve vestiges of the textile.

Similar to Kruger's analysis, the Argentine poet Tamara Kamenszain also acknowledges the vital connection between the mother, the textile and the text. In her essay titled "Bordado y costura del texto," she addresses the semiotic or non-discursive elements that matriarchs ingrain in literature:

> Si a través de los siglos las mujeres imprimieron a la literatura—ya sea escribiendo o transmitiéndolo a los hombres que escribían—el sello de lo artesanal, de lo no discursivo, esto no supone irracionalidad, tontera, ingenuidad, falso lirismo. Como para demostrar lo contrario, la modernidad encuentra involucradas a las mujeres en el llamado discurso 'racional'. (210)

Kamenszain, like Kruger, recognizes the same semiotic or non-verbal discourse of the textile and its influence on the modern text. According to her, women who weave possess an intimate knowledge of the seam that holds materials together. Consequently, as the master sewer and embroiderer in the home, the mother imparts upon her children the idea that "toda construcción apoya sus bases en un hilado no discursivo." Therefore, all writers, across genders, approach the texts they write from this perspective; they craft their writing as their mothers would create new clothes, through the wordless process of seaming and manipulating materials. In this way, the presence of the textile forms a non-verbal part of literature.

As Katherine Sullivan Kruger illustrates, this "silent" woven discourse generates a plane of information external to the tangible text. She states, "The symbolic function weaves together not threads of color and fiber, but ideas and words in an effort to create a fabric of thought suspended outside of the text itself" (41). Kruger highlights that the text's woven words represent concepts that stand alone "outside" of its material. Analogous to the text, the representational textile encodes cultural information that exists externally to its fiber composition. In this way, written texts and textiles are homologous because their communicative properties are valued on an intellectual plane that stands aside from their material construction. Hence, the relationship between literature and cloth becomes clear. Just like words in a poem that posit a meaning external to the physical realm of the page, textile construction and design elements also transcend their tangible realities to project cultural significance interpreted by the community.

CULTURAL SEMANTICS IN TEXTILES

With regard to the abstract geometric designs of ancient fabrics, Margot Blum Schevill comments that "not only the textile medium but actually the structure of the medium is in fact the message" (84).[19] With this statement, Schevill brings to the forefront the inner workings of cloth as a communicative media. We must not forget that all of the physical properties of the cloth structure previously discussed (fiber choice, spin direction, ply, weave style and *khipu* cord attachment) carry meaning that transmits information to those who wear and view textiles. For example, the use of a certain color of camelid hair in a textile could signify pertinence to a specific geographical location where the animals that provide the fleece live. And, as mentioned previously, the manner in which weavers spin these fibers also carries significance; for instance, S-spun textiles signal ceremony, rite and performativity. In addition to the selection of raw materials and spin direction, structural elements such as warp and weft thickness also represent a wide range of cultural meanings from ethnicity, social class, gender and beyond.

After embedding meaning in the base construction of the textile, the artist turns his or her attention to creating a second communicative layer that encompasses the visual elements readily recognized by the viewer and wearer. Among these implicitly seen design fundamentals, I wish to discuss the concept of pattern, vertical and horizontal features, geographic or map-like schema, anthropomorphic characteristics and message

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19 Although not cited by Schevill, the phrase, "the medium is the message" was coined by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media* (1964). A key concept of media studies, McLuhan insists that "'the medium is the message' because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (9).

encoding in the *khipu*. Often taken for granted as the mere "decorative" aspect of artistic creation, Mary Frame illustrates that repeated motifs in Andean art serve a different function. In her words, "Pattern, particularly in the art of non-literate peoples, reflects systems of classification and modes of cognition of their makers. Patterns of repetition are not arbitrary, nor simply decorative: they are culturally specific, selected from among many possibilities, and they are often systematic in their variations" (Frame 113). Frame signals here that the recurring images found within textiles do not originate from the fanciful whims of the designer. Instead, these visual elements represent the "modes of cognition of their makers," and consequently, they provide a glimpse into the *pensamiento textil* that so ingeniously designs the fiber art.[20]

Additionally, Mege Rosso's analysis of Mapuche cloth patterns supports the notion that weavers do not use design motifs capriciously. According to his research, models for the visual representation of objects originate through the technique of *desdoblamiento* (17). Weavers, wishing to incorporate the form of a three dimensional object into a piece of cloth, must generate a flat picture. As a result of this need, they design systematic patterns for the creation of these images. Regarding this technique, Mege Rosso explains:

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[20] In his essay, "Abstraction: The Amerindian Paradigm" (2001), César Paternosto argues that pattern in art from styles regarded as "primitive" exists as the first indication of abstraction. He speculates that the existence of geometric shapes that represent forms in nature comes from the technology of the textile whose horizontal and vertical axes define forms at right angles. In turn, this early/non-Western abstraction created by the geometric representation of objects influences artists of the avant-garde in the early 20th century.

> Los objetos, en la realidad, poseen tres dimensiones; son necesariamente volumétricos. La tejedora se enfrenta al problema de llevar esos objetos tridimensionales al plano de dos dimensiones de la realidad de su tejido. Ocupa para ellos una técnica representacional de gran difusión en América India, la del 'desdoblamiento por corte'. El objeto que se quiere representar en el plano del textil, se somete a un corte vertical imaginario, sin cortar su parte frontal . . . Esta figura cortada por la parte posterior es desplegada hacia ambos lados, abriéndola, . . . y transformándola en una figura plana, susceptible de ser representada en el textil. (17)

As Mege Rosso illustrates, many of the geometric patterns woven into cloth result from the "cutting" of an image along its axes. Once divided along these invisible lines, the representation of the three dimensional figure remains flat, and the weaver incorporates it within the flat surface of the textile. In addition to the technique of *desdoblamiento*, weavers may choose to further manipulate motifs through the processes of *desarticulación*, (altering the axes of a form that has already undergone the process of *desdoblamiento*), *dislocación* (changing the location of the figure's components), *desollamiento* (showing only the profile of the object) (Mege Rosso 17-18).

Correlating to Mege Rosso's research regarding the folding and the modification of images along their axes, Mary Frame posits that variations in shapes and figures in Andean fabrics frequently illustrate the mechanical processes of weaving itself. For example, serpentine forms regularly follow either a Z or an S axis (Frame 119). Similarly, flat patterns are often depicted as yarns crossing above or below others in

winding motifs, and in this way, they mimic the three-dimensionality of a braid, a basket weave or a twisted thread (Frame 120). Thus, by visualizing structures like braids and basic balanced weaves, the patterns act like texts which provide knowledge regarding textile technology and construction.

When contemplating the layout of the weaving, the arrangement of the visual space of the cloth imitates the physical components of its construction based upon the vertical warp and the horizontal weft. As a result, the *tejido* communicates the binary logic that structures Andean society divided into the four *suyos* or regions, upper, lower, east and west. Referring to this phenomenon, Sánchez Parga comments, "La confección del tejido andino juega sí como una doble representación espacial: la continua de cada unidad temática o cromática, que puede ser leída horizontalmente, y la discontinua, en la que la combinatoria de tema y/o colores configura una sintaxis de espacios verticalmente sucesivos" (24). Here, Sánchez Parga illustrates the double spatial representation inherent to all Andean textiles; each may be "read" horizontally and vertically through the syntax of their spaces. In general, this concept remains key for textile interpretation because in order to fully comprehend the cultural knowledge that the *tejido* represents, observers must not ignore the information that each axis and the juncture of these axes symbolizes.

As occurs with the threads on the loom, the place of intersection between these vertical and horizontal motifs exists as the interstice of the four *suyos*; all parts become one. In relation to this concept, Sánchez Parga declares that, "El eje o los ejes sobre los cuales se organiza el espacio textil y lo divide en dos partes, puede ser interpretado

también como el lugar de intersección, donde dichas partes y todos sus elementos se suturan en un todo unitario e indivisible . . ." (39). Therefore, the vertical and the horizontal elements of the textile communicate not only the Andean and the Mapuche binary logic of the division of space; but, on the contrary, they also convey the cultural concept of unity. What medium other than the textile, whose strings of opposing orientation that come together to form a whole, better communicates these complex concepts of division and harmony?

In addition to the horizontal and the vertical alignment that transmits the general core beliefs of the Andean and Mapuche peoples, smaller units of the textile convey a message to the reader and the wearer. Certain elements such as stripes, bands and shapes such as concentric diamonds and serpentine lines all stand for concepts familiar to both the weaver and the culture of origin. When examined individually, each shape represents an item or a concept; meanwhile, when considered as a text, that is, as many units brought together to form a whole, these features act as a type of schematic map. In support of this idea, Gisbert states "Quizás podemos decir que el textil es un mapa o paisaje esquemático" (16). In this way, the *tejido* serves as a type of landscape-driven guide for cognition.

With regard to this concept, scholar Rosaleen Howard shows that Andean ways of thinking relate very closely to the natural environment. In her studies of oral narration, she illustrates that the land serves as a type of scaffolding for the renewal of cultural memory. Referring to this continual rejuvenation of oral histories, she states: "In story-telling, this regenerative principle activates a close relationship between the discursive

construction of the landscape, the knowledge so produced, and the performance of oral traditional narratives (46). Here, Howard emphasizes that the landscape remains intimately tied to the composition of oral discourse in the Andes. Due to this connection, the earth and its fruits serve as a means of schematically storing memory which is transmitted through speech. Similarly, the textile, whose features frequently depict rivers, valleys, mountains, flora and fauna serves as a type of cognitive plan that holds cultural meaning. As humans, we *read* maps, and because we are instructed in the way of their symbols, we successfully interpret the value of their units. On a larger scale, the sum of these semantic pieces produces a text, or a new interpretable *whole*.

Among the most common designs that comprise the woven schematic maps of the Andes are stripes and bands of color. Automatically evoking a sense of vertical or horizontal orientation, these features dominate the cloth landscape. Of these lines of varying hues, there exist monochrome stripes and multicolored bands (Femenias 12). Other terms used to describe these patterns are *pampa*, colored bands with no decoration, and *pallay*, the elaborate part of the textile. In her research on the small bags known as *talegas* made by the inhabitants of Isluga, Chile, textile scholar Verónica Cereceda illustrates that the contrast of pigments frequently communicates opposition in natural and social phenomena such as day and night, male and female, today and yesterday (161). As shown by Cereceda's research, the making of meaning in textiles lies in the comparison of design motifs. For example, by themselves, pigments may not hold a special value; however, when juxtaposed within the body of the *tejido*, each color's relationship to others holds a new meaning. In his way, the metaphorical association of

textile design elements acts as the mechanism in the cloth that symbolizes Andean cultural logic such as the union of binary elements of opposition.

During the Inka period, the use of the *tocapo* also evidences the existence of textile motifs whose metaphorical association creates an interpretable social meaning. At the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru, chroniclers such as Guaman Poma de Ayala draw pictures of the garments worn by the Inka nobles. In many of these representations, very small squares containing images called *tocapo* adorn the masculine shirts called *uncus* (Quechua) and *ccahuas* (Aymara) and feminine dresses called *acsus* (Quechua) and *urcos* (Aymara). On the face of the fabric, they are linearly grouped or isolated and they depict *huacas* (gods) and other symbols of religion, lineage and ethnic group (Gisbert 12).[21] In other words, these shapes and the designs they contain depict and transmit cultural information from the wearer to the interpreter of the textile. In the Inka cosmovision, this phenomenon is supported by the belief that Inka Viracocha ordered the world by differentiating groups of peoples according to their dress. Thus, each *tocapo* or ordering unit, much like parts of a name, adds up to form the whole identity of the person who uses an *uncu* (male tunic), *llyclla* (feminine blanket) or *acsu* (feminine dress).

Related to the *tocapo* in function, other visual symbols depict natural elements in textiles. These features, much like the block-like figures discussed previously, also represent key concepts related to the cosmos and the landscape. For example, in Aymara

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[21]In the epoch of the Inka Empire, textiles also commemorate the life stages of birth, adolescence, marriage, death and grief (Gisbert 19). Evidence of interred cloth in graves and burned fabrics for ceremonial purposes also illustrates that the Andean textile held symbolic properties that superseded their use for warmth and protection (Gisbert 19).

weaving, a rhombus represents a lake (Gisbert 16), and similarly, textile scholar Anne Meisch's research illustrates that the most repeated symbols in the *tejidos* of this ethnic group are: the *coco* (fruit pit) formed by a diamond, the *palma* (palm tree) represented by two rhombuses mirroring each other, the *keshwa* (valley) signified by three touching, solid and vertically staggered rectangles, *mayu k'inku* (river) illustrated by a zig-zagging line crossed with short vertical lines at even intervals, the *ch'aska* (Venus) shown by concentric diamonds, the *t'ikita* (flower) exemplified by a diamond with a line radiating from one corner, the *yutu* (partridge) shown by the image of a bird and the *kuwichi* (rainbow) formed by a multicolored band (50). When viewed all together, these images create a semantic map that readers use to decipher information. For example, the use of the *ch'aska* or Venus in a textile illustrates cosmic awareness, and the inclusion of other astrological bodies in a piece of cloth such as the sun or the moon could be read for knowledge pertaining to the seasons or daily life. In the *pallay* area of the textile, like words included in a body of writing, the smallest and most varied of representational units come together to form a unified whole; and they act like a text that signifies the cosmovision of the culture that generates and interprets the *tejido*.

Further south, men and women of the Mapuche culture in Chile and Argentina employ textiles in ceremonial rites and wear them in order to classify their social status. For example, the colored columns of the *makuñ*, a male poncho, contain motifs that communicate the number of women and horses owned by the wearer, the type of land he possesses and the place of his origin (from the coast, the valley, the foothills or across the Andes) (Mege Rosso 40). In addition to this garment, the *sobremakuñ*, a male poncho

whose motifs represent power, is used only in ceremonial rituals (Mege Rosso 43). Like the male vestment, female belts called *trarüwe* utilized to tie the *kepam*, a black, rectangular shaped cloth used to cover the torso, communicate the status of the wearer's fertility. Those who remain prepubescent wear a different style of *trarüwe* than those women who menstruate (Mege Rosso 28). Furthermore, weavers imbed the body of these belts with culturally significant symbols such as the *rayen* flower that stands for fertility, the kneeling human figure of *Lukutuel* that represents the ritual realm and the *temu* tree that denotes the health of children (Mege Rosso 31-4). Even in textiles employed for domestic purposes like the *lama*, a type of rug, the design symbolizes information regarding the legacy of past leaders, cures for certain sicknesses and the astrological significance of the stars and the constellations (Mege Rosso 46).

Other ways in which the visual elements of the textile embody knowledge is through anthropomorphization. In many areas, weavers attribute human characteristics to their woven creations. The research of Lynn Meisch illustrates that the center *pallay* panel of Bolivian textiles is termed *sunq'u* which means *heart* in Quechua (50). Once a *tejido* becomes animated with a heart, it can then take on the other functions of a human such as feeling, thinking and even speaking in the metaphorical sense. For example, the *wayakaytas* or large sacks made in Tarabuco, Bolivia have weft selvedges called *simi* ("mouth" in Aymara) (Meisch 50), and the four selvedge pieces of the *acsu* are called *kallu* in Quechua or *qallu* in Aymara meaning tongue (Meisch 49). Had the artists not recognized the representational power of the *wayakaytas* or the *kallu/qallu*, then the interior design units that comprise them could have easily been termed *side* or *seam*.

However, by bestowing the names *mouth* and *tongue*, weavers acknowledge the communicative properties of the cloth they weave.

In support of this phenomenon, textile scholar Verónica Cereceda narrates an interaction with a weaver who affirms this concept. I quote:

> Once I showed a talega of this type to a weaver from the settlement of Enquelga and asked her what the tendency to pale meant when it appeared at the border of the mouth. She took the bag in her hands, thought for a moment, and talking to the talega said mischievously: *kamsajtata wayajja?* Laughing, she translated this into Spanish: 'What might you be saying in there, talega?' This defined the bag. To the verb *kamsana* ('to say that,' in Aymara) the weaver added the suffix *tata*, which means 'to move outward,' 'to expand.' The talega 'opens its mouth and speaks,' or it 'extends its territory' when the brown tone drifts toward light. (159)

Cereceda's research remains invaluable because it brings to light the voice of the *weaver* and her way of classifying the "speaking" textile. The anecdote shows that in the Aymara culture *los tejidos* contain inherent communicative properties that, through color gradation, illustrate the opening up of the *talega* mouth and the expansion of the content it desires to tell.

Within the realm of the Mapuche textile, weavers illustrate anthropomorphization through the use of *Lukutuel*. Known as "the one who kneels," this figure symbolizes the human being who bends down during ceremonial rites (Mege Rosso 31). In order to form design motifs for their textiles, weavers often take the figure of *Lukutuel*, and

submitting it to the processes of the *ñimin* (altering the image by "unfolding" it along its axes), they change its original form and create images of other representational shapes. For example, the previously mentioned symbols of the *temu* (tree) and the *rayen* (flower), in actuality, originate from the shape of the kneeling human and are transformed into vegetable symbols (Mege Rosso 34). As a result of employing a human figure as the starting point for the creation of other images, the cloth becomes personified and takes on the agency of embodying cultural meaning. Thus, like a person, the *tejido* contains the ability to acknowledge and remember the culture from which it arises.

As shown by the research of the previously mentioned scholars, there are multiple approaches that exemplify how the textile and the text remain homologous. Both writing and a piece of cloth exist as the sum of their material parts, and all of these components starting from the most basic forms of construction carry meaning. With regard to weaving, the type of raw material used and the spin and the ply directions of the fibers employed all contain rich elements of cultural signification. Moving from the more structural or inner workings of the textile to the visual designs registered in the fabric, recognizable shapes and forms woven in the cloth reflect the cognition of their makers and communicate this way of thinking to the viewer. These features obey horizontal and vertical axes and dialogue intimately with the landscape through the use of symbol and the anthropomorphization of the textile. Through all of these different channels, the *tejidos* of the Andes open themselves up to interpretation by a group learned in the analysis of their systems.

KHIPU CODING

According to Gottfried Semper, the knot functions "as a means of tying together two ends of cord, and its strength is chiefly based on the resistance of friction" (217). Given this basic design where tension unites opposing ends of string, it is only natural that knotted materials could conceptually store, or quite literally, *hold together* information. According to Galen Brokaw, in the Inka culture, these media forms record personal inventories, censuses, laws, ritual sacrifices, religious geography, calendrical data, and perhaps narrative history (96).[22] Similar to the *tejido*, the meaning of these devices relates to what the user sees and touches. Unlike other media that heavily relate information through visual cues, like pictographic sources, the *khipu* conveys knowledge through both tactile and optical means. Visible and touchable elements relating to fiber choice, color, spin/ply direction, cord attachment type and class of knots all serve as interpretable units of value.

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[22] Based on colonial accounts, Brokaw believes that the *khipu* stored genealogical information. He founds this notion on information provided regarding the state of crisis in the Inka Empire just before the Spanish arrived. A fight for the emperorship between two heirs, Atahualpa and his brother Huáscar, motivates the former to kill many of the latter's *khipukamayuq* and burn their *khipu*. By doing so, Atahualpa erases the data which proves Huáscar's legitimate right to the empire (Brokaw 116). In addition to this information, Brokaw presents the theory that the *khipu* exists as an instrument proliferated by the Inka Yupanqui. The name Yupanqui, from the Quechua verb *yupay* meaning to count, reminds us of the counting stones called *yupana* that the state used to keep track of goods. The Yupanqui emperors introduce many political and socioeconomic innovations to the empire during their reign; therefore, Brokaw calculates that they would have needed accounting records of this expansion and of the tributes paid to the state (106). For all of these reasons mentioned, it remains possible to see this type of "weaving" as an instrument for recording, managing and, in the case of Atahualpa, overthrowing executive power.

With regard to numerical worth, it is estimated that figure eight knots represent numbers in the single units (1s), that long knots denote units 2-9 and that single knots stand for decimal placements in the 10s, 100s, 1,000s or 10,000s based on their vertical placement on the cord or string (Urton 75). In relation to this information, *khipu* scholar Marcia Ascher posits that numbers on these devices could serve as identifying labels just as a social security number represents identity and a street address alludes to physical location.[23]

Adding to these theories, Gary Urton proposes in 2003 that the structural elements of the *khipu* make up the parts of a seven-bit binary code where each bit of information stands for one signifying concept. To develop this hypothesis, he relies on the binary logic of the Andean cosmovision which posits that every natural element has its opposite such as night and day, male and female and upper and lower. Referring to this concept he states, "systems of patterned differences in spinning, plying, knotting, numbers and colors in the *khipu* are *all* binary in nature" (Urton 39). Most *khipu* components contain three-dimensional designs that show the dual relationships of right-left, over-under and front-back (Urton 41). As a result of the double nature of these elements, the existence of a binary code remains possible.

To illustrate this idea, Urton compares the Andean media to an 8-bit computer code whose sequences of 1s and 0s transmit information electronically. When applied to the *khipu*, the seven categories that comprise the bits of the code are fiber choice, color, spin/ply, pendant attachment, knot type, odd or even number value, and decimal reading

23 See Ascher (2002).

(Urton 128). In this way, each component of the *khipu*, depending on its orientation, holds the place of a one or a zero in the code. Urton explains that cotton could stand for a zero while wool could represent a one, and in the same way, a *recto* pendant attachment could hold the place of a zero while its converse, the *verso*, shows a one (128). This binary pattern repeats for all previously mentioned categories, and ultimately a seven-bit sequence appears numerically like a byte of information [0100110]. In turn, each byte signifies one concept, and Urton hypothesizes that up to 1,536 different codes could exist which is far more than Western alphabetic systems and similar to ancient Sumerian cuneiform script (between 1,000 and 1,500 logographic signs originally), early Chinese (Shang period with 4,500 characters), Egyptian symbols (between 600-734 roughly) and Mayan (800 signs) (Urton 117-118).

Although we may never know if Urton's theory remains one hundred percent accurate, it remains critical to understanding how the *khipu* stored and transmitted information because it explores the device at a depth previously unattained. Furthermore, his study is significant because it further suggests, as does the research of *khipu* scholar Marcia Ascher, that this Andean tool uses numbers as labels that represent thousands of concepts much like our spoken lexicon. As a result, we can conceive of the *khipu* as a knotted text whose individual components come together to form a greater context of meaning.

Given that historical records refer to the direct deciphering of a poem recorded on a *khipu*, its knots could be perceived as symbolic elements tied to speech. In her

research, Latin American history scholar Margot Beyersdorff reveals such an occurrence. I quote:

> According to the Inca Garcilaso's account, it appears that *khipukamayuq* shared with two types of poets: the *hamawt'a* ("philosophers") and *harawikuq* ("poets") a common discourse committed to memory. That is, the *hamawt'a* disseminated verbally, as public addresses to provincial populations, the same record encoded in khipu. Likewise, the *harawikuq* used the same khipu source for recitations at ceremonial functions at state festivals. (299-300)

According to the testimony, this research illustrates that the *khipu* recorded verbal discourses such as public speeches and poetry used in ceremonies. Due to this information, it remains possible to perceive the *khipu* as a type of media capable of communicating more than numerical information.

In summary, the *khipu* methods of storing knowledge correlate to that of the textile because the makers of both attribute meaning to the structural components of each. With regard to the knotted media, its fiber-based building blocks consist of choice of raw material, wool or cotton, color, spin and ply directionality, cord attachment and knot type. In addition to these, Urton adds odd or even number value and decimal reading in order to configure a seven-bit code that possibly represents one signified piece of information. While we may never know for sure exactly how the *khipukamayuq* employed these devices, what remains certain is that these knotted systems exist as a tactile and a visual

means of recording information. In this sense, they serve as three-dimensional "texts" capable of holding and transmitting cultural knowledge.

GENDER AND AGENCY IN TEXTILE PRODUCTION

Having analyzed the *how* and the *what* of weaving, let us not forget to acknowledge the very important aspect of *who* weaves. In the Andean and the Mapuche regions, the vast majority of clothing producers are women. Some of the earliest written evidence of this tradition comes to us with Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales* first published in 1609. In it he states, "La vida de las mujeres casadas en común era con perpetua asistencia de sus casas; entendían en hilar y tejer lana en las tierras frías, y algodón en las calientes. Cada una hilaba y tejía para sí y para su marido y sus hijos" (152). Similar to the Quechua and Aymara cultures, in the Mapuche region of southern Chile and Argentina, women also take on the labors of producing string and cloth (Mege Rosso 9).

The implication of this division of labor according to gender delegates to the female much responsibility in the domestic and the public spheres. In the home, women use all of their time not spent in the employment of other activities to spinning and weaving. As a result, the task of weaving rules the majority of the domestic activity.
Often, there exists a further compartmentalization of industry within the females of the household. For example, grandmothers, mothers, daughters, aunts and cousins all work together on the spinning, the dyeing and the weaving that takes place during textile production. So in this sense, cloth construction unites women and prompts them to

organize themselves for the purpose of a common goal. Nevertheless, clothing production also gives women a right to stake a claim in the public sphere due to the fact that many women sell their work in local markets in order to supplement family incomes. Through their *tejidos*, these women "speak" in the public realm and become part of the public imagination through the language of colors, images and symbols. In this way, weavers participate in every sphere of social life because their cloth remains present at all times, ranging from the hum-drum of daily activities to the ritual-charged ceremonies that commemorate life and spiritual transitions. By taking part in political, spiritual and ritual practices via the thread, women enter into the cosmic and the religious realms of their ethnic group. As a result, they play an intricate part in the creation of textile media that carry and transmit the cultural values relating to cosmovision and life force. This responsibility of constructing the medium that conveys the community heritage gives women a very large responsibility and control over the *way* in which this information is encoded, disseminated and interpreted by the general public.

Although the vast majority of weavers in the Andean and the Mapuche worlds are female, one historical example contradicts this trend. Drawings by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in 1615 and citations by the Jesuit Anello Oliva confirm that the makers of the *khipu* are male (Brokaw 149). During the Inka Empire, men called the *khipukamayuq* carry out the task of creating and interpreting these knotted devices; and as a result, they play a very important role in the administration of the state. Closely related to the *amautas*, the wise Inka officials trained in the science of astrology, the *khipukamayuq* are specially trained, and they dedicate themselves solely to the making of the media and the

transmission of the information it stored. Due to the nature of the data contained in the knots, those involved in the production and the housing of the instruments play an important role in the economy and the administration of the state. Colonial accounts tell us that the *khipu* record information about the population and the number of goods possessed and traded to and from each household. By maintaining this information, the *khipukamayuq* have access to essential information regarding the current fiscal status of the state both on domestic and inter-community levels. In addition to their economic involvement, the makers of the knotted devices also possess a great amount of control in the recording of Inka history. Inka Garcilaso de la Vega tells us that the *khipu* contained the genealogy of the emperors. In this way, the "weavers" of the *khipu* hold the enormous responsibility of tracking and transmitting the lineage of the state government.

Since gender plays such an integral role in the fabrication of cloth, it is imperative that this theme is addressed with regard to the textile properties in the poetry of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña. By reappropriating the feminine space of the textile and the masculine space of the *khipu* in their poetry, each poet gains access to the agency of the weaver. Thus, these poets transmit to the words on the page the nonverbal authority of the textile producers and their influence on the creation of community aesthetics, the teaching of cultural significance and the communication with the spiritual and the symbolic realms.

If we hold cloth as feminine and the *khipu* as masculine, then it is possible to see that each poet breaches the normative borders between male and female. For example, Eielson, a male writer, transgresses traditional gender roles by incorporating structures

and metaphors in his poetry that relate to the weaving process; and consequently, he communicates without words the interconnectedness between all human beings regardless of gender. Notwithstanding this blurring of gender lines and binarisms, we could also argue that Eielson appropriates the role of the masculine *khipukamayuq* who holds the secrets of the cosmology and the affairs of the state in his knots.

Likewise, as shown by the incessant references to weaving in her poetry, Cecilia Vicuña dons the role of the word weaver in order to instill a sense of reconnection between humans, our earth and our language. In this light, she acts as a poet-*pachamama* who reminds us to listen to what the land tells us. As with Eielson, we may also argue that Vicuña crosses gender lines in her representation of the historically male-administered *khipu* in her poetry and visual works. References to this knotted media in Vicuña's poetry allow the author to take on the role of the *khipukamayuq* in order to carry the weight of an Andean way of life. In this way, both poets become *entretejedores* that interweave gender identities and transgress binary gender divisions. Just as their poetry and their visual art remain pluricultural through their interweaving of Western, Andean and other world visions, their work also displays gender polyvalence through the intermeshing of bodies and gender differences.

THE POETIC IMAGINARY OF THE TEXTILE

Overall, the imaginary of the textile in the poetry of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña expresses a desire for connection. By employing the metaphor of the *tejido* and the *khipu* and by imbuing poetic realities with aesthetic techniques analogous

to those found in weaving, both authors communicate unique perspectives regarding humans, our language and our cultural memory. Using the non-verbal textile structure as an underlying framework for poetry enhances the meaning contained in the poem by providing a secondary layer of content. When these two symbolic networks come together within the parameter of the poem, a fusion of the said and unsaid occurs, and the poet's craftsmanship of the two media provides a platform for the communication of that which lexical units cannot express on their own. In other words, the presence of the textile in the poetry of Eielson and Vicuña augments our capacity of interpreting meaning because the symbolic function of the poetry increases twofold by the constant interaction of the verbal and the woven discourses. Through the graphic experimentation of the word on the page, the poets direct our attention to the interstice of these two systems. As a result, not only do we understand the verbal thematic content of each poem, but we also comprehend *how* it comes together like a textile whose extensive network of fibers rely on thousands of connecting points in space.

Since both Eielson and Vicuña live the majority of their lives outside of their native countries, Eielson in Milan and Vicuña in New York, this theme of connection through language and weaving remains truly significant because, although they develop their work far from their birth nations, they still maintain contact with their Andean nations through the use of their native language, Spanish, and through their visual art which works the metaphor of the thread. In each artist's respective opus, weaving exists as an essential symbol, not only within the thematic confines of their poetry but also as a

means of resisting the isolation and the disconnectedness caused by the flight from political turmoil and repressions of multiple types.

Chapter 2: Weaving Surfaces: Jorge Eduardo Eielson's Written Textiles

According to the textile artist Anni Albers, "Material form becomes meaningful form through design" (80). These words hold a special truth in the literary opus of Peruvian poet Jorge Eduardo Eielson. In order to create a signifying form with words that take us beyond what we think of as our verbal immediate reality, he imbues the text with a non-verbal discursive textile framework that expresses meaning through meta-textual references, through the poem's visual and spatial organization and through the discursive weaving of words of opposite values. By creating a space for the interaction between the printed text and the woven discourse of the poem, Eielson increases the capacity for meaning in his poetry by bringing together two differing symbolic planes that generate a richer context for significance. Thus, I argue that the fusion of both the verbal and the non-verbal textile discourses creates a new clear space or starting point from which the author contemplates the properties of language and the surfaces of the material text.

To support this thesis, I provide close analysis of poems from three of Eielson's works: *Mutatis mutandis* (1967), *Tema y variaciones* (1976) and *Nudos* (2002). First, I discuss the formation of the non-verbal discourse of the textile plane by examining the way in which Eielson generates an awareness of the material nature of the text. Having shown the author's perception of the word as a malleable media that gives rise to meaningful form, I illustrate how the poet manipulates the visual organization of the poem in order to communicate silently, as do the motifs on a piece of cloth, the

significance of the non-verbal message woven into the text. And lastly, I demonstrate how Eielson carries the influence of the textile to a more detailed level in his poetry by showing how he weaves together antonymous terms in order to express a means of transcendence through negation.

Situating Eielson's poetry within a single contextual time frame remains problematic because the publication dates for his works often post-date, by decades in some cases, the time when he composes them. According to information provided by Ricardo Silva Santisteban, author of the prologue of *Poesía escrita* (1976), Eielson writes *Tema y variaciones* in Geneva in 1950 and publishes it for the first time in the 1976 anthology. Afterwards, he compiles poems for *Mutatis mutandis* in Rome during 1954. This collection is eventually published in a *plaquette* by Javier Sologuren in 1967 (Ediciones de La Rama Florida), and it is also included in the 1976 poetic anthology (Soraluz 203). With respect to the last volume included in this analysis, Eielson affirms that he starts writing *Nudos* in the 1960's when the he begins constructing his famous knotted textile sculptures (Soraluz 313). He first publishes the poem in a *plaquette* of 100 copies in London in 1997, and in 2002, it appears in a separate volume published in Spain and also in Luis Rebaza Soraluz's edited anthology of Eielson's works titled *Arte poética* (Soraluz 313).

Before the 1950's and the 1960's, a rich poetic genealogy precedes Eielson. In seeking to rupture from the realism of the nineteenth century, the writers and the artists of the avant-garde aspire to find alternative and meaningful modes of expression. During the turn of the century, the image becomes more prolific, and modernity becomes

characterized by a split between the sign and the signified. As scholar Willard Bohn states, "Once artists and writers rejected the conventions associated with realism, they undermined the fundamental relation between signifier and signified. In other words, they managed to turn the sign against itself," and in this way, they privilege the signifier at the expense signified (21). As Bohn states, this rupture with the practices of realism initiates a period in which artists expose the conventionality of the relationship between the signifier and the signified; or that is, instead of solely identifying the artistic subject, they place emphasis on the mechanisms that *support* and/or *create* the artistic subject.

