

Printing Presses, Typographers, and the Reader as People: State Publishing in Cuba,
Venezuela, and Chile (1960-present)

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ABSTRACT

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Among other paradigm shifts, in the last decades Latin America has underwent not only the privatization and corporatization of the historical State, but also the de-materialization of the book in paper and ink. Far from a death knell, however, this apparent limit has instead given rise to a further visibility of the support, material, and conditions of production of the historical book object. This dissertation will reconstruct through period sources, critical essays, fiction, photography, and film the hallowed, yet troubled, status of the State-sponsored book. Tracing an arc from the utopian 1960s and increasingly privatized 1990s and 2000s, I consider imaginaries of reading through the materials and cultural politics that comprise books in the most concrete of senses—paper, format, copyright policy, and reproduction technologies, in particular Xerox, linotype, and mimeograph. These elements form subjectivities that extend beyond what is normally understood as the reader to broader collective narratives. Something as simple as paper made of tobacco or sugarcane, for example, may link questions as diverse as anti-colonialism, the popular national subject, and racial, ethnic, and gender alterity. Conversing with and, simultaneously, contesting the work of critics such as Roger Chartier, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Rancière, and Johanna Drucker, I argue that what at first may seem anecdotal is instead a map of the material, spatial, and subjective distribution of knowledge told through the material life of books. The following chapters,

will address the nascent critical discourse on book materiality in Latin America, and then turn to three case studies drawn from Cuba, Chile, and Venezuela that variously imagine new subjectivities of the reader.

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INTRODUCTION

Given the density and vastness of Latin American print culture, one's potential modes of entry may appear labyrinthine and boundless. Yet, there exist certain historical moments in which the problems that characterize this field of study seem to come to the surface, if not in a novel fashion, at least in a way that proves historically significant. The large-scale state publishing projects that marked the 20th century proposed the democratization and the redistribution of symbolic goods and sought in one form or another the redefinition and the realignment of cultural protagonists and objects. The three case studies I discuss in this manuscript represent key examples of the phenomenon that I have just described.

Although the idea of the reader has transformed consistently since the introduction of the written word, the 20th century witnessed some of the most ambitious projects vis-à-vis the adaptation of the book, or, in less format-based terminology, the recasting of the lettered object to the spaces and practices of the quotidian.¹ In Latin America we can detect certain historical moments in which the determination of the form and the shape of the lettered object in function of the subject —and not vice versa— became a project of the State. State literacy projects of the 1960s imagined and constructed their readers on buses, in parks, upon the benches of factories, or even in agricultural fields —books and readers superimposed upon urban design and the national

¹ For an expansive notion of reading and the reader, see Lisa Gitelman who endeavors to construct the latter concepts as “culturally and historically contingent experiences,” tying them to diverse and at times unexpected technologies (1).

landscape— and created formats and designs that were consistent with this vision. The latter decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, whether in the private or the public sphere, imagined its readers seated in front of a screen, rather than a page; participants of a atomized, non-physical crowd (Sloterdijk 17).

Tracing an arc from three State Utopias of the 1960s to the increasingly privatized administration of culture and subjectivity in the 1990s and 2000s, I consider in this manuscript imaginaries of reading through the materials and cultural politics that comprise books in the most concrete of senses—paper, format, copyright policy, and reproduction technologies, in particular offset, linotype, and mimeograph. These elements form subject positions that extend beyond what is normally understood as the reader to broader collective narratives. Something as simple as paper made of tobacco or sugarcane, for example, may raise questions regarding topics as diverse as anti-colonialism, the popular national subject, and racial, ethnic, and gender alterity. The following, thus, is an attempt to plot certain global narratives of the book and reading, at the same time that it is an attempt to suss out the particularity and locality of the book. Its chapters, respectively, embrace three distinct, yet intertwined, sub-questions: First, how does copyright mediate the distribution of cultural goods in post-colonial contexts and relate to mechanical reproduction? Second, how is consumer culture—books a subcategory—reimagined in the context of certain collective projects under both dictatorship and democracy? And, finally, how do cultural heritage and canons, in conjunction with their material forms, mediate history and national and transnational visions of the collective? The organizing question of this manuscript, however, is how printed “things” (Appadurai) both create and respond to new readers or collectives and

how this relates to a social cartography of space. Geographically, the study centers on three particular national contexts: Cuba, Chile, and Venezuela, focusing on certain State-sponsored lettered projects of the 1960s and 1970s and their discontinuous translations in the post-Berlin Wall realities of the 1990s and 2000s.

The three case studies of this manuscript are borne of and contribute to moments of tumultuous social and historical change, as well as of its retraction and pacification. Apt touchstones, these projects test these historical fractures—whether a Revolution, a dictatorship, or a transition to a formal consumer democracy, reflecting the slippage of social constituencies and imaginaries like few cases in the history of Latin American print or consumer culture—hence their analytical appeal. Notwithstanding, the cases in question surpass notions of ‘causality’ between economic and social change and its cultural manifestations, instead engaging a broad spectrum of perception that involves the decipherability of new ideas concerning society’s real and imagined structure and “modes of being;” the ‘visibility’ and ‘audibility’ of subjects historically neglected in representational realms (Rancière 13). In this fashion, my three case studies from Cuba, Chile, and Venezuela variously conjure and are conjured by new subjectivities of the reader, that is, the reader as collective, consumer, owner, and producer as moving and interwoven subject positions. In my first chapter, I examine the role of copyright in Cuba and its shifting mediation—through the politics of the copy and reproduction—of public and private conceptions of culture. Examining intellectual property as it relates to technological and material factors, I plot its non-linear relationship with cultural democratization as it connects to the North-South divide. In my second chapter, I focus on a widely read and collected non-fiction pocketbook series published in Chile in

practically identical editions under three separate and vastly different political regimes. Tackling entrenched ideas about the aesthetics of the left and the right, I interrogate the paradox of State-sponsored cultural democratization under both democracy and dictatorship. In my third and final case chapter, I probe culture's force lines in the Venezuelan Petrostate, highlighting broader theoretical and historical problems surrounding the formation of both textual and visual canons. The three chapters open timely debates relevant to both Latin America and the international sphere concerning the status of State-sponsored culture and its relation to symbolic production mediated by the Market, which I will further elaborate at the close of this introduction and in the following chapters.

The premise of the project unleashes a series of quandaries surrounding both material culture and state production. First, if books are ontologically marked by their mobile nature, their ability to move from context to context, what is the relevance of maintaining a national or place-based construct (Johns 40; Drucker 1; Darnton 80)? Furthermore, if the state is increasingly depreciating as a critical framework, or even perhaps considered an analytical gaffe or impropriety, why revisit it as a cultural producer? These are not questions to be taken lightly, or dismissed quickly. They relate not just to critical fashion—though this is of course present, but also to the exhaustion of paradigms, junctures in which certain critical apparatus no longer have the same explanatory power or solvency.

Yet, at this moment in which the state and the nation have become a black sheep of academic scholarship, they have simultaneously become the pole around which collects a bevy of valuable research and archival acquisitions—albeit a body of work that

paradoxically announces its own demise in light of the ever-intensifying dominance of market-based mediation of culture that is the counterpart of any study of the state; the atrophying state, for its part, is likewise the footing of any study of the market (Franco; Williams; Beverley; Beasley-Murray, in varying degrees in the Latin Americanist field; Boltanski and Chiapello, in France).² New life moreover has been breathed into materiality studies, or the study of “things”—the disciplinary coordinates from which this study takes its cues, giving materiality studies a new methodological significance and currency. Taken together, if the critical works surrounding the state of the 1960s and 1990s and its attendant cultural production are of an enormous historical, social, and theoretical breadth, what are the forms and materials through which these objects and ‘discourses’ traveled? How may we consider these objects, in particular books, in new ways?

This approach or framework is not merely a product of critical cycles; rather of historical rigor. In the 1960s and 1970s nation-bound social histories influenced by the materialistic fervor of the period were enormously interested in presses, distributions circuits, readership, and the imaginary of work and the worker—the “people.” Contemporary criticism, to the contrary, in line with the referent-less and State-less criticism of the 1990s has treated the cultural production of this period comparatively ethereally and within conceptual constructs of informal assemblages. Notwithstanding, the purpose of this study is not to return to a unilaterally materialist analysis or to the high-flown imaginary of Liberated Territories of the Revolutionary State, rather to parse out the oscillation between the “air-like” (Castro) quality of ideas and the complex matrix

² I will return to the market in each of my chapters and in greater depth in my conclusions.

of meaning generated by words, images, and sounds as they relate to material surfaces and highly concrete media objects that extend across historical periods—if not, historical abysses, geographies, institutions, and social collectives.

This manuscript contends that culture and collectives are both vapor and solid; they are at once radically ethereal and material, and when they *are* material they are volatile, shifting, and locally inflected down to the last edition or reader.³ This responds to a current movement in scholarship that is asking material questions in a new fashion. (Lisa Gitelman; or, in the Latinamericanist field, Rachel Price, are good examples among dozens.) What happens when we zoom in upon book objects and the materials (machinery, paper, graphic elements) and the cultural policy (copyright, among other juridical economic gestures) that constitute them, as well as upon the actors that produced and consumed these book objects whether editors and readers, and the varied subjects that occupy their intermediate spaces? What new narratives and social groupings emerge in the webs of the State and in its thingly constructions?

But, now, the latter begs the question—why books in Latin America? Book culture and material culture has been a far more exhaustive endeavor in Europe and in the United States—think of Anthony Grafton, Robert Darnton, or Roger Chartier whose groundbreaking work rarely sets its gaze beyond Western Europe, and when it does, just barely south to Spain. What does Latin America, in general, and Cuba, Chile, and Venezuela, in particular offer us? Book and science historian Adrian Johns—whose work in many ways infuses this manuscript—borrowing from the epistemological approaches

³ See Adrian John’s reassessment of “textual stability” and “durability” as “transitive” “fixity” (Johns 19). This is important when considering the local nature of every edition, and how the locality of material and agents generates new meaning.

of anthropology once called for a de-familiarization of the “printed book” and its “subsequent construal” through its displacement in time or space—his examples were 20th century India, and 16th century Europe—in order to illuminate the “making of knowledge.”⁴ Let’s rephrase and displace John’s articulation: instead of considering Latin American book culture as “unfamiliar”—a characterization that defines Johns’s place of enunciation more than the objects that I propose—what if we consider temporal and spatial contexts “unfamiliar” not to any one given observing subject, but rather “unfamiliar” to book history’s canon and its contingent suppositions? What do these ‘unfamiliar’ temporal and spatial cases elucidate in the constructed nature of the material lives of books? Or, the material lives of people for that matter? Far more than mere instantiations, I argue that the three case studies that I propose are moments that unsettle—albeit perhaps subtly—the “self-evidence” of knowledge’s transmissive vehicles (Johns 3), and, in particular, knowledge’s relationship to books, texts, images, and things, as well as their subject counterparts.

The following introduction will situate these questions disciplinarily, covering the genre of the mass edition, democratization, the shifting imaginary of the State as cultural arbiter in both European and Latin Americanist theory, the status of book culture and in particular its material turn, and finally the case studies that will make up this manuscript. This brief introduction represents only the beginning of a project that began

⁴ Johanna Drucker’s more recent “Distributed and Conditional Documents: conceptualizing bibliographic alterities” (2014) complements Johns’ methodological exhortations regarding temporal and spatial displacement. She too sees historical and geographic deracination as a way of “unsettling” and unseating disciplinary “certainty” (2) and knowledge constructs (“knowledge ecology” [Drucker 13]). Drucker, however, does not present the latter displacement as an either-or—as does Johns, rather points in particular to “Old and New World contact” (2) as a destabilizing yet clarifying encounter.

with certain certitudes, yet which continuously opened new Pandora's boxes that were constitutive to the density and perhaps naive ambition of its premises. It only scratches the surface.

The Mass Edition?: Between Circulation and the Material

The topic of my research in its broadest sense is the field of lettered cultural goods and *their* deployment by the state and later by the market in differentiated forms in Latin America. In their vast majority the projects I approach work with what has historically been referred to as the mass or popular edition. In this case, the terms in question indicate elusive and fluid concepts that point towards mass print-runs and broad socio-economic profiles of the editions' imagined readers. These editions as an object of study have historically engaged a wide variety of topics ranging from intellectual history to the redefinition of reading publics. Instead of being analyzed through circulation and material questions, the popular or mass edition has principally been studied through a hermeneutic (borrowing the usage of Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht) or non-material lens. In our contemporaneity, these editions represent a historically determined mode of defining culture—seen through the lens of publishing in paper and ink—that is becoming increasingly more scarce as reading moves to new digital substrates and images take on even more dominance. This slow disappearance, or at least change in social location, of the historic book object lends the project a new relevance and necessitates new methodological approaches. In my research, thus, I have, instead, addressed this theoretical question through the lens of book materiality and print culture. In other words,

my research is informed not only by both textual and visual content, but by questions of circulation and the material form of books.

The decision to approach the question through the methodology of materiality and print culture is more significant than it initially might seem. Philology historically isolated its objects, allowing their textual material to maintain an artificial independence from their material manifestations. This persists on some level even in Ángel Rama's 1984 *La ciudad letrada* (to which I will return in this introduction when discussing the state, and later in Chapter 3 in the context of La Biblioteca Ayacucho) through his Foucauldian (in this case, structuralist and discourse-based) analysis that forever battles with the tense relation between signifier and referent at the same time that the study eases towards socio-historical approaches.⁵ Faithful to his title that invokes "letters" as well as the subjects and the spaces that they imprinted, Rama's project was still principally concerned with power and *writing*; not power and *books*; nor power and *paper*; nor power and *ink*, *linotypes*, *offset*, *typographers*, and any other complex material matrices that mark the lives of books.

Similarly, sociologically infused studies from the 1980s and 1990s endeavored to extricate cultural objects from what they esteemed the "ethereal" realms of language, yet many times still neglected the material qualities of the cultural objects in their studies — newly set in motion in circuits of cultural agents and consumers. A key player in the changing landscape of cultural analysis was Pierre Bourdieu who insisted upon the concept of "cultural fields," a proposal to see culture in terms of a system of intertwined

⁵ See Román de la Campa's analysis of post-structuralism in Rama, "The question of the materiality of words, of their capacity to constitute their own reality, a reality that went beyond the representation of a previous given order, is obviously a central concern for Rama" (127).

agents (editors, booksellers, buyers), against “platonic” visions of literature or art that saw them as freestanding semiotic objects independent of the circuits within which they circulated. Bourdieu’s theory regarding ‘social ageing’ —the transformation in the public and social categorization of a work throughout time and generations—also represented a useful starting point to relativize the verbal content of a literary or textual work as the sole determination in its social categorization. This shift in focus towards “social relations” is mirrored by critics disciplinarily more clearly situated in book history, for instance, the previously mentioned Roger Chartier or the cultural historian Robert Darnton; or in the Latin American sphere the Argentine cultural critic Beatriz Sarlo.

To name an exemplary case, let us recall Darnton’s classic methodological text “What is the History of Books?” (1982). Developing both the 1960s-era focus of book culture in “the most ordinary sort of books” and book culture’s interdisciplinary origins at “the intersection of a half-dozen fields of study” (65)—both useful contributions, the article also places book criticism in what Darnton calls a “communications circuit” (66). This “circuit,” described and illustrated both textually and through a diagram, does not address ‘use,’ ‘circumstances,’ and the ‘material qualities’ of the book. In Darnton’s diagram, in fact, the “book” is indicated by a curved connecting line. Although Darnton does recognize variance across ‘place’ and ‘time,’ this is not included in his explicit methodology, leaving the book object intact as a relatively ‘stable’ entity (hence the connecting line) that moves through an orbit.

Drucker (among others) has expressed dissatisfaction with Darnton’s model of the book as an “autonomous object moving through this circuit” (5), interestingly enough grounding her critique in the Americas. Despite the broad appropriation of Darnton’s

article including in Latin America—Beatriz Sarlo, for example, heavily leans both implicitly and explicitly upon it in her ample citation of Darnton in *El imperio de los sentimientos* (1985), Darnton’s methodology would profit from a greater material emphasis. Borrowing from Drucker’s portrayal of textual culture, as organic, lifelike, animated, but extracting it from a purely “performative” or “event”-based model,⁶ how does the book act upon Darnton’s actors? How do Darnton’s actors act upon the book? How is “space” and “place” constituted and intervened in by textual objects? Is it possible to construct a geometric model that communicates the transitory and explosivity of the material?

Other critics, however, despite finding useful Bourdieu’s emphasis upon publics, actors and temporal contingencies, as opposed to an unvarying aesthetic object, believe that certain answers to the question of social categorization and meaning of a work are found in the material circumstances of the book’s production and in the book’s materiality itself. Despite his emphasis upon the “social,” historian Adrian Johns and his *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (1998) represents an important example of this shift in the field: in which the material circumstances of an edition take on a new protagonism in criticism. In the formal and informal archives of Latin America, the countless editions and reproductions of so-called elite literature in

⁶ Drucker writes: “Marking, making, inscribing, reading, are all aspects of a system of social and cultural production. A semiotic object does not sit inside it, like a gem in a setting, in a context-based model of object and conditions. Instead, the object is constituted, like an organism in a medium, as an effect of the very conditions that bring it into being. In the same way that cell walls and chemical/physical/biological processes create the conditions of semi-autonomy that define a living organism in an ecological system, the semiotic ‘object’ is an effect of constitutive conditions in the culture of which it is an integral part” (6-7).

popular format that dot the landscape of Latin American print culture serve as eloquent examples of how the ‘material’ dictates the social meaning of books. By listing only a few of Latin America’s popular editions, it is possible to discern the recurrence of this operation: let us recall the mass editions of *El Quijote* in 1960 in Cuba and in 2004 in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez Frías (numbering 100,000 and one million copies respectively), or the collection *minilibros* in Chile under Salvador Allende that published classic literature, such as Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer’s *Rimes* (published with a print run of 100,000 in August of 1972) or Herman Melville’s *Bartelby* (80,000 in February of 1973), in the minuscule dimensions of 7 by 5 inches. All of these examples combine elements of circulation, with materials, printing, and format.⁷

Although the appreciation of a text may vary with shifting generations, as Bourdieu convincingly argues, the countless formats and publics elucidate how an edition — understood through its material conditions, such as its paper, dimensions and distribution patterns — can change the identification of a work. This is a double reading that Bourdieu and other critics of the 1980s and 1990s surely perceive, but that they choose not to highlight. If Bourdieu construes culture in terms of the agents and institutions that create them, I propose an heuristic inversion: is it not possible that ‘objects’ equally create, question, challenge and interpellate their agents?

The Machine and Democratization

⁷ For an incisive analysis of similar processes but in the first half of the 20th century in Argentina, see Graciela Montaldo and her article on the *Revista Claridad* where she finds “zonas de obscena indefinición de propiedades culturales” (41).

The latter reflection on ‘mass’ and ‘popular’ editions leads us to another key concept: democratization, with which the ‘popular’ maintains a constant flirtation.

‘Democratization,’ although it implies broader publics and the reproduction and new mass nature of previously unattainable cultural goods, also suggests an obscure relationship with notions associated with the political system, as indicated by its lexical root. Its analysis, at least in the 20th century, has been inextricably tied, not only to questions of social movements or political factions, but to questions of material development in imaginaries in which the ‘machine’ is bound up with utopian social visions, unfolding a series of time-worn, yet still relevant questions: How and when is culture ‘democratized’? By what means and what institutions or social assemblages? How do machines participate in this narrative?