In line with this current of thought, poets writing in the early twentieth century in South America such as Vicente Huidobro in Chile, José Juan Tablada in Mexico and Carlos Oquendo de Amat in Peru develop a type of verse that remains acutely aware of its material conditions and places more value on the arrangement of the words on the page than their linguistic message. Following the wake of the landmark date of Vallejo's *Trilce* in 1922, Peruvians such as Alejandro Peralta and Carlos Oquendo de Amat emphasize the materiality of the poetic text through the use of free verse whose non-traditional spatial layout creates a *libro-objeto*.[24] Oquendo de Amat's *5 metros de poesía*, which unfolds from one sheet of paper like an accordion, literally focuses on the *tangible* properties of poetry as if it were a commodity for sale like a length of rope in a hardware store. In this light, poetry becomes a *surface* that petitions its own exploration.

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[24] See Luis Fernando Chueca's prologue to *Poesía vanguardista peruana (Tomo I)* published in 2009.

After this time period, Peruvian writers continue developing theories regarding the materiality of poetry that germinate during the first decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the previously mentioned experiments in poetic form, Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, a personal friend of Eielson, leaves an impressionable mark on modern Peruvian poetry with his surreal and highly visual style. Often instilling a strong sense of mysticism and silence in his verses, Westphalen lays the fundamental groundwork for what will later be called "pure poetry." Attributed to the *Generación del cincuenta* comprised of Eielson, Blanca Varela, Javier Sologuren and Sebastián Salazar Bondy among others, pure poetry is characterized by a poetics that favors the abstract and the philosophical implications of poetry over the expression of cultural content.[25]

After the zenith of the vanguard literary production in the thirties, Eielson and his peers dialogue with the previous generation of poets from Lima through the creation of works that continue exploring the materiality of the poetic word and the role of poetry in expressing intellectual thought.[26] In the larger context of the avant-garde in Latin America, Jorge Eduardo Eielson and other poets such as Octavio Paz in Mexico and the Brazilian Noigandres group formed in 1952 by Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari cultivate a strong sense of verbal, vocal and visual planes in their

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25 The name "poesía pura" has been debated by several of the denominated "pure poets" of the *Generación del cincuenta* who claim that their poetry remains concerned with cultural implications. For more information, see Luis Carcamo Huechante's article "Una poética del decenso: Mezcla y conversación en Blanca Varela."

26 *La poesía contemporánea del Perú*, an anthology compiled by J. E. Eielson, S. Salazar Bondy and Javier Sologuren in 1946, allows us to trace the genealogy of the authors that preceded Eielson. In the collection, the editors choose to include the work of José María Eguren, César Vallejo, Martín Adán, Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, Xavier Abril, Enrique and Ricardo Peña and Carlos Oquendo de Amat.

poems, thus confirming the presence of an international poetic preoccupation with the word and its material form.

While Eielson shares with his peers the development of the *verbi-voco-visual* verse, his work remains distinctive because it also appeals to the sense of touch; or that is, in addition to being verbal, vocal and visual, Eielson's poetry heavily transmits the tactile sense through references to its own material qualities and through its relationship to Andean textile construction and aesthetics. By highlighting the substantive properties of the printed word and the conventionality of writing, Eielson surpasses the formal limits of the written text and emphasizes the non-alphabetic layer of significance latent in its silent and vestigial textile structure.

MEDIA IN EIELSON'S POETRY

In Eielson's poetry, two major media are at play, the written text and the Andean *tejido* or *khipu*. Although the latter do not physically form a part of the verses on the page, Eielson's work illustrates that these two tools for processing information, writing and weaving, coetaneously exist within the poetic framework. When the author acknowledges the material and the woven origins of his poetry, he dialogues with the non-verbal, textile plane of information that scaffolds the organization of the text. In *Mutatis mutandis* (1967), the poem numbered "10" provides evidence of Eielson's preoccupation with the printed word as a poetic medium: "escribo algo todavía / vuelvo a añadir palabras / palabras otra vez" (234).[27] With these verses, the speaker of

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[27] For the full text of the poem, please see page 60.

enunciation illustrates a cognizance of the word as a malleable matter that he or she must employ in order to construct the text.

Similar to weaving, in writing, the raw materials employed in the mechanical process of scratching lines onto a surface often impose limits on the manner in which one carries out the technology. For example, scholar Albertine Gaur affirms that "Writing material is not neutral; it can shape and influence the development of scripts in matters of general appearance, the way individual signs are formed, and also as far as the direction of writing is concerned" (36). Thus in the same way that the choice of fiber influences the construction and the appearance of the final textile, the selection of a marking surface and an agent also determine the properties of the final written product. Without wishing to delve into the details of writing instruments and the surfaces they alter, it remains useful to note the main idea of Gaur's statement: we must not forget that the *way* in which one writes with a set of materials influences the outcome of the text's form and the message it intends to communicate.[28]

Because writing exists as a symbolic media whose signs represent external concepts, its referents also remain influenced by the boundaries of its material inscription. Thus, like the textile whose design motifs illustrate geometric borders due to the restrictions of the interlocking warp and weft threads at ninety degree angles, the alphabetic scripts employed in many world languages also shape the content of the text.

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[28] In *A History of Writing* (1984), Gaur analyzes the relationship between various marking tools and their respective surfaces. For example, script carried out on palm leaves tends to be round in nature so that the horizontal marks of the pen do not split the leaf (51). In addition, the use of a chisel on stone lends itself for the use of print, and the use of a brush on a surface encourages cursive strokes (51).

For example, alphabetic writing focuses primarily on visual and phonemic methods of representing information, and because it is a systematic tool that virtually any human can operate, the written text reigns supreme in the relaying of information. Nevertheless, although it serves as a conduit for the transfer of large amounts of content to a sizeable audience, its rigid printed form fails to communicate other visual and tactile knowledge perceivable by humans.

With relation to that which the written text omits, what remains unique about Jorge Eduardo Eielson's poetry is that it does indeed convey a type of meaning not easily transmitted by writing. Through references to its own construction, he opens his poetry to the layers of significance embedded in its non-verbal textile framework.[29] Since cloth stores information without the use of alphabetic script, the textile roots of the poetic composition add the richness of their "silent" cultural symbolism to that of the printed word.[30] Thus, when Eielson exposes the underlying fabric in a poem through allusions to its material content and its construction, he provides access to a secondary plane of meaning deriving from the text's Andean textile origins. Consequently, both the non-verbal, woven discourse and the conventional meaning held by the printed words correlate and form a new surface of significance.

One of the best examples in which Eielson employs meta-language to expose a non-linguistic layer of interpretable meaning in the text exists in the poem "10" from

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[29] For more on this concept, see the analysis of Katheryn Sullivan Kruger's *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* previously discussed in chapter one.

[30] The words *tissue*, as in a covering, *textile* and *text* all originate from the Latin word *texere*, to weave.

Mutatis mutandis (1967). As shown below, the author continually refers to the process of writing through the repetition of the words *palabras*, *escribo* and *borro*. I quote:

> escribo algo
> algo todavía
> algo más aún
> añado palabras   pájaros
> hojas secas   viento
> borro palabras nuevamente
> borro pájaros   hojas secas   viento
> escribo algo todavía
> vuelvo a añadir palabras
> palabras otra vez
> palabras aún
> además pájaros   hojas secas   viento
> borro palabras nuevamente
> borro pájaros   hojas secas   viento
> borro todo por fin
> no escribo nada   (234)

In addition to the multiple uses of terms that refer to the writing process in this poem, Eielson repeats the nouns *algo, pájaros, hojas* and *viento*. The numerous applications of these words highlight the materiality of the poem because their increased frequency gives them the appearance of being stamped on the paper. As the reader sees each one, his or

her attention shifts away from the word's semantic properties and toward its material form, ink printed on paper via a typing mechanism. In this sense, the signs shift an internalizing gaze back to their concrete reality away from the exterior plane of significance that they symbolize. As a result, these terms act more like patterned motifs or designs on a visual field than linguistic units that represent meanings attached to speech. Furthermore, duplicating the word *palabras* copiously weakens its denotation because its increased number of physical appearances on the page emphasize that the word is exactly what the reader sees—a series of lines strategically designed on a white background.

To reiterate this concept, Eielson replicates the oppositional verbs of *escribir* and *borrar* in the poem. These terms emphasize the materiality of the word by referring to the actions that create and destroy it. Both writing and erasing transform the marking agent and the surface, and the constant oscillation between printing and deleting suggests a material and a semantic stalemate between the two. At the end of the poem, the verses, "borro todo por fin / no escribo nada," suggest that the action of erasing conquers that of writing thus indicating, as Ricardo Silva Santisteban affirms, that Eielson negatively silences the text (29). Unfortunately, this interpretation, while in line with the semantic values of the words, ignores any other possible reading that also includes an analysis of the layer of meaning present in the "silent" textile vestiges of the poem.

Although not conveyed directly through words, the central topic of the poem, which underlies the superficial theme of writing, derives from the text's non-verbal textile roots, the unspoken movements of joining opposite threads to form a new whole.

By alternating actions of creation and erasure with the terms *escribo* and *borro*, Eielson imitates the fabric of the textile which exists upon a system of interlocking oppositional threads to form a new artifact. Similar to a piece of cloth, the structure of "10" exemplifies the same textile principles of unifying difference because the words that join together to form the body of the poem are opposites. Therefore, by exposing the textile-like material interface between words, the overall meaning of the poem multiplies because it expresses that the creation of poetry results from the union of difference. In support of this concept, the last two verses, "borro todo por fin / no escribo nada," point to the construction of the text because even though the speaker insists that he or she is erasing, by printing the words on the page, he or she affirmatively writes and produces more written material.

When viewed from a wider scope, "10" alludes to the universal cycle of life that arises from the fusion of difference in nature. The repetition of the words *pájaros*, *hojas* and *viento* situate the text within an outdoor environment, and they represent the animal, the vegetable and the climatic forces present on the earth. When included in the reality of the poem, they provide an integral context for the cyclical theme of the life and death which includes the generation and the destruction of natural elements.

Among Eielson's other publications, the long singularly published poem *Nudos* (2002) also contains many textual self-references that bring the work's underlying textile semantic plane into play with the markings of the material words on the page. The excerpt below of the stanzas that open the poem provides a glimpse of the author's graphic insistence with regard to the title:

Hay nudos

Que no son nudos

Y nudos que solamente

Son nudos (313)

Throughout the poem, Eielson's incessant repetition and play on the title places emphasis on the text's concrete nature. For example, the author uses the term 96 times in a total of 129 verses, which calculates to an appearance at the rate of 74% per verse. Furthermore, he also includes it in the recurring words of *estornudos, desnudos* and *menudos*. Thus, through its increased frequency, as a word and as a part of other words, the term *nudos* directs the reader's attention away from the singular symbolic meaning of the print and points to its materiality.

In general, this effect is not only achieved through the prolific use of the marked word; the author emphasizes the materiality of the text by providing a plethora of physical descriptions. For example, the knot is described as being small, blue and composed of light and haze, water and clouds, just to name a few. Furthermore, the stress on external forms is reinforced by the allusion made to corporeal surfaces such as the nose brought forth by *estornudos* and the naked human body created by *desnudos.* As a result of the focus on surfaces, the conventional or the denotative definition of the words on the page slips into oblivion, and the reader remains left with an overabundance of verbal "exoskeletons" or printed word-shells and metaphors.

Moreover, by including the word *nudos* inside other words such as *estornudos, desnudos* and *menudos*, Eielson emphasizes the materiality of the text and illustrates its

concrete attributes because the physical form of the graphically represented utterance remains divorced from its conventional meaning. For example, although the latter part of *estornudos, desnudos* and *menudos* share the same spelling and the same sound as the Spanish word for knot, they have no semantic relationship to it. A sneeze, the undressed and the adjective for describing diminutive size do not relate symbolically to the concept of a tied piece of fiber or cord in any way. Thus, by playing on the homophonous and graphic qualities that the words share, Eielson emphasizes the printed form of the word over its semantic value.

By including references that illustrate its materiality, Eielson opens up the text and exposes the vestigial traces of the textile. In the Andean tradition, the knot holds or stores information to be interpreted by an *amauta*, or a wise man, called the *khipukamayuq*. The *khipu*, which signifies *knot* in Quechua, communicates without the need of graphic signs but rather with the twists of its plied strings, the number of turns in the tying of its knots and their placement upon the pendant or subsidiary cords. If we examine Eielson's poem through the critical lens of this textile structure, we must ask ourselves, "How do the metaphorical associations of this figure tie or hold information together in the text?"

The answer to this question reveals itself when we discover what the knot does that the printed text cannot. For example, although we do not know for certain exactly how the *khipu* were "read," we do know that their interpretation required the knowledge of a scholar learned in the employment of the technology. In the time of the Inka Empire, the *khipukamayuq* are classified on the same hierarchical level as the astronomer and the

shaman.[31] This being the case, it is wise to postulate that the knot interpreters made use of their special areas of knowledge when communicating the meaning stored in the thread. Thus, the significance of each tied piece of cord included not only its "conventional" symbol (if indeed one existed), but, in the case of non-numerical knots, it could also have also represented a wide range of semantic values attributed to it by the memory of the *khipukamayuq*.[32] In this sense, the knot could serve as a tool for storing a richer context of meaning than the printed word because its interpretation depends on the specialized knowledge and interpretation of the human who decodes it. Therefore, the *nudo* remains capable of recording a wider scope of significance than the printed word because the vast experiential memory of the human brain supplements its signifying framework.

With relation to *Nudos*, the poetic traces of the knot allow the text to express the content of the subject matter in a way that printed words cannot by metaphorically connecting the graphic symbol and its conventional significance to a level of meaning that exists beyond the denotative use of the word. For example, at the very end of the poem, the author provides two very short verses that clue us into the non-verbal message that he wishes to convey, "Nudos que no dicen nada / Y nudos que todo lo dicen" (322). As illustrated by the former verse, although they do not "say" anything in the traditional

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[31] On this commentary, see Brokaw's book, *A History of the Khipu* (2010).

[32] Although it is widely accepted that the *khipu* stored numerical data, it is unknown whether the knots formed a part of a conventional symbolic system like a standard code or an alphabet for representing non-numerical ideas. Thus it remains to be seen if the *khipu* could be interpreted by anyone who knew how to read the *khipu* code system or if the only person who could communicate the knotted messages was the individual who created the device.

verbal sense, knots still "say everything" without the presence of graphic words in their silent textile state. To reiterate this point, Eielson thoughtfully plays with the assonance of the letter "o" that appears in the words *nudos, no, todo* and *lo*. Because the shape of the grapheme resembles both the numeral zero and a circular ring, the repetition of the vowel in the verses alludes to the concepts of a void, or *nada*, and an absolute, or *todo*.

Throughout Eielson's works, the oscillating theme between emptiness and totality repeats. In line with Mallarmé's ontological preoccupation with the void and the absolute, nothingness exists as the clear space of creation where the absolute exists, and only in this empty space can the word discover its pure zone of existence (Friedrich 95). With regard to *Nudos*, the use of the words *todo*, *nada* and the increased frequency of the letter *o*, which stands for both the nil and totality, reference Mallarmé's theory. In this way, the "silent" and the visual, textile discourse in the poem that augments the meaning of the words acts as the void or the untainted area where language knows the absolute. By alluding to the non-verbal communicative capacity of the knot, Eielson exposes what the material word negates to say and shows that a different type of transmission of information beyond the power of script exists in the *fabric* of the text that often remains ignored. Should we choose to explore this "silent" discourse, then we come closer to knowing the indefinable qualities that escape the expression of our conventional language because, knots also serve as "sombras / De infinitos nudos / Celestes" (319). Or that is to say, the material *nudos*, in their shadowing of the heavens, provide a means of arriving at a vision of totality.

In the same way that Eielson manipulates the materiality of the knot in order to show the traces of the textile within the text, he also uses meta-language in "poesía en forma de pájaro" from *Tema y variaciones* (1976) to illustrate a means of poetic communication not grounded in the confines of the printed word. Because of its highly unique meta-poetic and visual qualities, its analysis deserves a two-fold discussion, one regarding its consciousness of material which I will undertake presently and the second pertaining to its spatial format which I will execute in the following section of the chapter.

Like "10" and *Nudos*, "poesía en forma de pájaro" repeats the printed word in order to show a mindfulness of self-construction.[33] Within the body of the poem, the terms *cuello* and *patas* are copied in the form of two vertical columns that draw out the neck and the legs of giant bird image on the page. Their increased frequency makes them appear as if they were stamped onto the surface of the paper. This unique quality of being impressed upon a surface draws attention to the ink on the sheet and not to its referent. In agreement with this concept, Alfonso D'Aquino writes:

> Si las palabras acentúan la concreción del mundo que designan, asimismo, trascendiendo sus niveles medios, rebasan el mundo concreto y, una de dos, se salen de sí o van hacia sí mismas. En Eielson presenciamos en este punto de su circular trayectoria un proceso de interiorización de la escritura: las palabras ya no reflejan cosas, reflejan palabras. (146)

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[33] For the full text of the poem, see page 73.

In other words, by shifting the focus away from what they signify in a linguistic context and by pointing back to themselves, the words on the page interiorize their concrete condition. For example, the terms *cuello* and *patas* serve as the bricks that Eielson employs to construct his figure. Wishing to design the neck and the legs of the animal, he must utilize the words *cuello* and *patas* as if they were different types of building blocks fit only for the purpose of assembling each corresponding part of the bird's body. In this sense, these constructive elements background their symbolic properties and foreground their graphic, material nature because, instead of recalling images, they *are* the objects that they name.

In addition to this technique of assembly, the poet mentions the materials that comprise the poem in the verses "pájaro de papel y tinta que no vuela / que no se mueve que no canta que no respira" (156). Here, the reference to the media used in the composition of the graphic bird, the paper and the ink, illustrates that the words on the page act like tiny stipples that come together to form the totality of a picture. In this sense, the material form that the markings create is valued over their symbolic meaning; the words do not reflect a referent; they reflect words. By making this connection in the poem, Eielson exposes the creature's artificiality. As a bird composed of poetry, it cannot perform its natural functions of flying, moving, singing and breathing. The figure, like the graphemes, remains hollow. It cannot truly represent the animal it names because it is made of ink and paper not of feather and blood.

To further emphasize the materiality of the text, Eielson alludes to the facility of its undoing. In the verses, "tal vez un soplo desbarata / la misteriosa palabra que sujeta /

sus dos patas . . . . a mi mesa," the author expresses that a slight breath of air could disrupt the arrangement of the words on the paper. In this sense, the printed terms act like building blocks or pieces in a puzzle that, when scattered about, destroy the shape or the image of the designer's intention. In referring to its own collapse, "poesía en forma de pájaro" exposes the fickleness of its material qualities, and having revealed the limitations of its media, the poem gives us a glimpse of what lies beyond the ink and the paper. For example, if we cannot trust the written word as absolute and steadfast, then what holds the poem together? It is here that the relationship between the text and the textile becomes salient. Referring back to Kruger's statement regarding the *thetic* break between the textile and the text, we understand that the text breaks away from the cloth when it denies its maternal function of covering and protecting; however, although the text separates itself from the textile through this negation, it continues to show traces of its linkage to weaving through the self-reference to its construction (37).

By exposing the conventionality of its media, "poesía en forma de pájaro" shows us its constructive properties that originate from the textile. Like a piece of cloth woven with threads, a carefully designed network of verses that clothe the surface of the animal's body hold the fragile words of Eielson's poem together. Were it not for the existence of this textual tissue, the creature could fall apart so easily from a slight movement of the air. In this way, the textile-like network that unites the verbal material serves as a place where the symbolic properties of the fabric and the printed word merge to produce new meaning. For example, even though the graphemes and the textile structure fail in their attempt to fully create life and give the bird an essence, they manage

to provide it with a material existence. Both the fabric framework and the text create new realities, and they mirror the mysteries of the life-generating force of nature. Consequently, it remains arguable that the theme of the poem is not one of pure negativity that exposes the concrete feebleness of our written language; instead, the opposite is also true: our written words, when viewed through the same creative lens as the textile, exist as a medium that stands capable of generating a new reality, a new form that approximates the mystery of the doing and the undoing that occurs in nature.

VISUALITY AND THE TEXTUAL-TEXTILE INTERFACE

Quite simply phrased, visual poetry is poetry that it meant to be seen (Bohn 15). In this way, it remains arguable that the visual poem acts like a piece of cloth more so than a traditional versed poem because its optical format creates a non-linguistic, material zone of meaning just like a tapestry or any other material used as a surface for depicting images. Consequently, this "silent" spatial layout combines with the secondary symbolic system at play in the body of the text, that is, the meaning induced from the emblematic properties of the printed word. With regard to this optical kind of poetry, Willard Bohn echoes this concept:

> By definition visual poetry is a hybrid genre, a second-order semiological system in which linguistic structures support pictorial structures and vice versa. Each work embodies a complex dialectic between these two sign systems, as we have seen, and centers itself around their point of articulation. Not only is aesthetic function tied to semantics, but the

> reverse is also true. Each level of signification, whether visual or verbal, looks to the other for corroboration or denial. (100)

As Bohn theorizes, both the language elements and the visual structures in the poem come together at an interface or a point of articulation where they confirm or refute each other's means of expression. Consequently, the interpretation of this crossroads of meanings remains the task of an active reader, which leads us to take a closer look at Eielson's visual poetry.

Because many of Eielson's poems are designed to be seen, they showcase the material qualities of the printed words on the page. Like small threads that bend and interlock to form an image in the textile, the placement of each verbal unit on the paper acts like a string that comes together with others to form a larger textual tapestry. As a result of this condition, the graphic word takes on another symbolic plane. It not only represents an external meaning associated to it through language, but it also signifies concepts inherent to the visual form that it creates in conjunction with the other words on the page.

In Eielson's work, many of the visible structures in the poems correspond to the design layout of Andean and indigenous textiles. These configurations include: a correlation to warp and weft, the presence of visual axes in the body of the text, the organization of verses in stripes and bands, the lining up of elements in *khipu* formation, the incorporation of three-dimensional images on the page in a flat representation, the juxtaposition of natural symbols of opposition and the structuring of the poetic space in the same manner that a textile configures the environment.

By choosing to craft the area of the poem along the aesthetic principles of the *tejido*, the author allows the significant textile discourse to dialogue with the semantics of the conventional printed word, and in this sense, he finds a more meaningful type of poetic expression that surpasses the meaning instantaneously recognized in the print alone. With regard to this concept, Andean textile scholar Ed Franquemont reminds us that, "As it is free of language, textile activity has a tremendous potential as a way of exploring and representing other systems of knowledge that are not easily conveyed through words" (33). Here, Franquemont illustrates that the textile expresses that which language (written or oral) does not. This of course does not imply that weaving remains superior to writing or speech simply because it communicates cultural concepts that often evade the convention of words. However, it does suggest that cloth products transmit information in a unique way unlike the medium of language. Thus, when the textile presence is heavily felt in the reality of a poem, its capacity of signification increases because the reader must decipher the interface of both the verbal and the non-verbal layers of meaning.

Although discussed in the previous section for using language that reveals its material traces of the textile, I would like to revisit "poesía en forma de pájaro" from *Tema y variaciones* (156). In order to illustrate the poem's textile aesthetics, I transcribe it below with added marks for reference:

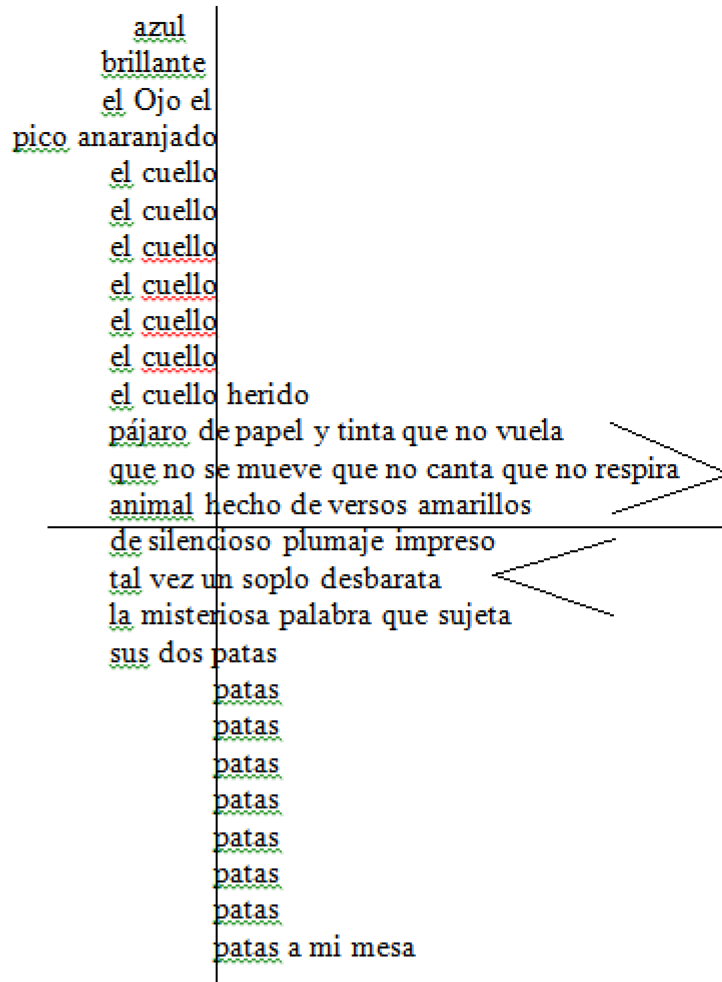

Illustration 2.1 "poesía en forma de pájaro" with added marks for reference

This poem, which forms the shape of a giant bird on the page, illustrates the text's materiality because the spatial arrangement of the words places an emphasis on the sign and not the signified. Consequently, the optical orientation of the verses allows the author to assign new meanings to the printed script. In the text, if we observe how the sign takes on its newly attributed meaning from its spatial organization, then we see that it expresses many of the concepts integral to Andean weaving such as the incorporation

of landscape features, the organization of space according to Andean cosmogony and the symmetrical pairing of design elements.

Upon glancing at the poem, the viewer immediately distinguishes the outline of an avian figure. With regard to the Andean *tejido*, this corporal silhouette correlates to the weaver's frequent incorporation of zoomorphic images into the design of cloth products. In this case, as well as in the case of the textile, the ornithological picture represents the Andean landscape; and therefore, it acts as a map that organizes information regarding the natural environment. Although the title of the work does not specify the species, one cannot help but remember the figure of the condor so often represented in Andean textiles. Like a *tejido* that depicts this majestic animal, the visual organization of Eielson's poem immediately evokes this cultural memory and serves as a representation of natural space.

Relating to this representation of the landscape, the text also displays a visual-spatial orientation divided into four parts around horizontal and vertical axes that cross in the middle of the bird's "verbal" body. In this way, the text correlates to the Inka division of the Empire into four zones or *suyos* in Quechua: *contisuyo* (west), *antisuyo* (east), *chinchaysuyo* (north) and *collasuyo* (south). Furthermore, the horizontal and the vertical axes in the poem relate to the directionality of the warp and the weft threads that comprise the *tejido*. Because the shape on the page is one-dimensional and geometric, it is as if the image of the bird was woven into a tapestry; only the type-set warp shows. As visual artist César Paternosto illustrates, the creation of angled images found in native cultures remains highly influenced by the technology of weaving. I quote:

> . . . I see the reiteration or modular all-over repetition of the motifs so often found on the Neolithic material . . . as also deriving from weaving. . . The repetition of motifs suggests . . . that these designs must have originated first on spherical surfaces, such as baskets, rather than on flat surfaces that present boundaries implying 'beginnings' and 'ends.' . . . it also enabled the weaver to replicate the essence of other formal patterns previously immersed in nature—the stylization, or abstraction, of animal or vegetal forms, perhaps the diamond reflected the rhomboids on the snake's skin; or the zigzag evoked lightning, just as the meander may have echoed the bends of the river. (31)

Here Paternosto theorizes that the abstraction of natural forms likely comes from the weaver's attempt to portray an image within the textile. In weaving, due to the limitations of the loom, vertical and horizontal threads must intersect at ninety-degree angles; and therefore, the designs produced in the cloth take on angular properties thus erasing the object's original curved lines provided to it by nature. With regard to Eielson's poem, the abstract depiction of a bird associates with the technology of weaving whose mechanics of production produce images bordered by angles instead of curves.

In the context of Andean art, scholar Thomas Cummins postulates that the geometric abstraction found in *quero* vessels calls attention to the object, its composition

and its use (28).[34] With regard to “poesía en forma de pájaro,” the linear design of the avian figure incites the viewer to contemplate its visual configuration. Vertically, the appendages of the animal exist in a mirrored inverse image like two letter Ls: “Ί” for the neck and beak and “L” for the legs and feet. In addition to the reverse mirrored relationship between the “legs/feet” and the “neck/head,” the bird remains divisible into two equal horizontal planes with a line of symmetry traversing the verses, “animal hecho de versos amarillos” and “de silencioso plumaje impreso.” Another inverse balanced association exists in the “body” of the printed animal because each horizontal half of the midsection displays symmetry within its own three verses forming either a convex or a concave shape as illustrated above with the lines > and < .

When viewed together, the contextualization of these spaces correlates to the balance found in textile design. For example, in the Quechua speaking regions of the Andes, a male garment called the *uncu* looks like a poncho divided into two planes, right and left. Within each of these zones, the motifs always follow the principles of symmetry; or that is, any design or color that appears on one side must also exist on the other. Correlating with this equilibrium, each fabric’s design performs the spatial conceptualization of the Andean cosmovision by encapsulating diverse entities into a single ensemble. In other words, the textile exists as a heterogeneous product where one whole remains comprised of dissimilar, yet symmetrical elements. With relation to

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34 The *quero* is a pair of drinking vessels made from the same material. During the Inka Empire, they are used for political, social and ceremonial exchanges. In *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels* (2002), Cummins illustrates that, with the progression of the Spanish conquest of the Andes, the *quero* lose their geometric carved abstractions and give way to painted pictorial designs.

"poesía en forma de pájaro," this phenomenon is communicated through the grouping of upper/lower and left/right spaces within a single framework.

Another way in which Eielson's poem remains conceptually interwoven with Andean abstract art and textiles is through the notion of *camay*. Thomas Cummins provides a definition of this concept in the following statement. I quote:

> Abstraction may also be an index of a type of referentiality existing within the Andean cosmological concept of *camay*. Camay can be considered the supernatural vitalization of all material things for which there is a supernatural prototype, *camac*. People, animals, and natural and cultural objects are the concrete manifestations of this essence and energy. (28)

Here, Cummins reveals the integral relationship between abstraction and the vitalizing force of the *camac*. According to the Andean cosmovision, all things possess *camay*; and as a result, they exist as the material manifestations of cosmic energy. Within the context of Andean art, Cummins posits that abstraction serves as an indicator of these supernatural drives.

In Eielson's poem, the geometric design of the creature not only expresses the non-verbal concepts of unity and symmetry; on the other hand, it also transmits the notion of *camac*, or the life force inherent to all beings, animate and inanimate. In the Andean world, specialists known as *camayoc* possess the ability to infuse the objects of their craft with this "essence and energy" (Cummins 28). Artisans such as the *cumbicamayoc* (master weaver), the *querocamayoc* (master woodworker) and the *quipucamayaoc* (master *khipu*-maker), all work so that "each object is brought into being

and exists with all others, participating phenomenologically in the events of the world" (Cummins 29).[35] In this sense, Eielson remains a type of *camayoc* with his own medium, the printed word, and as a result, he imbues "poesía en forma de pájaro" with the essence given to all material forms in the Andes.

Here, a certain level of irony becomes evident. The geometric abstraction of the bird dialogues with the concept of *camay*; however, the poet states that the textual creature cannot fly, move, sing or breathe. Thus, the contradiction between the focus on the creation of the animal and its false sense of existence undermine an analysis of the poem based fully on the concepts of unity, symmetry and life essence imbued in material. Since visual poetry exists as the product of the interface between two symbolic planes of meaning, Eielson supplements the significance of the "silent" message of the woven textile with the significance of the written script. As discussed previously with regard to the materiality of the text, the words in "poesía en forma de pájaro" expose the mutable nature of written language and play upon the ironic relationship between their capacity to create and also be undone. When combined with the non-verbal visual textile discourse of the poem, the text also expresses that written poetic language, when in close contact with its woven origins, approximates the cosmic order and symmetry that the textile illustrates. In this way, each poetic reality maintains the capacity to bring together units of difference in order to create a harmonious union, and by attempting to do so, the text bridges the reality of the poet and the forces of nature.

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[35] Although I have previously written the word for "khipu-maker" as *khipukamayuq*, I choose to spell it as *quipucamayoac* here in order to remain faithful to Cummins' spelling of the word.

When we reexamine the poem, we find that the terms *papel, tinta, versos* and *mesa* describe the immediate environment of the author; he is indeed surrounded by paper, ink, verses and a table. By including these variables in the text, Eielson organizes his environment into a versed syntagmatic map. In the same way that weavers incorporate the memory of their landscape in the cloth so as to re-arrange their reality according to their cosmic belief system of balance and union, the author takes elements of his mundane reality and reorganizes them according to the Andean vision of symmetry. Thus, by working the *surface* of the poem, he constructs a "wordscape" in the same manner that weavers incorporate components of their natural environment into the textile with the purpose of producing a signifying plane of fabric.

Throughout *Tema y variaciones*, Eielson continues to manipulate the visual organization of the text, and in the poem "inventario," he extends our awareness across the surface of the poem. Like "poesía en forma de pájaro," this text also contains a visually recognizable textile-like design that fuses with the symbolic layer of linguistic meaning represented by the printed word. By immediately looking at its spatial disposition, it remains clear that the weaving principles of symmetry dominate its layout.

astros de diamante

cielo despejado

árboles sin hojas

muro de cemento

puerta de hierro

mesa de madera

vaso de cristal

humo de tabaco

taza de café

hoja de papel

torre de palabras

hoja de papel

taza de café

humo de tabaco

vaso de cristal

mesa de madera

puerta de hierro

muro de cemento

árboles sin hojas

cielo despejado

astros de diamante (151)

Along the middle verse, "torre de palabras," the poem splits into two equal lateral parts. In addition to this separation, the reader also notices that the central location of the preposition *de* in the majority of the verses marks a vertical axis. As a result, the poem's visual and semantic organization take on the properties of a textile whose material

structure and design layout always align and divide themselves around the axes of longitudinal warp and latitudinal weft.

At the center of the poem, there exists one solitary verse that does not belong to either stanza. On a textile, this unique "stripe" correlates to the *corazón* of the *tejido*. As Meisch signals in her article, "The Living Textiles of Tarabuco, Bolivia," the center *pallay* panel of the cloth possesses the label *sunq'u* or heart (50). Here the verse "torre de palabras" acts as the core of the poem because, like the cardiac organ, it is located in the middle of the poem's body. Furthermore, as the heart allegorically defines a person's identity or disposition, the words in the verse characterize the nature of the poem: it is a tower of words, an inventory of items.

This vertical structure, which also brings to memory the classic ivory tower associated with intellectual and poetic production, provides the reader with the names of the objects that comprise a type of "textscape," perhaps that of the poet. The organization of the two equal semantic planes or stanzas and their positioning upon a vertical and a horizontal division around the heart all come together in order to form a visual map of the environment at hand. Here, the idea of the axis as a place of intersection remains capital because it expresses the totality of an Andean cosmovision that contains difference and union. Therefore, the "silent" visual textile-discourse of "inventario" organizes separate yet similar spaces (stanzas) and concepts pertaining to the domestic and intimate environment of the speaker (*astros, cielo, árboles, muro, puerta, mesa, vaso, humo, taza* and *hoja*). Furthermore, like an inventory, it unifies them within the parameters of the text.

Within this larger framework, the configuration of the words in the poem illustrates a process of gradation. This occurs in many textiles. As Verónica Cereceda demonstrates with the *talegas* of Isluga, the chromatic scale of color from dark to light toward the edge or *the mouth* of the cloth shows the opening up or the expansion of its communicative properties (159). Eielson's poem exemplifies this design because the words that progress outward from the center to the limits of the text follow a gradation of small daily objects to vast celestial bodies. For example, the first two verses positioned at the sides of the *sunq'u* verse are "hoja de papel." From here, the next line mentions *taza*; then *humo, vaso, mesa, puerta, muro, árboles, cielo* and *astros* succeed each in their respective lines. With this changing degree of expansion in the poem, the words, like the mutation in the color bands of the *talegas*, show the opening up of the poem from the most miniscule objects of daily material life like paper outward toward the expansive masses of the heavens.

Equipped with a "heart," a symmetrical trunk constructed from separate but equal parts and two "mouths," "inventario" becomes a body of words, and the extension of the poem's surface across space allows Eielson to explore the non-verbal properties of the text's skin. In line with this concept, we observe that the objects included in the verses all exist as surfaces; even the sky perforated by stars acts as a cover for the depicted domestic scene. By interlacing the verbal tissue of the poem with the image of the tower, Eielson illustrates the unspeakable qualities inherent in the intimate surfaces with which we come into contact. Long used as a metaphoric means of ascending to the sky in order to ascertain knowledge about that which lies beyond the physical realm of the earth, the

imagery of this structure in combination with the syntactic "wordscape" on the page expands the reader's awareness lengthwise across the fabric of the poem and invites us to ponder the traces of the absolute that lie in the surfaces that comprise our environment.

In addition to serving as an interface between the surface and the non-readily recognized meanings below it, the textile traces found in poetry also work to increase the lyricism symbolized by the printed words. For example, in "poesía en A mayor" from *Tema y variaciones*, there exists a strong relationship between Andean textile mechanics, the written word and music. The reader observes this connection immediately upon reading the title: it exists as a pun because it visually stands for the capital letter *A*, and it also represents a musical key. Furthermore, the acute angle of the *A* situates the text within the geographical context of the Andes because the shape of the letter resembles the jagged peaks of the mountain chain. As a result of the connection drawn between what the eye sees and what the ear hears, Eielson creates a crossroads between the visual, the musical and the linguistic discourses in the poem. And, in a very unique way, he strengthens the relationship between the text and the thread by connecting a chorded/corded musical and string technology with the lyricism of the poetic voice.

At first glance, the body of the poem suggests the visual harmony often found in Andean and indigenous textiles. A concept essential to both the *tejido* and to many musical compositions, the poem communicates its balance through its material appearance. For example, when one views the right margin of the verses, he or she

observes that it follows an undulating form with the middle verses displaying a symmetrical convex curve.[36] I quote:

estupendo Amor AmAr el mAr
y vivir sólo de Amor
y mAr
y mirAr siempre el mAr
con Amor
mAgnífico morir
Al pie del mAr de Amor
Al pie del mAr de Amor morir
pero mirando siempre el mAr
con Amor
como si morir
fuerA sólo no mirAr
el mAr
o dejAr de AmAr (155)

When seen in this way, the reader distinguishes a horizontal axis along the longest verse "Al pie del mAr de Amor morir." Visually, this line acts like a seam that holds the two halves of the poem, which are almost mirror images, together. If we exclude the first verse, (I will explain my reasons for this shortly), then the reader counts six lines on

[36] Here it remains appropriate for Eielson to contour the right margin of the poem with a wave-like, curved line because the poem repeatedly calls forth the notion of the sea.

either side of this central axis. In addition, if the image were rotated ninety degrees to the right so that the left margin appeared at the top, the text would appear like a symmetrical, banded and striped textile product whose equal halves express the Andean notion of the harmonious union of binary elements.

Furthermore, the increased graphic and vocal frequency of letters emphasizes the materiality of the textual-weaving connection which in turn exposes the poem's non-verbal textile discourse. Here, the assonance of the *a* and the alliteration of the *m* instill the poem with sound and also focus the reader's attention on their graphic symbols. With regard to the visual plane, this repetition is reinforced by the vertical alignment of the capital *A*. By lining the letters straight up, the poem resembles chord tablature because all of the uppercase letters could be connected on a string. When playing an instrument, three or more notes must sound at the same time to produce a chord, and the vertical connection between the letters in the poem imitates this musical phenomenon. So, in a way, Eielson writes a poem that resembles the chord A major both in its sound and its visual pattern.

This musical allusion brings weaving to mind because both string instruments and textiles depend on the workings of threads under tension. In music, written notes on a staff that are vertically aligned to represent a chord look like a grouping of knots on a string. Re-directing our attention to Eielson's poem, it remains clear that the *A*s not only line up vertically like musical notes on a staff; on the other hand, their variable spacing makes them look like knots on imaginary pendant chords hanging from a *khipu*. As mentioned before, the poem remains symmetrical except for the first verse. Singled out,

the primary line in the text appears like the main chord of a *khipu* (see illustration below); therefore, in a very mysterious and unspoken way, the poet finds a way to connect weaving and music through their common use of strings and chords/cords.

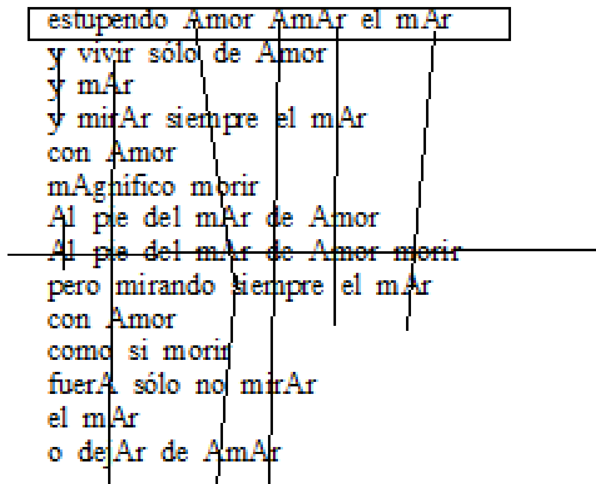

Illustration 2.2 "poesía en A Mayor" with added marks for reference

On a semantic level, the musical and the verbal *khipu* records an introspective feeling expressed by the poetic discourse. The enunciative voice takes on a pensive nature and ponders the relationship between "Amor" and "mAr." An age-old metaphor for erotic love, the ocean here represents the "magnífico morir" or the losing of oneself in the profound depths of the act of Eros.[37] At the end of his or her contemplation, the speaker arrives to the conclusion that true death consists of "no mirAr / el mAr / o dejAr de AmAr." In other words, the consequences of closing one's eyes to this longing would

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[37] Having made no mention of masculine or feminine traits in the poem, the gender ambivalence in the text subtly challenges heterosexual norms through the creation of an androgynous non-gendered space. Given the focus of my analysis on linguistic elements, I would like to acknowledge the non-heterosexual erotics of the poem which are worthy of investigation in the future.

be a true death. To express this rich lyric content, Eielson, employing the aesthetics of the Andean textile as a basis for communicating harmony and balance, visually and musically employs the string as metaphor that "records" the chords/cords on the "text"-like strings and "plays" the lyric he wishes to sing. As a result, he augments the linguistic content of the words on the page by interfacing their meanings with an intensity of emotion and lyricism implied by the threaded arrangement of the script.

Whereas in "poesía en A mayor" Eielson extends the poetic speaker's awareness across the vast body of the sea and embeds the text with the informational and the musical playing of c(h)ords, in poem "9" from *Mutatis mutandis*, the author opens up the textile layer of meaning in the text through the repetition of words and the division of space which work together to create an inverse relationship between the concepts of matter and emptiness:

> nada
>
> sino una masa clara
>
> de millones y millones de kilos
>
> de plomo de plata de nada
>
> vacío y peso y vacío nuevamente
>
> nada de plomo   plomo en la nada
>
> nada de plata   plata en la nada
>
> nada de nada   nada en la nada
>
> nada
>
> sino la luna   la nada

y la nada nuevamente (233)

Here, the central division of the poem into two hemispheres separated by an extended amount of white space provided by the page remains obvious. As seen in previous analysis, this visual break in the body of the text reminds the knowledgeable reader of the axis of reflection upon which all Andean textiles are designed that represents the divine organization of space according to the harmony of nature: upper and lower, east and west. Although all of the verses do not display perfect balance in equal halves, this spatial division into mainly equal parts, like the Andean textile, communicates a sense of binary existence, left side and right side. In this way, the split in the second half of the poem situates the message of the text within a context that highlights the nature of complimentary opposing elements such as matter and emptiness.

Moving beyond the initial visual observation of the double poetic space, the semantic meanings of the words in the poem work to enforce another dualistic concept also found in textiles—that of mass and nothingness. This dichotomy reminds us of Kasimir Malevich's suprematist conceptualization of material and the void. In an essay titled "From Cubism to Suprematism. The New Realism of Painting," Malevich states, "Our world of art has become new, non-objective, pure. Everything has vanished. There remains a mass of material from which the new forms will be built" (40). Here, Malevich posits that the artist must manipulate the remaining substances left from the creation of the void in order to create a new form. Thus, like a weaver who manipulates the

emptiness between fibers in order to fuse blank space and threads, the poet must fill the void of the blank page with the material form of the words.[38]

In "9," Eielson explores this idea through the comparison and contrast of *nada* with *masa*. For example, the first verses of the poem, "nada / sino una masa clara," juxtapose the conflicting notions of emptiness and matter. As a result, the author highlights their theoretical division, and at the same time he creates some confusion between the two ideas by blurring the boundary that lies between them. For example, the use of the adjective *clara* in the second verse imparts qualities of lightness upon the word *masa*; and therefore, the mass, once conceptually separated from the idea of voided space, approximates itself to nothingness in its luminous and airy qualities.

Throughout the poem, Eielson continues manifesting these principles of separation and fusion by repeating and rearranging the order of words that represent the qualities of nothingness and matter. In the verses, "nada de plomo   plomo en la nada / nada de plata   plata en la nada / nada de nada   nada en la nada," the author creates a vertiginous chain of objects whose varied syntax changes the meaning of the words. For example, when read "nada de plomo," the reader conceives the absence of lead; nonetheless, when viewed as, "plomo en la nada," the presence of lead in an empty space is perceived. Therefore, in the same manner in which a weaver produces a double-faced

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[38] In the decade of the 1950's and 1960's, Eielson forms part of the group of visual artists and poets who associate themselves with minimalism. In this movement, artworks remain stripped down to their most fundamental elements. Due to the extreme economy of words in his poetry, Eielson's verbal creations reflect the principles of this creative style.

textile whose reverse copy exists on the back side, Eielson creates a graphic and a verbal material product that contains a negative image.

Thematically, this idea of reversibility leads to a more in depth contemplation of matter and the void as shown in the verses, "nada / sino la luna   la nada / y la nada nuevamente." It remains significant that Eielson names the celestial body of the moon in the text because, like a mass of material in the void of space, its form changes. When full, the moon is a circle and represents the totality of the ring, an absolute, or the naught figure of the zero. In addition, when new, the moon is completely black, or that is, humans perceive the absence of its shape in the night sky. Thus, in order to illustrate the concepts of mass, nothingness and the creation of art through the manipulation of materials, Eielson utilizes the reverse images of the moon as a way to express that our reality remains filled with objects whose surfaces show us where the interface between empty space and material exists.

On a different note, the figure of the knot which wraps around itself and traps bits of emptiness in its center also dialogues with the Andean textile imagery. In *Nudos* (2002), Eielson interweaves the poetic text with the knotted asthetics of the *khipu*. Although the verses in the poem are grouped into traditional stanzas, their arrangement on the page communicates a message to the reader. Upon observing the location of each unit of verses, the viewer notices that they remain centrally located in the white space that surrounds them. This layout imitates the harmony and the equilibrium that are integral to the Andean cosmovision and conceptualization of space. In this way, the text mimics the

symmetrical design found in Andean woven products and "silently" imparts upon the words in the stanzas this same balance.

Moreover, the layout of *Nudos* shares many properties with the construction of the Andean *khipu* because, in the same way that each knot stands for a small bit of information, each stanza in the poem contributes a minute amount of knowledge regarding the central poetic theme. To provide an example of this structure, I transcribe an excerpt of the verses below:

Millares y millares
De nudos
Que no son nudos
Pero que brillan brillan
Brillan

Nidos de nudos canoros
Como canarios
Enamorados

Nudos como estrellas
Estrellas como nudos

Nudos de materia
Nudos de energía

Nudos de cabellos

De doncellas que se visten

Siempre de amarillo

Nudos animales

Nudos vegetales

Nudos minerales (318-319)

Here, each group of verses, like the knots on pendant *khipu* cords, serves as a small unit of information that explores the characteristics of the *nudo*. For example, in the last stanza cited above, the author highlights the concrete nature of the knot by describing it with adjectives that represent the three main raw materials used in the production of goods: animals, plants and minerals. In addition, each set of verses consists of a different number of lines. The first unit contains five verses, while others contain two or three. Coincidence or not, it seems as if Eielson amalgamates the verses into groups of varying numbers in order to imitate the stacked wrappings of cord bound in *khipu* long knots.[39] As a result, the strophic organization of *Nudos* parallels the physical arrangement of the Andean knotted device used for keeping records, managing the state economy and recording cultural history. Through this analogy, it then remains possible to see that Eielson's stanzas, like the *khipu* knots, contain an encoded message that lies beyond their foregrounded, conventional meanings.

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[39] Long knots appear on the *khipu* cord like beads that stack vertically on the rungs of an abacus. The cord wraps around itself a given amount of times according to the numerical value it holds. When pulled tight, the cord wrappings remain stacked in a vertical line around the straight cord; and depending on their quantity, they hold the place of single numerical digits between the value of two and nine (Urton 90).

In order to expose the reader to a deeper level of meaning in the text, the author refers to the common and the unusual properties of the knot in the first stanza of the poem.

Hay nudos
Que no son nudos
Y nudos que solamente
Son nudos (313)

Here, by declaring, “Hay nudos / Que no son nudos,” the poetic discourse suggests that certain knots exist that do not derive their value based on conventional methods. And by countering this concept with the lines, “Y nudos que solamente / son nudos,” the poem also claims the inverse; or that is, that some of these threaded bonds are just *mere* knots. They serve their day to day function and that is all. Overall, these verses deal directly with the matters of identity and representation. Or that is to say, like *tejidos*, knots also carry out dual purposes, the physical action of binding as implied by the positive statement of “Y nudos que solamente son nudos” and the symbolic function of encoding a message exterior to its material form, as suggested by the negative relationship in the verses “Hay nudos / Que no son nudos.” By juxtaposing the qualities of sameness and difference within the same structure, Eielson creates an ambiguity in the perception of the material form of the knot and its purpose. For example, it no longer remains a fixed concrete entity that carries out only one task. Instead, when examined through Eielson’s poetic lens, the *nudo* takes on a more open identity qualified by the simultaneous comparison and contrast between what it is and isn’t.

The poem illustrates this flexibility later with the verses, “Nudos de cabellos / De doncellas que se visten / Siempre de amarillo” and “Nudos de corbatas / Y nudos de zapatos” (318, 316). These verses describe the more functional daily used knots in our vestment; they beautify our hair by binding it in fashionable styles, and they secure our shoes to our feet and our neckties around our necks. However, in contrast to these practical fasteners, Eielson uses metaphor to describe the properties of the knot that hold a message exterior to their physical usage for binding. For example, the verses, “Nidos de nudos canoros / Como canarios / Enamorados,” (318) attribute sonorous qualities to the textile construction, and as a result of this comparison, the author interweaves the *nudo* with the song of love-sick birds. Here it also remains necessary to note the erotic qualities that the stanza creates through the proximity of male plural nouns and adjectives. In this way, the words *nidos, nudos, canoros, canarios* and *enamorados* all stand close, almost touching each other on the page. As a result of highlighting the sonorous and the erotic qualities of the knot, Eielson illustrates the structure’s ability to represent that which is lyric in nature. Therefore, through the interweaving of both the conventional and the figurative identities of the knot, the poet reveals the ambivalence that surrounds the textile structure. And as a result, the once material finite surface of the knot now becomes a zone of intermeshed symbolic play.

Other ways in which the author explores the non-conventional properties of the knot exist in verses that tie it to vast bodies of material and nothingness. Similar to the previously analyzed poem “9” from *Mutatis mutandis*, Eielson revisits the relationship between mass and void. The stanza, “Nudos que nadan / En misteriosos océanos / De

nada" (317), remind the reader of Malevich's theory of the zero of form. In describing his own creative processes, the Russian artist explains, "But I transformed myself in the zero of form and emerged from nothing to creation . . ." (39). With these words, Malevich posits that in order to generate art, one must erase all previous prescribed artistic conventions and institutions. Only when starting from a clear space of creation, artists begin to innovate. When viewed in this light, Eielson's "knots that swim in mysterious oceans of nothingness" recall the void and the matter of which Malevich speaks with the words *nada* and *océanos*. By linking the *nudo* to these concepts, Eielson intertwines the materiality of the textile figure with the nothingness from which all creation originates. Thus, the knot, like the sea, remains an extensive body of surface that holds the mysterious secret of its creation from a zero space.

When considered together, both the verbally signified discourses of the poem and the visual textile plane of meaning with its numerous strophic units like the units on a *khipu* interface in order to form a metaphoric network for uniting the various characteristics of the knot. As a result of this framework, a plethora of heterogeneous definitions merge to conceptualize the textile figure. In their printed poetic form, the words that categorize the the knot interlace within the panorama of the text and fuse their meanings to create a multi-faceted identity. Thus, Eielson illustrates in *Nudos* that poetry acts like a woven product or a knot capable of erasing the boundaries between disjoining concepts in order to fabricate a whole text whose overall meaning derives from the multiple significances of its material parts.

THE DISCURSIVE WEAVING OF OPPOSITES

The processes of weaving and writing inherently involve the combination of difference. With the former, both vertical warp and horizontal weft strings merge in order to form a new signifying textile plane, and with the latter, distinct verbal discourses come into contact to construct the text. Regarding this notion, philosophy scholar James Risser states the following:

> Unlike the compilation of similar units, language formation and the experience of meaning in language through the broader assemblage of units involves difference. And with this difference, discourse can only bring itself to unity in relation to a bond (*desmos*). To be more precise, what is peculiar to the weaving of discourse in which two dissimilar things are brought together, is a combining involving a force or power (*dunamis*) that binds the elements, as in the spinning that interlaces the warp and woof. (293)

Here, Risser offers a very salient point regarding the action of interface in weaving and in the text; both involve the generation of a bond that *creates meaning* through the combination of difference. Inherently, weaving, with its warp and its weft, and writing, with its threads of contradicting discourses, both follow this pattern.

In his 1967 studies of modern poetry, Hugo Friedrich illustrates that dissonance remains an integral characteristic of contemporary verse. Speaking of modern poetry whose origins date back to the 19th century with Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*, he states the following:

> A poem is now a self-sufficient entity of multiple meanings—a taut network of absolute forces that act suggestively upon prerational levels of the mind and make the secret areas of concepts vibrate. The dissonant tension of the modern poem is revealed in other ways as well: elements of archaic, mystic, occult origin clash with keen intellectualism, straightforward modes of expression with complicated ideas, balanced language with unresolved content, precision with absurdity, insignificant themes with turbulent styles. (4)

Here it remains necessary to highlight that Friedrich conceives the modern poem as a "taut network of absolute forces" that often operates in a field of tension. Although I do not believe it intended by the author, the image of the tightened net illustrates the relationship between the textile and the text as well as the tense stretching of their materials. Like a *tejido*, whose opposing strings come together to create cultural meaning, the dissonance in modern poetry exists in order to express highly complex theories not easily communicated by words.

Within his poetic opus, Jorge Eduardo Eielson illustrates an awareness of this phenomenon by purposefully weaving together conflicting linguistic discourses symbolized by the written words in the text. As a result of this juxtaposition and tension of opposing terms, Eielson creates a semantic impasse that neutralizes their contradictory values and generates a clear zone where conventional semantics do not impede the further exploration of meaning that lies outside of the symbolism of the print. While it remains arguable that *Tema y variaciones*, *Mutatis mutandis* and *Nudos* all contain poems

that achieve this goal, a select number of Eielson's poems from these volumes particularly highlight the interlacing of incongruous terms in order to create a poetic space for the contemplation of meaning that escapes the orthodox uses of the written word.

One such poem is "rotación" from *Tema y variaciones*. Through the repetition and the interweaving of printed words with opposing meanings, Eielson exposes the symbolic textile plane within the poem:

> a veces
>
> cuando se eleva el sol
>
> el sol se eleva
>
> otras veces es la luna
>
> y es lo mismo
>
> y cuando = reina la oscuridad
>
> es lo mismo
>
> se eleva el sol porque es de día
>
> y es lo mismo
>
> o se eleva la luna porque es de noche
>
> y es lo mismo
>
> y se acaba la vida porque ya es tarde
>
> y es lo mismo
>
> nada el amanecer
>
> y el anochecer lo mismo

nada todavía

y amarte tanto hasta morir

lo mismo (154)

Here, the words *sol, luna, día, noche, amanecer* and *anochecer* all represent converse, binary meanings. Sun is opposite to moon, day to night and dawn to dusk. As seen with previous analysis, the repetition of these words and the phrase "es lo mismo," emphasizes the text's concrete qualities and exposes the material textile structure of the poem. Much like the over and the under crossing of the warp and the weft threads of the *tejido*, the opposing terms alternate back and forth in the verses of the poem. For example, the concept of *sol* is introduced in the second verse, and in the following line, *luna* appears. The same occurs with *día* and *noche*, in verses eight and ten, and *amanecer* and *anochecer* in verses fourteen and sixteen.

Therefore, like magnets attracted to inverse poles, this interweaving of printed materials with opposing semantic charges forms a bond and creates a new meaning. Above all, the phrase "es lo mismo" and the usage of the "=" in the sixth verse illustrate this phenomenon. In this way, Eielson erases the differences between entities. For example, in the following selection of the text, the once resisting concepts of sun, moon, day and night now become the same:

se eleva el sol porque es de día

y es lo mismo

o se eleva la luna porque es de noche

y es lo mismo

The friction inherent to meanings of these word pairs creates a balanced space signified by "es lo mismo." In a similar way, the verse "y cuando = reina la oscuridad / es lo mismo," illustrates the fusion between light and dark because when equality, symbolized by the equal sign, rules the darkness, it will be the same, or that is to say, there will be no difference between the presence and the absence of light.

While some critics such as Ricardo Silva Santisteban argue that the impasse created by conflicting terms in poems such as "rotación" highlights the inadequacy of language as an expressive medium, I posit that this leveling of meaning through the interweaving of opposites creates a space for the generation of new knowledge.[40] Thus, instead of viewing the chain of semantic opposites as a negative force that obstructs communication, I see it as a way to go beyond the conventions of written language and express a type of meaning not easily transmitted through the word. For example, the string of opposites dealing with night and day all refer to, as the title indicates, the rotation of the earth on its axis. By juxtaposing *sol/luna, día/noche* and *amanecer/anochecer*, Eieslon erases the borders between the cycle of light and dark and fuses them, the sun and the moon in one plane. In this equation, he surpasses the limits that rule the movement of the earth in its galaxy and reaches a pure space of nothingness as shown by the usage of the word *nada* in verses fourteen and sixteen.

Thus, by reaching this state where opposing natural forces combine into one, Eielson illustrates, without the use of words to directly state his message, that all life

[40] See Ricardo Silva Santisteban's evaluation of *Tema y variaciones* in the prologue of Eielson's 1976 publication of *Poesía escrita*.

forces, even though they may be opposites, in fact are equal because they all come from the same clear space of creation. To support this theory, Eielson even shows that the human emotion of love and the process of death are the same in the verses, "y amarte tanto hasta morir / lo mismo." Thus, having fused together love, the creator of life through Eros, and death, the great equalizer and terminator of life, the non-verbal, woven discourse of the poem illustrates that ultimately everything remains equal.

On an intimate and more personal level, many of Eielson's poems search for this totality and a means to express it. In *Mutatis mutandis*, the author reveals this quest by exploring the textual-textile interface between printed words that convey contradictory meanings. The poems that particularly highlight the zone of interaction between these two systems are "8" and "4." In "8," Eielson's insightful switching of syntax, duplication of words and fusion of meanings of difference express the erotic nocturnal vision of the mystic quest.

de noche

de rodillas

solo de noche

de noche sólo

de verde tú

yo de rojo

de rodillas

en la noche

de tanto verte

y no tenerte

o de tenerte

y ya no verte

ni de rodillas

ni tú de verde

ni yo de rojo (232)

By alternating terms of opposition such as *verde/rojo, tú/yo, verte/no verte* and *tenerte/no tenerte*, Eielson weaves the poem into existence and creates a space for the symbolic properties of the words to interact. The use of the colors green and red symbolize difference because they are complimentary colors on the color wheel. In addition to this relationship, *verde* represents vegetable material, and *rojo* signifies blood or animal substance; therefore, another possible association formed by the pairing of the hues exists in the opposition created between the animal and the plant kingdoms. Furthermore, these pigments also suggest an active (red) and a passive (green) relationship between two entities, perhaps lovers in an erotic state or the mystic who actively seeks a hidden force of knowledge. Like the colors, the terms *tú* and *yo* denote the difference between the self and the other. This distinction between the two could be physical between the bodies or metaphysical as in the case of the recognition of a separate essence or soul. Moreover, Eielson includes the infinitive verbs *verte/no verte* and *tenerte/no tenerte* in order to express the presence and the absence of the state of seeing and having. As shown by the verses, retaining the faculty of one sense equates the deficiency of the other. Seeing accompanies not having, and the condition of possessing implies a lack of vision;

consequently, the speaker never truly reaches the desired subject because he or she remains capable of knowing it only halfway.

As a result of these conflicting relationships, Eielson creates a semantic impasse in which the symbolic values of the words counter each other. Regarding this process, Alfonso D'Aquino states:

> Eielson llega a la idea por la negación (o en lenguaje zen, por 'la afirmación por medio de la no-afirmación'), por la imposibilidad real de la negación. . . . Tal simultaneidad explica también la 'superficialidad' de su escritura, es decir, la limitación espacial de las palabras en la superficie del papel. Al doblarse y desdoblarse, aparecen, en su intangibilidad, a un mismo tiempo como signos de contradicción y como signos de lo inefable . . . Así se unen el silencio y el signo que lo expresa, que es la palabra misma. (148)

As D'Aquino theorizes, the contradictory pairs sustain each other in their silence through the art of non-affirmation. Consequently, they symbolize the ineffable. Therefore, like a weaver who embeds unspoken meaning into the textile via string spin and other visual motifs, Eielson uses words in a very meditative way to expose a state where meaning exists without language. All of the contradicting pairs of words (*verde/rojo, tú/yo, verte/no verte* and *tenerte/no tenerte*) suggest this action of silence through the equaling effects of affirmation and negation and indicate the speaker's desire to reach the Zen space represented by the symbolic impasse.

In the poem, this act of quest comes about through kneeling as when praying or meditating:

de noche

de rodillas

solo de noche

de noche sólo

Here, the text suggests that the *yo* of the poem gets down on his or her knees alone or only at night.[41] Here, Eielson presents the reader with a very vague scene. The lack of words that denote masculine or feminine characteristics provides genderless bodies for the *tú* and the *yo*. Similar to San Juan de la Cruz's *Noche oscura*, Eielson mixes both nocturnal erotic and mystic practices because kneeling possibly represents a sexual act or the activity of meditation.[42] When the erotic love scene and the meditative contemplation intertwine in their ambiguity, the possibility for a poetic ecstasy exists; and, in order to experience this highest state of being, the lyric subject searches for the *tú* that evades it. The following section of the poem provides evidence of this quest:

de tanto verte

y no tenerte

---

[41] For the weaving-minded, this image reminds us of a familiar motif in Mapuche weavings, the kneeling figure of Lukutuel. Bent over to illustrate the formality of ritual, this human figure woven into cloth signifies the unspoken action of ceremony and contemplation.

[42] With regard to the mystical angle of this poem and its relationship to San Juan de la Cruz's *Noche oscura*, another important point of reference in Peruvian poetry is the work of Eielson's predecessor, Emilio Adolfo Westphalen. For more information regarding this topic, see Eduardo Chirinos *La morada del silencio* (1998).

o de tenerte

y ya no verte

These verses illustrate how the interweaving of words of opposite meanings creates further ambiguity in the text. By fusing and by nullifying the semantic properties of the words, the subject of enunciation pursues the ineffable. The verses, “de tanto verte / y no tenerte,” demonstrate that the devotee sees but does not fully possess the *tú*. Contrastingly, the verses, “o de tenerte / y ya no verte,” show that the *yo* has contact with the other but cannot view it. Frustratingly, the meditation brings the speaker close to what he or she desires but does not allow him or her to fully possess the awareness he or she seeks.

On a larger scale, the longing for that which lies beyond human awareness exists as a recurring theme in modern poetry. As Hugo Friedrich accounts, French poets such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé develop in their opus the premise of an empty transcendence. Referring to the work of Baudelaire, he affirms that there is no mention of God, and he states, “Not only is the goal of transcendence far; it is empty as well, an ideality devoid of content, a mere pole of tension, hyperbolically striven for but never reached” (30). This statement does much to explain the ambiguity of the mystic quest in “8.” As with Baudelaire, Eielson makes no reference to divinity, and what most stands out in the text is the rash of conflicting extremes that permeates the verses. Furthermore, the subject of enunciation does not affirm that the goal of transcendence is reached; thus, we must assume that the speaker fails or is delayed in this attempt. Overall, this type of empty ascension fits well into Eielson’s opus that remains wholly focused on the *surface.*

Through the interweaving of opposites and the resulting tension, the author focuses on the *tissue* or the superficial experience of the quest. In this way, the poet manifests transcendence not by extending upward toward God but by expanding across the material entities that make the search possible.

This pursuit for the unnamable resurfaces in poem "4," also from *Mutatis mutandis*. In the text, the subject of enunciation attempts to express the unsayable through a series of comparisons that affirm and negate the qualities of an unspecified referent.