A key debate in which the ‘book’ as object and democratizing vehicle must be situated is that of Rancière’s *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2006), specifically the essay “Mechanical Arts and the Promotion of the Anonymous,” and its relation to Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936). The debate is important in that it establishes a constitutive back and forth between the ‘material’ and questions of circulation in determining meaning, social, assignation, and the democratizing potential of cultural objects such as film and literature. Following Benjamin and Rancière’s intermedial lead, I will pair the debate in question with an instantiation borrowed from the history of photography.

In recent years, Jacques Rancière’s work has become an alternative to the prevalent sociological readings associated with Pierre Bourdieu, with whom we began this analysis. Rancière, however, not only expands and questions Bourdieu’s socio-

cultural precepts as certain critics, Nicholas Dames, among them, have proposed. Rancière's readings also open the possibility of relativizing certain canonical origins and ruptures. Relocating many of modernity's problems in other, less 'modern'-seeming media, Rancière problematizes cinema and photography as exclusive sites of democratization, complicating the received connection between reproduction technology and democratizing forces.

Needless to say, at the same time that Rancière in this fashion offers alternative readings, his work at moments takes these analyses to a radical degree, artificially extracting the 'material' as a variable. A pertinent and paradigmatic example is book materiality, understood here, if not as a mechanical and technological *process*, most certainly as a mechanical and technological *product*. In "Mechanical Arts and the Promotion of the Anonymous," instead of detecting the aesthetic revolution of the masses in technology (read: cinema or photography) — as does Benjamin — Rancière detects it in novels — "the features, clothes, or gestures of an ordinary individual" of Honoré de Balzac and "the sewer [that] revealed a civilization" of Victor Hugo (32).

The critique and reorganization of Benjamin's overly categorical periodization is useful: the novelty that Benjamin desires to see in cinema and photography is without a doubt over-determined. The problem, of course, is that this distinction that Rancière attempts to make between the 'mechanical' and these processes of transformation is conceptually rooted in analytic (and, in this case, historical) omissions that Benjamin, despite his schematisms and essentialism in conceiving technology, in a certain sense, appears to conceive of with more clarity. Indeed, Rancière neglects the particular materiality of the authors that Rancière himself cites (Balzac, Hugo, Flaubert), names

connected to the serial novel and the mass production and modes of distribution that accompanied this genre in the mass circulation of periodicals. Rancière's analysis thus implicitly extracts the technological or mechanical from book production.

The technological, however, is only as meaningful as its regulation and circulation. An example borrowed from the realm of early photography proves especially eloquent in illustrating this dilemma: the two technologies in question are Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's (1787-1851) and Henry Talbot's (1800-1877) photographic methods. Daguerre's process, the daguerreotype (c. 1825) was printed on a copper plate with a layer of silver. Every exposition was singular and irreproducible, while Talbot's prints, precursors to modern photography, were created on paper giving them a greater potential for reproduction.

The difference, however, between the democratizing potential of the two photographic technologies did not lie in their reproducibility, but rather in the circulation of the technologies in question. Daguerre's method was acquired by the French Parliament in the summer of 1839 at the insistence of François Arago, who "argued that it would serve the necessities of fine arts and science, that in the not too distant future everyone would find a use for the device, as it would become increasingly less expensive, and that learning to use it would be simplified" (Fernández 28). Henry Talbot's paper printing method, to the contrary of Daguerre's method, was patented in 1841, limiting its circulation due to the high price that Talbot charged for the use of his invention. Thus, rather than finding its democratizing vectors in its reproducibility, that is, in the multiplication and desingularization of the image, what could be understood as "democratic" in the Talbot-Daguerre photography dilemma was the ease of early

daguerreotype distribution: the mechanics of the technology's circulation, as defined by patent regulation, is hence what detonated its democratizing potential and its deployment in the collective imaginary.

This episode in the history of technology, of course, does not only highlight juridical mechanisms such as patents or copyright, but also the place of the state in their administration, distribution and regulation, a lesson that may be applied equally to books and to which I will return implicitly throughout my case studies. How not to forget that books also participate in a technological narrative recalling Rancière's oversight? And, considering this final case borrowed from early photography, how to appraise technological elements in tandem with the juridical, the representational, and the bodies that administer them?

The State

The state as a cultural producer and administrator has long proved a thorny topic. Pierre Bourdieu, in addition to acting as a point of departure in our theoretical analysis of the book as cultural object, can also serve as a sort of barometer of this problematic relationship as regards state patronage. Although Bourdieu would moderate his postures regarding the state's mediation of culture starting in the 1990s as the market gained greater protagonism as the arbiter of culture and other goods, his most well known works manifest a marked mistrust towards state patronage in cultural production. According to Jean-Philippe Mathy, this posture is colored by the anti-institutional environment of May 1968 in France. In *The Rules of Art* (1992), for instance, Bourdieu exemplifies Mathy's observation, exploring the cultural migrations between different poles of power and the

subsequent cultural co-optations on the part of the state (in conjunction with the market, etc.). The state in this case represents a sort of contamination of the producer. At best, the state's patronage is a condemnation to triviality, to a lack of complexity and to the subordination of culture external interest. At worst, it is the reduction to Soviet Zhdanovism, for Bourdieu, a synonym of "mediocrity" or "failure." These strong condemnations are echoed by many of his generation, such as Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht or Jacques Rancière,⁸ that have been key to my research; and take on new forms in our contemporaneity.

In Latin America the intellectual and the state have lived symbiotically since the colonial era.⁹ The seminal and foundational study of the previous is Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada* (1984).¹⁰ Recounting the connection between urban life, the state and lettered culture, Rama constructs a vision of Latin America, where there is a simultaneous attraction and repulsion as regards the state: the state disciplines its cultural workers, while the commercial sector restricts through the logics of profit and a narrow view of consumer publics. Although with the Caso Padilla (1971), Latin American intellectuals began to distance themselves from state-based politics, in contrast to the French case, in many instances, in Latin America the late 1950s and 1960s represented a

⁸ Think of *Althusser's Lesson* (1974), or *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1987).

⁹ Although I am hesitant to make statements with continental breadth given the diversity of the national histories, as a preliminary analysis, the broad historical strokes that it implies may be useful, as, in the context of my topic in particular, publishing in general and State publishing in particular find themselves in dialogue with other national traditions, markets and consumers.

¹⁰ This symbiosis has been traced more recently by Nicolás Miller, Jean Franco, or Claudia Gilman in the Cuban context.

rapprochement with the state. In this period, one could conceive of the emergence of a state, infused by Leninist doctrines and by the historical weight of the figure of the Latin American caudillo, as an alternative to the historical national oligarchies and foreign interest. Notwithstanding national differences and particularities, an example, among others, is El Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (Conicet), established in 1958 under Arturo Frondizi in Argentina and the associated foundations dedicated to the arts and cinema. In the case of Venezuela, this tendency continues into the seventies with the foundation of the Consejo Nacional de la Cultura (CONAC).

The proximity of the state to culture and cultural producers paradoxically is due to the incompleteness of the state apparatus. Following Nicolás Miller, unlike in Europe where the expansion of education became part of national projects, in what has been called the “gardening” state, “dovetail[ing] neatly with the ambitions of the *philosophes* and their counterparts to preach the gospel of Reason to the common man,” apart from certain key moments in Mexico, in Latin America education many times was perceived as a threat (Miller 82). Though Miller’s assertion is surely overdrawn, the distinction is worth exploring at least as far as it establishes the incommensurability of the European and Latin American state.

For this reason, in line with certain elements of Rama’s analysis, the infrastructure of the reading or consuming public in Latin America cannot be compared with that of Europe or the United States. The strong public university system in France criticized by Bourdieu, was also home to a broad range of intellectuals and gave birth to a diverse gamut of publication genres and topics, generating a booming commercial publishing market in comparison to that of Latin America. This is not to say that a reading public

was not created in the 19th century in Latin America, but not with the same force that accompanied the ‘universalization of education’ that occurred in Europe.¹¹ At the same time that this faltering consuming public and market emphasized the ‘incomplete’ presence of the state in Latin America, it also created an intellectual dependence on the state; the vision of the state infused with progressive or revolutionary potential—that gained increasing currency as the 20th century progressed—only added to this magnetism.

This conception of the state foments very particular publishing policies all over Latin America whose legacies can be seen in the case studies that follow. According to Oscar Fernández,

En los años cincuenta los gobiernos latinoamericanos promovieron de forma activa el crecimiento industrial, se establecieron empresas estatales y se realizaron inversiones directas en empresas; el Estado, mediante la protección y la participación, creó las condiciones para el crecimiento industrial de la región. En ese marco, en las décadas del 50 y 60 surgieron varias de las editoriales más importantes del continente: Compañía Fabril de Ediciones, Editorial Sudamericana, Emecé y EUDEBA. Por esos mismos años se constituiría el Fondo de Cultura Económica (FCE), editorial mexicana de gran prestigio, adquirido gracias a la colaboración de intelectuales mexicanos y republicanos españoles exiliados. (Fernández “EUDEBA” 39)

¹¹ “In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, virtually every European state instituted or tried to institute a nationwide system of elementary education for boys and girls of between six and eight years duration that was eventually, if not usually initially, compulsory and free. After Prussia in 1763, the first to do so was Denmark in 1814; in Western Europe, the last country to make schooling compulsory was Belgium a hundred years later” (Brockliss 1), resulting in accompanying text book industries. In the United States, this process occurred in the middle of the 19th century. Although it is essential to consider these factors, the relationship between literacy and a given reading public is far from linear: in countries with comparative literacy rates there exist different reading and marketing tendencies, which in turn interacts with qualitative levels of literacy and leisure time. What’s more, the declaration of universal state education, does not guarantee its implementation. We need only recall the British child laborers that continued to toil into the 20th Century.

This state investment in publishing, of course, runs parallel to the Latin American Boom, a publishing phenomenon that not only challenged literary history seen from the perspective of a national tradition, but that was conceived in private publishing endeavors based in Spain. All the while maintaining a constant dialogue with state and revolutionary politics, the Boom, like the state initiatives that it paralleled, created a permanent back-and-forth between different means of cultural administration that proves representative of the period.¹²

Status of the discipline

In the last decade, the humanities have found themselves in what critics such as Roger Chartier have called a ‘material turn,’ resulting in a subsequent distancing from the semiotic and structuralist readings that were of such importance in the mid- 20th century Academy. The inclusion of an article, “The Rise of Periodical Studies” by Sean Latham and Robert Scholes in PMLA of March, 2005 as well as the special issue in 2006 called ‘The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature’, attest to this institutional shift. These approaches do not limit themselves to the ‘linguistic codes’ that were the domain of the post-war New Criticism or, later, of structuralism, but rather they attend to what Jerome McGann calls ‘bibliographic codes’ (typography, format, *mise en page*); these “bibliographic codes” come together in a much more holistic vision of the *book* as a concept that includes its “production, transmission and reception” as well as a broader

¹² The most important conference dedicated to the Boom according to Ángel Rama takes place at the Venezuelan State-publishing house Monte Ávila; Biblioteca Ayacucho published editions of all the Boom writers excluding Octavio Paz; and the Rómulo Gallegos Prize administered by the same institutional system contributed to both García Márquez and Vargas Llosa’s consecration as writers.

understanding of textuality (Chartier, “Crossing” 38, glossing Don McKenzie and *The Sociology of Texts*), that dovetails with varied disciplines from consumer studies, to art history, to anthropology.

Turning our gaze to the field in Latin America, it is important to consider the fact that, unlike the French or English-speaking fields that have flourished for two or more decades, within clear disciplinary coordinates, publishing, editing and the status of the book (as object and critical problem) in Latin America have not always been confronted directly. To the contrary, scholars have explored Latin American print culture obliquely, laterally, creating a discipline of footnotes and textual asides. Although certain key works may be identified, for instance, Bernardo Subercaseaux’s *Historia del libro en Chile (alma y cuerpo)* (1993) or the already mentioned *El imperio de los sentimientos* (1985) by Beatriz Sarlo, they do not constitute a clear tradition and abound in lacunas; these works tend to be the first assimilations of the corresponding archive, inquiries and collections of primary sources, rather than revisions or reconfigurations of an already established field.

Even in the case of Cuba, a fertile field in terms of 20th century critical production, critical texts are scarce. Even Pamela María Smorkaloff’s groundbreaking research from the late 1980s, *Literatura y edición de libros: la cultura literaria y el proceso social en Cuba*, or Ambrosio Fonet’s *El libro en Cuba: siglos XVIII y XIX*, conceived in the 1970s, and published in the early 1990s, insist upon the slipperiness of their sources. In the process of writing her text that explores literary production through topics like copyright and paper production, that is, through the circumstances as well as the materials involved in printing, Smorkaloff, and the other researchers involved,

initially found themselves in a bibliographic quandary. Smorkaloff writes, “Así mismo nos encontrábamos antes de realizar las investigaciones para este estudio: teníamos propósitos muy claros, áreas de investigación nítidamente delineadas, la convicción de que el proyecto valía, pero ignorábamos por completo si existían o no fuentes capaces de suministrar los datos necesarios para armar el gigantesco rompecabezas” (12). The sources that make up this study two and a half decades later were equally elusive, and at moments even phantom, resulting in unforeseen circumnavigation, detours, and deviation in what by all appearances had been a plan.

Cuba

In the first chapter, “The Revolution was Reproduced: the Copy Goes Public and Archival Retreats,” I delineate certain key problematics from the first decade of Revolutionary Cuba, and their discontinuous legacies in the 1990s. Cuba under Fulgencio Batista (1952-1959) was home to the most thriving mass culture industry in Latin America: *Selecciones del Reader’s Digest* was published, the first radio soap opera was broadcasted, and the musical scene of Beny Moré, the Aragón orchestra and Elena Burke became popularized in Havana (Chanan 33; Franco 90). With the beginning of the Revolution, the first of January of 1959, as well as through the Law 187, in March of 1959, the same facilities that had been used by foreign, principally North American, companies to disseminate a mass culture that radiated from the North American sphere and that worked with motifs popularized through the structures of Hollywood and its associated cultural industries, were appropriated by the new government. The revolutionary regime rechanneled these facilities towards other cultural aspirations with

ambitions to redistribute cultural goods. In 1960, the Imprenta Nacional was founded in conjunction with the 1961 literacy campaign and with the foundation of new cultural institutions such as the Unión de Escritores y Artistas and la Casa de las Américas. The previously mentioned organizations functioned under the auspices of the Consejo Nacional de Cultura and later under the Ministerio de Cultura beginning in 1976.

In this chapter I argue that the expropriation and symbolic appropriation of extant printing machinery after the 1959 Revolution resulted in a reimagination of these same technologies. The material and the mechanical align themselves with the Revolution's political and cultural message: the reassimilation of the structures in the new social paradigm. The Omega offset system, for example, where *Selecciones del Reader's Digest* was printed during the Republic, was reconfigured post-1959 according to the publishing ambitions of the new government: the bound book. Although between 1962 and 1966 newer machinery was obtained from East Germany, the initial books were printed within a context of paradox: the hypermodern machinery of the international companies, machinery intended for the printing of journals and newspapers, was refunctioned in order to print the bound books of the new revolutionary government (Smorkaloff 103, 106), forging an alternative metaphor for modernity, a heterodox modernity marked by a non-linear relationship with technology and the commodity. This was materialized through the figure of the 'fusilados,' illegally reproduced Western schoolbooks, and through the publication of texts such as *Diario de Bolivia* by Che Guevara, which thematize the 'copy' 'reproduction,' and the concept of the 'gift,' concepts that will be discussed at greater length in the chapter.

These shifts in models of production, reception and intellectual directions led to

new ways of analyzing the book as a “thing.” This is made evident in Ambrosio Fornet’s introduction to *El libro en Cuba: siglos XVIII y XIX* (1994). For Fornet, the book as a material object was illuminated by the inclusion of workers in the intellectual or academic dialogue that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, and that reappraised books in light of “production, distribution and consumption” (5). Fornet’s analysis allows us to consider the intellectual as an actor in the revolutionary discourse that was permeable to other discourses rhetorically (and historically) assigned to the working classes; at the same time that his study reveals the book as a physical object in new ways. Productive connections may be made between these local, “non-canonical” explorations, and the work of critics such as Chartier, Darnton or Gumbrecht that have constituted the book history and material culture canon, allowing us to territorialize these questions in the Cuban context and to rewrite the “universalist” accounts of book materiality. The circulation, albeit limited, of “The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936) by means of the journal *Cine Cubano* also informs my theoretical (as well as historical) framework that places the *machine* in a position of protagonism as well as of fragility as regards democratization.

Finally, I trace the mass projects of the 1960s to two editorial projects of the 1990s. Thrust into tumult by the absence of Soviet subsidies and the tightening of the United States embargo through the Torrecelli Act (1992) and later the Helms-Burton Act (1996), in the 1990s Cuban public services—and the state—shrank, as tourism and other means of foreign investment were cultivated in both basic services and culture. Two Cuban presses, Ediciones Vigía, initially founded in Matanzas in 1985, and Cuadernos Papiro, founded as an artisanal paper manufacturer in Holguín in 1994, may be read as

nuclei of this phenomenon. Despite technically being supported by the State, the books of these two small presses, through their insertion in a collectors' and archival market and through their anachronistic use of technology and the integration of daily consumer items in the book object, *materialize* the epochal changes in the private circulation of goods and in consumption patterns of the Cuban 1990s. This final section will explore how both presses signal Cuban culture's consolidation in the realm of the collectors' and the archival market, at the same time that the books produced by Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro act as compensatory mechanisms for what I argue is an anti-archival and anti-commodity ethos of the 1960s.

Chile

In my second chapter, "The Coup as Publishing House: Nosotros los chilenos and 1970s Chile," I address state publishing in Chile, particularly the collection *Nosotros los chilenos* published under the auspices of the Editora Nacional Quimantú (1971-1973) and the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral (1974-1976), as well as the privatization of these endeavors under the Transition to Democracy (1990-present). The ideological and political tensions of the latter days of the 1960s materialized in Chile as in few other countries in Latin America apart from Cuba. The fourth of September of 1970, with a third of the popular vote, Salvador Allende, became the first democratically elected socialist president. Although his coalition, the Popular Unity, made up of communists, socialists and radicals, found itself in internal conflict, the brief period of three years in which Salvador Allende served as president represents an historical effort to restructure the reigning system within the confines of parliamentary democracy: this included the

nationalization of coal, copper and the continuation of the agrarian reform already initiated in the 1960s by President Eduardo Frei (1964-1970).

The so-called ‘*vía chilena al socialismo*,’ a project that Allende proclaimed from stages, train platforms, the famous *mítines* in the Parque O’Higgins, was configured politically as a democratic and pluralist vision, contrary to what were perceived as contemporary autocratic states in Chilean discourse of the period, for instance, the Soviet Union, and Maoist China. One of the attempts, although it did not figure in the initial plans of the government (Dittborn), to pluralize the sources of power was the purchase and subsequent nationalization of the publishing house Zig-Zag. Founded in 1919 by Gustavo Hoffman and Agustín Edwards Mac Clure, part of the media-monopoly family of *El Mercurio*, in 1971 Zig-Zag, was on the point of bankruptcy; the purchase of the presses, that today would be called a government bailout, culminated in a state-run national press.

The resulting State publishing house can be inserted into the wider panorama of the large-scale Latin American state-run publishing projects, such as the case of Cuba, as well other state publishing enterprises in other Latin American contexts. Zig-Zag’s new name, borrowed from Mapudungun, an indigenous dialect native to Chile, would be Editora Nacional Quimantú (=“light of knowledge”). During its short duration, Quimantú, published a wide range of titles. In addition to reprints, Editora Nacional Quimantú also circulated a variety of collections of its own design. One of these is the series entitled *Nosotros los chilenos* (October of 1971 –September of 1973), a series that attempted to resignify what at that time was understood as the reader, the book object,

and national identity through topics that range from class warfare to ethnography and high culture.