> igual a la luz
>
> más tus ojos
>
> como yo o como tú
>
> pero encendido
>
> jardín de plumas que no existe
>
> luz de nada
>
> aire y tierra sin fronteras
>
> agua y fuego confundidos
>
> semejante a cuanto adoro
>
> pero nada
>
> semejante a tu mirada ciertamente
>
> semejante a centenares
>
> de millares de millones
>
> de manzanas

pero en llamas (228)

Throughout the poem, the referent of the phrase, "igual a la luz," remains uncertain. The only clues that the poetic speaker gives that describe it come forth in the form of a string of adjectival clauses starting with *más*, *como*, *encendido* and *semejante*. In addition to these figurative comparisons, nouns such as *jardín de plumas, luz de nada, aire, tierra, agua* and *fuego* form metaphorical associations with the thing or the quality that remains unknown. Thus, it remains clear that, in order to define the subject, the speaker must resort to the affirmation and the negation of what the unnamed object is and is not. For example, in verses 9, 10 and 11, the poetic voice states that the referent is "semejante a cuanto adoro / pero nada / semejante a tu mirada." In these lines, the speaker sustains that the thing remains similar to everything the poetic *I* adores, and immediately he or she negates the fact that the referent seems like the other's (exemplified by the adjective *tu* or *your*) face. Thus, in order to provide the reader with some understanding of the referent, the speaker characterizes it through the intertextual weaving of printed words that confirm and contradict what it is. In this way, Eielson presents the reader with another type of quest; that is, to define with words that which evades linguistic description.

In a more detailed fashion, we further observe how the author uses the discursive technique of weaving opposite values together in order to reach the unidentified subject of the poem. For example, the author juxtaposes the conflicting environments of light and nothingness, air and land and water and fire in the verses, "luz de nada / aire y tierra sin fronteras / agua y fuego confundidos." By mentioning that the four elements of the earth have blurred limits, Eielson conceptually fuses them together and generates the idea

of a new unexplored zone where the earth's components join to form the totality of the universe, an area that encompasses all geographies into one space. Through this allusion, the speaker creates a place of empty transcendence; or that is, the combination of all elements into one creates a zone of totality. Nevertheless, this universe remains vacant because the subject of the pursuit is unnamed.

Eielson continues developing the notion of a void ascension in the poem by illustrating that the lyric *yo* moves his or her awareness away from a familiar space toward an infinite chain of exterior objects. In the first half of the text, the mention of the *yo* and the *tú* indicates a relationship of nearness with the verses "como yo o como tú." Here, the poetic I attempts to describe the subject by relating it to something or someone familiar, the *tú*. Subsequently, the lyric voice's meditation shifts from the *you* toward a multitude of things: *jardín de plumas, luz de nada, aire y tierra, agua y fuego* and *millares de manzanas*. As the poem progresses, this shift in meditation outward toward the exponential realm of infinity is shown in verses ten through fifteen:

pero nada
semejante a tu mirada ciertamente
semejante a centenares
de millares de millones
de manzanas
pero en llamas

With the words "semejante a centenares / de millares de millones / de manzanas," the speaker illustrates that his or her contemplation shifts from the more intimate space of *tú*

toward the multiple chain of *things* expressed by the increasing gradation of the quantity of apples from hundreds, to thousands and then millions. This change in perspective suggests that the pursuit of the incommensurable subject lies not, as some mystics would have it, in the essential qualities of the spirit; on the other hand, the search for the unquantifiable lies within the never ending measure of items that surround us.

Quite a complex symbol, the apple represents a variety of meanings including knowledge, wisdom, joy, death, fertility, temptation and sin. Yet again, Eielson challenges us with an ambiguous interpretation regarding the form of the object; as a sphere, the apple brings to the forefront of our imaginations the notion of totality. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of the fruit with the fire also suggests an empty transcendence. Light from the flames produces illumination or a type of absolute knowledge; however, it also consumes and burns up all that it touches which indicates that the round shape of the apple could represent an empty zero rather than a complete ring. In either case, both interpretations with respect to the fruit are plausible. Eielson neutralizes these conflicting notions and goes beyond what the printed word tells us in search of the mysterious subject.

Within his poetic quest, Eielson also explores the surface of the knot as a means of discovering the unspeakable. Although it differs from the *tejido* whose warp and weft join to form a new plane of significance, the inner workings of the knot also depend on fibers under tension. When two opposite ends of a cord lace over themselves and pull tight, the zone where the bind takes place allows the converse sides of the string to come into contact with each other. Based on this phenomenon, Alfonso D'Aquino refers to the

knot as a "verdadero puente entre códigos diversos, donde las energías se transmutan (codficándose, descodificándose, recodificándose . . .)" (160). As he theorizes, the connection formed by the knot serves as a bridge that facilitates the communication between codes. In this sense, the *nudo* embodies the unifying space where symbols and signs merge and negotiate the terms of their associations. As a result of the metaphorical capability of the knot to unite differences and (re)generate symbols, it, like the ring or the zero, represents the totality of a universe where dissonant elements join together in harmony.

In *Nudos*, like the weaver who ties a knot, Eielson manipulates the written word to explore the totality that its structure encapsulates. The author achieves this awareness through the "knotting" of the printed word. Eielson imitates the technology of this fibrous structure by juxtaposing many conflicting terms. In the text, he offers many contradictory descriptions of the *nudo* as seen in the verbal pairs *enormes/menudos, nada/todo, sonreír/sollozar, amanecer/anochecer, luces/tinieblas, comenzar/acabar* and *encender/apagar*. By constructing several verses with these oppositional words, each stanza acts like a knot under tension because the meaning of each printed word resists the other.

As a result of this incompatibility, both terms cancel each other in a semantic stalemate because each one neutralizes the meaning of the other. In the verses, "Nudos de nada / Y nudos de todo," Eielson pairs the concepts of nothingness and everything (314). Here, *nothing* counterbalances *everything* because they exist as equally "weighted" opposites at both extremes of the semantic spectrum. Therefore, Eielson's

poetic *nudos*, or stanzas, imitate the knot because the semantic "ends of thread" come together in a unified whole. Ultimately, this totality overrides the tension created by the two conflicting terms, and they nullify one another in a unionizing act of agreement. In relation to this concept, art historian Patricia Railing states:

> Harmony, or beauty, is a search for unity of the outer and inner worlds. Dissonance, on the other hand, is inherent to harmony because everything has its potential opposite; this opposite challenges any given harmony, disrupts it, resulting eventually in a new harmony. This law, then, is also the law underlying change and the activity involving new intuitions that give rise to new creations. It is another of the systems of art. (6)

Here, Railing illustrates that dissonance remains a key component of union. In order to express a totality, differing forces must join. When their balance is breached, the conflicting entities challenge this harmony and produce new forms. With relation to *Nudos*, we observe that the tension created by the interweaving of opposite terms implies the creation of harmony, and the visual arrangement of the centered and symmetric verses on the page illustrates this principle.

When the concept of the knot interfaces with the technology of the written word, the fusion of these signifying planes generates a metaphor that attributes the characteristics of the *nudo* to the written word and vice versa. In this light, a poetic script takes on the symbolic information that the textile structure suggests, and conversely, the knot takes on the verbally charged communicative properties of the text. When the dissonant harmony of the knot transfers to the word in *Nudos*, we observe that Eielson

illustrates that the word, like the textile figure, also remains inherently based upon a system of difference where discord and accord balance each other. Thus, referring back to D'Aquino's statement, the material word, like a tied thread, acts like a bridge between diverse codes that negotiates the relationship between the interior meanings that often remain hidden from the exterior sign.

Because the polar tension of the knot's strings pulls inward and pushes outward; its metaphoric presence in *Nudos* prompts us to examine that which words with great difficulty express: the interior relationships between codes, their referents and the speaker, and their superficial relationship to bodies and other things. Thus, in its inside journey, the figure of the knot stimulates us to pursue our quest for transcendence by traveling toward the center in order to encounter the space of epiphany where the self-realization of the divine exists. Nevertheless, because the pressure used to maintain the knot must also be exerted outward from its middle, it prompts us to explore the surfaces that surround us.

As Martha Canfield so eloquently states, the use of the knot in Eielson's work encourages us to contemplate the interior properties of our essence:

> . . . la meta espiritual alcanzada [que] resulta más evidente es precisamente en el signo privilegiado de su arte al que nos referíamos anteriormente, es decir, el nudo. Con el nudo el movimiento se detiene—o a lo máximo se vuelve lenta inercia—, las telas se fijan, el tiempo interrumpe su curso y el alma, por fin liberada de cualquier motivo de zozobra, se concentra en la contemplación. (Presentación 13)

As Canfield illustrates, the immobility created by the form of the knot represents the moment in time when the poetic current pauses in a state of introspection. In *Nudos*, this is symbolized with each contradicting pair of words whose semantic impulses lie "motionless" in a paradoxical silence that generates a state of impasse. As a result, this conceptual stalemate fosters a space of meditation where the subject of enunciation or the reader ponders the paradoxical mystery of the knot and the absolute.

Although the poet does not communicate this introspective process directly with words, he reveals it by referring to the inherent qualities of the *nudo* and other interior spaces in language and the body. The verses, "Nudos de carne / Y nudos de hueso" illustrate the contemplation of the muscles and the bones that comprise the interior of the human physique (315). In addition, by continuously repeating the words "nudos de . . .," "nudos son . . ." and "nudos que . . .," the author considers the interior qualities of the textile structure because all the phrases deal with compositionality and attempt to provide a definition of the figure by defining its unknown, core qualities. For instance, in the following verses the speaker characterizes the inside of the knot as containing more knots and so on in the form of a Chinese box where each layer uncovered only reveals more of the same figure.

Nudos
Que son nudos
Que son nudos
Que son
Nudos (317)

Here, Eielson expresses that the heart of this textile structure remains composed of more knots; thus he communicates that the interior of the figure contains an infinite number of paradoxical relationships between dissonant entities. In this way, he expresses the struggle to define the core of the *nudo* because any attempt to do so only provides a never ending chain of indefinite knots whose totality cannot be expressed with language.

When compared to the written word, this never ending interior secret parallels the relationship between the graphic verbal symbol and the numerous meanings it signifies. In this sense, the written word, like the structure of the knot with its internal twists symbolizes the realm of knowledge found in the interior relationship between the signifier and the signified. Regarding this concept scholars Verner and Boi express:

> El nudo sugiere la perplejidad de una interacción con uno mismo: pasa nuevamente sobre sí mismo, hacia arriba y hacia abajo. Las *fuerzas* del nudo se manifiestan en *formas* enlazadas. La compresión especial que involucra el nudo tiene el efecto de una implosión: los pliegues, el lienzo plegado de los quipus y aún la porción de lienzo torcida, se sumergen en el nudo, que muchas veces se coloca en los bordes del marco. (197)

Although Verner and Boi's comment refers to Eielson's three-dimensional *quipu* artworks, the statement highlights an important quality of the knot that aids in the comprehension of the author's poetry. Because it passes over itself in an interlaced form, the knot compresses space and creates a feeling of implosion. Like the knowledge held within the interior of the *nudos* on the Andean *khipu*, Eielson's interlocking verses search

for the knowledge contained in the inside of the printed poetic word. A prime example of this quest exists in the following stanza:

Indecibles nudos
De palabras
Que son nudos y de nudos
Que son palabras (317)

Here, the lyric speaker ponders the ineffable nature of the knowledge contained in the knot and the word. Much like the Andean *khipu* whose content now remains *indecible*, Eielson states that the unspeakable *nudo* consists of words that are knots made of knots that are words. Thus, in a tangled mess of meaning, the author twists the bodies of the knot and the word through, around and back upon themselves. Again, he presents the reader with a never ending chain of antinomies that connect upon each other and continue on into the infinite realm of inner space. For example, by stating that the knot consists of ". . . palabras / Que son nudos y de nudos / Que son palabras," the lyric voice attributes the unspeakable mystery of the knot to words. As a result, Eielson comments upon the ambiguous nature of our language because, like the textile structure, each term contains within it an unlimited amount of unknowable content. In this light, the word loses its direct expressive power because it fails to represent a fixed value. Therefore, through the interlacing of this textile structure and the written text in *Nudos*, Eielson shows the ironic nature of the relationship between language, knowledge and the knot. As excellent media for communicating information, writing and speech hold a wealth of signification that we

as humans cannot fully comprehend. And ironically, through the use of words, Eielson reveals to us that by using them we only scratch the surface of understanding.

Conversely, although the knot pulls us to look at the interior, it also drives us to contemplate the surface. In order to counterbalance the introspection that the stagnation of the knot foments, Eielson highlights how it also fosters an exterior view of expansion. Even though this threaded structure crosses over and in toward itself, forces on the opposing ends of its string must pull outward in order to keep it tied. Therefore, by alluding to this extension, Eielson also directs the reader's sensorium to the exterior.

In the following excerpt of the poem, the author reveals his focus on the material surface of the knot:

> Nudos enamorados
> Nudos marineros
>
> Nudos de carne
> Y nudos de hueso
>
> Nudos que son desnudos
> Y desnudos que son nudos (319)

Here, the majority of these verses deal with exterior planes. For example, the *nudos enamorados* and the *nudos que son desnudos* remind us of the flesh of two lovers intertwined in the act of making love. The *nudos de carne* remind us of the tissue that covers the body while the *nudos marineros* bring to the forefront of our tactile awareness

the knots that sailors use to tie down sails.[43] In addition to these examples, Eielson also states that there are "Nudos que son nubes / Que son agua / Ques son mares" (315). With these words, the poet continues to highlight the superficial qualities of the knot; for example, the clouds, the water and the sea all contain vast amounts of surface area. Through these references, it remains clear that the figure of the knot asks us to explore not only the interior paradoxes that it presents but also the skins that cover the objects of our world.

In the verse pairs cited above, Eielson informs that surfaces also hold within them paradoxes. For example, in the stanza, "Nudos de carne / Y nudos de hueso," the *carne*, or flesh, and the *hueso*, or the bones, subtly oppose one another because the flesh exists on the exterior of the body and the bone on the inside. From this example, we observe that the body as a whole, like the knot, bases its construction on the notion of resistance. Two unequal parts with differing functions come together to form an absolute. In addition, the verses "*Nudos que son desnudos / Y desnudos que son nudos*" oppose each other semantically because the syntactic switch of the words *nudos* and *desnudos* reverse the meaning of the statement. By wearing no garments, the knots are "naked," and by engaging in Eros, two bodies without clothes become knots. Here, it remains notable that Eielson incorporates the pun of the *nude*/*nudo* in the poem because this joyful play on words reminds us of the power of the woven text: despite the tension of disparate meanings, the word leads us to unexpected connections.

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43 Although already discussed as a reference to the interior of the human body, we may also interpret the word *carne* as an allusion to the exterior because it represents both the muscles and the flesh.

Because weaving remains thematically and formalistically present in the majority of Jorge Eduardo Eielson's poetic works, understanding its presence and how it operates with the printed text in order to perform a message is crucial. In *Tema y variaciones*, *Mutatis mutandis* and *Nudos*, the threaded origins of the poems become evident through textual self-reference created by the repetition of the printed word and via references to the writing process. Moreover, Eielson provides the reader with an opportunity to discover the textile roots of his verbal creations by manipulating the visual and the spatial orientation of his poems in order to illustrate their construction along the same lines as the Andean *tejido* or the *khipu*; each text remains thoughtfully designed like a piece of cloth that organizes the poetic landscape into symmetrical planes divided along the perpendicular axes of warp and weft. Other evidence of the role of textile aesthetics in Eielson's poetry exists in the semantic interweaving of words with opposite meanings. With all of these poetic techniques, the poet brings to the forefront the fabric that holds all texts together. In doing so, Eielson allows the woven configurations to supplement the meaning of the print by expressing that which words with much difficulty articulate. Due to the acknowledgement of its crafted surfaces, Eielson's poetry reveals to us the connective properties of the word that weaves different entities together through tension into the text.

Chapter 3: Performing Weaving in Cecilia Vicuña's Poetry

Whether threading wool across the spaces of an art gallery or composing verses with a pencil and paper, visual artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña (Santiago, Chile 1948) intertwines spaces and concepts.[44] In a poem titled "Antivero" from her 1983 book *Precario*, she writes: "Cuerda en el aire / El hilo es sendero / me pierdo en él." Likening the cord to a pathway that traverses space, Vicuña conceptualizes the string as a conduit that leads to a metaphorical journey through nature. Through the acknowledgement of textual threads that fabricate discourses, Vicuña's books of poetry *PALABRARmas* (1984), *La Wik'uña* (1992), *Palabra e hilo* (1997) and *I tu* (2004) contain non-verbal, woven frameworks that that supplement the meaning of the written language on the page. Similar to Jorge Eduardo Eielson, she imparts this "silent" message through the visual and the spatial variation of the printed word. Overall, the intertwining of these varying discourses, both verbal and optical, enhances the content of her poetry. When woven like a *tejido* or a *khipu*, her poetic language unlocks the unspoken, metaphoric significance inherent within the fabric of the text.

In *La Wik'uña* (1992) and *Palabra e hilo* (1997), Cecilia Vicuña intertwines poems with the Andean imagery of the *tejido*. Frequent references to weaving bring the *pensamiento textil andino* to the forefront of her poetry; however, despite these direct allusions, she incorporates the textile into the fabric of the text by actively interlacing the poetic language with the discourses of scholars, shamans, mystics and literary giants. As

[44] Interestingly enough, the name "Vicuña" suggests the action of weaving because the fleece of the Andean camelid that bears her surname was used to fabricate the emperors' garments during the Inka Empire.

a result of this verbal "patchwork," Vicuña goes beyond the obvious references to the thread and *performs* weaving at the discursive level of the text.

Based upon the notion that the material word may be manipulated and also played with like a thread, two of Vicuña's works, *PALABRARmas* (1984) and *I tu* (2004) push the poetic envelope by taking apart language(s) and rearranging the fragments in order to encounter the non-verbal, metaphoric meanings that lie deep within words. Through the simultaneous unraveling and re-weaving of the text, Vicuña opens a space in her poetry and renders visible the unifying forces of linguistic creation. By artistically dislocating words and by repositioning their parts with other terms, different languages and cited speech, the poet highlights meaningful associations that would not have been apparent from the lexical units' original physical form and denotation alone. As a result, Vicuña takes the reader to the interstices between contents and forms in order to unlock the word's autonomy of meaning and illustrate the precise moment when the named comes into contact with the name.

Inspired by the Latin American avant-garde, Vicuña's fascination with the metaphor and its capacity for suggesting that which cannot be easily expressed with words traces back to another Chilean poet, Vicente Huidobro. However, while Huidobro envisions the poet as a small god, one who manipulates metaphoric devices in order to create a poetic reality instead of describing it, Vicuña gives much more sovereignty to the word.[45] Regarding this concept, literary critic Hugo Méndez Ramírez states, "Vicuña's poetic vision lacks the transcendent and hierarchical order of Huidobro's *creacionismo*,

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[45] See "Arte poética" by Vicente Huidobro in *El espejo de agua* (1916).

which places the poet in the role of a semi-god who gives life to the poem; instead, a sensual relationship is established between the poet and words" (64). Unlike Huidobro, Vicuña proposes the opening of the word to expose its metaphoric components. Then, like a botanist who cross-pollinates plants or like a weaver who joins warp and weft strings, she mixes these verbal elements to register what their internal metaphors signify.

During her years of artistic formation in the late 1960's and early 1970's, a period of intense cultural and political change on a global scale, Vicuña's participation in the small artistic and literary group *Tribu No* provides her with the impetus to create works of art and poetry that challenge the notion of the social and the artistic status quo.[46] Some members who participate in this counter-cultural group are: Claudio Bertoni, Coca Roccatagliata, Marcelo Charlín, Francisco Rivera and Sonia Jara (Bianchi 146). Immediately after the 1973 military coup, the *Tribu No* and many other literary groups disband, and their ideas and their future attempts at artistic creation remain silenced due to the threat of the censor's eye. However, in the late 1970's and throughout the decade of the 1980's, many Chilean poets and artists continue contesting oppression by

[46] According to information obtained in personal interviews conducted with Cecilia Vicuña by Soledad Bianchi, the word *Tribu* embodies the respect for the pre-conquest Native American and the word *No* communicates a rejection of the injustices continued by many social norms (150). The group cites its inspiration in from many sources, including but not limited to: Henry Miller, the beats, William Carlos Williams, jazz, surrealism, the mystics, Guaraní texts, Lezama Lima, Neruda, Paz and Huidobro (172). The members of the group published one mimeographed poetic anthology, *Deliciosas criaturas perfumadas* in 1972 (151), and they wrote a television program for children that aired on Canal 9, Universidad de Chile (156). For more information, see Soledad Bianchi's book *La Memoria: Modelo para armar, grupos literarios de la década del sesenta en Chile, entrevistas* (1995).

developing hybrid visual, material and performative genres. Literary critic Eugenia Brito describes the objectives of these artists, also referred to as the *Nueva escena*, with the following words:

> El esfuerzo de este grupo de escritores será justamente trazar sobre el empobrecido código oficial, los tejidos procesadores de su textura; hablar desde los huecos, las perforaciones, los hiatos, todo lo cual requiere la densidad del pensamiento ritmando la significancia desde múltiples ángulos, para construir redes paragramáticas insólitas, diferenciadas, las que van a constituir los nuevos lugares para el arte chileno y latinoamericano. (13)

As Brito theorizes, new Chilean and Latin American art and literature emerge from the poetic practices that engage texts as *tejidos* and materials of uneven textures. Here it remains interesting that she utilizes the terms *tejido*, *textura* and *redes* to describe the forces behind the artists' creation, or that is, the necessity for an active reader to reconstruct the meaning not readily recognized in the text by forming networks of significance.

Although Brito excludes from her analysis poets and artists who remain outside of Chile during the epoch of the dictatorship, it is necessary to illustrate the link between Vicuña's work and the opus of those who stay in Chile at this time.[47] Like her peers who

[47] When the military coup occurred in 1973, Cecilia Vicuña was residing in London where she studied painting at The Slade School of Fine Arts, University College, London. From 1975 to 1980 she lived in Bogotá and travelled extensively through the Amazon

reside in the country during the military coup, such as but not limited to Juan Luis Martínez, Raúl Zurita and Diamela Eltit, Vicuña manipulates the poetic word and pushes it to its limits in order weave a linguistic network that speaks from the interstices, or the holes, of the official discourse. For example, both Juan Luis Martínez's *Nueva novela* (1977) and Vicuña's *Saboramí* (1973) supersede the conventional limitations of the text because they exist as material, crafted artifacts. Constructed with multiple thematic discourses, copied texts, drawings, photographs and objects fixed to the page, their works become woven *pastiches* that ask the reader to navigate the text actively in order to patch together the multiple meanings that lie in the "silent" interstices between discourse and material. Although Vicuña resides outside of Chile, during the post-coup era, her work remains part of the new *vanguardia chilena* that seeks to produce literature from an alternative means of expression.[48] In this light, it remains clear that the presence of weaving in her poetry and her visual art plays a role in "tying" her to the culture of her homeland despite the forced diaspora caused by the military coup.

WEAVING, WRITING AND SPEAKING IN *LA WIK'UÑA* AND *PALABRA E HILO*

Poet Cecilia Vicuña illustrates the homologies between weaving, writing and speaking through an analysis of the word and the material thread in her poetic works *La Wik'uña* (1992) and *Palabra e hilo* (1997). In order to demonstrate the analogous characteristics of the word and the thread, she treats verses like discursive strings that can

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basin, Colombia and Venezuela. Since 1980, she has lived in New York City; however, she also continues to work in South America for long periods.

48 See Nelly Richard, *Márgenes e instituciones, Arte en Chile desde 1973*, a foundational critical text of the so-called *Escena de avanzada*.

be dissected and combined. Once split apart, the yarns and the words illustrate their connection to each other despite their differing forms and materials. Having demonstrated this homologous relationship, Vicuña graphically interlaces the poetic sentence-strings with the cited discourses of others. In this way, she not only describes the relationship between the textile and the text, instead, she *practices* the art of textual weaving that she outlines in each work.

In *La Wik'uña*, the author brings weaving to the forefront of the textual framework through the visual layout of the verses, the interlacing of discourses and the message that the words in the poems communicate. It remains notable that Vicuña chooses the Quechua word *wik'uña* to name this collection of poems. Signifying *vicuña* in Spanish, the title of the work instantly brings to mind the sacred wool of the small camelid that roams the high Andean plains. By employing the Quechua spelling instead of the Spanish, the poet suggests a return to a specifically Andean contextualization of knowledge. One of the most salient texts in this collection, "Oro es tu hilar," draws a direct connection to language and the textile by homologizing the act of praying to the process of spinning a thread. We observe this theme in the beginning stanzas of the poem:

> Oro
> es tu hilo
> de orar
>
> Templo
> del siempre
> enhebrar

. . .
Tuerce
que tuerce

El dorado
enderezo

El fresco
ofrendar (96)

As illustrated by the previous verses, Vicuña links weaving to oral poetry through the first stanza, "oro / es tu hilo / de orar," and illustrates that spoken words, when woven together like threads, exist as a golden light. As the last stanza cited shows, the illumination that results from the interlacing of words acts like a "fresco ofrendar," or a fresh offering for the reader to decipher.

Like most of the poems in the larger work, the practice of weaving in "Oro es tu hilar" remains salient in the spatial layout of the text. For example, it is comprised of short stanzas ranging from between one and three visually and semantically symmetrical verses. The majority constitute an expression of *arte menor*, a versification system in Spanish in which all of the verses contain eight syllables or less.[49] These petite verses emulate the minimalism of a weaving system based on two interlocking thread planes.[50]

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[49] In the tradition of Spanish verse, popular and oral poetry is composed in *arte menor* (verses containing less than eight syllables). This style of poetry differs from the clerical poetry written by scholars and clergy containing longer verse numbers known as *mester de clerecía*.

[50] One may recall here a classic example of *arte menor* in Chilean poetry, Pablo Neruda's *Odas elementales* (1959). See Jaime Concha's introduction to the Cátedra edition of *Odas elementales*.

Often divisible into two halves, the diminutive verses mirror the binary logic of the Andean cosmovision reflected in the *tejido* and the *khipu*. For example, the content of the stanzas evenly balances through a proportional physical and semantic distribution. Horizontally, each group of verses divides in half either by a blank space or by the center verse when three lines are grouped together. Like *tejidos* and *khipus* constructed along an axis of reflection, Vicuña's verses mirror each other in size and spatial layout.

In addition to this physical division, we also note that the stanzas remain semantically and vocally level as well. The first lines of the text illustrate that the words *oro* and *orar* counter-weigh each other semantically because the first is a noun and the latter is a verb. Moreover, a visual and an audible equilibrium exists between these terms. Although not exact in length, the alternating assonance of the *o* and the *a* combined with the consonant *r* phonetically balance *oro* and *orar* while they rest on the outer margins of the stanza as if tottering on a scale. In addition to the phonetic symmetry between these two terms, they also display semantic evenness because they both signify some form of orality, *oro* meaning "I pray" and *orar* which signifies "to pray." The line of separation that acts as the fulcrum of the stanza is the *hilo*. Thus, the string divides the poetic unit into two halves that express the binary harmony of the textile through their attention to what the reader sees, hears and understands.

Similar to the equilibrium found in the first stanza, the textile structure of the text becomes evident through the pairing of terms appearing in twos such as the noun and the verb *templo* and *enhebrar*, the duplicated action of *tuerce*, the adjective *dorado* with the noun *enderezo* and the adjective *fresco* with the verb, which also serves as a noun,

ofrendar. Overall, the counter balancing of these particles of speech and the duality of their meanings and uses echoes the binary elements of warp and weft. In this way, the poetry shadows the proportion found in Andean weaving motifs such as the division of ponchos in two parts, the mirroring of stripes and bands and the reversibility of dueling serpentine figures that imitate the form of S and Z spun threads.

Throughout the text, allusions to weaving continue as Vicuña interlaces scholarly and historical citations, excerpts from indigenous songs and her own commentary. Like loose threads gathered and woven to form a piece of cloth, the poet collects the words of others and weaves them into the space of the poetic writing. As a result, these varying linguistic fibers intertwine and generate the textile framework of the text. In *La Wik'uña*, the poet includes citations from Cuban author José Lezama Lima, an excerpt of *The Song of the Hummingbird* from the Chiripá Guaraní culture, a quotation from the Spanish Jesuit priest Bernabé Cobo and the speech of Mexican shaman María Sabina, among others.

By incorporating these varying discourses within the parameters of the text, Vicuña provides them with a zone of contact. As a result, these written and spoken threads merge within the same space as the poetic discourse, and together, the combination of their meanings creates new significance. In this way, *La Wik'uña* acts like a patch-work quilt, a *tejido* or a *khipu* fabricated through the amassing of minute components that unite in order to project a meaning derived from the sum of its parts.

With relation to "Oro es tu hilar," Vicuña explicitly includes cited material that supports this interwoven conceptualization of the text. For example, the words of José

Lezama Lima serve as the epigraph to the poem: "Las oraciones son los hilos y el tejido es la aparición de la luz" (95).[51] By stating that the prayers are threads and that the textile is the appearance of the light, Lezama Lima illustrates that the act of weaving language, the prayer or the sentence, produces a type of knowledge symbolized by the word *luz*. Or that is, the conjoining words form a verbal piece of cloth that illuminates some sort of intelligence.

With respect to theory regarding Andean and Mapuche textiles discussed in the introduction, this postulation falls in line with the notion that *tejidos* exist as mediums that project information regarding the cosmovision of their makers. In this sense, weaving *is* a form of praying because the weaver incorporates into the textile the design motifs that represent the spiritual beliefs of his or her people. Thus, like a writer who interlaces sentences in order to capture a body of knowledge within the text, the weaver manipulates and combines threads in order to encapsulate the rituals of his or her culture within the parameters of the cloth.

In support of Lezama's statement and the theme of weaving in "Oro es tu hilar," Vicuña closes the text with a mixture of her statements and citations by scholars. I quote:

> Quechua, the sacred language, is conceived as a thread.
>
> "Quechua possibly derives from *q'eswa*: a rope made of
> twisted reeds."

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[51] The Spanish word *oraciones* signifies the word *sentences* or the term *prayers*. When inserted into the context of *La Wik'uña* as an epigraph for "Oro es tu hilar," it remains very likely that it refers to *prayers*. Either way, the double meaning connects the actions of weaving and word working in both oral and graphic forms.

JORGE LIRA

"Mysteries are revealed by putting it all together."

ROBERT RANDALL

Watuq, the shaman, is "he who ties," from *watuy*, to tie.
Watunasimi, the woven language, creates the world
through oracles, parables and prophecies.
. . .
Chantaysimi, beautiful speech, is embroidered speech.

But they did not write, they wove. (102)

Here, the interlacing of the reporting poetic subject and the citations by Lira and Randall entwine like layers of threads in a *tejido*. In this way, the verses of the poem perform the actions suggested by the phrases: "twist[ing] reeds," "putting it all together," "*watuy*, to tie," "creates," "embroidered speech" and "they did not write, they wove." As a result of this practice of versified interweaving, Vicuña reinforces the correlation between the forces of energy that generate the text and the textile. Both result from the twisting, the bending and the tying together of strings, verbal, in the case of written and oral texts, and cloth, in the case of the *tejido*.

In addition to demonstrating the connection between the text and the textile through the interlacing of discourses, Cecilia Vicuña further illustrates the correlation between speech and clothing production with the verse "Quechua, the sacred language, is conceived as a thread." To substantiate this idea she cites Quechua language scholar Jorge A. Lira. According to him, "Quechua possibly derives from *q'eswa*: a rope made

of twisted reeds."[52] Due to the homophonous qualities shared by both *q'eswa* and *Quechua*, Lira hypothesizes that the meaning of the former is also shared by the latter. Vicuña capitalizes on this piece of information and incorporates it into her text in order to illustrate that Quechua speakers first conceived of language as a form of weaving or the twisting together of verbal fibers in order to form a larger discourse.

To further support the relationship between the text and the textile, Vicuña also includes the etymological definitions of Quechua words. In doing so, she provides an intercultural, poetic *tejido* by playfully merging terms from English and Quechua in the poem. The verses posterior to Robert Randall's quote illustrate the relationship between weaving and speech through the analysis of the Quechua word *watuq*. This term shows how Andeans originally perceived the shaman as one who prays, thus weaving with his prayer a language that creates the world. This sacred speech known as *watunasimi* and *chantaysimi* embroiders or weaves the cosmovision of a people into being. Thus, according to the Quechua imagination, the only difference that exists between weaving and speaking lies in the fact that the former deals with tangible material and the latter uses a verbal, audible media. Despite these variations, no contrast between working the thread and the word exists in the mind of an Andean native. Thus, as the verses suggest, the act of speaking, or making language, stands as homologous to that of embroidering, or embellishing with thread to form a design.

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[52] Lira is well known for publishing an authoritative bilingual dictionary in Quechua and Spanish titled *Diccionario kkechuwa-español*. The first edition dates to the year 1945, and subsequent editions have been issued in the 1970's and the 1980's.

As a result of this interlacing of voices, the poetic with the scholarly, Vicuña weaves a theoretical web that literally surrounds the poem. Bordered initially by José Lezama Lima's comment regarding prayer as a woven collection of light and delineated posteriorly by etymological findings regarding the textile origins of the Quechua language, the interwoven discourses, like the warp strings first loaded in the loom, provide the theoretical and the physical framework for the verses in "Oro es tu hilar."

Within this woven scaffolding, the body of the poem makes a statement about the relationship between the poetic text and the textile. As stated in the epigraph by José Lezama Lima, praying exists as the spoken act of weaving; from it, humans create threaded discursive texts that birth some form of light or knowledge. In "Oro es tu hilar," Cecilia Vicuña illustrates how the golden thread provides a connection between poetry, also oral in origin, and prayer.[53] Like priests who pray, poets also weave words together to create texts that hold within them the keys to our creative intelligence and our desire to unite the elements of our world vision.

To explore the relationship between weaving, prayer and poetry, the poem "Oro es tu hilar" examines the domestic and the ritualistic spaces where these acts occur. Starting with the first four stanzas of the poem, Vicuña makes direct references to orality, weaving and localities. I quote:

Oro

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[53] For more information regarding the oral origins of poetry in the Western tradition, see Nagy's *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (1996). For information regarding the oral origins of Quechua poetry, see Jesús Lara's anthology titled *Pauccarwara: poemas quechuas* (1947).

es tu hilo
de orar

Templo
del siempre
enhebrar

Armando casa
del mismo
treznal

Teja mijita
no más (96)

Despite the fact that the words in the text are physically written on the page, they exude a great sense of orality. The words *oro* and *orar* signal an audible reference to to the word "oral." Moreover, the short stanza "Teja mijita / no más," a command followed by a popular phrase in Chile, "no más," indicates the poem's correlation to spoken language. Each verse contains less than eight syllables thus constituting the oral roots of *arte menor*. In addition, the speaker takes on a popular voice, and it directs the informal command "teja" to a feminine subject "hijita." Because the word *hijita* signals kinship, either by blood as when referring to one's daughter or by an accepted fictitious affiliation, the poetic subject's use of this term of endearment illustrates the informality of the speech which likely occurs in the domestic sphere.

Relating back to the second and the third stanzas of the poem, this female person associates with spaces where she performs both the oral weaving of phrases and the

physical interlacing of threads. For example, "Templo / del siempre / enhebrar" and "Armando casa / del mismo / treznal" refer to places related to textile production: the temple where needles are always threaded and the house constructed by a twisted heap of natural fibers such as wheat or corn stalks (treznal).[54] Both locations associated with women's work, *el templo* (the temple) and *las casas* (the home) exist as places where females thread their speech through prayer at the spiritual site and fabricate their *tejidos* on the loom in their dwelling.

Relating to this concept of space and the feminine subject, the poem "Oro es tu hilar" illustrates how weaving plays a role in the artful motion of the feminine body and mind. I quote:

> Ñustas calmadas
> de inquieto pensar
>
> Marcas y señales
>
> Pallá y pacá
>
> Hilos y cuerdas
>
> Los negros
> y los dorá
>
> Cavilan
> el punto

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54 In Gottfried Semper's 1851 publication of "The Textile Art: Considered in Itself and in Relation to Architecture" featured in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, the author posits that weaving and architecture both commence through the intertwining of natural fibers in order to form structures such as walls and fences (254).

No se vaya
a escapar (97-8)

As shown by the use of the words, "Ñustas calmadas / de inquieto pensar" and "Cavilan / el punto," the poetic voice reveals that those who weave remain deeply engaged in thought as shown by the verbs *pensar* and *cavilan*.[55] Although the *ñustas* who produce textiles remain calm, their thinking is restless, carefully pondering each stitch as shown by the words "cavilan el punto." While exuding tranquility externally, in reality, the girls contemplate with an active mind each minute detail of the construction of the *tejido*, and they work cautiously not to lose the stitch.

In addition to the reference to the weavers' minds, the poetic speaker reveals the tactile sense of motion through the alternation of minimal verses in a rapid succession: "Marcas y señales / Pallá y pacá / Hilos y cuerdas." This swift listing of nouns provides a face paced movement in the reading of the poem that mimics the nimble gestures of the *ñustas'* fingers, and it highlights the physical orientation of the body with respect to the cloth being woven. For example, the words *marcas, señales, pallá y pacá* (the colloquial spoken expression for the phrases *para allá* and *para acá*) all reference space and mimic the motion of the girls' bodies as they shift strings back and forth according to markers in the cloth. Furthermore, the short pairs of verses reflect the binary qualities inherent to the Andean *tejido*, and they create a poetic rhythm that imitates the "one-two" movement of the weavers' hands that pass horizontally, flying the shuttle across the loom, and then

55 The Quechua word *ñustas* refers to the noble title of "princesses" during the Inka Empire.

vertically, swinging the batten downward upon the warp. In this way, the poem orients the poetic language in the context and the speed of an active textile project. Like a string in a loom, Cecilia Vicuña weaves the verses on the page alternating them back and forth and up and down thereby illustrating the connection between the intertwining of words and threads in the mind and the body of the weaver.[56]

By incorporating the mental and the bodily movements of the *ñustas* into the poem, Cecilia Vicuña illustrates that the action of weaving remains relational and intersubjective. Both the fingers and the mind of the weaver constantly signal to each other information regarding the rhythm, the texture and the pattern of the textile design. In addition, the poem illustrates the intersubjectivity of weaving by developing an association between a *yo*, or the subject of enunciation, and the other participant in the poetic scenario *tú*. The previously discussed verses, "Teja mijita / no más," suggest that the speaker of the command, or the *I*, interacts with a younger, feminine subject who receives the term of endearment "mijita." By introducing these two contributors, the poet names the agents of weaving. Since there are at least two weavers in the poem, Vicuña illustrates that this act remains an intersubjective task. In support of this notion, the verses, "Cavilan / el punto" and "No se vaya / a escaper," illustrate that those who engage in this cloth production painstakingly work to make *connections* between threads.

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56 In addition to the tactile sense, the verses also appeal to the eyes through the use of words that represent color such as *los negros* and *los dorá* (popular speech for *dorados*).

Overall, this theme of connectivity remains an active current in the poem, and to illustrate this concept, the author presents a scene in which the weavers go around tying together everything they see. I quote:

> El mundo
> es hilván
>
> Pierdo
> el hilo
>
> Y te hilacho
> briznar
>
> Código y cuenta
> cómputo communal
>
> Todo amarran
>
> Hilando
> en pos
>
> Cuerdas y arroyos
>
> Aunar lo tejido
>
> ¿No es algo
> inicial?
>
> El cálido fuelle
>
> Oro templar
>
> Habla y abriga

El mejor juglar (98-100)

From this excerpt, the verses in the first stanza, “El mundo / es hilván,” demonstrate the conceptualization of the world as a loosely stitched *tejido*. This connection remains so strong that even the threat of losing the thread, as expressed in the verses “Pierdo / el hilo,” is not capable of fully undoing the *mundo hilván* conceived in the poem. The verses, “Y te hilacho / briznar,” translated into English as “But I rag on,” illustrate the persistence of the weavers who continually strive to make threaded connections in the world, binding everything in their paths and leaving everything tied up behind them as illustrated by the phrases, “Todo amarran / Hilando / en pos.”

In this way, Vicuña’s firing off of nouns such as *mundo, hilván, hilo, código, cuenta, cómputo, cuerdas, arroyos, fuelle, oro* and *juglar* creates a concrete environment in which the weaver conceptualizes the materiality, or the “weave-ability,” of the world. The poet also saturates the poem with verbs such as *pierdo, hilacho, briznar, amarran, hilando, aunar, habla* and *abriga*. These actions paired with the previously cited nouns *work* the materials accordingly. In this way, Vicuña conceptually weaves the poem’s textile world into existence with the interrelation between matter and action.

As seen from the previous analysis, the poet *performs* the connectivity that the weaver encounters in her environment through the verbal associations stitched on to the page. In the verses, “Código y cuenta / cómputo comunal,” the alliteration of the letter *c* creates a chain of associations within the stanza. Furthermore, the words *código, cuenta, cómputo* and *comunal* remind us of the Andean *khipu* whose knots served as accounting codes (*código*, *cuenta*) that calculated (*cómputo*) the material goods of the community

(*comunal*). On a deeper level, Vicuña interweaves another layer of meaning into the text through the comparison of contemporary and historical media technologies. For example, the noun *cómputo* brings forth the notion of today's tool for recording information *par excellence*, the computer. The juxtaposition of this tool with the allusion to the *khipu* takes Vicuña's level of connectivity to a deeper level because the poem subtly entwines the concepts of changing media used by various cultures through distinct moments in time. In this way, the poet plays the role of a weaver who goes around tying up everything that is already woven, or "Aunar lo tejido," in order to generate a stratum of associations, eternally connecting the loose ends of our intertwined existence.

For the speaker, the re-weaving of the environment and the cultural vision of the community compares to the source of air which gives rise to oral language. The verses, "¿No es algo / inicial?," illustrate that the poetic subject contemplates the act of weaving as something initial. I quote:

> ¿No es algo
> inicial?
>
> El cálido fuelle
>
> Oro templar
>
> Habla y abriga
>
> El mejor juglar (100)

Here, the verses "El cálido fuelle," "Oro templar" and "Habla and abriga," relate directly to the senses. The word *cálido* associates with the tactile, *oro* brings forth the notion of

the visual, *habla* evokes sound and *abriga* also reminds the reader of texture. Since humans first experience their environment through the senses, each allusion to sight, sound and touch relates to the initial moment when the eyes, the ears and the skin perceive the happenings in the environment.

According to poet and scholar Susan Stewart, "*poiēsis* as figuration relies on the senses of touching, seeing, and hearing that are central to the encounter with the presence of others, the encounter or recognition between persons" (3). For Stewart, poetry exists as the register of what the senses distinguish. While she highlights that sensorial experiences remain key to knowing other humans, our faculties of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste also serve to register the physical environment. From this view, the main goal of *poiēsis*, is to capture the energies present in the world that our senses recognize.

With relation to the poem "Oro es tu hilar," the stanzas that close the text interweave our sensorial experiences in order to illustrate the origins of poetry. When the weavers unite the woven, expressed by the verse, "Aunar lo tejido," they tap into this initial space and moment in time. Cecilia Vicuña playfully engages our skin and our lungs by referencing a puff of warm air, or "El cálido fuelle." Furthermore, she invokes the visual with the color "Oro templar," or a soft golden hue. In these two verses, the senses merge with the body and the concept of the sacred, thus creating a quasi-erotic and sensual description. The warm breath of air from the bellows of the body produces sound, an action initiating from the deep hollows of the pulmonary organs and the diaphragm. Moreover, Vicuña's pun on the word *templar* softly dilutes the color of the gold while simultaneously reminding the reader of the sacred. In this way, the poet

sensuously plays with the body as an instrument for sensorial experiences that enhance our perception of that which is hallowed.

To conclude the poem, Vicuña pairs two actions with the the *cálido fuelle* and the *oro templar*. The last two verses state, “Habla y abriga / El mejor juglar.” Here, the verbs in the third person, singular form, refer to the collective entity of the “initial thing” that the hot bellows and the tempered gold describe. With these words, the poet interjects for the last time the notion of a correlation between the textile and the text. The poetic speaker states that the sound produced by the lungs, or the spoken words of poetry, and the light resulting from this woven oral discourse speak for and cover the *juglar*, the oral poet in the Hispanic tradition.

In this sense, Vicuña reverses the role of the oral utterance as a sign/function. According to Roland Barthes, the sign/function occurs when an object that originally had a utilitarian purpose (i.e. clothing—to protect) gains “sign” status (“Elements” 41). This occurs when a textile takes on the role of a communicative text that represents a value external to its function. Thus, when the poetic subject juxtaposes the “cálido fuelle” and the “Oro templar” with the actions of covering and protecting the troubadour, a reversal of the sign/function exists because the woven, audible word-sounds now revert back to the function of covering. Because a *tejido* made of sounds, verses and prayers sheathes the body of the oral poet, Vicuña illustrates the intimate connection between the textile, the oral text and the word weaver. It is the spoken communal discourses that intimately touch and wrap around the body of the *juglar* like a protective blanket or an erotic embrace, thus signaling that poetry shares the utmost foundational characteristics of a

piece of cloth. When we figuratively "speak" and wear ("Habla y abriga") the woven utterances that interlace our common histories, or to use Vicuña's words our *código, cuenta* and *cómputo comunal*, we generate poetry and bind ourselves to the sensorial experiences that define our environment and to the others who constitute our most intimate social circle and our communities at large.

Similar to the textual interweaving in *La Wik'uña* as exemplified by "Oro es tu hilar," Cecilia Vicuña seeks to illustrate the homologous characteristics of the word and the thread in her long, singularly published poem *Palabra e hilo* (1997). To illustrate this phenomenon, the poet shies away from the traditional verse form in favor of a sentence-based poetry. Like short lengths of yarn, the phrases intertwine and generate a quasi-prosaic discourse with an almost pedagogical tone. The absence of a poetic speaker in the text removes emphasis from the subject of enunciation and focuses it on the linguistic weaving that occurs at the sentence level of the poem. As a result, the reader becomes intimately aware of the homologation of the word and the string through his or her observation of how the sentence-strings interlace within the parameters of the text.

Although Andean *tejidos* do not communicate via a linguistic channel, in *Palabra e hilo*, Vicuña juxtaposes the word and the thread to suggest that the *unkus* and the *llycllas* produced from the loom also remain capable of transmitting a message. Thus, the Andean textile, like the alphabetic writing of Western societies, forms the heart and the soul of the community and also serves as a medium for the contemplation of that which lies beyond the tangible reality of its material form. With relation to this notion, the opposite also holds true; *Palabra e hilo* not only suggests that the *tejido* acts like a text;

on the other hand, it also illustrates that words can be woven to access to a form of thinking that lies beyond the daily transactional usage of language. To illustrate this point, Vicuña's poem extends the metaphor between the text and the textile by including separate elements of discourse within its context. By embedding the words of scholars that comment upon weaving and signification processes with the poetic discourse, the author actively demonstrates how the technology of the loom allows for the creation and the amplification of meaning in the written text. To effectively communicate this phenomenon of linguistic weaving, Vicuña illustrates the development of its process step by step. Like a piece of fabric that starts with the raw material and ends with its finishing touches, *Palabra e hilo* goes through a similar evolution.

To start the analysis of the text/textile, Vicuña commences with the poetic wool—the word. She defines its form, its sound, its function and the significant role that it plays in the metaphor between language and the *tejido*. In the first sentence, the verb *es* acts like a fulcrum that illustrates the homologous relationship between the word and the string: "La palabra es un hilo y el hilo es lenguaje." Here it remains obvious that the two are not equals; they vary in both form and material. A string is not a word, and a word is not a string. However, by balancing these two entities twice on either side of *es*, the poem performs the the homologous connection between them. Although different, *la palabra* and *el hilo* possess a likeness in structure deriving from the parts that comprise them.

Once this association is established, Vicuña develops the metaphor between the string and the text by focusing on the constructive properties of each. In line eleven, the

poem references the raw materials used in the production of both: "La tejedora ve su fibra como la poeta su palabra." Therefore, by calling attention to the primary sources used in the composition of the textile and the text, the poem illustrates the tangible nature of each and shows that both may be manipulated in order to create a meaningful product. For instance, both writers and textile designers "sculpt" materials in order to create a text, that is, a unified whole made out of smaller components. In support of this idea, the sentence-like discourse of the poem highlights the multiple, tangible constituents of both the word and the string: "Una palabra está preñada de otras palabras y un hilo contiene / otros hilos en su interior" (18-19). With these string-sentences, the poem further proves the correlation between the two entities because they illustrate that smaller units come together to fabricate both the thread and the word. The word exists not as an individual whole but as the conglomeration of morphemes and graphemes; likewise, the thread consists of smaller fibers that twist together to form a larger synthetic one.

Another way in which Vicuña homologizes the word and the thread is through an awareness of their oppositional components. I quote:

> La energía del movimiento tiene nombre y dirección: *lluq'i*, a la izquierda, *paña*, a la derecha.
>
> Una dirección es un sentido y la forma de la torsión transmite conocimiento e información.
>
> Los dos últimos movimientos de una fibra deben estar en oposición: una fibra se compone de dos hilos *lluq'i* y *paña*.
>
> Una palabra es raíz y sufijo: dos sentidos antitéticos en uno solo.

(42-9)

This poetic discourse explains how the torsion of the thread, either left or right, affects its meaning and, correspondingly, how the suffix and the root of the word intertwine to provide significance. By mentioning the terms used to describe spin direction, *lloq'i* (also spelled *lloque*) to the left and *paña* to the right, the poem describes the Andean weaving practice of assigning significance to a thread according to its manner of spinning. These designs compare to the composition of words. Like the left-right opposition encountered in the direction of the string, the contrasting root and suffix, or "raíz y sufijo," of the word merge to create a verbal "thread." Therefore, by demonstrating that both the word and the yarn consist of opposite elements joined, in the case of the string with the left-right spun strings and in the case of the word with the root and the suffix, the poetic discourse demonstrates how the textile and the text remain homologous.

Building upon the analogous structures between the textile and the text, the poet also connects the thread and the word through their processes of manufacturing. For example, the poetic discourse refers to the collection of fibers and lexicon for the *tejido* and the text: "Tejer diseños es *pallay*, levantar las fibras, recogerlas. / Leer en latín es *legere*, recoger." (25-6). Here, the definition and the etymological roots of the terms show that a homologous relationship between the textile and writing exists. In Andean weaving, the *pallay* section of the cloth, opposite of the *pampa*, is the section that contains the more intricate elements of design such as astrological symbols, serpentine bands, images of zoomorphic beings and other animals. This Quechua term also refers to

the action of weaving or picking up the fibers. Within the parameters of the text, the discursive strings show that *legere* in Latin also means to collect, so in this way, both weaving and writing/reading the printed word imply the gathering of material objects and information.

Other elements of textile design that the poet incorporates into the poem to illustrate the relationship between weaving and the word include an analysis of colors, knots and the alphabet. In the following discursive threads, the poem tells us that "Un textil antiguo es un alfabeto de nudos, colores y direcciones / que ya no podemos leer" (29-30). This metaphor juxtaposes the variation of colors and knots in textiles with the graphemes that compose the written alphabet. Even though they differ greatly in form, chromatic variation and material, hues and knots in a piece of cloth or a *khipu* and written letters remain analogous. When combined into certain patterns, letters form larger words that carry meaning; and likewise, when grouped together, colors and knots also take on signifying qualities. Therefore, the text and the textile stand as homologous products because both employ elemental design units that collectively form a coded message.

To further support the analogy between the word and the thread, Vicuña cites within the body of the poem Mary Frame's research regarding the relationship between motif patterning and the methods of textile construction. As mentioned in the introduction of this work, the images in Andean *tejidos* often reflect the process of weaving in the form of helical shapes, Z and S axes, and lines with breaks to show a crisscrossing or over/under effect (Frame 120). Affirming this practice, the poetic discourse in *Palabra e hilo* states:

El proceso es un lenguaje y un diseño textil es un proceso
representándose a sí mismo.
Un 'eje de reflexión', dice Mary Frame:
'los atributos serpentinos
son imágenes de la estructura textil',
las trenzas se hacen serpientes
y el cruce de la luz y la oscuridad se hace un diamante: una estrella.
(50-6)

This direct citation of Mary Frame illustrates that the designs featured in textiles such as "las trenzas [que] se hacen serpientes / y el cruce de la luz y la oscuridad [que] se hace un diamante" frequently mimic their internal woven structures. For example, serpents often look like braided strings, and the crossing of light and dark-colored threads produces the image of a star. To complement Frame's postulation, the phrases, "El proceso es un lenguaje y un diseño textil es un proceso / representándose a sí mismo," imply that the designs which imitate the textile's structure *are a language*, or that is, that the reproduction of these visual patterns systematically *relays information* regarding the construction of the woven media. Vicuña relates the text and the *tejido* because, much like a verbal system of communication that uses words to refer to itself, woven products introspectively reveal their creation. In addition to showing how the textile's motifs act as a language, Vicuña also compares the written word to the *tejido* by alternating the discursive threads from the previous selection between the left and the right sides of the page. Thus, like a motif that simulates the twisting of two fibers, the serpentine

movement of the words on the page also imitates their woven, discursive construction. In this way, the textual motifs reveal the methods of their interior textile framework.

Having established the homologies between the word and the thread in terms of composition and design, Vicuña then begins to interlace verbal discourses together in the body of the poem. In this way, she treats groups of words like yarns that tie together to form the text. Combined with the poetic discourse, she cites scholars who study Andean weaving and theories related to signification. As a result, she imbues the content of the poem with academic authority, and she generates a space where these ideas intertwine like fibers in order to create a new culturally significant product.

With the aid of the poet's careful selection, the words of anthropologist Elayne Zorn and poet René Daumal comment upon the role of the Andean *tejido* and the body in projecting meaning. Thus, like a textile whose second layer of weft threads create design motifs on top of the base-weave, the framework of the poem becomes interwoven with interpretable discursive patterns. I quote:

> Hoy los tejidos no sólo 'representan', sino que ellos mismos *son*
> uno de los seres de la cosmología andina (E. Zorn)
> *Ponchos, hijillas, aksus, winchas, chuspas* y *chumpis* son seres
> que sienten
>
> y cada ser que siente camina envuelto en signos.
> 'El cuerpo dado enteramente a la función de significar'.
>
> René Daumal
>
> (31-7)

According to Zorn, the *tejido* surpasses the ability to merely "represent" the cosmology of the Andes; instead, as indicated by the italicized verb *son* in verse 33, these woven products *are* cosmic beings. Zorn entrusts to the textile a power much higher than that of simply transmitting a message: *ponchos, hijillas, aksus, winchas, chuspas* and *chumpis* exist as the sacred entities of the Andean cosmovision. This conjecture is validated via the Andean notion of *camay*, or that is, the vitalization of a material object as it relates to the cosmology of a culture (Cummins 28).[57] In this way, Zorn's words establish a relationship between the textile and a signifying existence that lies beyond its material form.

Commenting on this notion, the poetic discourse states, "*Ponchos, hijillas, aksus, winchas, chuspas* y *chumpis* son seres / que sienten / y cada ser que siente camina envuelto en signos." Here, the poem associates the vitalized Andean garments with the sentient creatures that wear them. Every being who uses a *tejido* wraps him or herself in the signs that the clothing projects. In support of this notion, Roland Barthes states that "the garment is always conceived, implicitly, as the particular signifier of a general signified that is exterior to it (epoch, country, social class)" ("History" 5). Although outside the Andean framework of *camay*, Barthes' comment serves to illustrate that clothing worn by humans represents a meaning that does not directly relate to the acts of protecting and covering the body. Consequently, our vestment signals a type of knowledge relating to factors that determine social relationships.

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57 For more information see chapter 2 regarding the notion of *camay* in the poetry of Jorge Eduardo Eielson.

In line with Barthes' theory, Vicuña quotes René Daumal in the following string of discourse, "El cuerpo dado enteramente a la función de significar." As the citation indicates, the sole purpose of the body remains to signify. Thus the clothed human becomes a moving billboard that projects information toward a receptive viewer. From this point of view, the sentient being covered with the signs of a garment compares to the "animate" *tejido* because they both exist as "living" materials that, like language, function solely to signify knowledge.

Intertwined with Daumal and Zorn's words, Vicuña provides another citation from the anthropologist Mary Frame. In addition to discussing the textile's "eje de reflexión," in which the design motifs mirror the construction of the *tejido*, the words of the scholar explain the technique of sprang. I quote:

> La técnica 'sprang' es 'una acción recíproca en la que el entreverado
> de los elementos adyacentes y de los dedos se duplica arriba
> y abajo del área de trabajo'.
>
> Es decir, los dedos entrando en el
> textil producen en las fibras una imagen en espejo de su movimiento,
> una simetría que reitera 'el concepto de complementariedad que
> permea el pensamiento andino'. (57-63)

The definition of "sprang," a technique in which the weaver intertwines threads or cords over one another to form an open mesh, illustrates that weaving communicates who we are as humans. The discursive threads, "Es decir, los dedos entrando en el / textil producen en las fibras una imagen en espejo de su movimiento, / una simetría que reitera

‘el concepto de complementariedad . . .’”, demonstrate how the fingers and the woven product mirror each other because the hand shapes the yarns according to its motion, and the *tejido* acts as a record of this movement. Thus, the human shows the cloth what it is by creating it, and conversely, the textile reflects who the weaver is by recording his or her kinetic intentions.

On a more global scale, Cecilia Vicuña provides a space where the poetic discourse and the comments of Zorn, Daumal and Frame mutually communicate with each other. In order to achieve correspondence between these ideas, the phrases visually unite and metaphorically intertwine themselves like fibers. Like spun wool twisted to make a thread, the verbal fibers transform from their original state and take on a different meaningful form. To recapitulate, Zorn expresses that the *tejido* exists as a cosmic Andean being; Daumal proposes that the body remains capable of signifying or illustrating symbols, and Frame highlights the reciprocal relationship between the weaver and the *tejido*. As a result of the poetic interlacing of these three themes, Vicuña fabricates a new text that expresses that textiles and language exist as material bodies that transmit a meaning exterior to their immediate form and functional use. Similar to the etymology of a word, a woven product holds information pertaining to its material origins, and it simultaneously reflects the human hands that create it. In this way, the textile stands as a type of super-text because it contains within it an endless possibility for signification. Cloth woven with, to use Katherine Sullivan Kruger’s words, “attention to intention,” encapsulates within a small area the totality of a cultural cosmovision and the narrative of its production (11).

As a result, the *tejido* remains the ultimate expression of community because its elements connect all bodies to meaning both cosmic and human. To illustrate this phenomenon, the poetic discourse states, "El hilo está muerto cuando está suelto, pero está animado en el / telar: / la tensión le da un corazón" (64-6). These words expand upon the reciprocal relationship between the *tejido* and the human being. Without hands to animate it, the thread has no life. Contrastingly, the textile relies on the shaman to interpret the cosmic knowledge that it represents: "El adivino se acuesta sobre un tejido de wik'uña para soñar" (71). In this light, both the textile and the human complement each other; without one, the other is limited and vice versa. To reiterate this point, the poem states, "La palabra y el hilo son el corazón de la comunidad" (70). Together, the word and the thread exist as tools that aid in our knowledge of the heart, or "el corazón," of our community.

WEAVING WITH WORDS ON THE POETIC FRONTIER IN *PALABRARMAS* AND *I TU*

According to scholar Leon S. Roudiez, "the text cannot be thought of as a finished, permanent piece of cloth; it is in a perpetual state of flux as different readers intervene, as their knowledge deepens, and as history moves on" (5). When viewed from this perspective, the border between the text and the textile reveals its shifting nature. While some pieces of writing do not exhibit an awareness of their "perpetual state of flux," Cecilia Vicuña's poetry illustrates this flexibility through the continual weaving and the unraveling of words. Depending on how the reader constructs or deconstructs her poetry, he or she formulates a new meaning each time contact with the text is made.

Instead of creating an unalterable reality, Vicuña's poetry acts like an open network that carries within its woven discourse a wealth of significance and endless possibilities for interpretation.

As a poet who observes the aesthetics of weaving in her poetry, Cecilia Vicuña perceives the text like an interminable textile with re-workable threads that continually mutate in their actions of torsion and communication. For Vicuña, this zone where discourses come into contact and shift lies beyond the superficial limits of language. In this sense, words exist as a border that must be surpassed in order to reveal the origins of language where the meanings and forms meet. Relating to this concept, Roland Barthes states, "The writer literally takes nothing from it; a language is for him rather a frontier, to overstep which alone might lead to the linguistically supernatural; it is a field of action, the definition of, and hope for, a possibility" ("Writing" 9). As Barthes shows, in order to encounter the "linguistically supernatural," or that which remains beyond language as we know it, writers must "overstep" the boundary that words present.

With relation to *PALABRARmas* and *I tu*, Cecilia Vicuña attempts to surpass the frontier of language by first acknowledging the materiality of the word. Once conceived as a concrete substance with borders, the "edges" of words can be deconstructed and reassembled in order to illustrate their enigmatic woven origins. For example, in *I tu*, the poetic discourse states that the sign, or the word, exists as insinuation. I quote:

el sign

  o

no es

si no

insi

nua

t

ción

By treating the written word as a material and by manipulating it in space, Vicuña captures the fluctuating nature of the linguistic frontier: the sign is not but insinuation. What it suggests lies beyond its conventional borders, and in order to capture this significance, the poet must disassemble and rearrange the text, crossing it with other languages and its own word parts. As a result of this practice, Vicuña illustrates the dynamism inherent to our language, and she shows that the meeting point between the sign and the signifier exists as an open and flexible textile in an enduring state of undoing and doing. Of all of her poetic works, *PALABRARmas* (1984) and *I tu* (2004) best illustrate this phenomenon, a preoccupation for language whose theoretical roots reach back to the avant-garde.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, poets and artists become more concerned with producing poetry and art that captures the energetic forces that drive language and creativity. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this shift away from a fixation on form toward an obsession with force exists as the postromantic turning point (343). I quote:

> The essential relation is no longer matters-forms (or substances-attributes); neither is it the continuous development of form and the continuous

> variation of matter. It is now a direct relation *material-forces*. A material is a molecularized matter, which must accordingly "harness" forces; these forces are necessarily forces of the Cosmos. There is no longer a matter that finds its corresponding principle of intelligibility in form. It is now a question of elaborating a material charged with harnessing forces of a different order: the visual material must capture nonvisible forces. *Render visible*, Klee said; not render or reproduce the visible. . . . Matters of expression are superseded by a material of capture. The forces to be captured are no longer those of the earth, which still constitute a great expressive Form, but the forces of an immaterial, nonformal, and energetic Cosmos. (342-3)

As Deleuze and Guattari highlight, between the romantic period and modernity, a transformation occurs in which the artist and the poet lose concern regarding the sole formation of material and preoccupy themselves with capturing and rendering visible the *forces* harnessed by matter.

A prime example of this turning point in poetry occurs with Mallarmé's initial experimentation with the graphic verse in his poem *Un Coup de dés* (1897). Scholar Mary Lewis Shaw describes how the visual variation in Mallarmé's poetry seizes the drives of the idea. I quote:

> He maintains that the typography functions to guide us in our reconstitution of the visual, or figurative, aspect of the Idea, which the poem verbally signifies. What the poem makes happen in the mind is

> presented as having its corollary in space. The poem's pattern becomes a concrete, plastic model of the signifying process, or the *process* of thinking itself, by exteriorizing not what simply *is* but, rather, what is *happening* in the reader's mind. (177)

As stated by Shaw, the experimentation with typography in Mallarmé's poetry externalizes, or makes concrete, the process of thinking thus capturing the invisible forces of the mind. In this sense, a poem such as *Un Coup de dés* stands capable of communicating this energy before it convincingly expresses a coherent meaning pieced together by the signifying words on the page. Since the text has no prescribed manner of being read, the varying spatial approach of the reader creates a multitude of meanings depending on how he or she chooses to associate the terms. In this sense, the text exists as an open network that renders visible the invisible processes of creation and cognition.

Thus, the arrangement of the poetic word on the page opens the text and allows it to express the dynamisms that lie beyond language. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Julia Kristeva defines these forces as the *chora*, or the pre-verbal semiotic rhythms that consist of drives and articulations (42). When this energy becomes identified with a subject, a *thetic* break occurs and the semiotic *chora* now enter the realm of signification (41). With relation to Kristeva's theory, we can state that all spoken and written language exists in the reality of the signified where subjects are posited in relation to the objects they represent. Nevertheless, unlike prose texts, poetic language remains unique because it still retains some of the pre-verbal drives of the *chora*; as a result, it exists as a second degree thetic (Kristeva 50).

In other words, poetic language "straddles" the *thetic* break between the semiotic and the signified encompassing meaning derived from its verbal significant plane and its "silent" semiotic discourse that underlies the text. Thus, "Magic, shamanism, esoterism, the carnival, and 'incomprehensible' poetry all underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the *process* that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures" (Kristeva 16). In this light, poetry reveals what lies beneath the socially confined limits of language by illustrating the forces that surpass the subject and its form of expression.

Within the framework of the text, syntax registers the *thetic* break between the semiotic drives and the realm of signification (Kristeva 55). Thus, when the prescribed order of words is interrupted, as often occurs in modern poetry and especially the visual poetry of Cecilia Vicuña, the semiotic articulations of the *chora* shift to the foreground of the reader's attention. As a result, the *chora* disrupts and redistributes the signifying order of the subject and the object (Kristeva 55). In this interference, the text transmutes from one sign system, that of the signifying, to another, that of the semiotic, and vice versa. Consequently, this shifting creates the formation of a new meaningful product. The previously existing text and the new meaning derived from its ruptures intertwine, forming a poetic language characterized by the presence of the semiotic and the signifying. The new body of words behaves much like a textile in-progress because its existence depends upon the interlacing of diverse discursive threads that join together within the larger context of the written piece.