Following the September, 1973 coup, the series was appropriated by the dictatorship's cultural apparatus, in particular the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, that continued to print the series in virtually identical editions, a project that would later be continued in 2004 by the Chilean independent publisher Ediciones LOM. The mass print-runs of 50,000 copies in the first period and the subsequent continuation of the project, with the same machinery and with the same format (dimensions, typography, etc) by the military government of Augusto Pinochet following the coup d'état of September of 1973, this time with the name *Nosotros los chilenos: Nueva Serie*, raises questions surrounding preconceived ideas about the political affiliations and marks of belonging of aesthetics—I understand aesthetic here in a capacious sense that may include varied sensorial interactions with the object, as well as a series of broader questions regarding the *forms* and *authors* of the democratization of culture and the archive, that can be extended into the Transition-era. The case of *Nosotros los chilenos* both pushes for us to situate book history in the cultural and the social, at the same time that the books' unusual material nature, and life histories, are what allow us to see the socially-conditioned nature of meaning. Like the control set in an experiment, however, *Nosotros los chilenos* is perhaps also a micro-case of what happens even internally to any given edition—as each copy is appropriated in related yet singular ways by their readers—and contexts.

Venezuela

The final and third chapter, “A Brave New Canon: the Invention of the Biblioteca Ayacucho” will discuss state publishing in Venezuela from 1974 to the present. Despite a focus on non-literacy based cultural programs (collective muralism as well as *Villa del Cine*, the state-run film production company, were staple programs), under Hugo Chávez’s presidency (1999-2013) and later under his beleaguered successor Nicolás Maduro, mass literacy and publishing gained momentum in Venezuela’s cultural sphere. There were both continuities and breaks, however, with previous publishing traditions. The National Culture Council (CONAC), historic champion of the state-run publishing houses closed its doors in 2008. But, both Monte Ávila and Biblioteca Ayacucho—the latter being the focus of this chapter—continued in operation. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, furthermore, founded its signature publishing house El Perro y la Rana in 2005, that positioned its publications within a greater state-run apparatus that included the latter projects originating in the 1970s.

El Perro y la Rana was unusual for its time,¹³ and could be read in certain ways more in the clef of the ambitious literacy and publishing projects of other historical moments, such as the Cuban Revolution of the 1960s or the Soviet and the Mexican Revolution of the 1920s and 1930s, than in the clef of its present. Needless to say, it was a potent cultural force, and brought about a rearticulation of the state publishing apparatus; the same logo (a “mestizo” stamp from the Panare region) that adorned its books and its website was also affixed upon the covers of the books of Monte Ávila and the Biblioteca Ayacucho indicating through graphic language, the unifying impulses what

¹³ Despite the continued existence of these projects under current shortages the mass nature of what I am describing is more aptly spoken about in the past tense. This tense change occurred slowly throughout the writing of the manuscript.

had occurred at the level of institutions and of production in the most concrete senses—that is, printing presses and materials.

Despite sharing characteristics and continuities with the other cases, the Venezuelan case is also unique and may be inserted within new political constellations: it is a project that borrows the symbolic appropriations of the 1960s and early 1970s, yet whose economic structure is determined by the geopolitics of oil that have characterized the post-Cold War era and marked its economic and political conflicts. While the Latin American left of the 1960s spoke from the perspective of the Vietnam War, the 1968 student movements, the anti-colonial movements in Africa, in short, from the viewpoint of a climate of growing politicization world-wide, Chavez's Venezuela is forged within another constellation that finds its coordinates within the world's oil reserves (the first Gulf War, the War in Iraq), the same imaginary that gave birth to the broad figure of the 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' that replaced the Cold War imaginary (Žižek). Venezuela pivots between older visions of Panamericanism and brotherhood marked by traditionally geography, and allies defined by the oil geo-economic topography. This may be coupled with a new and ever-more visible relationship with consumer culture that has subtly replaced more traditional forms of political relations.

If Chavism is what visibilized the object of this chapter, the 1970s is what gave it its structure. In the 1970s, enabled by the very particular circumstances of the oil bonanza resulting from OPEP legislation, and the flowering exile community of intellectuals (among other groups) from the Southern Cone, Venezuela proved to be a cultural oasis. Carlos Andrés Pérez, whose first presidency spanned from 1974 to 1979, established the new Ley de Cultura (1975) as well as the Consejo Nacional de la Cultura (CONAC)

(1975), an institution that facilitated the creation of the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos 'Rómulo Gallegos' (CELARG), Monte Ávila Editores, the Teatro Teresa Carreño, the Casa de Bello, la Cinemateca Nacional, the Museo de Bellas Artes, the Galería de Arte Nacional, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (MACCSI), and the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas (CONICIT). Apart from these nine institutions, the Biblioteca Ayacucho (established in December of the previous year), that proposed to establish an affordable collection of Latin American classics ranging from pre-Hispanic to contemporary works, also benefited from the new institutionalism.

Spearheaded by the Uruguayan intellectual Ángel Rama, among other prominent Latin American critics, The Biblioteca Ayacucho, was a book collection of Latin American classics forged by sensibilities traceable to the revolutionary dusk of the 1960s. Yet, instituted by presidential decree in 1974 during the first presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez (1974-1979), the collection itself came into being in a period marked by vast educational reform colored not by the ebullience associated with the Cuban revolution and other revolutionary struggles, rather by the sobering developmentalist policies of guerrilla pacification and neutralization of an armed left.

This final chapter explores how the Biblioteca Ayacucho, producing objects for an intellectual elite, albeit an expanding university population, in the last decade paradoxically became a condition of possibility for a subsequent —and polemical— democratization and symbolic redistribution. I address that complexity in the second half of the chapter in my discussion of state publishing projects founded under Hugo Chávez Frías, framing these projects, in particular the Biblioteca Ayacucho, as both a continuity

and a break with this 1970s tradition as read through the material and spatial qualities of the editions. I thus explore how Bolivarian state publishing apparatus “rethought” the democratization of the book as object through its material conception, yet simultaneously produced content with vertical strands.

CHAPTER 1. The Revolution Was Reproduced: The Copy Goes Public and Archival

Retreats

“El mundo tiene que perder su apariencia, su convencional falsedad, su mentira, su egoísmo y su injusticia, y ha de ser como el ánimo generoso de Don Quijote lo concibe y quiere que sea. De la desesperación de ver y sentir la mentira y la injusticia nace la fe heroica del caballero, y así pelea, porque no es pesimista, porque lleva en su corazón la esperanza.”

—Miguel de Cervantes, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*
Imprenta Nacional, Biblioteca del Pueblo, 1960; illustrated; 100,000
copies; 4 volumes, 25 cents each

“La ciudad tiene sus calles rotas
y nadie las puede arreglar.”

—Ruth Behar, *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad*
Ediciones Vigía, 2013; bilingual; 200 hand-made copies; 40 CUC (approx. \$45)

The two quotes that act as epigraphs for this chapter and the publishing projects that they evoke form an epochal arch between two moments in which the reader and the book were imagined for vastly different publics and intended to be read in vastly different settings. The first, arguably the inaugural moment of print and the printing press under the Revolutionary government, is the 1960 Cuban edition of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. Along with the 1961 Literacy Campaign the following year, the 1960 Imprenta Nacional edition encapsulated a mode of understanding the imaginary of a public text and reader—a text and reader located in the streets. The second, the first two lines of the autobiographical poem, *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad*, published two years ago at the Matanzas-based artisanal press, Ediciones Vigía, by Cuban exile anthropologist, Ruth Behar, instead points, to the shortages of the Special Period of the Cuban 1990s, and to the interiors of precious personal collections and U.S. rare book archives.

The literalization of the public and private understood through the editions in question *materializes* and *spatializes* a particular relationship with the market and the state as these implicate the subjective elements of the ‘proprietary’ and ‘consumer’ imagination.¹⁴ As in the chapters that follow, I will argue that these subjective elements are marked by epoch and place, yet far from unilateral even within a particular historical period or locality. The initial diptych of Miguel de Cervantes’s *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* and Ruth Behar’s *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad* leads us into a broader analysis of the critical resonances of the administration of the public. The ‘public’ here is understood in terms of both space and subject positions. The lettered policies of the 1960s generated subjective maps, a collective “you” or “un tú,” that served as the cardinal point of a newly imagined collective. This subject map, however, is far from straightforwardly expansive. It is instead a cartography that heaves under the weight of history’s tendency towards eclosion and retraction, and the aspiration and perhaps aporia of the democratization and decentralization of culture through vertical structures such as the state.

This cartography will be traced in the following chapter not only through the particular publishing projects in question, but also through a central juridical pole that mediates authorship, readership, and the commodity—copyright policy in Cuba. Historic arbiter of the porous limit between the ‘public’ and the ‘private,’ as well as of liberal individualistic conceptualizations of the author and creator, in the case of Cuba,

¹⁴ I borrow this phrasing (over merely “property” or “consumption”) from cultural anthropologist Rosemary J. Coombe who attempts to linguistically extricate the concept of property (which I extend to its accompanying practice of “consumption”) from its “dominant meanings under neoliberalism” in order to place it in dialogue with a “larger field of possibilities in its histories—judicial and otherwise” (2).

copyright's force lines are subverted, although briefly and incompletely, through a technological narrative of reproduction. This narrative as it relates to technology, the material and immaterial aspects of ideas and books, as well as to the market, reaches into the 2000s by means of fracture as the book in Cuba through artisanal presses, such as Ediciones Vigía, takes on new metaphors of interiors and archival traces.

Letters Take the Street

De Miguel de Cervantes se ha dicho todo: fue el hombre más sabio de su tiempo, no fue más que una pesadilla de de [sic] Don Quijote. Metió en un solo libro todo el afán de justicia, la crueldad y la ternura del mundo. Ha sido admirado por los carreteros andaluces y por los amigos de Goethe, elogiado por Marx y Martí, leído en las tranquilas universidades japonesas y en las bulliciosas calles de la Habana.

—Back cover authored by Ambrosio Fonet, Jean Cassou, *Cervantes: un hombre, una época* (Cocuyo, 1966)

When he wrote the back flap of Jean Cassou's *Cervantes: un hombre, una época*, Ambrosio Fonet, at the time a young editor and aspiring writer with a penchant for Anglo-American prose, had never traveled to Japan. In all likelihood he had never spoken to *carreteros andaluces* regarding their judgments on Cervantes. Despite the German writer's documented predilection for the Spanish classic, the approval of Goethe's friends and of Andalusian street types of the Spanish literary figure, furthermore, was probably more of a literary construction than a certitude. Yet, this chain of references, intersected, of course, by Marx and Martí (not insignificantly the namesake of the Cuban National Library), representing an essential conceptual axis upon which the Revolution would be buttressed, was a way of understanding literature's readers and spaces *in potentia*: the wide gamut of symbolic constructions and constructors which the books published by

state-presses in Cuba could perhaps foster and attain. Unlike the imaginary Japanese university figured within Fornet's matrix of relations that perhaps evokes a more classical imaginary of the reader—academic spaces of isolation that maintain a paused, meditative relationship with knowledge's temporalities, this book, along with other editions published at the time in Cuba, were intended to circulate simultaneously and, perhaps, primordially throughout the “bulliciosas calles de la Habana,” as well as throughout the rest of the country, activating what at the time was seen as democracy of the street.

If history remembers Cuban publishing endeavors of the first years of the Revolution as a moment, on the one hand, in which indigenous and Afro writing, women's writing, and other historically underrepresented authors, readers, and genres found their place in lettered institutions,¹⁵ and, on the other, a time in which socialist realism cemented its place within a national canon, the first titles of the Revolution may come as a surprise. Likewise, the first text published by the Revolutionary Government's Imprenta Nacional in 1960 was not a work produced under the prism of Third World liberation, or of Socialist Realism, as many of the predominate debates of Cuban revolutionary aesthetics could lead us to believe. This inaugural text was instead *Don Quijote de la Mancha*.

¹⁵ There are examples of this editorial line. Nigerian writer, Amos Tutuola, *El bebedor de vino de palma* (1967), and his oral literature, or Casa de las América's patronage of the testimonial genre are instances.

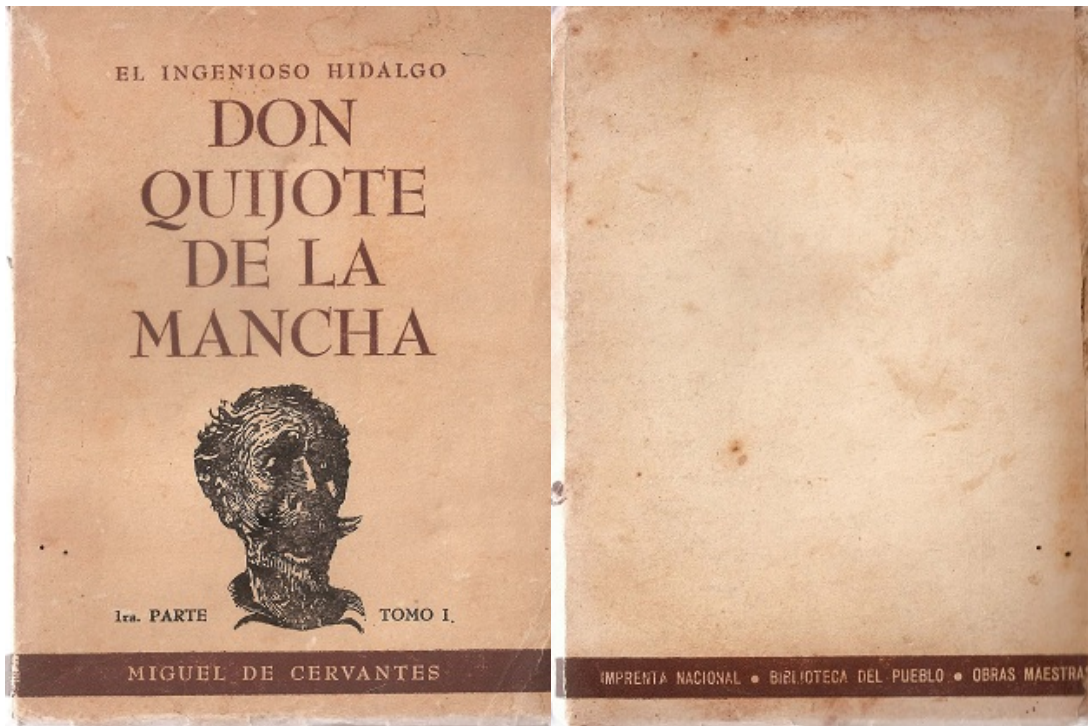


Figure 1: *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Primera Parte, Tomo 1, Imprenta Nacional, 1960

The edition of 100,000 copies would be published in four volumes, at 25 cents a volume. The edition was characterized by irregular printing, “mistakes” in the books’ construction, “arbitrary” (Santonja) textual notations. The book’s title character would be understood as the triumph of the imagination, rather than as representative of a colonial imaginary. Cervantes would conjugate the myths of modernity, developmentalism, and enlightenment to which the moment aspired (*A título personal* 110).

Editorial accuracies, taste, academicism are traits that imply a relationship with time—generally durational—and that, in a parallel fashion, determine editors and readers, as well as the spaces in which their contingent practices, editing and reading, occur. They allude to libraries or universities, desks and a seated posture, silence, and probably an accompanying pencil or pen, as well as the *time* and horizontal surface space to engage in

the non-linear reading that notes and bibliography generally imply. The editorial inaccuracies of the 1960 *Don Quijote* edition, to the contrary, related to an entirely different matrix of practices. These physical, mechanical traces, uneven application of ink and the hasty production, can be read as a commitment to production and to urgency. The reader (and the editor) may be in a public space: a bench, a bus, a waiting room, a work break. The “shoddy” printing and confection, as well as the spaces just mentioned, also hint at a different conception of time: the printer’s material traces parallel a text that was either edited or printed quickly and to be read accordingly.¹⁶

The changing space of letters and its subjects was taken up in a variety of media. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s parodic comedy, *Las 12 sillas* (1962), released two years after the 1960 Cuban edition of *El Quijote*, based off a Soviet novel by Ilya If and Yeveni Petrov, is exemplary in this respect. The film thematizes the figure of the book on several occasions: the mansion’s shelves full of books and hidden treasures, the reading of Marx’s *Capital* by one of the new residents. Most interestingly, however, in the context of this discussion is the cameo, minutes after the appearance of *Capital*, in which the 1960 Cuban edition of Cervantes’ 1605 novel makes its appearance. The frame is filled by cars and urban types: sailors, families, in a dense, boisterous urban arcade, upon which a straw-hatted street salesman erupts. Waving the text above his head, in the fashion of newspaper boys, he announces, barely comprehensible: “*Revolución*, con las últimas noticias. Salió el Quijote.” The latest news and literature are pronounced in a single

¹⁶ See Lisandro Otero, “Tres preguntas a Lisandro Otero,” (1967): “También aspiramos a hacer una revista que no sea ‘respetable’, en el sentido académico de la palabra, una revista que no infunda miedo al posible adquirente, que sea un poco de andar por casa, de leer en la guagua. Una revista que por su aspecto no provoque un distanciamiento en el posible lector, que sólo de ver su portada piense que esa es una publicación destinado a otro, que no es él” (96).

breath, joined to the voice of the news seller and the speed with which he moves through the city streets. This moving image of the book and body can be seen as both triumphant of a certain lettered tradition and inaugural of a particular mythology of letters that is perhaps unparalleled in other Latin American imaginaries. It condenses the lettered image as object and as a system of relations, cementing an ethos of urgency and speed, corporealized and subjectified through its imagined readers and purveyors.

The Book as Commodity and Copyright as Third-World Mediator

¿Quién le paga a Cervantes sus derechos de propiedad intelectual? ¿Quién le paga a Shakespeare? ¿Quién le paga a los que inventaron el alfabeto, a los que inventaron los números, la aritmética, las matemáticas?
—Fidel Castro, “Despedida a las becarias” (April 29, 1967), at Guane, Estadio Deportivo

As the decade progressed these temporal and spatial coordinates of literacy—urgency and the street, understood as a broad metaphor for the public—would converge in an essential rhetorical figure: the suspension in Cuba of the recognition of international copyright law made official in 1967. Due to the shortage of scholastic books, medicine, and technology resulting from the tightening of the U.S. embargo, Cuban policy makers decided to no longer recognize international intellectual property law. In this fashion the imaginary of the public book would intertwine with intellectual property law and neo-colonial mediation of letters in a discourse almost of historical reparations.

“Public” is a term and spatial domain upon which we must tread with caution. Its terminology—like that of the private—is elusive and variously used among disciplines and theorists. 1961 would mark the publication of one of its most notorious theorizations, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, by Jürgen Habermas. Predating the

reassessments of May 1968 and its attendant epistemological shifts, Habermas's account of "private people putting reason to use" in a "sphere between civil society and the state" has been a polemic object for now several generations of scholars, with laments ranging from its limited subjective conceptions—understood as white, male, and literate Europeans (Warner; Piccato)—to critiques of the very possibility of the existence of a public sphere. Intellectual property criticism tends to mobilize the term in relation to the Market. "Private" is tied to market-based modes of social conglomerations, while "public" may be understood as a mode (or modes) of exchange and affiliation mediated by other structures understood as collective or common, among them the state. These are moveable definitions that may be seen as interpenetrated and far from binary, and that admit the potential for other mediating forces in collective structures that escape either term. In the following, I will treat the term in relation to its deployments as regards the market and "public" space in 1960s Cuba.

Fidel's speech to scholarship students, "Despedida a las becarias" (April 29, 1967), at Guane, Estadio Deportivo, Pinar del Río navigated the complexities of symbolic property as it was understood at this juncture. The suspension of copyright in 1967 was significant in its implications upon the transmission of knowledge and cultural capital, but also in the very conception of property, understood as a conceptual marker between private and public. Before the Revolution, Fidel proclaims, "Las casas, la tierra, las montañas, el cielo, el mar, todo era privado. Porque por lo menos en el mar, en los mares que rodeaban a Cuba, si algún barco transitaba por esos mares era un barco privado"

(4).¹⁷ Taking a conceptual leap, Fidel rebaptizes these “private” environmental entities that were “once” bought and sold, alongside intellectual property or “bienes espirituales” (4), as goods of common use (“bienes de uso común y como bienes que pertenecen a toda la sociedad” [4], “Patrimonio de toda la humanidad” [5; 6]).¹⁸ Fidel’s reflections are useful in establishing a discourse of the “common” and the “public,” but also in the back-and-forth that the speech establishes between the material and the immaterial and their relationship with intellectual property. Fidel proclaimed:¹⁹ “Claro está que el aire se puede decir que no era privado por la sola razón que no había manera de agarrar todo el aire y meterlo en un garrafón. [...] Entre todas las cosas de las cuales se hicieron propiedades, hubo una muy “sui géneris” que se llamó propiedad intelectual. Ustedes dirán: Pero esa es una propiedad abstracta. Sí, es una propiedad abstracta. Y cosa extraña: el aire no podía encerrarse en una botella y, sin embargo, algo tan abstracto como es la

¹⁷ For an exploration of the “territorial” undercurrent (“territoriality”) of intellectual property rights see Gitelman’s analysis of the “patent letters” issued to British colonists in North America that serve as the lexical basis for the more familiar intellectual patents at the end of the 19th century (100).

¹⁸ The usage of “patrimonio” or “heritage” is consonant with the contemporary heritage discourse that was in the process of concretization through UNESCO. According to Heike C. Alberts and Helen D. Hazen, “The internationalization of the heritage movement led to the drafting of the World Heritage Convention by UNESCO. Adopted in 1972, the convention encouraged the ‘identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity (WHC 2007b)” (57).

¹⁹ Fidel Castro’s speech at Guane is an extremely rich document. Apart from addressing the question of the immaterial and material aspects of intellectual property, Castro also places emphasis upon the instrumentalization of culture—the imperative of culture’s usefulness (mechanics, agriculture, negatively compared to philosophy in the context of rural communities). This discussion is significant in establishing the intellectual climate of the Cuban 1960s, but also when considering that the 1990s artists’ books that will make up the final portion of this chapter are lauded for their “un-utilitarian” nature.

propiedad intelectual sí podía encerrarse en una especie de botella” (4).²⁰ “Air” becomes a figure through which Fidel denaturalizes the private nature of intellectual property. If air cannot be contained, bottled up for sale, how could thoughts and ideas?

Fidel’s argument for the “abstraction” of intellectual property may seem strange in the face of a Revolutionary project that attempted to rewrite history in terms of its material context and modes of production. Yet, the formulation of the book especially in the first decade or so of the Cuban Revolution would appear to oscillate between the most concrete of objects,²¹ to a material paradox of the appropriation of an entity whose outlines were akin to the vaporous outlines of air: how to free the abstract and intangible

²⁰ Roger Chartier addresses the immaterial and material premises of intellectual property in “Crossing Borders in Early Modern Europe: Sociology of Texts and Literature” (2005): “For a long time within the Western tradition, the interpretation of texts, whether they were canonical or not, was separated from the analysis of the technical and social conditions of their publication and circulation. There are many reasons for this dissociation: the permanence of the opposition between the perfect purity and corruption by the matter, invention of copyright that established the author’s property in a text considered as always identical, whatever the form of its publication, or again the triumph of an aesthetics that judged works independently of their different and successive materialities.” He references scholar of Shakespeare, David Kastan and his description of what he calls “Platonists,” or those who “consider [...] that a work transcends all of its possible material incarnations, and as pragmatic that which affirms that no text exists outside of the materialities that propose it to its readers.” Chartier insists that this binary is far from an incidental observation, rather a key dividing line in both literary criticism and editorial practices (42).

²¹ Ambrosio Fornet’s prologue to *El libro en Cuba: siglos XVIII y XIX*, for instance, published in 1994, but hatched in 1972, during the Torneos de Saber with workers in the context of the International Year of the Book: “En los primeros ocho meses de 1972 desempeñé sin rubor ese papel dando conferencias y orientando debates ante los auditorios más diversos y en un área geográfica que abarcaba virtualmente todo el territorio nacional, desde La Habana hasta Santiago de Cuba. Pude observar así este hecho curioso, aunque previsible: mientras el interés de los escolares se limitaba casi siempre a los cuales y los cuándo—en las charlas menudeaban entonces los títulos, las fechas y las anécdotas del oficio—, el de los trabajadores se concentraba casi exclusivamente en los cómo y los porqué, es decir, en los problemas de la producción, la distribución y el consumo” (5).

knowledge that circulates in the ‘immaterial’ sphere of “thought” and “voice” from the enclosures of the commodity culture of the culture industry, and, in particular, of the commercial book? How does the technological reproduction of text both showcase the material conditions of knowledge and their very liquidity and de-auratic nature?²² And how does the circulation of these materials as “common” take part in a conformation of the social?

The book as commodity has a long and tumultuous history. In the U.S., 1959, the year of Cuban Revolution, corresponded to a change in the patterns of commercialization of mass-market paperbacks, a transition that marked a corporatization of the book that paralleled other instances of market consolidation. In *Paperbacks, U.S.A., A Graphic History, 1939-1959*, the Dutch researcher and collector Piet Schreuders describes a paradigm shift detected through the covers of mass market paperbacks where “the charming, naive, artistic, daring covers, covers used as testing grounds for new graphic forms, covers whose designs were not 100% dictated by sales departments,” buckled, along with the texts therein, under the pressure of “sterile marketing policy” (2).

Schreuders ventures the hypothesis that the purchase of Avon Books by the Hearst

²² The debate that I address in my introduction established by Rancière, “Mechanical Arts and the Promotion of the Anonymous” (2006) in which Rancière problematizes the technological origins of the visibilization of the masses by resituating Benjamin’s famous investment in film in what he sees as the immaterial mechanics of visibilization in 19th century novels by Balzac, Hugo, and Flaubert, is useful to recall in this context. Fidel, in the midst of a speech framed by underdevelopment discourse, invokes Balzac in the following paragraph as an example of the poverty and material want with which “intellectual creators” have historically battled in the face of the profiting culture industry, once again emphasizing the oscillation that is established in the 1967 speech between material and immaterial conditions inherent in the production of knowledge. The second half of the speech at Guane is occupied furthermore by a discussion of technological patents.

Corporation in 1958, Signet by MCA, Dell by Doubleday, Popular Library by CBS, Bantam by Bertelsmann Verlag and Pocket Books by Gulf & Wester in the 1960s and 1970s both changed and signaled transitions within editorial policy. This was paralleled by vast changes in retail as bookstores, historically an urban phenomenon, shifted their gazes towards the suburbs, malls, and chain structuring.²³

Cuba, especially in the 1950s, a testing ground for U.S. consumer culture, underwent similar shifts in the 1950s. This was signaled by the installation of retail chains, selling clothing, domestic consumer products (radios, televisions, mass-market paperbacks), as well as American automobiles that paired the booming tourist economy (Pertierra *Consumer* 26-29; 111-12). Following the 1959 Revolution, however, there was both a rapid and gradual nationalization of much of this infrastructure including book production. The presses of the privately owned newspaper, the *Excelsior*, became the Imprenta Nacional, while the Omega Press where Selecciones del *Reader's Digest* had been printed for all of Latin America in the 1950s was also quickly converted to national print production. Other private presses would follow as the decade ensued.

²³ See John B. Thompson's *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (2010).



Figure 2: “Pausas de felicidad,” Coca-Cola advertisement, 1961 (*Verde Olivo* and *Bohemia*)

In 1961, the mass literacy campaign that enveloped the country was still shared by both the public and private spheres. Issues of *Verde Olivo* and *Bohemia* from 1961 boast a full-page Coca-Cola advertisement, with the title, “Pausas de Felicidad.” The advertisement portrays an older, heavy-set woman, with large unwieldy hands, writing in impeccable cursive on a notepad the word “libertad.” The notepad is on a wooden desk, with an ornate table lamp to the left over the student, and a lace doily upon which a Coca-

Cola bottle is placed with a glass and a portion of the notepad. A slight, elegant hand (her *alfabetizadora*, one assumes) guides her hand. The *alfabetizadora*'s manicured nails are painted red, and don a glimmering ring. We are not permitted to see more than the *alfabetizadora*'s hand and lower arm, as if indicating a benevolent force as abstraction, rather than as subject. The doily points to "genteel" society, property of value (a table with wood fine enough that it needs protection), even leisure (hand knit?), while the *alfabetizadora*'s nail polish and ring would appear to be a symbol of economic privilege that doubles the hand of the student, tracing the word—liberty—ever so redolent in connotations in the context of the liberal democracy to which Coca-Cola has inextricably been tied in a dual commercial and political imaginary.



Figure 3: "Mercado Negro," *Caimán Barbudo*, Dec. 1, 1966

As the decade progressed, however, an increasing presence of the state in the

mediation of public cultural goods could be perceived in continued nationalization measures. An article and comic, by Victor Casaus y Luis Rogelio Nogueras, on “pirated” mass market U.S. and Mexican paperbacks in 1966 in the recently founded *El Caimán Barbudo*, gives a sense of the growing divisions of the period; of an epoch that was didactic and utopian; democratizing and paternalistic; radicalizing and secularly evangelizing. Under capitalist “monopoly,” Casaus and Nogueras wrote, national cultural was neglected in favor of mass-market cultural figures: “la penetración ideológica a través de los comics dibujados en Estados Unidos y ‘doblados’ al español en México, adquirió ribetes de éxito editorial. Superman siempre fue más conocido en Cuba que Wilfredo Lam.” U.S. and Mexican cultural production (in a sub-section titled “LOS COMICS: SADISMO, SEXO, VIOLENCIA”) were now considered “veneno ideológico,” “narcóticos” that “estupidizan al pueblo” by way of “las formas anticulturales de Corín Tellado.” These materials developed “el mal gusto de las masas” and were domain of “las incautas amas de casa, o [...] las adolescentes” (18). Rewriting comics and mass culture as ideological machines, Casaus and Nogueras pathologized these objects through both the text and the image. The latter portray a bourgeois female reader in search of capitalist fantasies of upward mobility.

The Revolutionary-era print production in contrast is characterized as attending to the “necesidades de los lectores” through their variety and mass distribution.

En 1962, apareció en las librerías cubanas un libro de carátula carmelita. En la penúltima página de ese libro se consignaba su tirada: 100,000 ejemplares. Para un país como Cuba, en relación con su población, la cifra era asombrosa. Cuatro años antes, nadie lo hubiera pensado.

El libro contenía una selección de poemas de César Vallejo, Rubén Darío, Melville, Cervantes, la lista comenzaba con disímiles nacionalidades y épocas: solo las unía las cifras de la tirada. Miles de buenos libros comenzaron a inundar las librerías. La Editorial Nacional mejoró y desarrolló estos empeños. Obras maestras de

la literatura universal se encontraban en las librerías con las de los autores nacionales. Otra cosa nueva: los autores no tenían que regalar los libros, las librerías los distribuían (mal que bien) en todo el país.

Buenos libros, muchos libros: las ofertas de las librerías del país llenan las necesidades de los lectores. (Casaus and Nogueras 19)

The key phrasing, which in the magazine figured as the section's title, "Buenos libros, muchos libros," in its simplicity and verticalization of taste and horizontalization of readership would appear to synthesize the project's initial vectors: to bring a high-brow canon of Cuban, European, and U.S. authors—many times "pirated" themselves and "regalados," but by the state and its editors—to the "masses" in print runs previously unheard of outside of foreign commercial spheres; to satisfy the "needs" of those readers, as perceived by the Revolution's editors.²⁴

This project, by the mid-1960s in full swing, was much more than just an imposition of taste, but rather implied historic inequalities in the distribution of profit in the book trade. In Cuba and in Latin America the gaps between publishing, the bookseller, and the writer have historically been wider than in publishing contexts in Europe and the United States, a fact of which 1960s Cuban cultural policy was acutely aware. In 1970 a Cuban edition of Robert Escarpit's *Sociología de la literatura* (1958) translated by Virgilio Piñera was published. A French proponent of the sociology of literature, Escarpit explored the social and economic force lines of lettered culture.²⁵ The editor's note in the Cuban edition by Ana Victoria Fon, however, attempted to localize

²⁴ This shift to a public or governmental administration of culture has been variously interpreted in its critical assessments. It has been viewed by some as an emancipation from commercial epistemic monopolies and the reformulation of culture as a public good, and by others as a means of ideological indoctrination and critical impoverishment. For recent exemplars of the first two highly opposed stances see Kumaraswami and Looseley, and Rojas, respectively.

²⁵ Regarding the connections between the "sociology" of literature and book history see English.

Escarpit's analysis in the Cuban case of copyright abrogation. Applauding Escarpit's focus on social and socio-economic factors, Fon territorialized —in an anthropological, rather than Deleuzian sense— *Sociología de la literatura* in the Cuban context. She wrote, “este revelador ensayo tiene desde nuestra perspectiva, sin embargo, la desventaja de que en parte se refiere exclusivamente a las sociedades capitalistas y, en especial, a la sociedad francesa” (181). According to Fon, where in France the average pocket book was equivalent to the compensation of a half hour to two hours of work, in Latin America in the 1960s it was equivalent to a day or more of salary. The statistics Fon presented called attention to the troubled imbalance between subsistence and readership — aggravated in Latin America— that lay in the relation between salary and cultural product.

It was not only readers that sustained a vexed bond, however, with the culture industry, so did authors. Parsing out profit distribution, Fon insisted upon the ancillary role of the author in the dissection of a book's profits: “En América Latina, del precio de venta al público de una obra, el autor recibe un 10%; el distribuidor, entre un 10% y un 15%; el librero, entre un 35% y un 40% y el editor un 40%, del que debe, sin embargo, deducir los gastos de producción (aproximadamente un 20%).” Later, quoting García Márquez, the point is driven home: “Los escritores de éxito somos como vacas lecheras de las cuales vive medio mundo, desde los fabricantes de papel hasta los libreros, pero a nosotros nos corresponde solamente el 10% de éste que pagamos al agente literario y menos los impuestos. Hay que vender como cuatro ejemplares de una novela para llevar a los niños al cine” (184). García Márquez's “cash cow” authors became yet another link in the chain of capital exploitation and surplus value. By extension, *Cien años de soledad*,

arguably the instituting work of the Latin American boom's economic ascension, became a microcosm of commodity exploitation. Intellectual property rights was thus conceived not as an individual juridical category, that is, not as a mode of protecting an author, rather as “a transactional matter of contracts among corporate, state, and other parties” (Hernández-Reguant 13). This argument, among others, paved the way retroactively for copyright's elimination as ethical imperative.

The bibliography on copyright is vast. In the last decades scholars have unearthed intellectual property's basis upon liberal conceptions of authorship. The “author” function has been conceived as an individual working within Western parameters of invention to the exclusion of traditional knowledge paradigms—generally based on collective creativity and authorship.²⁶ Intellectual property conceptualizations, moreover, have been found exclusionary along the lines of gender and race, as female creativity in the domestic sphere has consistently been overlooked, and women of color, in particular, have felt the brunt in their double exclusion from White, male professional spheres of intellectual property law, commerce, and epistemology. While intellectual property regimes have excluded non-dominant subjects from its realms in the United States and Europe, some have argued that its very inception is the product of former colonial powers' attempts to administer the consumption of Western intellectual goods in the

²⁶ Tracing the appropriation of the song “Guantanamera” through the lens of a copyright dispute, Peter Manuel articulates the tense conceptualization of authorship as simultaneously influenced by 1960s Marxism and long-standing local oral traditions and understandings of collective originality. In *música guajira*, Manuel writes, “melodies and texts were freely borrowed, recycled and modified,” while in the early twentieth century, commercial recording “allocat[ed] a new dimension of financial importance to compositions and a system of registration that favored individual rather than collective claims to authorship and ownership” (140), that was later reformulated by the Revolution as both an innovation and a return.

former colonies, especially through the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886) and the U.S. Copyright Act (1909) (Woodmansee 12; Reguant 9).²⁷ Cuba's decision to no longer recognize international copyright law in 1967, and to freely produce Western texts, patents, and other materials within Cuban national borders was thus inserted within the liberation struggles of post-colonialism and tercermundismo of the 1960s.

The December, 1967 edition of *Pensamiento Crítico*, a journal recently founded to join theory and praxis especially as it related to Panamericanism and tricontinental revolutionary struggles, discussed the topic in its various permutations.

Responde a una necesidad y a una ética. Necesidad de apropiarnos de los logros técnicos, científicos, literarios y artísticos creados por la humanidad a lo largo de siglos, como escalón imprescindible para continuar el desarrollo acelerado de nuestra economía, única forma de superar el subdesarrollo. Moral del que sabe que este subdesarrollo que padece, y sus secuelas de atraso técnico y científico, fueron históricamente *condición* del desarrollo de otros, moral del que sabe que esa técnica y esa ciencia y ese arte fueron *también* creados por él, por el subdesarrollo, y que en rigor le pertenecen. (Martínez Heredia 1)

Copyright's continued recognition was thus a way of preserving an historical dynamic of development in which North and South developed in a negative and uneven symbiosis.

To eliminate copyright was to render poetic justice, to join the "accelerated" technological and scientific temporality of the North, and to act as "ejemplo" y "precedente" for the rest of Latin America.

Copyright's circumvention, like most gestures related to the early years of the Cuban revolution, not only has its intellectual rationale, but also an accompanying

²⁷ As regards the administration of copyright in Latin American, the Berne Convention and U.S. Copyright Act were followed by the Buenos Aires Convention of 1910, the Havana Convention of 1928, and the Washington Convention of 1946. (U.S. Senate, On Copyright Law Revision, 1961, p.45).

mythology. The publishing endeavor Edición Revolucionaria (1965-67), scholastic editions reprinting primarily Spanish-translated, U.S. textbook material for Cuban university students, represented an antecedent to the 1967 legal officialization of the policy. Its volumes are, furthermore, tied to a Revolutionary parable surrounding copyright's circumvention. The parable, recounted on several occasions throughout the ensuing decades by one of the Cuban university professors involved in the project, finds at its core the legal stewardship of culture as it intertwines with cultural democratization, recreating what could be called an inaugural scene of free-use and the implementation of culture as "gift" in Cuba.