Moreover, the tottering back and forth upon the fulcrum of the *thetic* break and the subsequent breaching and re-organization of the text exposes its concrete limitations and the possibility for multivalence. According to Kristeva:

> If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy can also be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence—an adherence to different sign systems. (60)

Therefore, due to the existence of intertextuality, the word never remains fixed wherein one subject signifies one object. Instead, the word positioned in its framework of transpositions embodies at least more than one meaning, or as Roland Barthes states, it becomes "a Pandora's box from which fly out all the potentialities of language" ("Elements" 40).

In *PALABRARmas* and *I tu* by Vicuña, the negotiation between the semiotic and the signifying plays out among verses with broken syntax and rearranged verbal fragments. As a result of the simultaneous actions of destroying and crafting the text, Vicuña illuminates the marginal space of language, or that is, the non-verbal, polyvalent forces that weave the text together and renegotiate its meaning at the point where speech, writing and meaning merge. Due to the unraveling of the word and the sprouting of its multiple denotations, the textual forces that drive the association between the sign and the object free themselves from the stagnant language that exists only to identify a subject

with its referent. According to Roland Barthes, this freedom points to the suicide of literature:

> The word, dissociated from the husk of habitual clichés, and from the technical reflexes of the writer, is then freed from responsibility in relation to all possible context; it appears in one brief act, which, being devoid of reflections declares its solitude, and therefore its innocence. This art has the very structure of suicide in it, silence is a homogeneous poetic time which traps the word between two layers and sets it off less as a fragment of a cryptogram than as a light, a void, a murder, a freedom.
>
> ("Writing" 75-76)

Upon opening its multivalent forces, the word gains the autonomy of its expression found in the "silent" associations unlocked by the intertextual meeting place of sign and signifier. For Barthes, this freedom equates the "suicide of literature." Here, the term "suicide" points not to the death of meaning but to the limitations placed upon the sovereignty of the writer. Having reached the frontier of language, or as Barthes states, "the homogenous poetic time that traps the word between two layers," the interwoven potentialities of the word illuminate. As a result, the poet's role remains limited, and the many associations of the word *activate* themselves in their crossed contact.

With relation to the poetic work of Cecilia Vicuña, we first observe her intent to capture the forces of the word through her treatment of it as a material substance in her 1984 publication *PALABRARmas*. Speaking of her work in general, she describes her approach to poetry as: ". . .es como si esos poemas o esos textos o esas líneas o esas

frases, esas asociaciones de palabras, fueran algo tan concreto como una mesa" (Vicuña, cited in Bianchi 176). From this quote, it remains evident that Vicuña conceptualizes the written word as tangible matter. She "works" the word on the edge of its poetic frontier in an attempt to sieze the meaningful drives that lie beyond its material boundaries. The neologism *PALABRARmas* brings attention to this objective through the inclusion of the word *labrar* in the title. Utilizing figurative tools, such as the shovel or *pala*, also included in the title, Vicuña ruptures written discourses in order to encounter the "silent" and the meaningful associations woven inside of them.

In the first poem of *PALABRARmas*, the poetic discourse theorizes the tangible nature of the word by comparing it to a seed that opens up. I quote:

> Primero vi una palabra en el aire
> sólida y suspendida
> mostrándome
> su cuerpo de semilla
>
> Se abría y deshacía
> y de sus partes brotaban
> asociaciones dormidas (9)

Here, it remains clear that the poetic I—the one who "saw a word"—regards the word as a visual body of matter with boundaries like a seed. Since the *palabra-semilla* is a solid object that shows its figure to the observer, it outlines its material limits in space. Subsequently, when the word-seed opens up and undoes itself, as shown in the verse, "Se abría y deshacía," the poetic I illustrates a breach of form. The word, now splintered,

releases outward "asociaciones dormidas," or that is, a plethora of meanings not readily recognizable to the reader accustomed to observing the word in its unbroken state.

Once conceived as a malleable substance, the word carries the potential to reveal the non-visible forces of creation that underlie it. Describing this process, the poetic discourse discloses, and I quote:

> Cada palabra
>
> aguarda al viajero
>
> que en ella espera hallar
>
> senderos y soles
>
> del pensar (11)

The verses, "Cada palabra / aguarda al viajero / que en ella se espera hallar," affirm the existence of a substratum of knowledge in each word. In this sense, each linguistic term contains within it "senderos y soles / del pensar," or that is, the pathways and the luminosity of its ingenuity. Thus, in the same way that visual poetry illustrates the act of thinking rather than placing emphasis on a single intended message, *PALABRARmas* strives to illustrate the energy that drives the word.

To demonstrate this process, Vicuña modifies the graphic orientation of the verses and the words by splitting them apart. She gives name to this practice with the neologisms *palabrar* and *palabrir*:

> Palabrar más o palabrir
>
> es armar y desarmar
>
> palabras

para ver qué tienen

que decir. (34)

Here, the poem provides definitions for the terms *palabrar* and *palabrir*. *Palabrar más* exists as a pun on the title and suggests the further (*más*) working (*labrar*) of the word (*palabra*). The roots of the word *palabrir*, *pala* and *abrir*, highlight the action of *opening* words (*abrir* and *palabra*) with a shovel (*pala*). These expressions respectively contain the signifying units of *pala, palabra, abra, labrar, abrir*. By combining all of these terms into two new names, Vicuña illustrates that the poetic act of *working* words (*palabra, labrar*) involves the task of taking them apart (*abrir, desarmar*) and putting them back together (*armar* also from *PALABRARmas*).

In addition to emphasizing the construction and the deconstruction of language, Vicuña's play on the neologisms *palabrar* and *palabrir* suggest that the female body acts as the chief agent in the labor of word working. As stated previously by the poetic discourse, the figure that opens and gives life to the dormant meanings that lie within the word is a seed. In Spanish the word *semilla* alludes to a feminine subject. Like embryos incubating in the womb, the sleeping word associations await the moment when the body of the mother opens and delivers them into another reality.

The conceptualization of this birth arises from the terms *labor* and *parir* which are audibly suggested by *palabrar* (*labor*) and *palabrir* (*parir*). In English, *labor* is a verb which means to work or to engage in the act of giving birth. In Spanish, *labor* refers to work, sewing, sowing and plowing. When we examine the denotations of these words more closely, we discover a fortuitous connection. The term *labor*, in either tongue,

implies working the earth, the body and the textile, and the term *parir* implies the concepts of *el parto* (birth) and *partir* (to crack open a fruit, to divide, to leave). With this subtle play on words, Vicuña intertwines the forces of the earth, the female subject, the textile and the production of new realities through the splitting of the body all within one metaphor. In this way she *maximizes* the amount of meaning that the seed produces, alluding to the fertility of the processes of the *palabrar* and the *palabrir*.

When Vicuña opens the words and reconstructs them, she alters the syntax of the verses and their prescribed form. Consequently, she modifies the *thetic* break between the realms of the semiotic and the signified. Thus, the semiotic drives of the *chora* return to the text, and the multiple discourses that crop up as a result of this process intertwine and form an intertextual body of language. In this light, the words become autonomous because, as expressed by the verse "tienen [algo] que decir," they have something to say to the reader and the writer.

In the portion of the book that bears the name of the title, Vicuña unlocks her seed-words and renders the semiotic visible in poems that she calls *adivinanzas* and *palabrarmas*. Below I quote four small poems from the *palabrarmas* section. In the original text, each appears by itself, centered on the page surrounded by white space.[58]

verdad
dadver (36)

con**razón** (37)

---

58 The difference in typography size and color is represented here as it is in the original text.

común
unica
ac**ción** (46)

imagin en **a** c **ción** (47)

In these verses, Vicuña deconstructs words and reconstructs them according to the meanings they suggest. By breaking them apart, she challenges the *thetic* break and generates a space so that the "silent" metaphors that underlie the text come forth. For example, when submitted to the process of the *palabrar*, the internal metaphor of *verdad* tells us that it means "to give sight," as indicated by the terms in small print *dad* and *ver*. Likewise, Vicuña renders visible the drives behind the word *corazón* by illustrating that it means *con razón*, with reason. In the second to last poem cited, the author re-arranges the fragments of the word *comunicación* thus amplifying its meaning to that of a "common unique action" or as the verses show, "común / unica / accíon." Similar to the previous text, the word *imaginación* also divides itself into three parts. When the fragments are woven together with the preposition *en* and the letter *c*, the internal metaphor hidden in the word illustrates that *imaginación* contains two components: an image, implied by the verbal piece "imagin," and an action, suggested by the noun "acción." As a result of the *palabrar*, or that is, the working of the word, Vicuña illustrates the multivalent forces that underlie linguistic signs. This brings about a new way to perceive the text where each word acts like a flexible guide that points to its multiple values.

Another way in which Cecilia Vicuña renders visible the varied meanings that weave together to form our words is through the citation of etymology from Joan Corominas' *Diccionario Etimológico*. According to Kenneth Sherwood, "Throughout Vicuña's work and thinking, the etymology becomes the occasion for poetry, crossing languages" (79). Throughout *PALABRARmas*, the poet provides historical definitions for the words *palabra, metáfora* and *poesía* because the disclosure of their linguistic origins supports the internal metaphors that the word-seeds suggest. For example, as cited in the text, the word *palabra* stems from the Latin term *parabola* signifying "símil, comparasión" and the Greek term *parabolé* from *paraballo* meaning "pongo al lado" (63). This knowledge supports the process of the *palabrar* because it shows that the word *palabra* inherently contains a dialogue between two parts. In this light, Vicuña reveals to us that the *word* is not an unwavering symbol that encodes one bit of information; on the other hand, it exists as the sum of various compared meanings.

Additionally, Vicuña provides the etymologies for the words *metáfora* and *poesía*. The former, derives from the Greek term *metapherein*, meaning "llevar o transferir" which comes from the roots *meta*—signifying "más allá" and *pherein*—meaning "llevar" (67). As suggested by its definition, this type of figurative speech "carries or transfers" us to a type of knowledge that lies beyond our immediate realm of comprehension. Thus, the metaphor exists as the conduit that renders visible the unseen through suggestion. Vicuña also includes the etymology for the word *poesía* which derives from the Greek term *poiesis* meaning "creación" from *poiein* signifying "hacer" (73). Similar to the other word genealogies offered, *poesía* stems from more than one concept, the acts of

creation and doing. Thus, by exploring the meaningful origins of this term, the poet illustrates that poetry is an action, the force of invention.

Through the etymologies of *palabra, metáfora* and *poesía*, Vicuña implies that the significance assigned to words results from the crossing of various suggested meanings. Within the framework of the larger text, these word genealogies demonstrate that poetry exists as the labor of working words in order to see their internal comparisons. As a result of this effort, the metaphor that gives tension to the words' internal semantic threads suggests that which lies beyond the limitations of written language. Thus, the inclusion of the etymologies in the text provides another voice that supports the poetic practice of the *palabrar* because the Latin and the Greek roots render visible the "invisible" metaphoric forces that generate our language.

In this sense, Vicuña's poetry strives to break past the material word in order to arrive at a conceptual level. Through visual means or through the exploration of their linguistic origins, the poetic discourse fragments and rearranges words to illustrate the abstract concepts created by the metaphoric relationships of their semantic parts. This is the meeting place between meaning and form, the frontier where the energetic crossing of signifying threads generates our language. The poetic discourse describes this phenomenon in the following verses:

> La tensión interna de la comparación
> permite el crecimiento y la asociación.
>
> La palabra es silencio y sonido articulado
> Luz y sombra organizada

Cruza y combina formas de energía
Permite ver el sonido y oir [sic] la imagen

Aire o aliento modulado
Construye y destruye a la vez (66)

As the first two verses state, the internal tension of comparison within the word foments growth and association of meaning. To support this statement, the poetic discourse affirms that the word contains within it forces of opposition such as "silencio y sonido articulado" and "Luz y sombra organizada." Within the zone where inverses merge, *la palabra* "Cruza y combina formas de energía / Permite ver el sonido y oir [sic] la imagen." Here, by stating that silence becomes visible and that sound articulates the image, the poem illustrates that lexical units intertwine abstract concepts. Thus, at the word's most intimate level, varying threads of opposite meanings interlace in order to form metaphorical associations. The last two verses, "Aire o aliento modulado / Construye y destruye a la vez," show that words, made of air or formed breath, construct and deconstruct abstract ideas simultaneously, thus generating a never-ending textile-like text whose tangible internal structures and intangible symbolic meanings derive from the creation and the unraveling of woven relationships.

The key to approaching this boundary line between what we know of language and that which may only be suggested to us by the internal tension inherent to words lies in the metaphor. I quote:

La metáfora lleva más allá
hacia formas más complejas
y específicas de comparar;

al más allá o meta del conocer, (69)

Here, the verses, "La metáfora lleva más allá / hacia formas más complejas / y específicas de comparar," illustrate that the metaphor traverses the linguistic barrier in order to reach the more complex forms that our language suggests. As the last two verses in the citation state, this remains the goal of our knowledge or the "meta del conocer."

Further describing the relationship between the metaphor and that which lies beyond the frontier of language, the poetic discourse posits the specific point of encounter between the signifier and the signified. I quote:

Esencia que exige la parabola
que la persigue
y no puede ser nombrada
más que por analogía y sugestión

La metáfora lleva más allá por amor.

Busca y desea
el encuentro
del nombre y lo nombrado

Sólo en la unión
el nombre y lo nombrado
logran la reproducción

. . .

La palabra condensa la creación
en su metáfora interior. (69-70)

In the first stanza, the poetic discourse states that the essence that the *parábola* demands cannot be named except for through analogy and suggestion.[59] Thus, as expressed in the verses, "Busca y desea / el encuentro / del nombre y el nombrado," the work of the metaphor remains to search out the meeting point between signifier and signified. Following the impetus of suggestion, the labor of the metaphor is compared to the act of Eros. Initially stating, "La metáfora lleva más allá por amor," the poetic discourse characterizes the process of union between the name and the named: "Sólo en la unión / el nombre y lo nombrado / logran la reproducción." By comparing the internal comparison that drives the meaningful force of the word to the act of physical reproduction, the poetic subject deduces that, "La palabra condensa la creación / en su metáfora interior." In this light, the interweaving of the metaphoric components in the interior of the word produces new meanings. Therefore, the *palabrar* not only illustrates the multiple and the intertwined significances of the word; it also renders visible the poetic act of creation, or that is, the germination of the word where the named and the name merge.

Much like *PALABRARmas*, Vicuña's 2004 publication *I tu* also illustrates the characteristics of an open-ended, polyvalent and intertextual text in which the author renders visible the forces of language through the fragmentation and the threading

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[59] Previoulsy in the text, Vicuña cites the etymological definition for the word *palabra*. It originates from two sources: the Latin term *parabola* signifying simile or comparison and the Greek word *parabolé* from *paraballo* meaning to put beside (63). Here, the author uses *parábola* as a synonym for *palabra* in order to invoke the wider scope of meaning that the etymology of the word implies: a comparison, a physical proximity between two things.

together of word parts. Within the scope of Vicuña's work, *I tu* most radically experiments with the concrete qualities of the word by turning its pieces into strings that cross each other in space. As a result of this break-down of lexicon and the subsequent intertwining of verbal bits, the communal pre-verbal and multi-lingual space that generates languages is made evident. In this sense, *I tu* exists as a linguistic experiment that delves into the origins of all human tongues.

The first section of the book titled, "gramma kellcani" introduces Vicuña's threaded verbal creations.[60] Below, I provide a scanned image of the first poem "alba / habla":

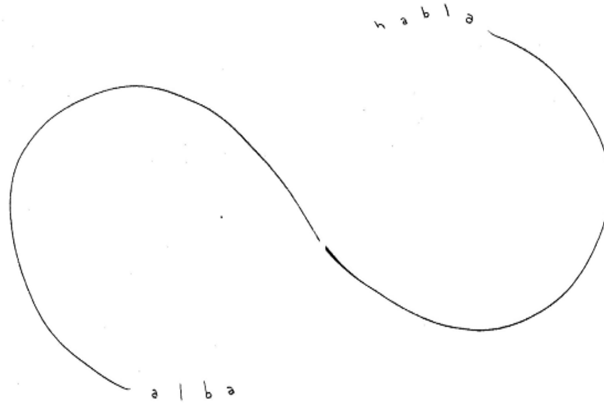

Illustration 3.1 "alba / habla" 27.5 x 20 cm

60 In the dictionary that accompanies *I tu* titled "dixio na rió," Vicuña provides the etymology for *gramma* and *kellcani*. The first derives from the Greek word *gramma* meaning to scratch, to write and to paint. The latter, from the Quechua tongue, means to paint or to write.

The visual layout of the words in this poem immediately highlights the author's material conceptualization of the text. Like Andean *tejidos*, the lines on the page respect the lines of symmetry based on vertical and horizontal axes. Furthermore, the inclusion of the palindromes *alba* and *habla* reflects a state of balance through their paronomastic graphic forms and sounds.[61] Linked by a skinny cord, these terms seem full of motion almost as if they were being lassoed around the page. The sweeping movement of the thread and the nouns suggests the shape of an infinity sign, ∞, the perfect symbol for two auditory palindromes that would be pronounced the same whether written forward or backward. Nevertheless, it remains notable that the unconnected shape of the string leaves the text open for interpretation, drawing the reader's attention also to the negative space that rushes around the cavities formed by the quasi interrogative marks on the page. In this sense, the verbal and the graphic paronomasia points as much to what it does not say than to what its words spell out, emphasizing the interstitial void between the verbal representations. Reminiscent of swirling particles in space, "alba / habla" reminds us of the dawning of our speech, the enigmatic big-bang of language, when linguistic expression emerges.

As shown from the previous example, Vicuña attempts to capture the immaterial forces of language through the visual experimentation of the word. Similar to the *palabrarmas*, these threaded poems also fragment, thus altering their syntax and the *thetic* break between the pre-verbal semiotic *chora* and the linguistic realm of the

[61] For more information regarding the role of the palindrome in the Andean cultural vision, please see Lucy Lippard's article titled "Spinning the Common Thread" (1997).

signified. In the following example, the poet divides the words *palabra* and *estrella* and weaves their syllables together thus modifying the order of the compound noun and the organization of the page's space.

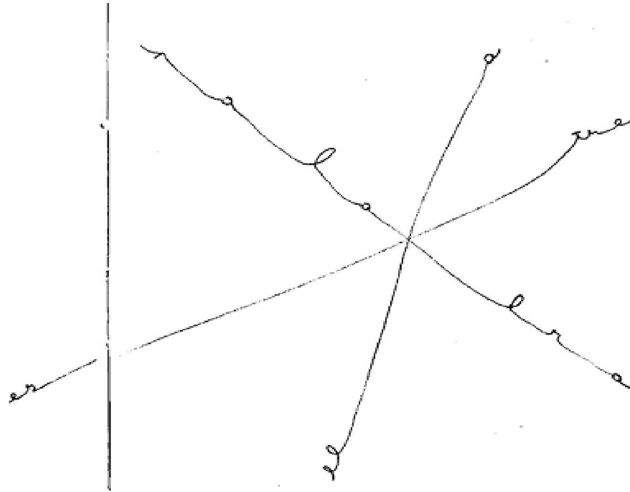

Illustration 3.2 "palabra / estrella" 18 x 13.5 cm

Much like a *tejido* whose visual components *are* the process of its construction, "palabra / estrella" visualizes the cognition and the materials that create it. The text illustrates the action of discursive weaving through the deconstruction of words and the intertwining of verbal bits. By dismantling the terms *palabra* and *estrella* into the parts *pala, bra, es, tre, ll* and *a*, Vicuña disrupts and redistributes the signifying order of the subject and the object. Now free to associate with other pieces of lexicon, the fragments take on new meaning depending on how they correlate to other word parts within their physical proximity.

Although not all of the letters, syllables and sounds are signs with immediately recognizable meanings, some of the verbal divisions remain significant at the semantic

level despite their fracturing from a larger word. For example, *pala* brings forth a meaning of action, excavation and discovery. Similarly, the piece *es* can also be read as a conjugation for the verb *ser*, thus imparting a sense of existence to the newly formed word-star. In addition, given the multilingual nature of *I tu* which regularly incorporates English, Spanish and Portuguese, *a* could represent the Portuguese word for *the* or the English term *a*. Just as a star in the cosmos exists as a body composed of tiny particles, the interweaving of phonemes and graphemes constructs Vicuña's "palabra / estrella" and allows it to take on a meaning that results from the sum of its parts. In this light, the star shines like an enigma, one that stands capable of uncovering (from *pala*) its existence (from *es*).

In addition to the semantic and the material weaving present in the poem, Vicuña emphasizes the interlacing of the zones that surround the text. For example, although the vertical line traversing the left side of the poem looks like another drawn thread, it is the crease between pages. Because the poem breaches this border with the stringed fragment *es*, the text emphasizes the notion of crossing frontiers, both linguistic and spatial; thus, "palabra / estrella" becomes what its verbal fragments describe, a celestial body composed of minor elements floating in space.

Accompanying the drawn poem on the bottom left corner of the double-page spread, another word-star appears. When the fragments of the cosmic text are re-constructed, they spell out the words *tiempo madre*. I provide a scanned copy of the poem below:

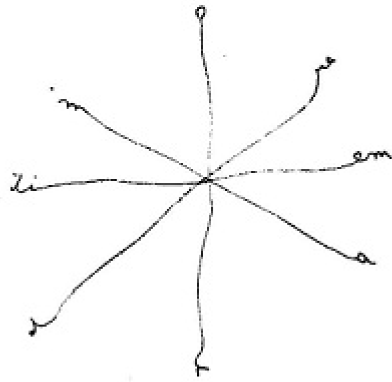

Illustration 3.3 “tiempo / madre” 10 x 7 cm

Like an Andean *tejido*, “tiempo / madre” illustrates characteristics of weaving through the symmetrical threading of its verbal fibers. Each identical half communicates with a center axis, and the equal hemispheres of the string-poem draw the eye from the outlying areas of the star to its center, and vice versa, thus implying a sense of union among mirroring parts.

Resulting from this union, “tiempo / madre” renders visible the unseen forces of semiosis that drive the need for articulation. By separating the words *tiempo* and *madre*, Vicuña alters the *thetic* break in the signifying process and illustrates the pre-verbal existence of the word. Or that is, before the ordering syntax of our linguistic system congealed the forms of our lexicon, the term existed as pieces of cosmic dust that eventually gravitated toward each other in the form of a pattern. By experimenting with

the breaking apart of words and by stringing their elements together, the author returns to the zone that witnessed the birth of language.[62]

In the second section of *I tu* titled “poema cog nado,” weaving again takes center stage as the rupture and the intertwining of discursive parts unfold. I quote:

> alba saliva
> el instan
>
> time bending
> tongue
>
> madre
> del habla
>
> imán
> del gen
>
> entwine
> the betwixt
>
> double
> thread
>
> palabra
> estrella
>
> mother

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[62] Vicuña’s insistence on fragmenting language in order to arrive at the meeting place between meaning and form correlates to the “language poetry” of other Chilean artists in the *Nueva escena* group during the 1980’s. For more information, see Eugenia Brito’s publication *Campos minados: Literatura post-golpe en Chile* (1990).

of time

Here, the poetic discourse invokes the spark, or *instan*(te), of creation that conceives our language in the amniotic saliva of the mouth, "alba saliva / el instan."[63] Following the opening metaphor, the verses "entwine / the betwixt" and "double / thread" allude to the textile-like germination of the word. In this way, Vicuña conceptualizes the beginnings of language like the fusion of two threads. Similar to the double strands that compose human DNA, each stanza contains two discursive strings that ply together. As a result of the metaphor that homologizes verbal production to the twisting together of strings, Vicuña illustrates that the deconstruction and the reconstruction of our words opens our awareness to the generative zone where language is created. Described by the verses, "imán / del gen," "madre / del habla" and "mother of time," this pre-verbal space gives rise to all linguistic foundations. Like a magnet, or an *imán*, that pulls fragments together, the mother of speech weaves verbal fibers in time and space, thus inventing language.

Through the semantic properties of words and also through the visual layout of the text, the "poema cog nado" strives to make visual the threaded frontier where the signifier and the signified incubate. The layout of the word fragments on the page emphasizes the interface between the particles and the pre-verbal zone because each tiny verse lines up in the form of a column situated near the outer margin of the page. In this

63 As Vicuña signals in the "dixio na rió" of the text, the word *instan* comes from the infinitive *instar*, meaning to urge, to be or to demand. In addition, the author highlights that the word *instar* in English means "form or figure," "to stud with stars," "to be evenly balanced, to stand upon."

sense, even the design of the poem implies the concept of a border that lies in a peripheral space. Overall, the graphic arrangement of the text reinforces the notion of encountering a spatial frontier, an action that leads to what lies beyond the limits of language's physical form and sematic content.

This concept of breaching the border between words in order to discover the communal mother of language is also suggested by the title. The poem is a cognate; or that is, its words are related by descent from a common ancestral language. By splitting the term *cognado* into *cog* and *nado*, Vicuña ruptures the word's nucleus in order to find its "mitochondrial linguistic DNA." For example, the particle *cog* deriving from the Latin word *cognoscere*, meaning to come to know, implies a sharing of information. Since *cog* also exists as a word in English, akin to the Swedish word *kugge*, Vicuña illustrates the concept that each word remains composed of smaller, integral parts that merge in order to create a functioning symbolic body. In addition, the fragment *nado* invokes the notion of floating or swimming in space, from the Spanish infinitive *nadar* meaning to swim. Thus, the "poema cog nado" acts as the cosmic space in which verbal elements float around and eventually unite thus sparking the creation of language.

Like atoms in a state of fissure that expose the contents of their nuclei, words split and reveal the poetic frontier where signifier and signified negotiate their relationships. The poetic discourse ponders if this space equivocates the "¿milk / del trans / late?" or the life giving substance that leads to the translation between meaning and symbols. By dividing the word *translate* into two parts, *trans* (Latin, meaning to transfer) and *late* (Spanish, meaning to beat, as in the cardiovascular system), Vicuña illustrates that the

origin of our words lies in the interior metaphors that they conceal. For example, at first glance, the term *translate* implies the changing from one language or set of symbols to another. However, the poetic fragmentation of the term allows it to express an alternative meaning: the milk of translation, or the life giving sustenance of our languages, transfers to our words a heartbeat, or the force that brings them into existence.

Thus, by unraveling words and then by sharing what their fragments mean, what the word has to say becomes evident. The poetic discourse expresses this concept in the following verses:

com
      partir

ayni
el zumbar

la hebra
cortada

deditos galaxias

el consejo
es el con
        s
              telar [64]

As shown in the previous verses, the search for the origin of our words involves a process of sharing, implied by the word *compartir*. However, by dividing this term into *com* (Latin, meaning with) and *partir* (Spanish, meaning to divide), Vicuña reveals that the

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64 A*yni* is a Quechua word that signifies to reciprocate.

inherent nature of sharing involves union and division. Following *compartir*, the stanza, "ayni / zumbar," suggests that the reverberating sounds of the cognate reciprocate the internal tension of multiple meanings found inside the word. Moreover, the verses, "la hebra / cortada," compare the fissure of words to a cut thread. As a result of these analogies, the word, like a severed piece of cord, exposes the various inner semantic fibers that comprise its meanings thus unmasking the origin of its fabrication. In this sense, the broken threads form little cosmic fingers, or "deditos galaxias," that point to the non-human origins of our language. Thus, words want to tell us of their origins; this is their "consejo."

By drawing the conclusion that the *consejo* is the "con / s / telar," Vicuña illustrates that the ancestry of our language lies deeply intertwined with weaving. Here again the poet divides a word and highlights its fragments in such a way that their polyvalent origins become clear. When spoken, the Spanish word *constelar* means to cover or to fill; however, the visual arrangement of its morphemes and graphemes suggest that it signifies the concepts of union (from the Latin root *com*), star (from the Latin root *stel(l)a*) and loom (from the Spanish word *telar* deriving from the Latin *tela*, meaning web, loom or warp). When attention is given to each significant word part, the negotiation between the signifiers and the signifieds provides a new multi-faceted meaning for the term *constelar*. By merging *com*, *stella* and *telar*, Vicuña compares the beginnings of our language to the weaving of thousands of celestial bodies on a loom. Thus, when we open our words, like a child who unravels a *tejido* in order to understand

its methods of construction, the text reveals its common threads. The milk of its translation exists in the weaving together of tiny particles that form significance.

Supporting this idea, in the following section of the book titled "fábulas del comienzo y restos del origen," the poetic discourse states: "La lengua es la memoria de la especie, el có-digo po-éti- / co de una relación." With these verses, the poetic discourse affirms that each language contains within itself the poetic history of the species. By splitting apart the words *código* and *poético*, Vicuña illustrates that language exists as a communal and a spoken code that connects humankind to its story. Here the visually separated fragments *co, digo, po, éti* and *co* illustrate this notion. For example, *co*, from the Latin meaning "together," and *digo*, from the Spanish infinitive *decir* meaning "to tell," demonstrate the unifying and the communicative powers of the word: it is a code that connects beings by telling our common linguistic ancestry. Moreover, the emphasis placed on *po*, *éti* and *co*, clarifies that the act of *poiesis*, or working the word, generates a set of unifying ethics: guiding principles that create community through our shared use of language.

As shown through the analysis of works such as *La Wik'uña, Palabra e hilo, PALABRARmas* and *I tu*, the technology and the aesthetics of weaving play a major role in the poetry of Cecilia Vicuña. Through direct indications and through subtle visual references, the poet illustrates that our language follows the same *modus operandi* of the textile. Like a thread, words exist from the compilation of material parts both audible and graphic. When these elements interweave, or combine in a prescribed way, they form a larger framework for meaning. Beyond this analogy, understanding language

through a textile lens also allows the poet to experiment with the written word in order to supersede its material boundaries and render visible the internal metaphors that illustrate the interlacing of multiple meanings. In this light, Vicuña demonstrates that language exists as the fusion of many discursive threads that suggest significance: words do not exist in an unbending relationship with what they represent. Instead, our lexicon results from the interweaving of various and sometimes opposing meanings. Thus, the text acts as an open, a never ending textile continually constructed and undone by the shifting point at which the internal fibers of words merge.

Chapter 4: *Khipu* Aesthetics in the Artwork of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña

In the visual art of poets Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña, the *khipu* resurges in the twentieth-century aesthetic imagination as a relevant media whose abstraction and visual-tactile forms suggest an alternative means of cognition. Through their tactile, temporal and visual arrangement, the pieces that allude to the Andean knotted devices dialogue with the ephemerality, the loss and the creation of Andean ritual and memory. By manipulating surfaces, volumes and light, the artists capture the forces of kinetic and cultural energy embodied in the *khipu*; and consequently, they interweave these drives with with differing concepts and contexts in order to create a new meaningful product.

To evaluate Eielson's and Vicuña's three dimensional art, I base my analysis on cultural theories regarding the Andean cosmovision and information regarding the media of the *khipu*. Given that Eielson and Vicuña create many of their pieces outside of the Andean region in Europe or the United States, it remains necessary to examine the international climate of art and critical theory that circulated between Europe, the United States and the Americas during the twentieth century. Therefore, with the objective of providing an analysis of their work that includes both Andean and international currents of theory, such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the rhizome and smooth and striated spaces, I will also illustrate how the artists' work dialogues with other aesthetic trends at large such as minimalism, street art, installation art and body art. Ultimately, I demonstrate how Eielson's and Vicuña's abstract works manipulate and

fuse the visual and the tactile in order to metaphorically generate discourses regarding the body, cultural memory and ritual thus engaging the viewer's subjectivities in a manner that lies outside of mainstream, textual medias.

THE VISUAL: WHAT WE SEE IN THE ARTWORK OF EIELSON AND VICUÑA

According to scholar Malcom Barnard, cultures represent themselves physically so that they can be perceived through visual and aural signs (102). Since the *khipus* of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña are meant to be seen and not heard, the present topic of analysis focuses on what the viewer observes in the works and the various meanings that arise from the interfaces between their design and their inter-cultural contexts.[65] As Barnard states, "There can be no non-cultural, or natural, form of the visual in visual culture. In so far as it is meaningful in some way, it will have been made meaningful according to cultural codes and therefore be culturally meaningful" (11). In other words, the elements of Eielson's and Vicuña's work that remain perceivable through sight exist as socially significant because there is no non-cultural way of seeing. Every bit of visual information that passes through the lens, the optic nerve and the brain passes through a "cultural screen" that judges its significance. Thus, to fully capture the more diverse and in-depth meanings inherent to any piece of visual art, the viewer must navigate the cultural codes intrinsic to its visible characteristics.

Separate from text, which is also seen, the images of Eielson's and Vicuña's works provide observers with alternative interpretations of meaning that do not pass

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65 Although many of Cecilia Vicuña's performances do include aural components, for this study, I refer only to the artist's work that does not involve sound media.

through the filter of words. In support of this notion, Andean scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui discusses the key role of the image in Andean media. She states, "Las imágenes nos ofrecen interpretaciones y narrativas sociales, que desde siglos precoloniales ilumina este trasfondo social y nos ofrecen perspectivas de comprensión crítica de la realidad" (Rivera Cusicanqui 20). Here, Rivera Cusicanqui highlights the importance of the image in a society where the "official" Hispanic, textual discourse omits the social narratives of those excluded from the dominant culture. As suggested in the previous quote, Rivera Cusicanqui values the image because it offers critical perspectives regarding the comprehension of an Andean reality. With relation to the visual works of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña, the image provides an alternative means of perception that circumvents the necessity of words to convey or explain the artistic reality. In this sense, their aesthetic production surpasses the limits of language and provides for a type of cultural expression that springs forth from an alternative awareness achieved through the suggestion and the comparison of the seen.