The story goes: An evening in 1965 Fidel Castro visits La Plaza Cadenas (Agromonte) to inquire about the rising need in academic material due to the scarcity rendered by the first years of the embargo. Castro takes note of the titles of which the university students are in dire need. Months later, waiting for the professor, Rolando Rodríguez (later president of the Instituto del Libro), in Rodríguez's office, Castro announces a policy of direct and illicit reproduction of Western textbooks through an almost ludic game of visual illusion. Rodríguez narrates:

¿Dónde fue editado este libro? Una pregunta un poco ingenua, pero por si acaso lo abrí y le dije: En España y dice: *Chicho*, trae el otro. Entonces me da uno exactamente igual y me pregunta: ¿Y éste dónde fue editado? Me digo a mí mismo: ¡Oh, esta pregunta tiene ya una trampa! Lo abro otra vez y le digo: Bueno, Comandante, en España, en Barcelona. Me dice: ¿Puedes creer que no? El primero sí, pero el segundo está editado en Cuba. Mira, mañana te vas a ver el rector Vilaseca y le pides una lista que él tiene con los libros que hacen falta porque ha pasado una cosa: los muchachos necesitan muchos libros y nosotros no tenemos tanta divisa para comprarlos, así que vas allá, le pides una lista y vamos a <<fusilarlos>>, es decir, a reeditarlos. (240)

That is, Fidel brings the young philosophy professor two books, both by all appearances printed in Spain. One, however, is a Cuban reproduction. The identical nature of the two

books and the process of the illicit copy is rhetoricized and then militarized. The books are called “fusilados,” shot, as if the electric static of the copy were akin to a rifle, echoing literacy’s associations with arms—now extended to free-use—in the 1961 Literacy Campaign. The veracity of the parable is dubious, faithful to the genre, yet illustrates the initial policy’s resonances like few explanatory vehicles, intertwining principles of underdevelopment, postcolonial justice, and the universal right to culture through an insinuated play on the importance of *place* in the *originality* of a copy.²⁸ The physical manifestation of these books is “identical,” yet much of their meaning is rendered by their social, geographic, and economic deployment, what historian Adrian Johns would call their “transitive fixity” or “mobile mutability” (Johns 19).²⁹

The technological and material process and metaphor that would mediate this circumvention was the “fusilado” and the idea of the copy. The “fusilado”—or shot

²⁸ On the culture of the copy and reproduction in Cuba, see Coco Fusco and Robert Knafo’s “Interviews with Cuban Artists” (1986). Despite the virulent critiques in liberationist discourse of the “copy”/ “la copia” (Getino/Solanas 34), the “copy” as “fusilado” was read as emancipatory. The editions, contrary to the anecdote in question, in actuality are far from identical. As Johanna Drucker writes on offset: “[T]he concept of reproduction is always qualified. Transformation and mutation are effects of reproduction—the original is not only not present in its reproduced form, but is seriously altered by the photographic and printing processes [...]” (188).

²⁹ Print culture’s classic “textual stability” and “durability” (Eisenstein, 1983) was seminally reformulated by Adrian Johns as “transitive fixity” (John, 2000); that is, the production of “knowledge” through print as generated through “mobile mutability” (rather than Eisenstein’s “mobile immutability”)—print as frequently “corrupted” and altered as it circulates among new printers and new readers giving “knowledge” both “local” and “universal” implications. This mirrors the oscillation found in Cuban discourse in broad terms between the “liquid” and “solid” of culture. Yet the Cuban theorization seems to be understood less through a logic of textual intervention; and more through a reading conditioned by “materialist” strands in which culture is at once a radically “material” and “mechanical” process—and an exercise of “containment.” Thus, at the same time that culture is rewritten as a process of *production*, the more fluid aspects of “ideas” are also artificially “fixed” in the process of ‘making’ and ‘concretizing’ culture in cultural objects.

text—has been popularly understood as a photocopy, yet in actuality was printed through offset (Rodríguez, e-mail), another photomechanical process. Like photography and the Xerox, offset implied a developing and appropriative process, in which photosensitive surfaces were exposed and developed before printing. Although lacking the ease of the photocopy machine or the portability of a camera, in the 1960s, offset’s speed altered the rate “at which information” could “be transmitted and reproduced, by allowing for the rapid recombination of printed materials.” Its photomechanical print impressions, furthermore, facilitated “the creation of novel vehicles of communication and novel groups of readers” (Carey 26).³⁰

In *On Photography* (1977), Susan Sontag analyzed the photograph and the camera as inextricably tied to arms in part due to the form itself of a camera: its lens, cylindrical arm. The verbs associated with its usage, as Sontag eloquently wrote—“load,” “aim,” “shoot”—are both phallus and gun (13).³¹ Photography, furthermore, is tied to questions of domination, evidence, surveillance, and memory (i.e., snapshot as memento mori), but it is also connected to possession, appropriation, and ownership, constellations that,

³⁰ Lisa Gitelman, for instance, rethinks Habermas’s conceptions of “public” versus “private” through new subject and spatial axes. Her work on early office and reproduction technology represents an expanded understanding of public and private, on the one hand, through an broader vision of inscription, and, on the other, through the increasing visibility of subordinated subjects within novel spatial realms, thus changing the “public” nature of the latter in what she calls “changing experiences of public knowledge, public space, self, and community” (11). In the case of patents, she also outlines the territorial and colonial metaphors that mark its history and rhetoric (“royal letters patent,” legal discourse that compares patents and intellectual property to a “deed which marks the bounds of a parcel of land.”)

³¹ Friedrich A. Kittler ties cinematic technology to war technology (automatic rifle, airplanes) and processes. Interestingly enough typewriters in their early avatars also shared this past: Sven Spieker develops similar rhetorical resonances between the typewriter and the machine gun (77), especially relevant considering that E. Remington and Sons were originally gun manufacturers (82).

continuing with Sontag's analysis, connect to *knowledge* and rapidly to *power*. The term "fusilado," like most photomechanical processes, carries similar acquisitive associations; yet in the Cuban context would even more strongly imply intertwined questions of social and economic cohesion.

In fact, the protagonist of the parable is not Fidel, nor Rolando Rodríguez, but rather the books and the collective narrative that they represent. The University students were subsequently given the "libros fusilados" with the small card inside that read:

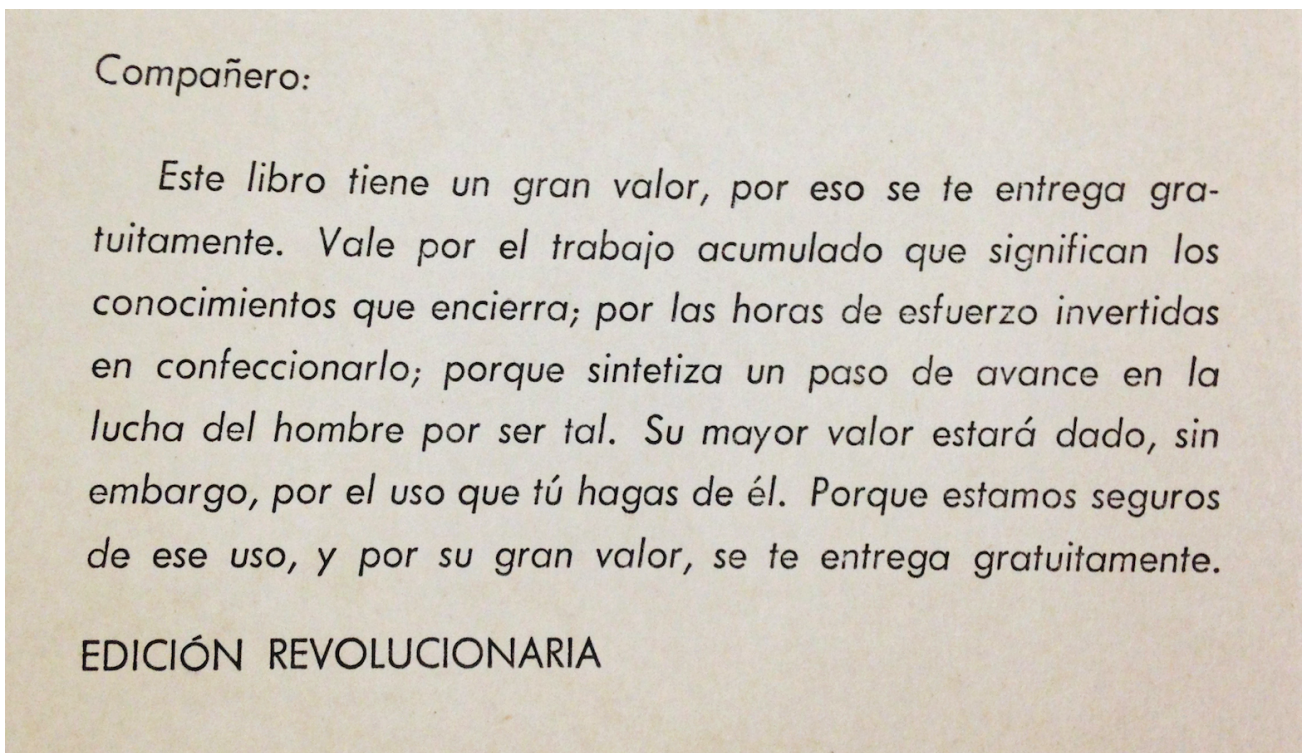


Figure 4: Card, Edición Revolucionaria 1965-1967

The precepts of the canonized incident and the card that accompanies the resulting books are pregnant with significance. The card's text, playing with classic economic theory, invests the books with a tremendous value due to both the manual and mental work implied in its production. As the text extracts the books from the monetary logic of the

market and, thus, the classic Marxian commodity, it reconsiders them in terms of their “use” and their role in the formation of an emancipated subject. These books are of great value, ergo they should be free, a “gift,” if you will, the card insists, inverting market-based logics.

The card works with classic Marxist thought, yet is also in dialogue with more local variations. Developed in Ernesto Guevara’s famous essay, “El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba” (*Marcha/Verde Olivo*, 1965), the construction of the “New Man,” for instance, runs parallel to technical development and production through the prism of anti-colonialism and developmentalism. The essay argues that the modes of production—now in the possession of Cuban society—result in a reformulation of work as “social duty.” If under capitalism commodity relations defined an alienated consciousness, this rethinking of work, in turn, became the condition for objects that reflected their producers: a reflection between material production and subject formation, in which the subject would find him or herself more “complete” (“completo”/“pleno”), establishing a chain of relations between work, objects, and subjectivity.³²

In practice, this liberation from commodity relations would be far from clear. Although Ediciones Revolucionarias may have temporarily freed themselves from the inequalities of the market or of commodity status, they were still present within a field of symbolic capital. As Pierre Bourdieu wrote in a 1989 lecture regarding the adjustments to the field of symbolic production in a State socialist context (in particular the GDR), the relation between economic and symbolic capital under State socialism is not abolished, rather it presents different force lines. “The relative weight of cultural capital,” Bourdieu

³² For an analysis of the “new man’s” evolution in criticism, see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s *New Spirit of Capitalism* [1999] (Verso, 2005).

writes, “is proportionally increased,” at the same time as “political capital.” Political capital is defined as “another principle of differentiation, another kind of capital, the unequal distribution of which is the source of the observable differences in the patterns of consumption and lifestyles, which guarantees its holders a form of private appropriation of goods and public services (residences, cars, hospitals, schools, and so on)” (*Practical Reason* 16).

Notwithstanding these internal fissures in the logic of its implementation, in Revolutionary Cuba the imaginary of culture as gift took hold in many sectors of symbolic exchange —not only in the lettered sphere, but also within a broader panorama of cultural circulation. Robin Moore in his book about music under the Revolution writes:

[E]xecutives considered musicians to have less need of royalties in a socialist society given that they were guaranteed a higher wage, free health care, and pensions... Additionally, the concept of paying artists extra royalty income clashed with Marxist ideals of egalitarianism and Che Guevara’s drive to orient Cuban society around moral rather than material incentives. Leaders felt art should be offered freely to the people, that it should not exploit them with fees that would end up in the pockets of a single composer, that it should be a spontaneous gift. Copyright, from such a perspective, represented everything that was wrong about the capitalist system. (77)

To further understand the significance of the Ediciones Revolucionarias card and its pertinence to a larger cultural field, the concept of the “gift” in its complex apprehension must be unpacked.

In marketing theory, of course, as we all know, the “gift” or the “freebie” is the ultimate bait for the gullible and unsuspecting consumer, as a vehicle to engender previously unimagined needs and desires or as a mode of generating future purchases through bundling of product compatibility. That is, the gift in this case is a strategy embedded in capitalist logic or, at least, in capitalist practice. That being said, classic

20th century sociological or literary scholarship —at least until the 1980s— persistently theorized the concept of the gift in opposition to a market-based economy, the usage with which Cuban cultural production of the period would seem to affiliate. Diverse critics have parsed out the particularities of this line of reasoning. The French sociologist Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift* (1925), in which Mauss conceived the “gift” as a means of exiting capitalist patterns of exchange, is perhaps the most famous exemplar. In Mauss’s formulation, the gift represented a lapse in capitalism’s logic, sealed by a public, social pact.

Mauss’s analysis has given rise to several generations of derivative (and contestatory) analyses, deconstructivist, post-colonial, and feminist critiques among them. In anthropology and from a post-colonial lens, Arjun Appadurai took issue with the stark division placed between gift-bartering and commodity in many of Mauss’s appropriations. Appadurai resituated the relative binary between the commodity and the gift along a fluid spectrum in both “traditional” and capitalist societies, “Gifts and commodities don’t have an apples-and-oranges relationship. Rather, a gift and a commodity are often one and the same thing: if I catch it here, it’s a gift. If I catch it one week later, when someone’s having a garage sale, it’s on the road to Commodity Land” (20). In sociology, Bourdieu problematized the concept of reciprocation. The darkest of the analytical permutations posited by Bourdieu called “the initial act” of gift giving “an attack on the freedom of the one who receives it. It is threatening: it obligates one to reciprocate, and to reciprocate beyond the original gift; furthermore, it creates obligations, it is a way to possess, by creating people obliged to reciprocate” (94).

Literary studies have also tried their hand at the “gift.” Jacques Derrida in *Given*

Time: I. Counterfeit Money (*Donner le temps*, 1991) through the frame of deconstruction, for his part, placed in doubt the possibility of the interruption of private interest (developed by Mauss) through a theorization of the gift (and hospitality) as aporia. Derrida's analysis of aporia has in turn been interestingly resituated by Michael Tratner in his perceptive essay "Derrida's Debt to Milton Friedman" (2003), in which Tratner rethinks Mauss's notion of the gift as it relates to 20th century economic theory, in particular, Keynesian economics and reframes Derrida's intervention in relation to the theories of Milton Friedman.

The "gift" deployed in the card of Ediciones Revolucionarias—and articulated through the publishing projects that followed as the decade concluded— resonated with and drew from the gift's theoretical tradition of the first half of the 20th century. These theories were assimilated according the juncture's exigencies, simultaneously developed in the spheres of praxis and theory, alternating within the state's cultural apparatus between critique and the perhaps utopian implementation of free use doctrines. The cultural gift as both a symbol of free use and of nonmonetary, noncapitalist modes of exchange and kinship, for 1960s Cuba implied an intricate constellation that joined anti-imperialism and underdevelopment-based rationales. The "gift," as articulated at the time, also transgressed property and authorship's sanctity, reconfiguring property's spatial (public) and temporal associations (present-future). It also questioned the impermeability of the historical divisions between intellectual and manual work, as Western cultural goods were made to circulate publicly and Cuban authors and artists, like workers, were compensated through wages rather than royalties.

The gift as manifested in Cuba would also, however, take on more ambivalent

manifestations—episodes that revealed its more complicated underbelly. Ediciones Revolucionarias and the abolition of international copyright law in 1967 attempted to relativize the singular purchase of commerce upon culture, placing symbolic production and distribution in an urgent, collective, and public matrix. Che's *Bolivian Diary* (November 7, 1966 - October 7 1967)—of which a million copies were printed in Cuba in 1968 by the Instituto del Libro, and more abroad—the largest print run in Revolutionary Cuba's publishing history, presented a similar problematic, yet revealed perhaps otherwise hidden valences in which authorship and commercial structures remained intact.

If Ediciones Revolucionarias' founding mythology is organized along the rapid-fire metaphors of reproduction, the *Diary's* trajectory is of a cloak and dagger variety. According to an interview published in April, 1997 in Chile, the diary was smuggled in January of 1968 across the Bolivian border to Chile by Bolivian Minister of Interior Antonio Arguedas. Arguedas by means of the Bolivian lawyer Víctor Zanier concealed the diary—whose original form were two red notebooks purchased in Frankfurt, epicenter of German capitalism—in strips of 35 mm photographic film glued to the interior of two records of folkloric Bolivian music. The film reproductions were missing two pages, extracted by the Bolivian government in order to trace any leaked edition, marking its provenance. Masking the content that they furtively transported, the covers of the records were serene images of reed boats (barquitos de Totorá) on Lake Titicaca (Cabieses 8). Manuel Cabieses, the recipient of the 35mm film in Chile and the interviewee, wrote “fue escrito con una letra endiablada de médico, además de un hombre que está apurado y en malas condiciones físicas (8).

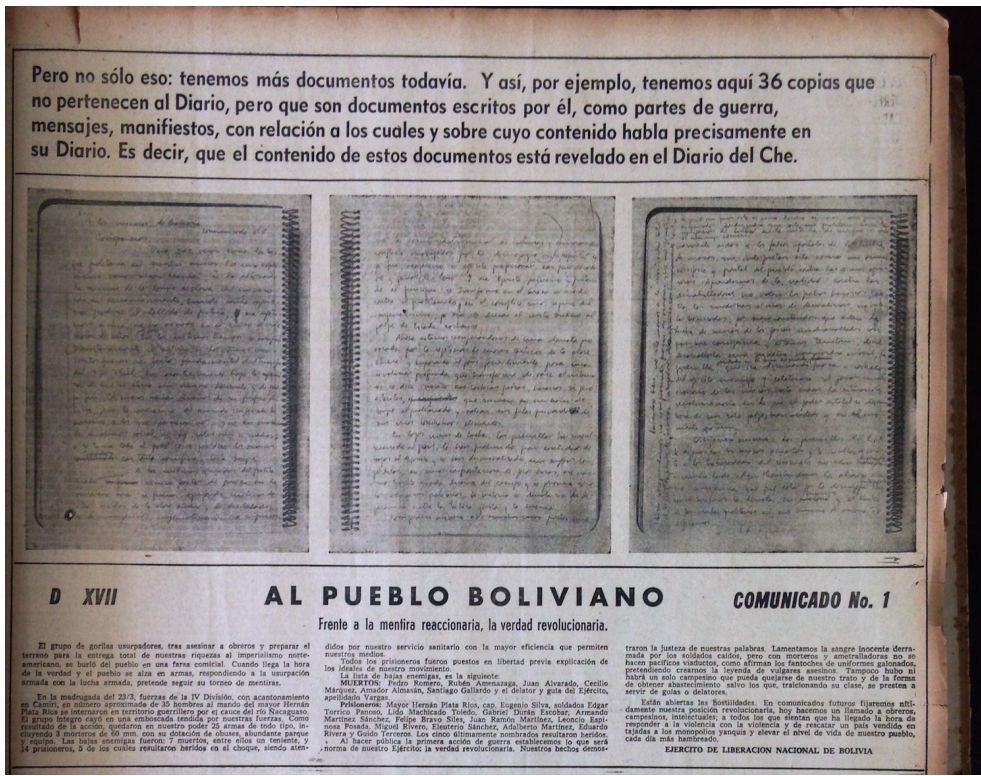


Figure 5: “Al ‘pueblo boliviano,” *Granma*, 4 July, 1968

Upon arrival in Cuba in a false compartment of a briefcase, the Instituto del Libro would soon publish the diary in a mass edition of a million copies. Through a series of articles in *Juventud Rebelde*, *Granma*,³³ and other state press organs published on the first of July, 1968—a day after the diary’s release to the public—with the principal addressee of “el pueblo,” one can construct the ‘nexus’³⁴ that the diary composed: its merchandising

³³ Founded in October, 1965, both *Juventud Rebelde* and *Granma* are official periodicals of the Cuban Communist Party. *Granma* amalgamated the Movimiento 26 de Julio’s *Revolución* and the Communist newspaper *Hoy*, while *Juventud Rebelde* was a consolidation of *Diario de la Tarde* and *Mella*.

³⁴ I borrow this term, concept, and following methodology of analysis from Adrian Johns’ *The Nature of the Book*, in which he describes the printed book as a “complex set of social and technological processes” that is followed by an equally intricate web of agents, modes of use, and “circumstances” that create “a nexus” which “conjoin[s] a wide range of worlds of work” (3).

and commodification, the material conditions of its production, the immaterial conditions of Che himself, and the final destination of the text in a reading public of Cuban citizens and foreign consumers.

These debates take as their point of departure Cuba's putative "patrimony" over the text. If the *fusilados* appropriated material foreign to the Revolution through reproduction, the publishing of Che's diary was the re-appropriation of the Revolution's deterritorialized symbolic production in the midst of the Bolivian government's attempts to sell the diary in capitalist markets. The contenders were Magnum Photos Inc., and several other U.S. television franchises who offered the Bolivian government \$200,000 for the rights of the diary. Magnum was followed by *Time-Life*, and the West German media conglomerate *Der Stern*. *Granma* interpreted the failed negotiations as a result of the companies' reticence regarding the diary's dubious provenance and ownership:

Al parecer, el regateo de las empresas editoriales imperialistas por la obtención de los <<derechos de publicación>> sobre el diario del Comandante Che Guevara, decayó ante el temor a los riesgos de una reclamación sobre la legítima propiedad del documento, que quiso usurpar el régimen de Barrientos. Pero no desapareció, y otros grupos, con agentes de la CIA como promotores y asociados a los propios gorilas bolivianos, continuaron afanosamente sus negociaciones para adquirir y publicar el diario.

Fracasaron los asesinos y fracasaron los buitres. El diario del Che, sus anotaciones sobre la campaña de Bolivia, no podrán ser jamás una mercancía que colme los bolsillos ya repletos de los que oprimen al pueblo que él se lanzó a libertar, o de los monopolios del imperialismo que combatió con tenacidad incansable. ("El Diario del Che" 2)

According to its own articulation, the Cuban government—and, by extension, its people—was the rightful, "legitimate" patron and purveyor of the material. The idea of "property" and "ownership" was retained, at the same time that the diary was seen as an object that resisted commodification and insertion in a monetary system.

The diary's publication in Cuba was framed in a similar narrative as that of the 1960 *Quixote*: urgency, night shifts, inevitable typos. And, like the fusilados, it tied its critique of commodification to “work” as it related to reproduction, that is, to the printing of the material in which the people-worker became active participants in the realization of edition. Printed at the Omega Sánchez lithographic complex on a Levey and Webendorfer offset, where *Selecciones del Reader's Digest*—emblem of the Batista-era U.S.-leaning cultural production—had been printed in the 1950s, 400 workers worked eight days straight for eight-hour shifts, totaling over 13,000 voluntary work hours.³⁵ The scene was described by journalist Frank Agüero in *Juventud Rebelde* (July 1, 1968) in highly physical and material terms: Agüero verbally illustrates the sequestered print shop as an “improvised” mess hall with bunk beds, dining halls and cafeterias, populated by workers amidst accumulated paper with “barbas a medio crecer,” “ojos cansados” working in time to music projected from loudspeakers (6).³⁶ Rolando Rodríguez in July, 1997 makes similar observations: “El miércoles por la noche nos acercábamos al momento culminante: la salida del primer ejemplar de la edición pequeña. La imprenta Osvaldo Sánchez, totalmente iluminada, con todas sus máquinas en funcionamiento,

³⁵ In the article in question, this voluntary labor is contrasted to the wage labor and job insecurity of the *Reader's Digest* era.

³⁶ The detailed description of the physical conditions of the edition's printing would point toward the division between physical and intellectual labor and the Cuban Revolution's efforts to overcome the latter historical dichotomy. When conceived in opposition to wage labor, copyright's enforcement and the mechanics of royalties separate authorship (intellectual labor) and production (physical work); copyright's abolition in the Cuban case inserted intellectual labor into the same paradigms as manual labor. See Hernández-Reguant's analysis of an addendum to volume 1 of *Capital*, “Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” in “Copyrighting Che: Art and Authorship under Cuban Late Socialism” (2004). It is furthermore interesting to consider how technology has historically questioned the dichotomy of intellectual and manual labor, in particular through photography, see Allan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain* (XIV).

trepidaba como pocas veces. Las zorras, cargadas con bancos de papel, se movían difícilmente entre los equipos, bloqueados a veces por las bobinas. El olor de la tinta lo invadía todo. Las planchas llegaban de la fotomecánica y eran colocadas a toda velocidad en las máquinas; apenas demoraba su encarrilamiento antes de empezar a imprimir” [27-28]; Later, emphasizing a sense of urgency: “Allí comenzó un torneo contra el tiempo y la testarudez de los metales. Nunca se ha visto a unos mecánicos trabajar con más frenesí” (Rodríguez, “Una edición” 31).

COMO SE IMPRIMIO EL DIARIO DEL CHE



Aspectos del proceso de producción en la unidad litográfica Osvald de Sánchez, antigua Omeiga. 1.—Taller de linotipe. 2.—Corrección de los textos escritos en plomo. 3.—Retoque y preparación artículo. 4.—Una obrera labra en el emplate sobre cinta crítica, mediante sistema offset. 5.—Este obrero ajusta y prepara la máquina para continuar la edición. 6.—Vista de una sección de la máquina por donde salen las pliegos ya impresos. Actualmente, los trabajadores siguen el proceso para evitar partiduras de papel u otros desperfectos. 7. 8 y 9.—En el proceso final de acabado los obreros realizan la encuadernación, presajia y terminación del libro.

EL MAS GRANDE GOLPE...

Los grandes revolucionarios tienen amor a una idea o un programa, amor a la idea y amor al programa. Los grandes revolucionarios, además de su amor al programa, tienen amor a los hombres que se unen a su programa. Los grandes revolucionarios, además de su amor al programa, tienen amor a los hombres que se unen a su programa.

En este juego de retroalimentación, el dirigente revolucionario demuestra un papel protagonista. El administrador, en cambio, demuestra un papel secundario. En el juego de retroalimentación, el dirigente revolucionario demuestra un papel protagonista. El administrador, en cambio, demuestra un papel secundario.

El dirigente revolucionario debe ser capaz de dirigir a los hombres que se unen a su programa. El administrador, en cambio, debe ser capaz de administrar los recursos que se destinan a su programa.

Los grandes revolucionarios tienen amor a una idea o un programa, amor a la idea y amor al programa. Los grandes revolucionarios, además de su amor al programa, tienen amor a los hombres que se unen a su programa. Los grandes revolucionarios, además de su amor al programa, tienen amor a los hombres que se unen a su programa.

FELIX PITA ASTUDILLO

TRABAJADORES 4

Habitantes de esta ciudad. Una revolución tipo leninista es una idea. Compañero de trabajo revolucionario. Algunos trabajadores son quienes hacen posible la revolución. Los trabajadores de esta ciudad son quienes hacen posible la revolución.

Los trabajadores de esta ciudad son quienes hacen posible la revolución. Los trabajadores de esta ciudad son quienes hacen posible la revolución. Los trabajadores de esta ciudad son quienes hacen posible la revolución.

INSTRUMENTAL

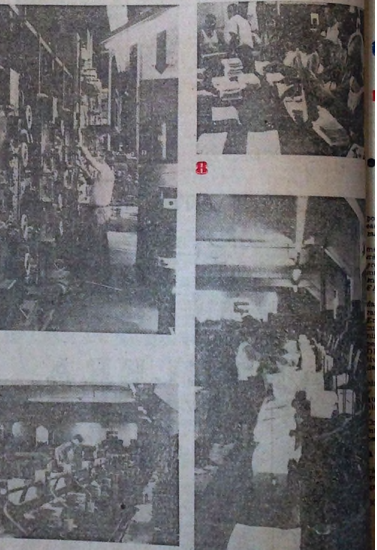
La preparación de esta obra y su edición requieren un instrumental de alto nivel técnico y del trabajo del Instituto del Libro y del uso del personal que sirve en su funcionamiento, así como en el montaje y edición de algunas secciones, el 32 por ciento de los trabajadores de la ciudad.

Y estamos, cuando se realizan estas actividades, la entrega de los materiales necesarios para esta tarea.

Desde el viernes último comenzó el traslado del material de la imprenta al Instituto del Libro de la primera edición aligerada de 40 000 ejemplares. Actualmente, en Omeiga, se están preparando 20 000 ejemplares de la primera edición y 20 000 ejemplares de la segunda edición. La impresión de esta obra será distribuida en una tercera edición.

Debe señalarse al respecto que el total de libros se ha fijado en 60 000 ejemplares de una sola vez, debido al momento que sigue a la guerra. Este número supone un volumen considerable de trabajo, pero se hará en menos tiempo que el anterior y con mayor productividad.

FRANK AGUIERO Fotos MAQUEIRA



Durante muchos días los trabajadores dormían en sus ropa de trabajo provisionalmente en sus respectivos departamentos, para cumplir el tiempo récord de la edición de 40 000 ejemplares del Diario del Che.

Figure 6: "Como se imprimió el diario del Che," *Juventud Rebelde* (July 1, 1968, p. 6)
Photos: "Maqueira"

This rhetoric of production and work would be simultaneous to the immaterial nature of the deceased Che himself. Another article from July 1, 1968, also from *Juventud Rebelde*, by Félix Pita Astudillo, emphasized the lack of “space” or “place” of Che’s body: the immaterial nature of his death by means of the lack of a corpse and burial site as rendered by the Bolivian army in its attempt to avoid a “shrine.” The diary—in the cadaver’s absence—took on the shape of Guevara’s trace (“huella”), his “prolongación vital.” The debates that ensued were adamant regarding the text’s authenticity as a legitimate representation or extension of Guevara (“el estilo y la letra inconfundibles del heroico combatiente”), holding up “la copia fotostática de su original” as proof of Guevara’s inimitable style, handwriting, and compact manner of writing (Rodríguez 51). The cover image was also the iconic Korda image from March of 1960 mandated as the cover of all copies including those circulating abroad in an effort to avoid Che’s “deformation.” Though Pita Astudillo’s discussion revolves around the quasi-religious aspects of the leader and its reciprocity with the collective,³⁷ the inverse relation between the absence of Che’s physicality by virtue of his unmarked grave and the diary’s role as material stand-in, also appeals to the question of the immaterial aspects of symbolic production. If Che would forever be remembered as a man of “action,” he would also be materialized in the physical object of paper, drawing attention to the manner in which physical objects condense more amorphous symbolic material and cohere social identities.

³⁷ I will not enter into this discussion here. For the manner in which collective formations constitute in relation to the figure of a leader, see Ernesto Laclau’s *Populist Reason*.



Figure 7: “Emocionadamente recibió nuestro pueblo el diario del Che en Bolivia.”
Granma, July 2, 1968

The edition would surpass both the 1960 *Quixote* edition and the fusilados print runs by multiples. Distributed for free—“un gran regalo para el pueblo” (Rodríguez Calderón 68)—to large groups of Cuban readers forming mythical lines outside state-sponsored bookstores, in a final *Granma* article published a day later on July 2nd, Mirta

Rodríguez Calderón described sidewalks flooded with “un verdadero tumulto humano,” streets crowded with expectant readers. The book, despite being a diary, individual genre par excellence, and carrying a individual portrait upon its cover, was thus incorporated in an imaginary of the public space and among the masses.

Cuando la hora señalada para la distribución se acercaba—y en muchos lugares se adelantó treinta minutos—ante <<La Moderna Poesía>>, por ejemplo, el público llenaba literalmente cada centímetro de acera a lo largo de dos cuabras y media. Faltaban diez minutos para las doce cuando un verdadero tumulto humano comenzó a acercarse por las calles confluentes para ocupar puestos en la cola.

No por esperados menos sorprendentes resultarían los minutos sucesivos. La emoción de los que recibieron los primeros ejemplares, el gesto conmovedor de quienes apretaron contra su pecho el imperecedero documento de Che, la impaciencia de los que formaron corro de lectores junto al poseedor de algún libro, la pregunta ingenua de niños que interrogaban a la mamá sobre lo que acontecía, y esas muchas lágrimas contenidas que asomaron a los ojos del pueblo, podrían ser unos pocos entre los infinitos instantes imprescindibles de reseñar. (1)

Soon, one in eight Cubans kept a copy at home. And, abroad, the “simultaneous” editions,³⁸ in English, French, and Italian, among other languages, totaled two million additional copies in circulation within months.³⁹ In these international markets, however, the book circulated as “mercancía.” These two circuits represented a very different relationship with the book as commodity, yet also placed the gift in a fragile commodity spectrum even a year after Fidel’s speech at Guane. The simultaneous release of the book nationally as gift and internationally for sale highlighted, recalling Arjun Appadurai, the flexibility of “things,” and the social relations that they engender as they move

³⁸ Other sources suggest that the editions were staggered, though all were published within a span of a few months in 1968.

³⁹ The rights to the diary were conferred by the Cuban government to foreign editors sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution such as *Punto Final* in Chile, Maspero in France, Ramparts in California, and Milan-based media magnate, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, who according to statements on the books’ covers donated the proceeds to “Latin American liberation causes” and the biography written by his son (Feltrinelli 262). Korda insists that Feltrinelli reaped profits (Hernández-Reguant 5).

conjuncturally from market-based to non-market-based modes of exchange. This malleability of the social and economic place of the book and its flirtation with commodity culture even as it was formulated as resistant to monetary exchange foreshadows the partial overturning of Cuban free-use law in the 1970s and once again and more radically in the 1990s.⁴⁰

Yet, it would also appear to reveal more constitutive fissures. As anthropologist Cori Hayden underscores, the very conceptualization of state-sponsored piracy is dependent upon its insertion within a dominant liberal regime and economic vocabulary. This is not to disqualify the historical gesture of 1967, but rather, echoing Hayden's exhortations, to continually remind us of the moveable and "troubled" space that the public and private have always inhabited. To this constitutive question of the public and private may be added additional questions of circulation. What changes when copies are made at the behest of the state and in the context of both Marxist and military values?⁴¹ And, on the curatorial level, how do editors, state-sponsored or otherwise, as arbiters of taste inflect and corrode visions of the public? Finally, how to apprehend censorship,

⁴⁰ Changes in copyright, patent, and trademark policy in the 1990s, that is, certain reversions to its pre-1967 state, in part to ease Cuba's entry into the World Trade Organization in April of 1995, have once again given protagonism to the question of copyright and intellectual property, placing it in dialogue with a Market of even more rapid reproduction and speculative nature than that of the 1960s. The reformulation of copyright law in Cuba since the 1990s has forced critics to revisit the constellation that are defined by intellectual property law. Ariana Hernández-Reguant, among others, through her work on the "free" international circulation of Korda's 1960 image of Che — originally produced for the government newspaper *Revolución*— and the 1999 lawsuit against Smirnoff vodka, has explored its historicity at length, revisiting certain debates from the 1960s. Despite not discussing the Bolivian Diary and its cover image, Hernández-Reguant's analysis places Korda's image in a broad and complex panorama of copyright law.

⁴¹ Recall Bourdieu's doxa, though also the shift in the 2000s.

understood as the erosion of the “public” circulation of ideas, in tandem with the expansions of the “public” through other elements of public policy?⁴²

Rather than appropriating the idea of the Cuban cultural ‘regalo’ of the 1960s as an absolute and unpolluted gift, the Cuban fusilados and Che’s Bolivian *Diary* invite further interrogation of the spatial and subject vectors of the juridical and economic administration of the letter and the book. Both cases open questions that I am hesitant to foreclose prematurely, regarding the politics of inscribed objects within the public space, their relationship to exchange, and how the latter questions evolve according to epoch. Instead of considering the brevity of these projects as a testament to their “failure,” they should be considered latent—albeit fallible—potentialities. In the following section, I will discuss the redeployment of the commodity and the “private” realm in the 1990s in Cuba, considering how, by means of the artists’ book, the imaginary of the book left the streets and entered the archive.

The Book as Archive: Cuban Artists’ Books between 1960s Utopia and 1990s

Disenchantment, or the Retraction of the Public Space

“People who want to defend contemporary capitalist societies ‘philosophically’ should defend its values ‘philosophically.’ Those values are absolutely unambiguous: one lives and dies to increase consumption.”
—Cornelius Castoriadis, “What Democracy?” (2007)

⁴² On the public sphere and its exclusions in Cuba in particular between 1968 and 1983, see Desiderio Navarro’s “In Medias Res Publicas: On Intellectuals and Social Criticism in the Cuban Public Sphere” (2002), in which Navarro attempts to historicize the public sphere and the circulation of symbolic content therein in the Cuban context.

Amidst power outages and the deprivation of basic goods, Cuban state publishing nosedived from well over 2,000 titles per year in the 1980s to a mere 568 state-published books in 1993 (Más Zabala qtd. Whitfield 13). Books in the 1990s were plagued by paper and technical deficiencies, resulting in vast changes in print runs and production rationale. The lack of paper, binding materials, and even ink shaped writing's forms, genres, circuits, and readership, forcing the island to look north towards the United States and east across the Atlantic toward Europe—and by extension, towards capitalist models of exchange.⁴³

The 1990s represent an almost universal point of inflection in terms of the entrenchment of the 'private' and the commodity in both post-Soviet geographies and the formal democracies of the West. Since the 1990s, the ideas of the 'public' and 'private' have continued to morph. The expansion of the private is sometimes so radical that it represents spaces and spheres by all appearances completely discontinuous with the public-private binomial's conceptions in the 1960s (Sassen 224). The 1990s, as both a decade and a heuristic question or provocation, pose new questions and challenges to the Utopian 1960s and freshly illuminate the latter decade. In light of the 1990s, the 1960s have gained new pertinence and historical currency, in some cases as a period of "disillusion" and naiveté,⁴⁴ and, in others, as a moment in which doubt was still cast on

⁴³ Par Kumaraswami and Antoni Looseley's study of the Havana International Book Fair in the 1990s and the 2000s relates this shift from the shortages in book publication in the 1990s to the strategic commercialization of the publishing industry in Cuba in the late 1990s and 2000s as the Havana Book Fair developed ties with the Guadalajara Book Fair and other "for-profit" based initiatives.

⁴⁴ Beverley explores the question of what he calls the "paradigm of disillusion" in the Post-Cold War reception of the "armed struggle" and, more broadly, of 1960s political

consumer culture as a dominant paradigm for mass identity formation.⁴⁵

The public and private realms as mediators of culture are fundamental when contemplating the idea of culture's spatial and political distribution in both Latin America and the international sphere. As a geopolitical and cultural landscape, Cuba finds its place within this consumer narrative of the 1990s by means of opposing and unequal currents. Thrust into tumult by the absence of Soviet subsidies and the tightening of the United States embargo through the Torrecelli Act (1992) and later the Helms-Burton Act (1996), Cuban public services—and the state—shrank, while tourism and other means of foreign investment were cultivated and dictated by necessity. While the period was marked by the excess of consumer consumption, Cuba—at least internally—would instead greet the 1990s transition with scarcity. Thus, despite experiencing a similar disillusionment with the State as the primary or even privileged mediator of goods, this disenchantment, which was usually accompanied by the gloss of consumption, was coupled instead with debilitating shortages, resulting in the stagnation, if not the standstill, of internal consumer circulation.

Two Cuban presses: Ediciones Vigía, initially founded in Matanzas in 1985; and Cuadernos Papiro, founded as an artisanal paper manufacturer in Holguín in 1994, are emblems of both this shortage and return to the market. Despite technically being supported by the State, these small presses constitute a change in paradigm from the investment in the “public” book of the Cuban Revolution, and in particular of the 1960s.

militancy. For the perspective of a “disillusioned” intellectual, see Mexican political scientist Jorge Castañeda's *Utopia Unarmed* (1993).

⁴⁵ For a Latin American perspective on neoliberalism and consumerism as identity formation, see Tomás Moulian's *Chile actual: anatomía de un mito* (1997).