As artist and critic César Paternosto highlights, the practice of abstraction in art remains central to Andean culture, and it exists as a way "of advancing non-verbal metaphorical thought constructed on a true culture of the Americas, one that encompasses its own, often forgotten roots" (111). With these words, Paternosto signals that Andean abstraction promotes non-verbal, critical thinking. Through the geometric design of images, craftsmen and women promote and develop a type of cognition based on the metaphoric relationship between observable forms, colors, contours and textures. As a result, they perceive knowledge based on a system of sight and touch, and the continual

presence of abstraction in their art provides them with a means of regenerating their cultural intellect. To fully capture the meaning inherent in the non-verbal works of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña, the brain must also engage in this visual way of critical thinking. By looking at their works from this metaphorical paradigm, we observe how the association of components within their pieces engages the mind of the viewer in the symbolic play inherent to Andean textiles.

EIELSON'S ART IN CONTEXT

Generally after World War II, aesthetic currents turn in the direction of new tendencies defined as minimalism, abstract expressionism (Pollack, USA), op art, pop art (Warhol, USA) and photo realism. While this short list by no means pretends to be all inclusive, it does highlight some of the major trends in art from the late 1940's to the 1960's, and it provides a basic means for characterizing Eielson's art with regard to other major aesthetic developments. Most closely associated with minimalism, Eielson's works make maximum meaning by presenting to the viewer stripped down forms and materials.

In the Peruvian context, Eielson's visual works dialogue with the genealogy of abstract art established by both the European avant-garde tradition of the 1920's *and* the abstraction found in the textiles, the architecture and the utensils of the native peoples of Peru. Stemming from a lineage of Peruvian artists who conflictingly engage the indigenous and the European facets of the national culture such as José María Arguedas and Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, the young artists of the forties and the fifties such as

Jorge Eduardo Eielson, Fernando de Szyzlo, Javier Sologuren, Sebastián Salazar Bondy and Blanca Varela renovate the image of the modern Peruvian artist by sidestepping the conceptual pathways established by Arguedas, who looked at European culture from an indigenous perspective, and Westphalen, who perceived native cultures through Westernized eyes (Rebaza Soraluz 196). Commenting upon the new generation's multifaceted artwork which recognizes Peru as a culturally diverse nation, scholar Rebaza Sorluz states the following. I quote:

> . . . van [los jóvenes artistas] a proponer un modelo móvil de identidad artística nacional—para algunos de ellos, un *mestizaje* redefinido—que sintetiza los desplazamientos estéticos que reconocen en Arguedas y Westphalen: ser artista en el Perú contemporáneo es una experiencia dinámica de apropiación y reelaboración cultural que pasando no sólo de uno a otro espacio sin también de uno a otro periodo histórico, se desenvuelve en un medio de tradiciones múltiples y simultáneas (llámense éstas andina, hispana, afropuerana, etc.). (196)

Here, Rebaza Soraluz highlights the reconceptualization of the role of the artist in contemporary Peru as part of what he calls "a dynamic experience of appropriation and cultural re-elaboration." In line with changing perspectives regarding art, young Peruvian artists synthesize differing cultures and time periods deriving from Andean, Afroperuvian and Hispanic cultures, past and present, into their works of art. As a result, they create heterogeneous products, or that is, works composed of dissimilar or diverse elements. This concept of heterogeneity, later studied in depth by Antonio Cornejo Polar,

provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the inherent weaving of multiple cultural elements found in the artistic production of members of the *Generación del cincuenta*.[66]

Overall, the conceptualization of a dynamic world vision and culture remains significant in Eielson's visual work. In 1948, the twenty-one year-old, known primarily as a poet and as a playwright after having won the *Premio nacional de poesía del Perú* in 1945 and the *Premio nacional de Teatro* in 1946, demonstrates the fruits of his studio art studies in his first exhibition alongside peer Fernando de Szyslo (Canfield, "Una biografía" 18). In the following decade, after travelling to Paris and Italy, he shows a series titled *serie i-5* in 1959 that illustrates the germination of a later group of pieces known as *paisajes infinitos de la costa del Perú* (1961-62), works that experiment with abstraction and media by combining a diverse number of materials within each composition: cement, fabric, soil and, in some cases, excrement. With the inclusion of many forms of alternative media in this series, Eielson constructs the outline of varying Peruvian landscapes. In this way, he formulates a vision of his homeland's geography through the use of varying materials mastered by the varying cultures that comprise the modern Peruvian nation: hide and earth from the Andes and painted canvas from Europe.

After these initial experimentations with fabric and other materials traditionally excluded from the hegemonic genre of painting, Eielson's work increasingly focuses on the medium of the textile and the figure of the knot. In the mid-1960's, he creates a

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66 For more information, see "El indigenismo y las literaturas heterogéneas: Su doble estatuto socio-cultural" by Antonio Cornejo Polar (1978).

series of *quipus* in which he stretches, twists and binds colorful fabric across flat bases.[67] Throughout the remainder of his career as a visual artist, Eielson includes the theme of the knot in the majority of his works, even up until the years preceding his death in 2006. Of interest to this study are Eielson's *quipus* dating from 1965 through 1973 specifically, *Quipus 15az-1* (1965), *Quipus* 24b2 (1966) and *Alfabeto* (1973). Each forged from knotted and/or stretched cloth, the works present the *khipu* in an abstract setting which allows us to examine the metaphorical relationships between the visual, the tactile and the cultural significance of this accounting device.

In Eielson's series of *quipus* created in 1965, number *15az-1* illustrates the allegorical associations between color, shape and the Andean landscape.

67 For the purposes of this study, I will use the word *khipu*, in the historical sense, to refer to the Andean devices employed for record keeping during the Inka Empire. Since both Eielson and Vicuña utilize the term *quipu* to refer to their visual art, I will employ this term when referring to their works.

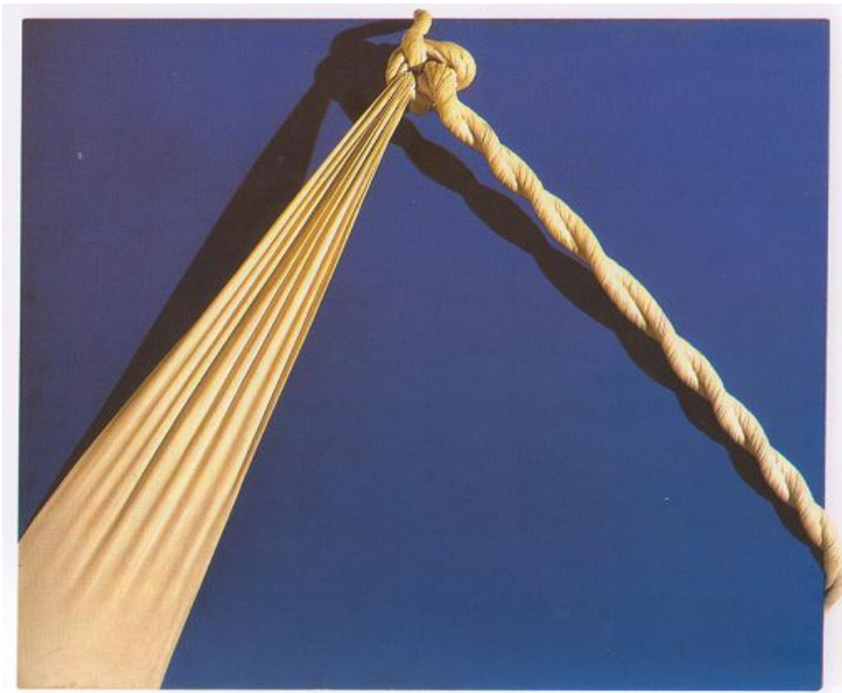

Illustration 4.1 J. E. Eielson. *Quipus 15 az-1*, 1965. Cloth over wood, 90 x 90 cm[68]

Like most Andean art, the *quipu* is abstract and geometric. The viewer sees one blue square divided into two triangles and a polygon with four sides. In addition, the central knot takes on a circular shape, while the wide, white piece of fabric on the left also takes on a geometric form and the twisted rope on the right approximates a long, thick line. Furthermore, an angled v-shape is generated at the knot's center by the joining of the piece of fabric on the left with the long cord on the right. Through the juxtaposition of these materials, it remains possible to perceive that the work imitates the shape of a white snow-capped mountain against the blue sky, both vital elements of the Andean landscape. Moreover, the shadows produced by the "floating" planes of fabric suggest the presence

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68 Image scanned from *Nudo: Homenaje a J. E. Eielson*, edited by José Ignacio Padilla and published in Lima by Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002.

and the absence of light which remind the viewer of the figure of the sun whose rays fall upon the snowy peaks and cast shades. Alternatively, these silhouettes could represent the blocked sunlight caused by a flying bird's wings, suggested by the "flying v" shape created by the white stretches of fabric.

In addition to the work's relationship to the Andean landscape through abstraction, the work also dialogues with the indigenous concept of the *ceque*. For Quechua speakers, this term signifies "line," and it is generally used in reference to the roads and the invisible borders that divide the city of Cusco into four main divisions, or *suyos*, and smaller geographical zones within these main regions. In the Inka Empire, these pathways radiate outward from the city center and connect religious shrines called *haucas*. *Quipus 15za-1* appeals to the notion of *ceque* because the two cords/pieces of fabric that intersect at the knot radiate from its center, thus reminding the viewer of the Andean conceptualization of space.

Relating to this concept, Rosaleen Howard suggests that the locations on the landscape plotted by the *ceque* relate to the structure of the *khipu*. In her study regarding Andean narrative practices and memory she posits that "just as points on the landscape are discursively plotted and interconnected in both narrative and *ceque*-related ritual, so it may be fruitful to consider the khipu as a topographically structured network of meaning-bearing knots and strings" (Howard 47). By highlighting the relationship between narration and the *ceque* pathways, Howard illustrates the association between geography and the *khipu*. To facilitate discursive memory, systems of knots could serve as geographical markers that anchor narrative events to the landscape and the imagination of

the story teller. As discussed previously, Eielson's abstract *quipu* dialogues with the Andean geography through its angled forms and colors; however, on a more profound level the image of the lines radiating out from the central knot could also provoke metaphorical associations between the *ceque* and the *khipu*, relationships that deeply intertwine with the spatial organization of the environment and the memory of Andean culture.

Complementing the landscape abstraction present in *Quipus 15az-1*, the knowledgeable viewer also recognizes other characteristics of the work that dialogue with Andean textile and *khipu* design principles. For example, Eielson chooses cloth to fabricate the work, and this choice of material situates the piece within the ambit of the textile culture of the Andes. Furthermore, like a conventional *khipu* or a *tejido*, Eielson's creation is a three dimensional craft whose image dialogues with the binary design principles of the Andean weaving paradigm. One of the most salient features of this "notion of twos" exists in the artist's selection of only two colors for the piece, blue and white. In addition, *two* strings ply together, alternatively winding over and under and left and right, in order to comprise the cord. A closer look illustrates that these strings twist to the left. This spin directionality, known as Z, also plays a role in the binary conceptualization of Andean weaving because it contradicts the reverse-imaged, right spun S threads.

In summary, although centuries separate Eielson's *quipu* from those of the Inka period, it engages with Andean material culture through its media and its visual correlation to the landscape through the *ceque* and the binary systems. Like other forms

of Andean textile art, the *quipu's* visual elements generate an artistic reality whose meaning abides in the metaphorical associations of its abstract design. From this point of view, Eielson's contemporary piece does not differ greatly from that of the original *khipu*, also an abstract textile product designed around the basic tenets of the Andean cosmovision. Because he utilizes the visual form of this device in his own work, the artist demonstrates that this fiber instrument projects many meanings inherent in Andean culture and challenges the viewer to think in terms of images and associations that surpass the limits of other media such as writing.

VICUÑA AND THE CHILEAN EXILE CONTEXT

Much like Jorge Eduardo Eielson's visual works, the non-verbal art of Cecilia Vicuña exists, to use Catherine de Zegher's words, as an *ouvrage* that remains open to multiple interpretations. I quote:

> . . . [it] challenges such questions of recent art as the status of the object, the relation of the artist and the viewer/reader, bodily action, the space/time relation, the environment, inner and outer, the connection of the visual to the other senses, at once moving viewers away from their habit of compartmentalizing artistic production into separate media. (Zegher 41)

As Zegher signals, Cecilia Vicuña's artwork does not fit into the prescribed parameters of what one would call the standard aesthetic object. Often using discarded materials and natural fibers, Vicuña engages the viewer through the sculpting of materials that illicit

multiple sensorial experiences. Often minimal in size, her pieces produce a maximum dialogue with the tactile, the visual and the notions of space, time and the body.[69]

Born twenty four years after Eielson in 1948, Cecilia Vicuña commences her artistic and literary production in the latter half of the 1960's. As a part of the group of young artists called *Tribu No*, she finds herself at the forefront of the Chilean avant-garde.[70] She, along with Claudio Bertoni, Coca Roccatagliata, Marcelo Charlín, Francisco Riviera and Sonia Jara, engage in many of the newer mixed-media practices *en vogue* during the start of the 1970's. Internationally and in Chile, new aesthetic forms such as video, digital art, installation art, land art and body art replace the canvases of the past. For the most part, Vicuña's works remain close to the body and the land, and photographs taken of erasable earth installations at Concón Beach and pictures of the artist's body entwined with yarn date back to the late 1960's thus illustrating Vicuña's pioneering techniques with new media before many artists in Chile started conceiving of the possibilities for art in non-traditional spaces.[71]

Although in London during the 1973 military coup and unable to return to her homeland, Cecilia Vicuña's work parallels the evolution of the Chilean *avanzada*, a movement in which artists who remain in the country during the dictatorship create

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69 An example of Vicuña's miniature and fragile works are her *precarios*, small objects made from rubbish displayed in various urban and natural settings.

70 For more information regarding *Tribu No*, please see chapter three.

71 Concón is the name of a town that lies at the meeting point between the Anconcagua River and the Pacific Ocean. In Mapudungun, the language of the Mapuche, it means "water-water."

highly abstract and cryptic works in order to avoid the censor's eye. According to scholar Nelly Richard,

> Del formato-cuadro (la tradición pictórica) al soporte-paisaje (la materialidad viva del cuerpo social), la "avanzada" puso en marcha un itinerario de desbordamiento de los límites de espacialización de la obra de arte que llegó a abarcar la ciudad y sus dinámicas espacio-temporales de recorridos urbanos. (17)

As Richard states, art in Chile during the 1970's and 1980's expands out from the pictorial tradition to the landscape and the body as surfaces for artistic expression. In this way, artists associated with the *avanzada* group such as Carlos Leppe and el Grupo CADA, whose members are Diamela Eltit, Raúl Zurita, Lotty Rosenfeld and Fernando Balcells, surpass the physical limits of the traditional work of art in favor of cityscapes and other natural geographies.

Although Vicuña remains physically separated from this group due to political exile, her visual art parallels that of the *avanzada* because it also makes use of mixed materials and the alternative landscapes of the city, the earth and the body. Similar to, but also contrasting with other more permanent urban art of the 1980's such as graffiti, street art and yarn bombing, Vicuña's work spills from her studio in New York City over into the streets and the river as evidenced by photos of sewn cracks in plaster walls, strategically arranged debris in the Hudson River and words chalked onto sidewalks and

highways.[72] Nevertheless, depspite similarities in aesthetic currents between her work and that of artists who remain in Chile during the post-coup years, Vicuña and other Chilean artists living in New York such as Catalina Parra and Alfredo Jaar exist as "exiles" from the *Nueva escena*. As a result, their work often remains excluded from affiliations to artistic currents in Chile during the 1980's.

When we compare her work to that of the *avanzada* group, one of the most salient characteristics of Vicuña's opus is her recurrent use of Andean textile imagery. Varying in size and levels of abstraction, her fiber creations prompt the viewer to enter into a conversation with the visual and the tactile energies of the media. The three dimensional pieces allow the observer to "feel" the *quipu* with his or her own eyes, and alterations in fiber consistency and the spatial organization of the strings pose juxtapositions for the eye and the brain to interpret. Overall, the metaphoric associations that arise from the *quipu* components convey meaning regarding the ephemerality, the loss and the creation of cultural memory. One of the most striking features of Vicuña's *quipus* is that, like the original device used for imperial accounting, her knotted creations remain flexible and open to alternative ways of thinking and interpreting the environment.

Much like Eielson's *quipus*, Cecilia Vicuña's plastic works dialogue with Andean aesthetic design. One of her most striking pieces regarding this knotted medium is titled *Quipu huérfano* (2009). Following the abstraction so fundamental to many Andean material products, Vicuña's work exists as a gigantic version of an Inka-period *khipu*. As

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[72] Yarn bombing is a practice in which, often without permission, knitters cover public structures with colorful yarn. If not removed, these fiber installations last for years.

shown from the image below, the *khipu* artifact displayed in the glass frame to the right of its "orphaned" relative serves as a model for scale that highlights the monumental size of the piece to the left.[73]

Illustration 4.2 Cecilia Vicuña. *Quipu huérfano*, 2009. Unspun wool, width variable x 14 ft[74]

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73 Although the surviving Andean *khipu* vary greatly in size depending on the length of their main cords and the number of their pendant and subsidiary cords, Vicuña's *Quipu huérfano* greatly exaggerates the dimensions of the conventional *khipu* utilized during the Inka and colonial periods.

74 *Quipu huérfano* was displayed in the exhibition titled "Painted Ideas" at the Cecilia de Torres Gallery in New York City in October of 2009. Photo taken by the author.

Here, the hanging *quipu* takes on the geometric form of three gigantic columns or stripes that connect the floor to the ceiling space of the gallery. In spite of its colossal size, Vicuña's piece remains similar to the conventional *khipu* because of its three dimensional volume and its wool composition. Nevertheless, the artist abstracts the object by extending it vertically and by leaving the wool in its unspun form.[75] Since the *khipukamayuq* process the cords on a *khipu* by submitting raw material through a number of steps including the collection of fiber, spinning, dying, plying, attachment and then knotting, the *Quipu huérfano* exists as an abstraction of the traditional Andean media because its contains "under" processed fibers. Therefore, despite its intimidating size, Vicuña's sculptural *quipu* exists as a minimalized abstraction of the knotted media. The "orphaned" device contains no applied vegetable dyes in hues of red, yellow or brown. Displaying little processing, it exhibits only muted, natural colors like those of the fleeces that provide wool for its construction. Furthermore, with exception to the attachment of the pendant cords to the main cord, there are no knots on the contemporary media, and there is no twisting or plying of the cords. In this sense the *Quipu huérfano* exists as a stripped-down version of the tool that the Inka used to administer the goods and the information pertaining to the state.

Even though the image contrasts heavily with the traditional *khipu*, it does dialogue with the Andean principles of balance and symmetry. For example, the long cords do attach in the prescribed way of *recto* and *verso* knots thus signaling the dualism

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[75] With the exception of very small *khipu*, most, when unwrapped and extended horizontally on a flat surface, have dimensions in which the width surpasses the height.

inherent in the device and in Andean culture. Furthermore, the work displays symmetry intrinsic to many indigenous textiles because the middle cord visually divides the piece into two equal halves. In addition, the elongated stretches of wool approximate the vertical stripes and bands present on all Andean *tejidos*.

Through the visual (in)consistencies apparent in the image of the *Quipu huérfano*, the viewer is spurred to generate metaphorical associations regarding the color, the form, the volume and the materiality of the sculpture. In this way, the oversized *Quipu huérfano* advances metaphorical thought by inciting the observer to ask questions regarding its faithfulness to and its variation from the norm. Perhaps an association to the tree can be made due to the length and the color of the strands whose ends touch the floor and bunch together like tangled roots. If so, what kind of thoughts does this association arouse within the viewer? Or how do the insulating qualities of the thick wool relate to the memory of a *khipu* without knots? How is the device "orphaned," and what does this mean? In order to answer these questions and fully examine the metaphorical associations inherent in Vicuña's and Eielson's visual works, we must also address their tactile nature.

THE TACTILE AND THE DOUBLE NATURE OF SEEING AND FEELING

While addressing the visual qualities of Eielson's and Vicuña's art, a challenge arises in discussing the works because they simultaneously transmit information regarding the senses of vision and touch. In other words, the contemporary *quipus* visualize the tactile. Just like the Inka period *khipu,* the textures and the dimensions in

Eielson's and Vicuña's pieces spread the communicative functions of the Andean media out over various sensory channels (Brokaw 31). For example, with the exception of color, all of the visual characteristics of the *quipus* relating to the choice of materials (wool or cotton), cords (number, length, position, spin direction, attachment), knots (quantity, type, directionality) can also be touched.[76]

This unique condition of synesthesia, or the quality of activating more than one sense at a time, remains central to the textile experience. For example, we simultaneously view with our eyes and feel with our skin the patterns and the consistency of the fabric that covers our bodies and the bodies of others. French scholars Deleuze and Guattari explain this notion very well in their distinction between smooth and striated spaces. According them, smooth space acts like the rhizome; all points connect to each other in an infinite space without a center (Deleuze and Guattari 475). A felted piece of fabric composed by tangling fibers models the notion of the smooth (Deleuze and Guattari 475). On the contrary, striated space is delineated and based upon a grid like a woven textile on a loom bound finitely by the dimensions of its warp and weft (Deleuze and Guattari 475). With regard to the concomitant between the optical and the textile, the scholars confirm that smooth space best harnesses this visual and tactile synesthesia. I quote:

> It seems to us that the Smooth is both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space (which may be as much

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[76] Changes in texture that occur during the dyeing process could also contribute tactile information to the user of the *khipu*.

> visual or auditory as tactile). The Striated, on the contrary, relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space—although the eye in turn is not the only organ to have this capacity. (Deleuze and Guattari 493)

Here, Deleuze and Guattari affirm that smooth spaces foment a multiplicity of the senses; the haptic, relating to the sense of touch, accompanies the sense of sight. Opposing this concept, striated spaces remain more oriented toward vision.

While it remains arguable that striated spaces also contain a strong sense of the tactile as well as the visual, I will focus my current analysis on the relationship between smooth space, the knot and the interweaving of the image and the haptic in Eielson's and Vicuña's visual art.[77] Because the figure of the knot turns back in upon itself, it acts like a rhizome, or a smooth space, rather than a striated plane where fibers intersect at regular intervals on a grid. Like the rhizome, the knot exists as an unorganized naturally occurring phenomenon. The amassed roots of trees that display no central point and the tuft of hairs that haphazardly tangle in the wind both serve as prime examples of knotted smooth spaces. In *Quipus 15az-1*, Eielson generates this type of space through the central knot which twists and turns back upon itself repeatedly. With regard to Vicuña's *Quipu huérfano*, the artist creates smooth space through the use of unspun wool which acts naturally like a felt rather than a woven piece of cloth. In either work, it remains

[77] I would argue that the Andean *tejido* exhibits a plurality of visual and tactile senses even though Deleuze and Guattari classify it as striated space because many of their motifs such as, but not limited to, the depiction of braids, serpentine designs and basket weave create an optical illusion of three dimensionality, thus appealing to touch and sight.

difficult to decipher the "beginnings" or the "center" of these zones thus exemplifying what Deleuze and Guattari classify as the Smooth.

When observing the knots on Eielson's and Vicuña's *quipus*, one cannot help but think of how they feel. With regard to this phenomenon, literary scholar Susan Stewart declares that "Face-to-face forms, regardless of their media, bring forward a desire to touch, a compulsion to be in proximity to the material of the work of art . . ." (161). This longing to be close to the object at hand also deals with the notions of motion and time. According to Stewart, "Movement and time are part of the phenomenology of touch, part of its experience, as they are also preconditions for transitive touch to take place. As touch moves and takes time, pattern becomes apparent . . ." (145). In other words, motion and time exist in the act of transitive touching, or that is "touching" through a third party, in this case, sight. Visual pattern creates rhythm or movements in time which in turn allow the observer to "feel" the object of his or her gaze.

With regard to Andean textiles, repetition, symmetry and color sequences all generate a haptic image created through the changing movements and rhythms intrinsic to their patterns (Frame 135).[78] Similar to the *tejido*, when one views a *khipu*, the eye rhythmically passes over its knots, its color sequences and its cord and string directionality, riding up and down the bumps of the fibers, "feeling" their textures and interpreting the meaning assigned to them. As textile scholar Ed Franquemont illustrates,

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[78] Other forms of Andean art such as the *quero* vessels also illustrate the notion of a haptic and a visual space. The engravings on their surfaces are seen, and the rhythm created by their etched abstract lines merges the tactile and visual senses. For more information see, Thomas Cummins' publication *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels* (2002).

this double notion of seeing and feeling remains inherent to the Andean weaving culture. Through the observation of how individuals transmit textile knowledge from one person to another, he discerns how masterfully Andeans turn visual cues into kinetic skills. I quote:

> Textile skills are learned by repetitious practice of complex motor skills rather than through verbal explanation, producing a domain that is independent of language, more like music than like reading. Just as musicians can translate sounds into the motions of playing their instruments, weavers are able to translate visual information directly into kinetic activity without passing it through the filter of words in their minds (Franquemont 31).

As Franquemont signals in the previous citation, weavers learn their practice, without the aid of spoken prompts, through the observation of others' complex motor skills and by touching the threads on their own loom. This example highlights the inherent intertwining of the visual and the tactile senses within the bodies of the textile and the *khipu*.[79] From their onset, their existence comes to fruition depending on how the weaver manipulates and combines visual and tactile information.

In line with this concept, both Eielson and Vicuña simultaneously evoke the visual and the tactile in their *quipus*. For example, Eielson's *Quipus 15az-1* exhibits properties of this dual sensorial relationship because the stretching of the cloth across the

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[79] While there is a lack of information regarding the instruction of *khipu* making, based on Franquemont's research, I hypothesize that the *khipukamayuq* also instructed their apprentices through predominantly visual and kinetic instruction.

surface of the wooden background creates a pattern that the observer sees and "feels." In this case, two characteristics of touch are at play: the twisted fabric and the smooth base. In addition to displaying these qualities that appeal our sense of touch, the observer views with his or her eyes that the work runs over its edges, thus illustrating the evidence of its fastening to the frame. Regarding this phenomenon, Susan Stewart observes how pieces of art that give proof of their making have a higher level of tactile awareness. I quote:

> In handi-crafts that are two sided, such as embroidery and rug making, there is often a front for viewing and a back that shows evidence of touching and making. Whether we are thinking of paintings on canvas or the relics on sarcophagi, all visual forms, including the visual forms of poetry, have as well a tactile dimension that comes into play even if it is repressed. (162)

Here, Stewart's words highlight the "underside" of art not often seen: the area that displays the traces of human ingenuity and craft. This evidence of "touching and making" appeals to the tactile sense because the mechanisms employed to hold the work together record the memory of human kinetic movement.

In *Quipus 15az-1*, Eielson provides proof of this "doing" by extending the cloth materials past the edges of the wooden base. For example, both of the textile cords and the central knot attach to the blue square by wrapping around it. As the eye traces the forms of the twisted fabric, it eventually finds the spaces where the *quipu* surpasses the limits of the base thus indicating the existence of its backside where the fabric fastens to the frame. This evidence of construction is pertinent because it demonstrates the

handiwork of the artist. The observer sees how the piece is assembled; and consequently, he or she is reminded of the hands that create it. This proof of fabrication intensifies the tactile sensations of stretching and binding that that work projects from its viewable patterns. As a result, the edges of the work become fulcrums for tension that bring the *surface* qualities of the object to the forefront the image.

In addition to the tactile qualities apparent through the work's proof of doing, *Quipus 15az-1* evokes the haptic through visual repetition which creates rhythm and transitive touch. For example, the regular twisting of the two strands that form the plied cord on the right side of the piece creates a pattern. As a result of the highly regular rhythm produced by the wrapping of the strings, the eye "feels" the spiraled surface of the cord. Similarly, on the opposite side of the work, the visual design generated by the undulating wider stretch of fabric acts like a playground for the sense of sight. Riding up and down the waves across the cloth and shooting down through the channels created by the undulations, the eye travels about and eventually descends to the wide and flat "delta" at the lower, left edge of the base. These ripples connect to the sense of touch through their pattern and repetition. Like suspended, tense cords on an instrument that beg to be strummed, the sight of Eielson's *quipu* provokes a desire to run one's fingers across the fabric in order to render audible the rhythm created by the cloth's ridges and valleys. Opposing the movement created by the texture of the cords, the multiple twists of the knot visually generate tension and project a sense of pent-up energy waiting to be released. In contrast to the cords that illustrate rapid undulating movements, the knot

retards motion in a quagmire of interminable and pressing folds thus demonstrating the tactile sense in relation to visual pattern velocity.

With relation to Cecilia Vicuña's *Quipu huérfano*, the tangibility of the work springs forth from the visible play on material, visual frequencies and tension. Like Eielson's *Quipus 15az-1*, Vicuña's "orphaned" *quipu* evidences the tactile memory of its creation through the instrumentation of the human hands that knotted the strings to the main cord. However, although the observer sees both the front and the backside of the work, it does not evidence the process of its handling because the front and the back remain largely equal, thus illustrating a minimal amount of material manipulation by the artist. Because *Quipu huérfano* is constructed of unspun wool, a type of smooth space naturally occurring in the environment, the work shows a lesser level of tactile memory owing to human maneuvering.

By this, I wish not to imply that the work fails to appeal to the notion of touch. On the contrary, the tangled fibers of the thick, insulating cords remind the viewer of things we feel such as a tuft of hair wrapped around a briar and the warmth that woolen textiles provide for us in the winter. Moreover, the sight of the colossal strands of wool feels heavy upon the eye, and the lack of twisting, binding and stretching in the work produces a languid sense of motion. Like molasses, the brown wool sluggishly oozes from above and collects into puddles on the floor. This slow, dripping effect created by the singular rhythm of the long unruffled strands produces a transitive sense of touch and movement that remains flaccid, flexible and malleable. Correlating to this general sense perceived from the piece, the knots that attach the wool strands to the top cord appear

loose and bulky. They do not constrict or bind the lethargic movement of the unspun bands descending to the floor. Instead they allow the fibers to gently hug the string upon which they hang.

Furthermore, the visual rhythm generated from the three evenly spaced, vertical cords, evokes a sense of the tactile as well. The even thickness of the strands, their shared color palette and the rhythm created by their parallel positioning allow the eyes to feel the contour of the piece from a distance. Like vertically strung harp cords, Vicuña's *quipu* urges to be plucked. And the color variation among them provides an aural connection to the tones that each string would produce. However, since each cord's gravity remains the only force of tension upon it, the vibration resulting from touch would result in more of a whisper rather than clear and vibrant notes.

Overall, Eielson's and Vicuña's *quipus* relate to the tactile through varied visual channels. They both exhibit smooth spaces whose messy and irregular patterning remind viewers of thick felted spaces, and the evidencing of their crafting by human hands illustrates the record of their tangibility. In addition, the works transmit kinetic information via the image through the inherent movement, either rapid or slow, that the multiple repetitions or minimally patterned materials project. As discussed, it would be impossible to analyze the visual elements of Eielson's and Vicuña's works without acknowledging the strong presence of the tactile inherent in the optical information that the viewer's eyes process. This mixing of senses intensifies the pieces and provides an alternative to other art forms and media of the twentieth century such as film, the camera and the digital image that rely heavily on the sense of sight for their interpretation.

SURFACES AND THE BODY

One of the most salient properties of the tactile sense remains its ability to engage the full exterior of the body. With the exception of hair and finger nails, there is no part of the human physique that does not feel. Relating to this idea, literature critic Susan Stewart states, "Although the hand is paramount, no particular organ is exclusively associated with touch; rather, the entire surface of the body is touch's instrument" (162). Unlike the eyes, the ears, the tongue or the nose, the skin blankets the whole human figure registering environmental cues such as temperature, pressure, pleasure and pain. In this light, we may regard touch as the sense *closest* to the body. As a result of this intimate connection, works of art with a strong tactile presence often hold meanings that correlate to the body.

Within their visual art, Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña constantly involve the viewer in the discernment between the surfaces of the textile and the flesh suggesting alternative perspectives regarding tactile awareness and the human body. For example, in Eielson's *Quipus 24b2* (1966), the white cloth covers the entire work like a hide.