In other words, while in the 1960s the book in Cuba became a symbol of the State, of the public space, and of culture as a “common” good, in the 1990s Cuban artists’ books became a symptom of material need, and, ultimately, of culture’s reinsertion in the private realm (in particular, in institutional and private collections). In the context of these presses, the transition may be perceived through the acquisition of Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro by collectors and foreign archives. It may also be interpreted through an “archival” assimilation of consumer goods into the book object that allegorizes the consumer status of the editions of Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro themselves.⁴⁶

Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro thus perform a material exegesis of the shifting place of books in the Cuban national and transnational imaginary, as they relate both continuously and inversely to the mass editions and State utopias of the 1960s. Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro conceptually invite, furthermore, the interrogation of the archive as an arch-concept in Cuba. The Cuban artists’ book of the 1990s is no longer a reflection upon the common, but rather a revelation of the heightened pace of acquisition in the private sphere that coexists with the paused temporality of the archive

⁴⁶ The “collector” or a “collection” should not be approached innocently. Geertz is an essential reference in this regard. Geertz’s essay illuminates a complex history of collecting and its relationship to Western (and largely capitalist) conceptions of individual property—and later to consumption and consumer society, especially as this “appropriation” connects to collecting’s basis in an historic relationship between non-Western objects and Western museums. This final institutionalist analysis with orientalist overtones is both continuous and discontinuous with the Cuban case. It diverges in that it does not consider the “fetish” of tropical socialism, or Cuba’s historical and site-specific relationship to property that is embedded in any Cuban acquisition. Yet, Geertz’s analysis maintains its relevance to the field of Cuban art and cultural export even if the more typically non-Western marks, such as “magic and negritude” (225) that he mentions, in the Cuban art market are part of a larger system of salvage and post-Cold War economic and social nostalgia that critics such as Esther Whitfield have developed in broader consumer analyses.

as it is rehearsed through national and personal archives and collections, unveiling three principal questions: First, what place does consumption as a ritual of the private sphere play in these dynamics? Second, how does the archive—both complicit and contestatory—dovetail with consumption’s force lines? And, finally, how does the 1990s-era Cuban “archival” artists’ book amalgam these two axes?

The international acquisition and archiving of 1990s-era Cuban artists’ books has garnered extensive critical literature.⁴⁷ Considering commodities in a traditional and broad Marxian sense as “intricately tied to money, an impersonal market, and exchange value” (Appadurai 8), the relationship sustained between Cuban artists’ books and commodity culture in both the objects these books assimilate and as commodities themselves is, however, insufficiently interrogated. Despite lengthy critical discussions of Cuban artists’ books’ presence in United States archival collections and an ever-growing literature on Cuban art’s insertion in commodity markets and international artistic languages in the 1990s,⁴⁸ the influence that the foreign archive has had on publishing choices, the aesthetics, and the material nature of Cuban artists’ books is little considered. In fact, the majority of critical assessments of the Cuban artists’ books’ connection to commodity flows center on discussions of the paucity of raw materials available to artists

⁴⁷ See Behar, Graveline, and Howe. Both Behar and Graveline focus in particular on Ediciones Vigía. Howe’s purview is broader and encompasses a wide variety of artists and projects.

⁴⁸ For a perspective on the dialogue between the Cuban and international art scene as market, mode of circulation, and source of artistic language in the 1980s and early 1990s, see Luis Camnitzer’s *New Art of Cuba* (1994). Linda Howe also addresses these questions in *Cuban Artists’ Books and Prints* (2009), albeit primarily in the volume’s discussion of the fine arts scene, rather than in sections that attend to artists’ books, and, in particular, to Ediciones Vigía, which I will discuss.

and writers in the 1990s. What Antonio José Ponte develops as an “exchange of history” (Whitfield 8), that is, the exchange of Cuba’s history as a mode of entry into United States or European markets that has amply been explored as regards other cultural phenomenon including “commercial” literature, is, however, noticeably neglected by critics of Cuban artists books. The strategic deployment of aesthetic codes and materials in Cuban artists’ books, as well as the thematization of the foreigner or the tourist, as a means of integration in institutional markets, opens up new lines of analysis for critics.⁴⁹

Few book objects have remained untouched by the extra-official paths of the tourist economy of the 1990s and the 2000s. Somewhat paradoxically, Cuban books of the 1960s sponsored by the State, which arguably sought with great radicality to leave the world of exchange and commodity, are also those that with time have most solidly

⁴⁹ The critical literature on foreign consumption of Cuban cultural goods is far reaching. Key works include José Quiroga’s *Cuban Palimpsests* (2005), Esther Whitfield’s *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and ‘Special Period’ Fiction* (2008), and Anna Cristina Pertierra’s broad work on consumer studies. The foci are diverse, although there exists a consensus on the importance of the dependence-economy (based on tourism and United States, Western European, and Canadian remittances and exchanges) in collective formations post-1990s. Quiroga and Whitfield emphasize what they see as Cuba’s particularity as a post-Soviet geography, and, in Quiroga’s case, what he perceives as the emancipatory power of liberal economic policy. Framed within consumer studies, and, to a certain extent, also emphasizing a Cuban consumer singularity, Pertierra’s work, based on ethnographic fieldwork, traces the gap between lived experience, especially domestic space and media consumption, and State or dissident economic and political discourse. Despite these important advances, consumption as a mode of collective cohesion both internally and externally needs further exploration. In particular, what are the political implications of the consumption that *does* occur, that is, not merely as it appertains to lack? How does this connect to economic and social formations and alliances? In other words, does the persistent emphasis on consumption, and lack thereof in Cuban critical discourse culminate in a search for an alternative to State socialism, or does the discursive negation of the State, in fact, equate to a latent affirmation of free market liberal ideologies? For an illuminating history of consumption in the United States as an economic and moral praxis, see Joshua Yates and James Davison Hunter’s *Thrift and Thriving in America: Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans* (2011).

entered the realm of capital and exchange. In Cuban bookstores, the signs marking selective prohibitions of exportation abroad—formal or informal—make this flourishing commodification clear.⁵⁰ Yet, these signs underline less the prohibition in question than its systematic infraction. In fact, used book sales have taken root so strongly in the local economy and imaginary since the 1990s that they have begun to appear persistently in fiction. An emblem himself of the commercialization of Cuban writers in the 1990s, especially by Spanish publishers, Cuban novelist Leonardo Padura in *La neblina del ayer* (2005) turned his now retired, bestselling sleuth Mario Conde into a used book salesman. Padura describes a “transmutation” of everyday objects (“desde un fósforo hasta una aspirina, desde un par de zapatos hasta un aguacate, desde el sexo hasta los sueños” [15]) through the “arte de la precariedad” whose powers extend even to “el venerable mundo de los libros” (15).⁵¹

⁵⁰ In 2013 and 2014 the sign read: “La venta de libros publicados antes de los años 50 y de Ediciones ‘R’ solo está dirigida para el territorio nacional.”

⁵¹ The appearance of libraries and books in Padura’s corpus, as well as in the work of other Post-Soviet writers and filmmakers is discussed in greater depth in Vicky Unruh’s article “Unpacking the Libraries of Post-Soviet Cuba,” *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (2013).

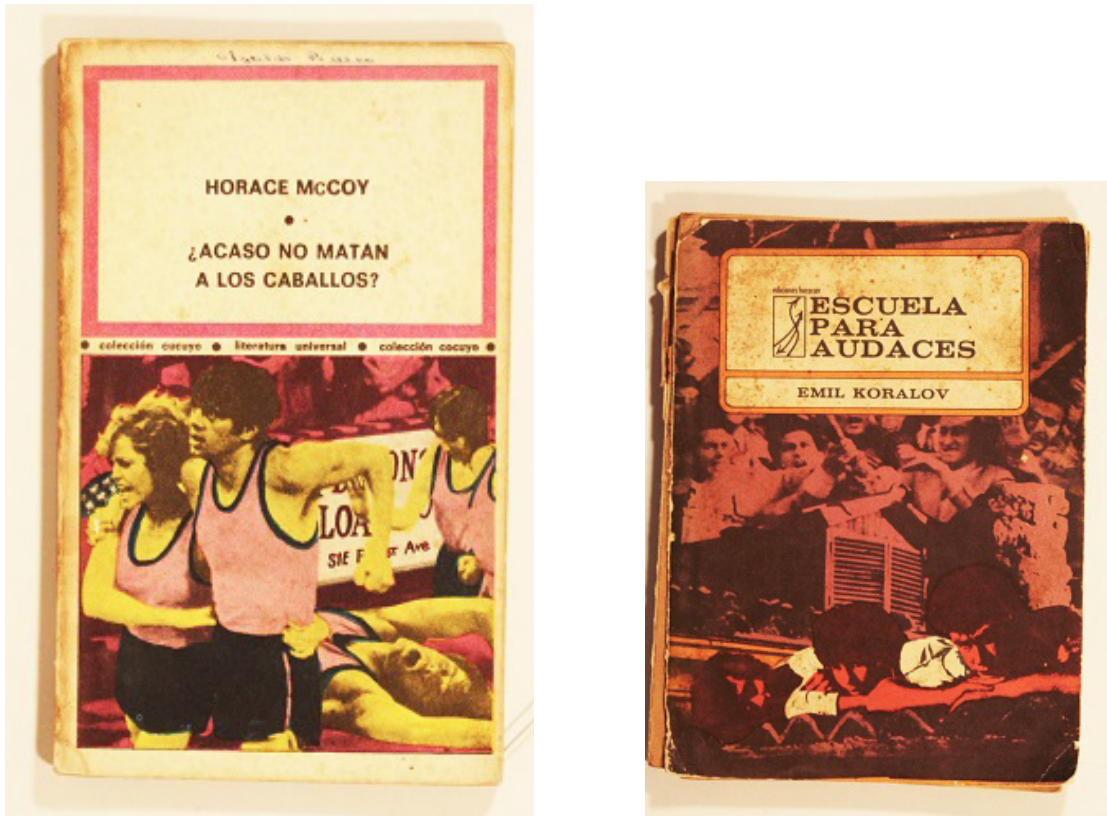


Figure 8 Cuban Cover art from the 1960s and 1970s

The marketing of Cuba as an international cultural product in the 1990s exploited the fetishism and exoticism that characteristically surrounds tropicality and post-Berlin wall socialism. These two fetishes, according to Esther Whitfield, are compounded in a single geographic horizon of the “commodifications of Cuban identity” (2), of which books are an important manifestation. Though Whitfield is primarily interested in the commercialization of writers as “movement,” that is, a literary cultural field that surfaced in the 1990s, the market of diverse *objects* in the most concrete of senses is vast. The tenacious commodification of the material past has led to a slow, yet consistent, trickle of objects, books among them, past the island’s borders.

While collections abroad of Cuban memorabilia and cultural material have

flourished abroad since the 1990s, within Cuba this commercialization is frequently tied to archival deterioration. A paradigmatic example in the domain of Cuban books, the Biblioteca Nacional's catalogue is riddled with holes; books were sold by enterprising employees during the 1990s, as rumor has it. There are books and documents present in the catalogue that cannot be located; archives that must exist, but whose whereabouts are unaccounted for. These hiatus also punctuate archival holdings elsewhere, and are a condition of the archive as such, yet in Cuba these institutional cavities mark public collections with a greater insistence. Through its catalogue and collection lacunae, the Cuban archive evinces the ravages of the commodification critiqued by Whitfield. Its absences are consistently attributed to the neglect and the sales associated with the voracious second-hand cultural market of the 1990s.

There are other modes, however, of reading these holes that researchers find so persistent in Cuban archives. These alternative readings see the absences of the archive as purposeful and political. This analysis, founded upon the fraught relations sustained in the 1960s with the archive, runs parallel—yet is also contestatory—to the darker hypotheses of 1990s black market attrition, suggesting that the lacunae in Cuban archives maintain a more complex weft with history than merely that of the erosion rendered by the lean years of the 1990s. Borrowing from and transposing Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa's manifesto "Por un cine imperfecto" ("For an Imperfect Cinema" [1969]), Ceja Alcalá demonstrates how under the sign of a liberational and decolonializing archival politics founded upon a representational and technological poetics of scarcity articulated as a moral and political imperative, preservation was forgone over dissemination and distribution, and at moments even stigmatized as counter-

Revolutionary. Under this lens, the Cuban Revolutionary archive is irregular not merely because of an illicit purloining of its contents, but also because of the relationship with time that the first decade of the Revolution sustained.⁵² Although some would suggest that these voids relay other motives—one of them being the sequestering of unsavory exclusions in the cultural field especially of the early 1970s,⁵³ following Ceja Alcalá, it can also be argued that they reveal an archival economy particular to the Cuban 1960s. Through this reading, the Cuban archival economy of the 1960s was not future-oriented in terms of conservation and preservation—that is, a future closely related to the past and its material circumstances. Its investment in the future, to the contrary, can be perceived through a forward movement that configured the future as unburdened of its material past. Under this prism, the archive in the Cuban 1960s became an imaginary vehicle of containment, symbolic of history's remove and endowed with a temporality antithetical to the present-future to which cultural policy in the 1960s aspired.

⁵² Even if preservation was not forefronted in the Revolutionary project, it was also not absent. Pertinent archival laws of the Revolutionary period include: Law N 714/1960 <<Ley Orgánica del Archivo Nacional>>; Law Decree 221/2001 <<De los Archivos de la República de Cuba>>; Law 44/2004 <<Reglamento General de los Archivos de la República de Cuba>>; Law 265/2009 <<Del Sistema Nacional de los Archivos de la República de Cuba>>. The Heritage National Council responsible for museums, sites, and monuments is another relevant program (Pastrana 26). In many Cuban archival contexts, however, these archival laws are largely unknown (Aranda 589). As far as implementation, museologist Urbano Martínez Carmentate relates certain museum fervor in the 1960s, though Martínez dates the *institutionalization* of this impulse to the late 1970s (262).

⁵³ On the difficulty of consulting certain closed Cuban archives—albeit ones primarily dedicated to State diplomacy, see Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (2002). The documentary aspect of Gleijeses work was also partially published by the National Security Archive and can be accessed online: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/visions-freedom-new-documents-the-closed-cuban-archives#intro>

Where institutional archives have left incomplete territories, periodic archival *terrae incognitae* of the Revolutionary-era book, in the 1990s the *book constructed as archive* became a sort of institution. Matanzas' Ediciones Vigía and Holguin's Ediciones Cuadernos Papiro and print museum construct an arc from the Revolutionary 1960s to the reflective 1990s through their materials and procedures. Here, I understand the "book" as "archive" in a similar fashion, *mutatis mutandis*, as art historian Hal Foster interprets "archival art:" that is, art, or in this case *book art*, that "draws on informal archives but produces them as well" (5) in an effort "to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present" (4).⁵⁴ The hand-made books, boxes, letters, and scrolls using found paper and objects, such as sand, gauze, straight pins, or even domestic construction materials of Ediciones Vigía and Ediciones Cuadernos Papiro form object-based archives of the shortages and remainders of the 1990s. Non-linear and fragmentary, these objects represent a historic saturation, primarily through domestic objects.

Ediciones Vigía, produced in a two-story picturesque colonial structure in the heart of Matanzas, publishes a wide variety of authors ranging from Emily Dickinson, Jorge Luis Borges, and Dulce María Loynaz, to local Matanzas-based poets. The press has been the subject of articles, Special Collections acquisition purchases by U.S. and

⁵⁴ For further analyses of "archival art" of the 1990s and 2000s in Europe and the United States and, in this case, its relationship to capitalist consumption, history, and an attempted recovery or rewriting of the public space and "affective association"—albeit in a qualified, self-critical, and hesitating fashion, see Foster. Or, for a less optimistic appraisal, see Rancière ("Problems ..."). According to the latter, where dada and the contestatory art of the 1960s proposed a critique—be it of the state or market, archival art (or "inventory" art) of the post-Cold War era is ostensibly non-denunciatory and distancing, at the same time that "art" is, paradoxically, summoned—in a political environment flattened by consensus and "lack of politics in a proper sense" (60)—as a compensatory political mechanism.

Canadian-based academic libraries,⁵⁵ two documentaries, a 2009 exhibition-symposium at Wake Forest University in collaboration with the MoMA and the Grolier Club, and a conference at the University of Missouri (Cultural Bricolage, 2012) devoted to the publishing house as a master example in which book art culture as discipline could be subsumed. Cuadernos Papiro, as well as other projects that arose in the same period, share a similar fate. Like Ediciones Vigía, Cuadernos Papiro places special emphasis on poetry, but manifests a clear slant towards the Eastern part of the island (Holguín, Bayamo, Santiago, Gibara), and, for the moment, remains without Ediciones Vigía's cultivation of exile and U.S.-based writers. Cuadernos Papiro's archival proposals extend to the machinery and typography with which they are constructed and have led to their acquisition by private collectors and by North American libraries, such as Stanford, despite having received less critical attention due to their lack of proximity to Havana. Both projects manifest an "archival impulse" to materialize a "displaced" past (Foster) at the same time that they package themselves for the collector, and many times for exportation.

If Cuadernos Papiro and Ediciones Vigía constitute archival art, what composes the archive in question? The archive as concept has passed through many critical paradigms in the last decades, although two revisions contemporary to the Cuban Special Period prove particularly revealing: Jacques Derrida's published lecture, "Archive Fever" (1994)⁵⁶ and Roberto González Echevarría, now canonical *Myth and Archive: A Theory*

⁵⁵ These include University of California at Irvine, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Miami, the University of South Florida, the Library of Congress, and the Getty Research Institute Library.

⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida's "Archive Fever" (1994) represents one of the archive's most destabilizing critiques. Using psychoanalysis and Freud as a mode of entry into the

of *Latin American Narrative* (1990).⁵⁷ These two theories of the archive are useful in their conceptualization of the archive in space—public, yet private, per Derrida, and, following González Echevarría, off-center and colonially imprinted, as they relate to a Cuban archival impulse.

To these spatial readings, I would add a temporal one: Sven Spieker’s more recent *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (2008). Spieker, through an analysis of varied models of visual art, interrogates how art practice in the twentieth century simultaneously excavates and rethinks the bureaucratic archive and its historiographical pretensions. “I contend,” he writes, “that the use of archives in late-twentieth-century art reacts in a variety of ways to the assault by the early-twentieth-century avant-gardes on the nineteenth-century objectification (and fetishization) of linear time and historical process” (1). If in the 1960s, Cuba’s cultural production moved according to a

conceptual structure of the archive, whose original Greek *arkheion* gestures towards its public yet private function—the “house” or “domicile” of its interpreting magistrate—Derrida problematized the notion of the archive as documentation: “The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17). The tension placed within the archive’s evidentiary and documentary pretensions is inflected by the destructive impulse of erasure that Derrida saw as native to the archive.

⁵⁷ Virtually contemporaneously to “Archive Fever” in the Latinamericanist field, the Cuban-born literary critic, Roberto González Echevarría, published the now canonical *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1990), in which the archive became a reciprocal metaphor for the varied discursive appropriations, especially of State-produced juridical and anthropological forms, within the Latin American novel. Framed by Foucaultian theories of power and a postcolonial questioning of the anthropological division between the subject and object, the archive represented a space of amalgamation, disciplinary crossing and “repository” through which Latin American literature could be read at the same time that the Latin American archive was reclaimed and re-conceptualized as fiction. Neither one of these critical texts would have circulated officially in Cuba in the period, although both were read in the context of non-official circulation. For more information on the circulation of theoretical texts in Cuba, see Rafael Rojas’s *El estante vacío: literatura y política en Cuba (The Empty Shelf: Literature and Politics in Cuba* [2009]), in which both Derrida and González Echevarría are discussed.

temporality marked by rhythms of urgency, its reception and archivization through which it is relayed to the contemporary academic community is characterized by a perforated or fragmented temporal fabric. Spieker's text pertinently not only addresses time, but also absence. "Archives do not record experience so much as its absence," he posits. "They mark the point where an experience is missing from its proper place, and what is returned to us in an archive may well be something we never possessed in the first place" (3). How then may we account for the absences of historical time that are constitutive to the archive in general and to Cuba's archive in particular, and then extend these to 1990s Cuban artists' book production?