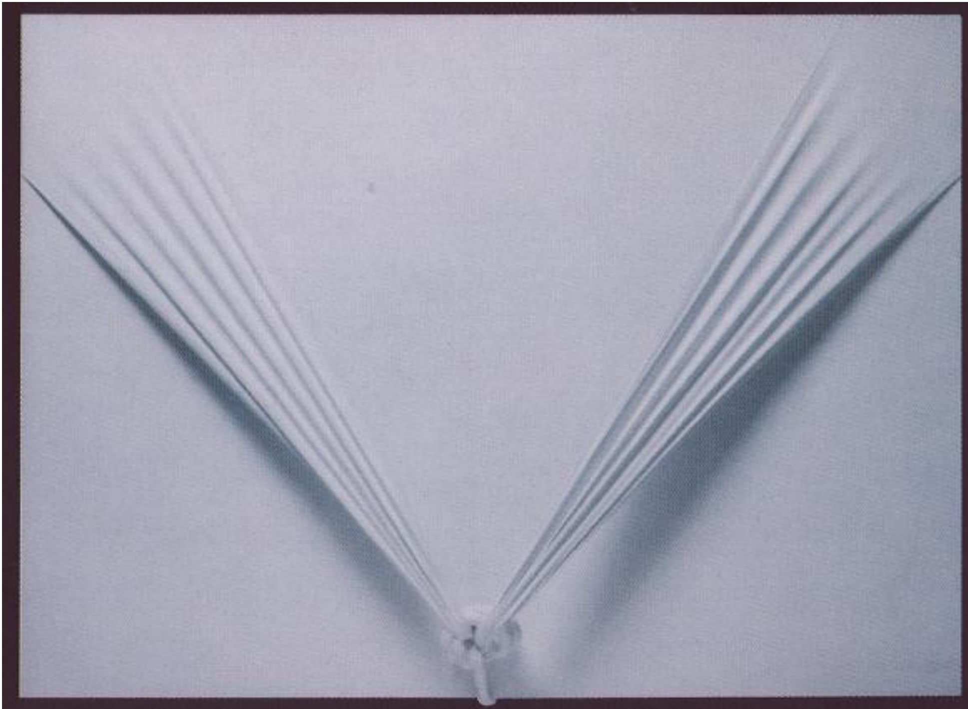

Illustration 4.3 Jorge Eduardo Eielson. *Quipus 24b2*, 1966[80]

Similar to human skin, the image above is monochrome, and it sheaths every part of the work from the base to the knot and the hovering "wings" that fly over the background. In addition to its pale "flesh," the piece correlates to the body because the two "cords" of the *quipu* that stretch from the outer and the upper most opposing corners extend down like arms. Interestingly enough, like arms, the pieces of fabric widen near the joints (the corners or the armpits) and diminish in size progressing down toward the knot, which also reminds the viewer of the navel. With relation to the Andean cosmovision, it remains imperative to remember that the Inka capital city of Cusco is popularly referred to as *el ombligo del mundo*, or the navel of the world. Thus, when viewed within the

80 Image scanned from *Nudo: Homenaje a J. E. Eielson*, edited by José Ignacio Padilla and published in Lima by Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002.

contexts of the Andean world vision and the body, the knot in Eielson's *quipu* generates a metaphorical relationship between the skin, the textile (knot/cord), the center of the human body and the Andean conceptualization of space. The centering of the observer's line of sight upon the knot generates an introspective view pointing to the core of the body, the focus of human life and Andean geographical orientation.

Following the direction of our gaze toward the center, a different perspective of the abstract forms in the *quipu* draws upon the sensual contours and volumes stretched out before the eye. For example, the undulating pieces of fabric imitate the natural creases in the body where the legs join the torso. In relation to the position of the folded lines or the "joints" of the composition, the knot stands where the sexual organs lie in the landscape of the human anatomy. Androgynous through its monochrome and non-committal color, the *nudo* could relate to the female or the male genitalia.

While different analyses regarding the meaning of the work abound, a possible interpretation springs forth from the image of the bodily forms characterized by sameness and ambiguity. Due to the symmetry of the work and its lack of variation in color and material, the artist offers a unique perspective regarding the body. Like an Andean *khipu* whose knots house binary opposites within one form (i.e. left/right, front/back), the work contains heterogeneous elements, such as the knot (created by the tying of the opposite ends of a thread) and the cords which differ through their reverse imaging. Reinforcing the notion of heterogeneity, a visual axis of reflection divides the composition into two planes that, while containing balanced parts, are unequal due to their mirroring. What remains truly unique about the *quipu* is the manner in which Eielson merges these

differing elements in order to project an image of a homologous and an ambiguously gendered body covered by one color and one "flesh." When we situate these interpretations within the historical and the social context of the work, the viewer sees and feels how Eielson challenges the prescribed gender norms that clearly define each body as either female or male.

With relation to the Andean notion of space, Cecilia Vicuña re-visits the image of the *khipu* and illustrates the interrelation between the tactile, the textile and the body in a visual poem accompanied by a photograph title *Ceq'e*.

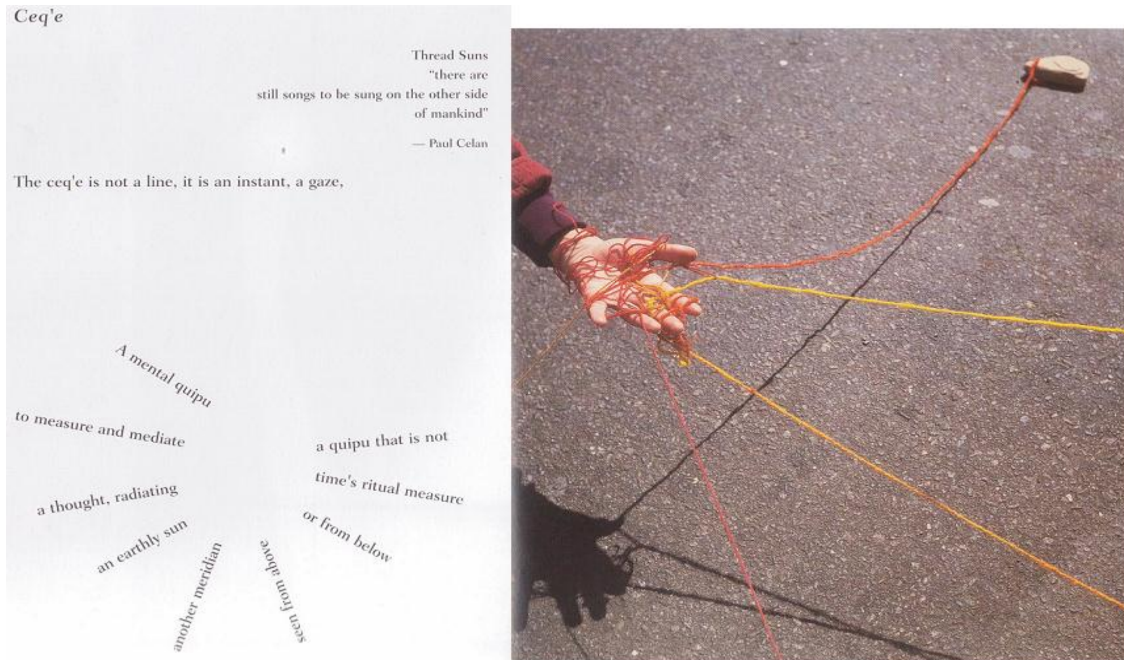

Illustration 4.4 Cecilia Vicuña. "Ceq'e"[81]

81 Image from *quipoem* (q110-11). Photo by César Paternosto.

In this photograph, five threads (one for each finger) travel from points attaching to the hand and radiate toward the ground. Imitating these forms, words on the opposite page orient themselves like an unwrapped *khipu* or like the geographical *ceque* lines that demarcate the physical boundaries of Andean geography. While the poem's center consists of blank space, in the photo, the human hand serves as the nucleus thus illustrating the body's role as the focus of Vicuña's *khipu/ceque*.

Although it is not a knotted, textile device for recording knowledge, as signified by the phrase, "a quipu that is not," Vicuña's *ceq'e* parallels the function of the *khipu* because it provides a moment for meditation indicated by the verses, "A mental quipu / to measure and mediate / a thought radiating." Furthermore, the words "another meridian" illustrate how the *ceq'e* lines provide a means of guiding thought. Like meridians on a map, these lines also orient geographic awareness and cultural cognition. In the photo, when we follow the threads from the periphery, we see that these visual pathways lead us back to the hand, the body's surface of feeling and knowing *par excellence*. In this way, the artist suggests an alternative perspective regarding pathways of thought. Instead of the brain acting as the central organ of perception, the image of the hand suggests a distinctive type of awareness rooted in the skin and the tactile sense. The *ceq'e* represents a different means of insight that leads us back to the body and what it feels. In a modern society full of informational technology and signage, Vicuña presents another way of understanding, one that promotes a reconnection between humans and the subtle sensations that derive from touch.

REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN AND CREATING NEW MEANING

In general, Eielson's and Vicuña's *quipus* exist as vital instruments for our understanding of the present and the future. While reminding us of the forgotten, their visual art urges us to reconnect to the moment at hand and project this sense toward tomorrow. In reference to this concept, scholar Rosaleen Howard illustrates that the act of remembering in Andean culture "is a regenerative one, whereby the past provides the symbolic resources for making sense of the present and projecting toward the future" (46). As Howard theorizes in the previous statement, the Andean notion of safeguarding memory does not relate to the notions of loss, nostalgia and/or grief. Instead, the relics of the past remain pertinent to the understanding of the present and the hopes for the future. Thus, the remnants from long ago stand not as defunct objects; on the contrary, they serve as flexible resources for continual cultural connection and change.

For Andeans, forgetting equals a neglect of social and ritual obligations, and remembering centers around keeping the culture alive through song, dance, music, story-telling and maintaining a relationship with the landscape (Howard 30). Complementing these rituals of memory, textiles also physically manifest the Andean cosmovision. In addition to the *tejidos* whose construction and motifs hold meaning, the Inka design an instrument specifically for facilitating memory, the *khipu*. Within the context of the visual work of Eielson and Vicuña, the use of textiles and knots prompt us to inquire the nature of the relationship between weaving and memory. As a medium whose entire purpose is to remember, what implications arise when the *khipu* forgets? Or that is, what

do these systems of knots signify even though their readers, the *khipukamayuq*, have perished?

With regard to the art in Vicuña's *quipoem*, scholar Juliet Lynd remarks, "If weaving alludes to the persistent presence of other forms of cultural production in the Americas, the poet's creative use of references to the *quipu* points to the multiple cultural erasures suffered throughout the continent" (1590). As Lynd signals, the image of the *khipu*, a device no longer "legible," reminds viewers of a loss of knowledge and the ephemerality of the perishable textile devices. While not exclusive to Vicuña's work, the same statement could also be made with correlation to Eielson's *quipus*. Thus, in both of the artists' creations, the references to these knotted instruments inaudibly point to the cultural silences created by the neglected care of Andean memory and the impermanent qualities of a disappearing media. For example, in Vicuña's *Quipu huérfano* and *Quipu in the Gutter* (1989, see image below), and in Eielson's *Quipus* 1*5az-1* and *Quipus 24b2*, the lack of multiple knots on the pieces indicates a possible loss of information and the decay of the biodegradable instrument.

With regard to the orphaned *quipu*, the presence of long smooth cords appeals to a loss of Andean memory through the eyes of the viewer/interpreter and through the perishable nature of the textile technology. Having no knots, the device holds no information. Thus, like a slate wiped clean or a hard-drive erased, the media no longer serves its intended function of recording the economic transactions of the Inka Empire. Furthermore, the lack of knots points to the *khipu's* ephemerality. In a state of decay

where its knots are no longer recognizable, the material figuratively biodegrades before our eyes.

Upon viewing *Quipu in the Gutter* (1989), the observer also recognizes a shortage of knots on the fibers that comprise the media.

Illustration 4.5 Cecilia Vicuña. *Quipu in the Gutter*, Hudson Street, New York, 1989[82]

As seen from the photograph, the *quipu* consists of a tangled mess of strings laid out on the edge of a sidewalk with the ends of the cords draping down into the gutter. Like trash discarded on a city street, its configuration is sloppy and haphazard. The disarray of this sacred Andean item and its positioning in the "no man's land" of the gutter sends a very powerful message to the viewer. Like garbage already starting to rot, the material of the *quipu* breaks down. As a result, it is forgotten and its sacristy is violated. In the

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82 Image from *quipoem* (q87). Photo by César Paternosto.

photograph, Andean culture lies exhausted, tossed to the margins of consciousness and the "official" history of American culture. Furthermore, the image acts as a reversal of the reverence owed to the *khipu* in Andean ritual. Here, the gutter takes the place of an altar, and the *quipu* exists as a type of anti-offering. This acute reversal of the value of the *quipu* through this paradoxical scene of ceremony provokes a sense of disgust. How could an object so venerated now be devalued and trashed on the street like a *huaca* of urban decay?[83]

While not as obvious as in the cases of Vicuña's orpan and rubbish *quipus*, Jorge Eduardo Eielson's *Alfabeto* (1973) also holds an interpretation that relates to the ephemerality of the Andean media and its possible loss and creation of cultural memory.

83 The Quechua term *huaca* refers to the sacred sites in the Inka Empire where monuments, ceremonies and rituals were performed.

Illustration 4.6 Jorge Eduardo Eielson. *Alfabeto*, 1973. 100 x 100 cm[84]

In this work, Eielson correlates the knots with the alphabet deriving from the Greek system of writing. Like letters, each *nudo* contains a different shape. In this context, the frame which houses the textiles reminds the viewer of the wooden cases used to hold the metal type utilized in printing presses.

Despite these similarities, Eielson presents the observer with an alphabet that contrasts strikingly with that of the contemporary Romance languages. Although the knots lie ordered neatly and are preserved in their boxes, they are not letters; therefore,

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84 Image scanned from *Nudo: Homenaje a J. E. Eielson*, edited by José Ignacio Padilla and published in Lima by Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002.

any relationship between shape and color to meaning or sound remains indecipherable to the alphabet user. With regard to the *khipu*, the cord hue and the form of the knot work as signifying factors. In *Alfabeto*, Eielson merges the alphabet and the *khipu* by taking away components from both such as the cords from the knots and the linear forms from the alphabet. Nevertheless, he also transfers features between them. He colors the "letters" and standardizes the knots at a graphemic level. Thus, he creates his own heterogeneous alphabet deriving from Western and Andean informational systems whose contours and rainbow of colors symbolically merge in order to generate an alternative media.

Because these knots are unintelligible to the viewers who are instructed by the title of the work that they are indeed observing an alphabet, the artist signals the loss of cultural memory which would enable an observer to interpret or "read" *Alfabeto*. Furthermore, the encasing of the knots into the frame bears some implication upon the way in which Western culture attempts to classify the Andean *khipu* through its own *alpha-centrism* and preserve it by enclosing it in a protective case. The piece exemplifies how the Western, scientific mind that categorizes these knots as a form of "writing" succeeds in preventing the further deterioration of the textile material while, on the other hand, it fails to provide an accurate understanding of *khipu* meaning.

Although Vicuña's and Eielson's *quipu* related works deal with the erasure of an Andean cultural memory and the ephemerality of the device's textile materials, they also present an alternative means of remembering the past, knowing the present and aspiring toward the future. In their visual art, forgetting exists as a type of memory; or that is, the

acknowledgement of that which is lost constructs the remembrance of the present. While referring to Cecilia Vicuña's poem "Quipu que no recuerda nada" published in *quipoem*, Juliet Lynd offers an interpretation of this oxymoronic, aesthetic state of cognition. She comments: "The poem plays on the paradoxical simultaneity of presence and absence: by signaling the lack of memory, it enacts memory, but the memory is the trace of an absence, the consciousness of something irrecoverably disappeared" (Lynd 1593). This description of Vicuña's poem sets forth an accurate account of how she and Eielson process memory in their works. Despite the obvious losses to Andean cultural memory and the disintegration of *khipu* materials suggested by *Quipu huérfano, Quipu in the Gutter* and *Alfabeto*, each one of these pieces also demonstrates the possibility for preservation and an alternative form of awareness.

In Vicuña's works, the orphaned and the guttered *quipus* stand ready for adoption. Like other homeless objects, others may pick them up, take them home and refurbish them. On the positive side of their marginality, these symbols of Andean memory fall within new contexts, whether gallery space or on the street, so that others will reutilize and reinterpret them. As Galen Brokaw illustrates in his study of *khipu* history, twists on fibers illustrate the tying and the untying of knots thus indicating the recyclability of the device (13). Consequently, it remains possible that these instruments, unlike Western script that was scratched into baked clay, chiseled into stone and safe-guarded in books, was never meant to serve as a permanent testimony of cultural history. Beyond their immediate use, it is plausible that no need to preserve these knotted devices existed due to the changing record of the annual community administration (Brokaw 88). With

relation to this information, Vicuña harnesses within her work one of the most unique characteristics of the Andean media, its reusability. When viewed in this light, the paradox of remembering the forgotten and preserving the ephemeral comes to life. Vicuña's *quipus* stand, as mentioned previously in relation to Rosaleen Howard's study of Andean narrative, not as mysterious objects from the past; instead, they fall in line with the Andean way of remembering—a continual and simultaneous rejuvenation of the impermanent. As a result, the *Quipu huérfano* and the *Quipu in the Gutter* serve as aesthetic encounters where the fleeting materials of the present perpetuate the continual cycle of cultural memory.

With regard to Eielson's *Alfabeto*, the composition suggests a unique way of remembering through its relationship to space. Although the piece does not refer to the abandonment or the erasure of memory as directly as Vicuña's abandoned and trashed *quipus*, Eielson's encased knots present an alternative perspective which reminds the viewer of the Andean world view. For example, like *tejidos*, the frame remains completely symmetrical when divided into four main quadrants which are also divisible into four squares. When counted individually, sixteen small squares appear. This is no coincidence. By designing the wooden framework based upon the numeral sixteen, a perfect square whose root derives from multiplying 4 x 4, the structure of *Alfabeto* correlates to the concept of binary equality in Andean design, and it also relates to the four *suyos* that divided the geographical space of the Inka Empire.

In this way, Eielson ingeniously works the notion of Andean space into his visual art. Despite the fact that the *nudos* point to a loss of memory and ephemerality through

their illegibility (when contextualized as a Western alphabet) and through their impermanence (as suggested by their preserving encasements), the symmetry and the spatial design of the work bring forth the Andean cultural vision. By evoking this cosmovision, Eielson suggests that there are ways of perceiving media "outside of the box." The bright colors of the "cloth letters" challenge the notion of what constitutes an alphabet. Like rhizomes, the vibrant knots are organic, vegetable forms with no beginnings or ends. They consist of millions of material elements connecting to each other randomly within a field. In this way, *Alfabeto* generates an alternate cultural media that challenges the concept of linear time and thinking. The knot symbolizes continuity and connection that spans epochs and cultural boundaries. In this way, Eielson's visual art alludes to a form of memory where all moments exist simultaneously and incite a dialogue between Andean culture and other traditions such as alphabetic writing.

Overall, the visual artwork of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña appeals to our need to remain interwoven with the *khipu* even though many of them are gone and now "illegible." Due to their abstract qualities and their inherent tensions which provoke metaphorical thought, all forms of these knotted devices regardless of the moment of their creation in time provide us with the opportunity to critically experience aesthetic perception. Each observer of Eielson's and Vicuña's *quipus* possesses the ability to refurbish each one and (re)create its meaning based on his or her visual and tactile sensations. In this way, the *quipus*' material replicates the transient experience of the sensorium where a "silent" dialogue with alternative discourses relating to abstract

thought, the body and our memory appeals to an awareness that words often fail to express.

Conclusion

Like the lackluster dishwasher that no longer marvels us, the textile falls into the realm of inventions that fail to spark the creative mind of the modern consumer. Mass-produced clothing fabricated in faraway lands does not excite the imagination. In factories where thousands of fibers fly across each other at lightning speed to form material surfaces, textile technology only exists as the shadow of a churned out product. Used up and tossed to the curb, contemporary cloth loses its mystery and its representational capacity. Although speaking in general terms, Rubén Gallo's statement regarding our absence of wonder with technology also applies to the off-the-shelf textile. He asserts that "technology is no longer deployed as a metaphor, but merely circulated as a commodity, and our culture . . . has been deprived of the pleasures of symbolic play" (236). In other words, the modern customer ceases to revel in the amazement of technology; and as a result, he or she looses the opportunity to let his or her mind wander through its symbolic proportions.

Contrasting this consumer-centered vision, one of my main arguments remains to bring to the forefront of our technological awareness the Aymara, Quechua and Mapuche textiles. As I have illustrated in previous chapters, woven products engage our poetic and our aesthetic cognition through the figurative play of their components. Abstract in form and design, Andean *tejidos* and *khipus* subsist on many levels, including metaphorical dimensions. From the Greek term *metapherein*, *meta* (beyond) and *pherein* (to take), the word *metaphor* suggests that this type of cognition based on analogy "carries or transfers" our awareness to a level of knowledge that lies beyond our

immediate realm of comprehension. In this way, it exists as the conduit that renders visible the unseen through insinuation. Signifying textiles make use of metaphor through the intersection and the twisting of their threads, their chromatic variations and the placement of their motifs and knots. All of these elements, when juxtaposed within the parameters of the *tejido*, associate with each other and embody meaning that stands beyond their material components.

Although submissive in nature because human hands craft them into shape, Andean and Mapuche textiles *actively* sculpt the cognition of their creators. Because these media thrive on metaphorical connections, their prolific employment promotes a type of thinking based on analogy. Scholar José Sánchez Parga defines this kind of thinking as the *pensamiento textil*, and in order to fully comprehend what Andean fiber products represent and how they embody meaning, we must approach them from this mode of reasoning. Related to this theory, I have demonstrated that, in order to arrive at a deeper level of comprehension of Jorge Eduardo Eielson's and Cecilia Vicuña's poetry and artwork, we must *think* like a textile. Once we orient our analysis around the technology of the thread, the non-verbal, woven frameworks that underlie their artistic productions spring forth.

Within this context, the written and the visual opuses of Eielson and Vicuña continue to revel in, to use Gallo's words, "the pleasures of symbolic play" inherent to Andean textiles. Both poet-artists allude to *tejidos* and *khipus* through direct naming, through the graphic and the material organization of their poetry and through the use of fabrics in their artworks. Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated how their

works allegorically play with the "silent" layers of meaning deriving from the spatial, the visual and the tactile metaphors inherent to the textile aesthetics. In turn, the non-verbal significance of these woven contexts enriches the content of the written poetic word and the visual media by creating an interface where two signifying planes, the textile, the written word and/or other materials, intersect.

As I have illustrated in Chapter One, Andean textile aesthetics stem from methods of construction and from design components. In the Andes and in the Mapuche regions, *tejidos* are woven with attention to the binary relationships between Z and S spun threads, warp and weft and balance in weave structure. In alignment with the strings in the cloth, textile designs such as bands and stripes of color follow horizontal and vertical axes. Zoomorphic, geographic and anthropomorphic images in *tejidos* also follow this model of balance through *desarticulación*, or that is, the "cutting" of the three dimensional image to create a flat representation within the body of the textile.

Culturally, each of these elements holds a meaning exterior to its physical form. Weavers utilize Z-spun threads in common textiles, and they employ S-spun threads for ceremonial fabrics. The intersection of balanced warp and weft and the binary symmetry in textile construction and design represent the concepts of spatial organization that divide geographies into four locations, north, south, east and west. Moreover, the mirror axis that divides patterns acts as a center where divergent zones convene and symbolize the union of difference. With regard to the *khipu*, knot type, placement and directionality (*recto/verso*) represent meaning. Single knots, long knots and figure eight knots all hold differing values. While the significance of other *khipu* components such as cord length,

color and number of cords (pendant and subsidiary) remain unknown, scholars hypothesize that they also contribute meaning to the global interpretation of the device.

In the poetry of Jorge Eduardo Eielson, I have demonstrated how the aforementioned woven aesthetics come into play through the visual experimentation of the graphic word on the page. By drawing attention to the materiality of writing through repetition, the poet illustrates the conventionality and the constructability of printed language. Through its self-referentiality, the text relates to its material textile roots; or that is, it renders visible the non-verbal traces of its crafting. In many poems, we observe these woven signs in the spatial organization of the verses. When viewed, Eielson's poetry illustrates symmetry and balance. Poems often remain divisible into two identical or almost identical graphic halves. Correlating with the inclusion of zoomorphic images in *tejidos*, the verses in "poesía en forma de pájaro" create the shape of a giant, abstract bird on the page. With regard to the *khipu*, the alignment of the verses in "poesía en A mayor" imitate hanging pendant cords on the Andean knotted device, and the poem *Nudos* presents the reader with small centered stanzas that appear like long knots on an invisible cord. Through the incorporation of symmetry, mirror-imaging, knotting and other themes related to the Andean cosmovision, Eielson's poetry dialogues with the text's textile roots.

Another way in which Eielson's poetry plays with the interface between weaving and writing is through the discursive weaving of opposites. As mentioned previously, all textiles work on a system of difference where opposites merge to create a unified whole. Within the body of the *tejido*, the contrasting motions of up/down, left/right and

front/back dominate the construction and the design processes. Through the inclusion of words of opposite meanings in his poetry, Eielson engages in this binary system of converses. Poems often contain verses whose terms semantically cancel each other. Lexical pairs such as *todo*/*nada* and *escribo/borro* serve as examples where the poet creates tension through contrasting meanings. Like the paradox of the knot where two opposing ends of string unite and pull away from each other simultaneously, Eielson's poetry creates verbal nuclei where terms conjoin and separate at the same time. In this sense, the poet generates new metaphorical associations between the words through their physical proximity; however, these words also nullify each other. As a result of this puzzling relationship, the poetry concurrently points to the conventionality of language, or its voided power of expression, and the totality of the polyvalent word that holds more than one meaning.

With regard to Eielson's visual art, I have shown how textile aesthetics appeal to the notions of sight, touch and surface. His abstractions of the Andean *khipu* called *Quipus* (1960's—1970's) stretch fabrics across space and challenge viewers to contemplate the metaphorical associations between each work's components. Through rhythms created by folded cloth, Eielson imbues what the observer sees with the haptic, a sense of touch that implies movement within the static visual image. Extended like skins that cover and protect the body, the geometric forms in the *Quipus* take on the appearance of body parts like arms, the navel and the groin. As monochrome and ambiguously sexual bodies, these fabric sculptures generate alternative discourses regarding gender

sameness, neutrality or ambivalence that challenge the gender/sex regimes of representation.[85]

In addition to the corporal aspects of the *Quipus*, Eielson's textile piece *Alfabeto* (1974) focuses on the homologies between the *khipu* and the alphabet. Through the placement of colored knots within a wooden framework consisting of 16 squares (4 x 4), the artist treats knots like the type used in printing presses. By arranging the *nudos* in the boxes, Eielson generates a very salient message regarding the obsession to classify the Andean counting device in terms of the alphabet and writing. Nevertheless, opposing this categorization, the work presents an indecipherable alphabet, thus alluding to the *khipu's* resistence to be labeled according to the standards of other informational media. Instead, Eielson's *Alfabeto* remains open for interpretation and provides the opportunity for viewers to construct their own meaning for the knots.

Similar to Eielson, Cecilia Vicuña creates a type of poetry that continually shifts between the syntagmas of the text and the textile. In her works *La Wik'uña* (1992) and *Palabra e hilo* (1997), I have indicated how she explores the homologous relationship between Andean fiber products, speech and writing through short sentence-like verses that address the physical characteristics, the design properties and the symbolic meaning of the word and the thread. The poem "Oro es tu hilar" from *La Wik'uña* emphasizes the connections between speech, represented through the act of prayer, weaving and poetry. At the discursive level, the text performs the act of weaving oral language by intertwining

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[85] For more information, regarding gender performativity and regulatory sexual regimes see *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* by Judith Butler (2011).

short phrases of popular speech with the cited words of scholars. Sealing the poem with a metaphor in which the words of the troubadour cover him like a cloak, the poem illustrates that poetry shares the utmost foundational characteristics of a piece of cloth. When we reverse the role of the oral poem and employ it as we would a textile, the words of our common culture intimately touch our bodies like a second skin and form a part of our human identities.

Although not marked by strong currents of orality as in "Oro es tu hilar," *Palabra e hilo* addresses the homologous characteristics between the word and Andean textile products. In line with the theme of weaving, the poem strays away from traditional versification in favor of short discursive sentences. Like small lengths of cord, these poetic sentence-strings intertwine with scholarly citations. As a result, the poem performs the act of weaving at the textual level and interlaces the poetic discourse with discussions regarding the use and the significance of *tejidos*, *khipus* and the body. Lacking a one-sided center of judgment, the poem artfully strays from evaluating the textile in terms of the text or the text in terms of the textile. Instead, the discursive strings illustrate how words and threads, although different in form and use, stand as homologous entities linked in origin through a distant past. As the poem suggests, understanding this relationship illustrates how the common word-thread links us to the heart of our communities and our cultural visions.

With *PALABRARmas* (1984) and *I tu* (2004), I illustrate how Cecilia Vicuña takes textual weaving to a new level by actively breaking apart written words and rearranging the fragments in order to create a new signifying product. By disrupting the syntax of

words and phrases, the poet unravels the text, and by repositioning the semantic and the graphic parts of the displaced verbal elements, she weaves it back together. In *PALABRARmas*, the word is conceived as a concrete seed whose body opens and gives birth to the internal metaphors inside of it. Resulting from this conceptualization, the poet unlocks words in order to release the dormant meanings that lie within them. Once the multiple semantic values spring forth from the ruptured verbal body, they now remain free to form new meanings through their associations. In order to visualize this "dialogue among fragments," the poem utilizes differing font sizes and colors that illustrate how the word bits intertwine among each other. As a result of the *palabrar*, or that is the process of working the word, the material and the symbolic planes of the word come to light. Like a textile composed of fibers with culturally assigned significance, the word also exists as a material product whose metaphorical associations of meaning conjoin in order to form a larger textual body.

In *I tu*, I demonstrate how the splitting of words and their "stringing out" on the page illustrates the common origins of writing and weaving. Here, Vicuña turns lexical units into threads by drawing their fragmented parts out on the page in the form of strings that intersect and entwine. Mixing Spanish, English and Portuguese, the poem conceptualizes the big bang of language where verbal bits floating in space weave together in the moment of the instant. In this way, Vicuña theorizes that the beginnings of our language come about through the weaving of thousands of celestial bodies on a loom.

Like her poetry, Cecilia Vicuña's visual art delves into questions relating to textiles and bodies of cultural significance. Her works *Quipu huérfano* (2009) and *Quipu in the Gutter* (1989) present viewers with highly tactile images that dialogue with sensorial ways of knowing and cultivating memory. A recurrent theme in many of Vicuña's works, discarded or unwanted objects take center stage in both of these compositions involving the Andean *khipu*. In *Quipu huérfano*, thick matted strips of fiber hang knotless from a string. The adjective "orphaned" communicates that the instrument remains abandoned by its creators, and the lack of knots illustrates a loss of Andean knowledge and the deterioration of its material. Similarly, the *Quipu in the Gutter* is also undesirable. Tossed out onto the street like garbage, only a tangled mess of yarns remains. Like an altar, the gutter ironically holds the threads as if they were an offering. Because *khipu* are considered sacred media during the Inka Empire, these pieces of art speak greatly on the diminishing appreciation of the Andean world vision. Nonetheless, these *quipus* also offer redemption because they stand ready for rebirth in a new context. The orphan and the unwanted item on the curb await new homes. In this sense, Vicuña's works dialogue with the loss and the creation of cultural memory despite the ephemerality of the device. These *quipus* do not exist as defunct objects of the past; instead they are ready to be used in the process of new cultural creation.

While Vicuña's visual art is primarily meant to be seen with the eyes, it also contains many tactile properties as well. In this way, I have shown how it appeals to a plurality of senses and suggests an alternative means of perceiving the environment that does not depend solely on sight. In *quipoem*, Vicuña accompanies a poem titled "Ceq'e"

with a photograph of her hand wound with strings that radiate outward and down toward the pavement. The photograph illustrates *ceque* lines made of yarn. In the Inka Empire, these lines organize and divide the territory by branching out from the central city of Cusco. Vicuña's version of the *ceque* depicts the human hand as the nucleus of the yarns. Because this appendage remains the body's primary instrument for feeling, its positioning as the core for the threads indicates the supremacy of the sense of touch. Allowing us to make physical contact with the objects of our environment, the skin imparts upon us a different way of knowing unmatched by other dominant senses like seeing and hearing. Consequently, the photograph suggests the development of the tactile as a means of understanding the world from a different perspective.

Although their opuses are individually unique, I demonstrate through my analysis that the poetry and the visual art of Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Cecilia Vicuña share a common thread. Using the textile as an abstract framework, I illustrate how their works engage verbal and non-verbal forms of media at the conceptual level in order to surpass the limits of their material and their symbolic conventionalities. While contemplating that which language does not easily define, Eielson and Vicuña also ingeniously work surfaces. Like weavers, they remain aware that the act of *poieses* involves the creation of a material tissue. By playfully sculpting the poetic medium on the page, the authors augment the written word's capacity for meaning through the incorporation of a non-verbal, visual plane of information. When we closely examine their written and their plastic works, it remains apparent that the aesthetics of the Andean *tejido* and *khipu* serve as conceptual and visual scaffolds. Within their cultural specificities, this woven and

Andean *modus operandi* in the artists' opuses conjoins with other poetic and artistic developments ranging from the European avant-garde to urban street graffiti. As a result of this interlacing of traditions, Eielson and Vicuña create their own pluri-cultural aesthetics where the forgotten is remembered and the unsaid gains a means of expression.

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