Although not an avant-garde experiment in a traditional sense, Cuban institutional archives exemplify a similar contingency as many of Spieker's case studies:⁵⁸ pages missing, ink amok, vulnerable to the fair-weather stewardship of private and public,

⁵⁸ Among other examples, Spieker draws from a book experiment dating from 1919 that, despite its very different historical context and geographical affiliations, is relevant when extrapolating the relationship that Vigía and Papiro maintain with historical time, space, and the archive. During his time in Buenos Aires, Duchamp charged his sister with an installation, which he later called the "Unhappy Readymade," in which she would construct a readymade of a geometry book suspended by strings from a window of his Parisian apartment.

Instead of the book conceived as part of the exterior—and by extension the street and the public space understood as a space of vitality and the rhetorical stage of cultural democratization in the 1960s and other historical junctures, in this case, the textbook—replete with scholastic and didactic associations—deteriorates under the force of the elements. The rain and sun break down its pages, and make its ink run, rendering it lexically and visually incomprehensible. Duchamp's threads exclude the corporeal variable of the life of books in which different subjects are activated by different spaces. Yet, the relocation of the book to this unusual stage, understood broadly as the street, not as metaphor, but literalized, inherently surrenders its pages, words, and textual body to the inclement forces of chance. This dynamic is then transferred in Spieker's argument to the institutional walls of the archive: "Allowing the weather to interfere in the book's integrity is to allow contingency to intervene in geometry's regulated symbolic universe. [...] With Duchamp, threads (fils) do not seal an object for preservation, they expose it to the savagery of contingent time" (57).

primarily unregulated collections, and to their attendant humidity, salt and heat degradation, paper hungry insects, and equally harmful fumigations. Cuban institutional archives have experienced the ravages of inclemency and history's unforgiving touch; bookworms and humidity have rendered these objects non-sequential and nonlinear. The climatic corrosion of Cuban archives is meticulously documented in a recent issue of the *Revista Española de Documentación Científica* (2012).⁵⁹ The researchers relate in unflinching detail the overpowering smell of humidity, the rusted metallic shelves—many devoid of organizing boxes or labels interspersed with out-of-place tubes or abandoned antiquated computers, and the deteriorating piles of paper precariously wrapped in plastic (*nylons*) illuminated by degrading direct light and lined by stray cables like electric cobwebs.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ This study—called a diagnostic by its authors Font Aranda, Ruíz Rodríguez, and Mena Mugica—was principally carried out in the Archives at the Universidad Central Marta Abreu de las Villas, though it attests to broader archival conditions. Ward made similar observations in the mid-2000s concerning the poster archives of the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí.

⁶⁰ Digital backups are stored by means of flash drives, CDs, DVDs, external drives, and on personal PCs.



Figure 9: Cuadernos Vigía, Artisanal paper production, Holguín, Cuba

Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro are a conceptual mise-en-scène of a process of archival degradation in their condition as archival composites. Originally composed and printed with typewriters and black-and-white mimeographs—now a stencil-and-ink risograph,⁶¹ Ediciones Vigía’s use of reproduction technology buttresses itself upon a layered assimilation of previous generations’ bureaucratic reproduction technologies in

⁶¹ For essays on both the implementation of risograph printers in the Cuban territorial publishing system in the 2000s and their attendant polemics, see *Una puerta de papel llamada Riso (A Door of Paper Called Riso* [2005]). These Risograph projects have been criticized for their low-quality, limited ink palette, and the stapled Bristol paper covers that usually accompany their editions; Ediciones Vigía commandeers these very qualities to render alternative aesthetics.

an embrace less of speed or futurity, than of a fractured, piecemeal, small-scale production.⁶² Cuadernos Papiro, for its part, collects machines that previously inhabited the spheres of the “useful,” and integrates them into an artisanal museum process. As the large printing complexes and other printing workshops scattered throughout the island converted to digital print technologies, Cuadernos Papiro salvaged linotypes,⁶³ Gordon presses, and cast metal sorts, creating an aesthetic marked by nostalgia and anachronism, an amalgamation of multi-generational antique technology reorganized and re-catalogued in a synchronic system. Cuadernos Papiro’s paper-making process mirrors this archival procedure. Pulping recycled industrial paper in a Soviet-era adapted washing machine, complete with an installed blender, Cuadernos Papiro melds this industrial paper base with autochthonous material—tobacco, garlic, and other organic material—staining the surface to imitate the traits of archival paper.

⁶² For more on the use of mimeographs in offices and their relationship with burgeoning labor cohorts at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, see Lisa Gitelman’s *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology* (1999). The typewriter, for its part, has more than just bureaucratic associations. Due to its small-scale nature, in the Soviet context the typewriter was tied to dissidence against the State. As Serguei Alex Oushakine writes, “Samizdat emerged in the 1950s and was simultaneously a mechanism for reproduction of and an institution for dissemination of unavailable texts. By reproducing in a typewritten form never-published texts and texts that were out of print due to ideological reasons, samizdat activists overcame the shortage of literature created by the state monopoly on publishing” (194). Albeit more attenuated in the Cuban context, this samizdat resonance is still present despite Vigía’s “state-sponsored” condition, though bureaucratic echoes may be even more present. (Think the typewriter in the introduction to Nicolás Guillén Landrián’s *Coffea Arábica* (1968) or in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s *La muerte de un burócrata* (*Death of a Bureaucrat* [1966]), where typing and the typewriter take the shape of prominent visual and sonic tropes).

⁶³ Although in the 1890s the linotype may have been the glory of industrial age print technology, allowing typeset to be mechanically composed, enhancing printing speed and ease and multiplying radically the number and size of newspapers and readership, even by the 1950s the linotype’s aspirations of massivity were in the process of being superseded by phototypesetting instruments (Wilson 27).



Figure 10: *El abrazo*, José Lezama Lima, Cuadernos Papiro, Holguín, Cuba, 2010 (print run, 100 copies; design: Freddy García; SERIES: Cubanos para llevar)

The books' constructive elements and images many times complement these material conditions and substrates. Making use of a sort of readymade *modus operandi*, these books emphasize their relationship with chance and the idea of consumer and industrial

culture's remainders. A Cuadernos Papiro series from 2010, designed by Freddy García, *Cubanos para llevar* (print run, 100 copies; 5 CUC [approx. \$5]),⁶⁴ featuring Cuban poets Virgilio Piñera, José Lezama Lima, and Nicolás Guillén, faithful to its name (*llevar* =for carrying/taking), employs a visual and textual strategy of mobility in which the unbound books are placed in jute bags, with jute shoulder handles. The bags are xylographically printed with a can of tuKola (the Cuban-produced variant on Coca-Cola) with a wick, adapted as a makeshift lamp, referencing the power outages of the 1990s. The paper, for its part, is made with recycled material and garlic elements, while the interior text was composed with linotype (c. 1900) and printed with 1896 Chandler and Prices platen jobbing presses. The elements from which the books are materially composed in this fashion form a palimpsestic cartography of consumption: the woven jute bags carried through Cuban tobacco and sugar fields—historically imported from Bangladesh by way of Barcelona;⁶⁵ the xylographic printing used in 19th century Cuban cigar packaging;⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Despite being sold at international book fairs, in terms of foreign *institutional* acquisition, *Cubanos para llevar* and *El gran vidrio: Último discurso de Zaratustra* are less visible in archival catalogues. While certain Cuadernos Papiro editions (editions with texts by Roberto Fernández Retamar, for example) are acquired by multiple U.S. and European archives, *Cubanos para llevar* does not appear in any WorldCat listings, suggesting that they were acquired for private collections.

⁶⁵ Jute, imported from Barcelona during the colonial era, and, in 1974 famously from Bangladesh—soliciting ire from U.S. diplomacy and the cessation of food aid, in Cuba has an historic link with coffee and sugar bags. As raw material, jute is thus branded by a harsh legacy of colonialism doubled by its use in bags in sugar and tobacco fields. For historical documentation on the relationship between colonialism and worker-manager relations in Bengali jute mills through a Subaltern Studies perspective see, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History* (2000). For information on the importation of jute and its relationship with sugar bags in Cuba at the turn of the 20th century, see *Report on the Commercial and Industrial Condition of the Island of Cuba* (1898).

the typesetting and printing machinery imported by U.S. neocolonial companies in the first half of the 20th century; and finally the sugarcane-based Coca-Cola generic—TuKola—that metonymically names the Special Period’s hydrocarbon Soviet energy crisis through its wood-printed wick.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Xylography is a wood engraving technique; wood cuts are of historical importance in Cuba, most notably canonized by Francisco Javier Báez who illustrated the cigar packaging for Díaz Cigars at the beginning of the 19th century (Mateo 30-1).

⁶⁷ tuKola is produced by the soft drink factory Fábrica de Refrescos Los Portales, a joint venture since the 1990s of Nestlé Waters (previously San Pellegrino) and la Corporación Alimentaria de Cuba. The xylographic tuKola can, symbol of both deficit and privatization, adds another layer in the assimilation of consumer goods within the book object. The fact that tuKola uses sugarcane in its manufacture—related to the jute bags on which it is printed—and is packaged in red, white, and blue, the colors of both the United States and Cuban flags further allegorizes the national implications of the image.



Figure 11: *El gran vidrio: Último discurso de Zarathustra*, José Luis Serrano, Cuadernos Papiro, Holguín, 2006 (print run, 50 copies; design: Rubén Hechavarría)

Another example, *El gran vidrio: último discurso de Zarathustra* (2006; print run, 50 copies; sewn binding 80 CUC [approx. \$80]), a poetry book written by José Luis Serrano and designed by Rubén Hechavarría Salvia, was printed with Morgenthaler linotype (1900) and Gordon & Price presses (1816) and is constructed with paper made of plantain, tobacco and corn fibers, within which is placed a developed x-ray film inset salvaged from an Holguín radiology unit. Hechavarría's book object design—not unlike Freddy García's *Cubanos para llevar* albeit by means of a distinct visual mechanics—x-rays the logo and packaging design of a disassembled, flattened pack of Cuban Titanes

cigarettes, once again foregrounding Cuban commodity culture's most prototypic exemplar of exportation—tobacco—in its daily and national manifestations, superimposing its logo with photo-evocations of the human skeleton. Within the pages upon which the poem is printed is scattered packaging material of other Cuban products, such as the Bucanero Fuerte beer logo and Criollos cigarette packaging, juxtaposed intermittently with the stamp “PARA ROMPER” (for breaking) in diagonal.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ I worked in particular with number 16/50 of the edition, stored at the unofficial archive located at the Cuadernos Papiro print shop in Holguín. The consumer objects assimilated in the book object vary slightly with each copy and include boxes of tea, clothing tags, receipts, airplane tickets, and notes on pieces of paper.



Figure 12: *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad*, Ruth Behar, Ediciones Vigía, Matanzas, Cuba, 2013 (bilingual; print run, 200 copies; design: Rolando Estévez)

In the case of Ediciones Vigía, Cuban-American poet and University of Michigan-based anthropologist Ruth Behar's recently published *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad* (2013) (bilingual; 200 hand-made copies; designed by Rolando Estévez) is an

ideal example of this procedure.⁶⁹ Partially held together with a ribbon reminiscent of popular cordel literature,⁷⁰ the text's linguistic content—cursive handwriting, reproduced and printed with a digital RZ390UI Risograph printer—is architectural, alluding to Havana's urban deterioration (“the sidewalk,” “the streets,” “the concrete”) and the poet's peripatetic childhood. The book object, which varies slightly with each copy,⁷¹ however, is domestic. Split in two, flaps uncover on either side of the book a Spanish and an English version that are mirrored and inverted. The English version is printed on coarse, brown kraff paper, while the Spanish version is copied on smooth white bond paper. Paramount, however, is its manually-applied textured cover, affixed with wood shavings and shells and bound by roofing felt, wrapped and layered repeatedly upon a now heavy cover.

In order to read its content much is required of the reader. The reader is in all likelihood standing, preferably with the aid of a long table or a desk to unfold fully the accordion-like pages (each side unfurls to 15 feet). The book must be maneuvered, demanding from the reader's body the ability to amply manipulate the book's surface and volume. Re-spatializing reading, the distinct panels dislocate the usual mental space and sequence of reading by leading his or her eyes and hands through a ritual that is both domestic (building materials) and peripatetic (materials that reference the city). As the

⁶⁹ Ruth Behar has licensed the digital version of her book in English through Creative Commons, that is, allowing free, non-commercial use. Despite Ediciones Vigía's small editions, this gesture points towards a courtship of a mass readership. The fact that the text is located on the internet, however, practically limits its free use on the island.

⁷⁰ Cordel (or string) literature has primarily early modern origins in Spain and is principally practiced in Brazil.

⁷¹ The book-object I am examine here is number 183/200.

reader unfolds and lays out the panels, the assimilation of quotidian objects and experience within the book object—a photo of the poet and her family in Havana’s Parque Central accented by oil, tempera, and acrylics, as well as tulle netting and polyester fabric inlays—is paradoxically integrated into an anti-quotidian reading practice. The movement of walking that is described in the book’s poem is displaced by the mechanics of a book that calls for a standing, yet stationary reader. The book’s fragility and expense stipulate archival conditions, while the book’s small print runs and its 40CUC price for foreigners (more expensive once sold by third parties abroad) assure that the books will never be carried through the streets, and that their deterioration is constitutive, rather than a process.

Like Papiro’s editions, despite the book’s title and material form, *Las calles rotas de mi ciudad* does not retain a performative relationship with the exterior, nor the Cuban 1960s’ affiliation with the public space. The street is an urban imaginary, rather than a place to stage reading. Public space is articulated as a poetics of memory, rather than a poetics of the present. The book object is heir to the Revolution’s mass editions in displacement, or perhaps even in negation. It comes as no surprise that a good portion, if not the majority, of both Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro’s limited editions are sold to foreign buyers. In the case of Vigía, these buyers visit the press from the resort town Varadero, generally with the assistance of *Lonely Planet Cuba*, and, in the case of Papiro, from the beaches of Guardalavaca, or, alternatively, arrive at the press by way of Paradiso educational tours. A third of the editions are sold in Cuban pesos during book launches. Yet, the imaginary of Vigía and Papiro’s reader is still somehow external and elite, and the books’ connection with an internal reading public—or a reading public at

large—remains oblique.

These presses, designed under a logic of necessity in the 1990s for internal consumption due to a dearth of paper and the contraction of state-sponsored printing in the 1990s, somewhere along the way became a paradoxical luxury product destined for the Cuban amateur collector⁷² or for exportation. Even if not their original intention, like many avant-gardes —or craftwork (Shanks)—they have become property of the archive as enclosure and market, whether institutional or the affective archives of the amateur collector or of the “individual” and “personal” past (Pearce) of the tourist’s souvenir. As their material construction “undoes” the linear precepts of the archive, appropriating its environment fitfully and according to a logic of the illogic (à la Spieker, and perhaps à la Revolutionary-era archival practice), Cuadernos Papiro and Ediciones Vigía are later re-assimilated into the archive’s order through their limited editions and their appeal to particular constructions of taste. In its extremity, they thus enter into the disciplinary interior regime of the U.S. institutional archive—the special collection: a space enclosed and monitored usually both by a librarian and a security camera, filtered and mediated by the gloves required for many archival objects, and proscriptive of personal marks and possessions that range from rain gear to ink pens.

Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro are not alone among artists’ books in this unresolved dynamic with the market and with a broad reading public, though the fact that they are based in Cuba adds an overlay to their relationship with commerce and with their

⁷² Internal to Cuba, strangely enough, despite efforts to eliminate traditional conceptions of property in many spheres of culture in Revolutionary Cuba, the idea of private amateur collectors persisted and was even encouraged by Revolutionary-era policy. For an history of Revolutionary-era Cuban collector’s groups and circles, in particular in Matanzas, see *El coleccionista en Matanzas: del gabinete privado al museo público (The Collector in Matanzas: From the Private Cabinet to the Public Museum* [2010]).

reading and purchasing public. The artists' book has always sustained a relationship typified by friction, on the one hand, with the masses, cultural democratization, and economic accessibility, and, on the other, with institutionalization (e.g., leaflets and magazine productions of the Italian Futurists or German Dada artists acquired by prestigious institutions and collectors [see Drucker 178]). The 1960s and 1970s represent a paradigmatic moment in the troubled, yet aspiring, relationship that artists' books maintain with the public.

Artists' book historian and visual poet Johanna Drucker has written and spoken widely regarding the latter phenomenon. Using Lucy Lippard and Ed Ruscha's artistic and written work, Drucker's dethroning essay, "The Myth of the Democratic Multiple" (1997), takes as its point of departure the mass-produced artists' books of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. context. Animated by the generalized disenchantment and cynicism of the 1990s towards seemingly impossible democratic principles, amidst a simultaneous 1990s-era commodification of this 1960s idealism,⁷³ Drucker outlines the "tenets" of the artists' book genre along a series of guiding axes. In particular, she develops the artists' book's condition as an "ordinary," "industrial" object and product, as well as its mobile nature that in theory distinguished it from other artistic media confined to the gallery, the museum system, and, by extension, the museum archive. Its practitioners, in particular Lucy Lippard, accordingly imagined its distribution in "supermarkets," "drugstores," and "airports." Drucker writes skeptically:

⁷³ For more on this tendency, see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999), despite working primarily with the French context, is an invaluable resource as regards 1990s Capitalism's assimilation of critique, in particular, 1960s counterculture values.

While that idea worked fine in the abstract, in reality it depended upon creating a system of distribution and upon finding an interested audience for these works which were at least as esoteric in many cases as the most obscure fine art objects. To this day there are plenty of viewers who respond to artists' books with puzzlement, dismay, confusion, and/or outright hostility. The fallacy of the supermarket distribution network envisioned by Lippard was not merely that there wasn't a structure in place to facilitate it, but that even if there had been, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* or Suzanne Lacy's *Rape Is...* (1976) would never have leaped to the eye and hand of the casual shopper with the same easy rapacity as the *National Enquirer*. (176-77)

The "democratic multiple," despite its location within a capitalist, market-based economy,⁷⁴ shares many of the ideals of the 1960s mass-produced, state-sponsored Cuban book: the broad circulation of both a visual and textual "art," the "public" as an overarching value of symbolic production, and an appropriation of consumer culture, in particular in its pop-art manifestations, under an emancipatory matrix. In Drucker's analysis, however, as is the case with most of her post-Berlin Wall contemporaries, "the democratic multiple" is crossed by defeat and disavowal. Ediciones Vigía (averaging editions of 200) or Cuadernos Papiro (averaging editions of 40-100), in contrast to the democratic multiple that generally ranged from 500 to 5,000, arose contemporaneously not with Ruscha or Lippard's earlier work, but rather with Drucker's disenchantment, and its accompanying values and affiliations with its socio-economic context.

In the 1960s, Cuban graphic design responded to shortage through abundance.

⁷⁴ The artists invested in the concept of the democratic multiple were closely tied to the New York-based artists' book collective, Printed Matter. Printed Matter—like the artists' book projects in question, despite aspirations towards "democratizing" art distribution, was originally a for-profit institution, and has always proposed artists' books as economically solvable alternative to the gallery system (see Lippard). In other words, despite a greater politicization in the 1960s, the democratic multiple never rhetorically proposed to leave a market-structure like its counterparts in Cuba in the 1960s. Many of these books furthermore in addition to entering rarified art markets have also entered the archive. Consider, for instance, Lippard's project PAD/D (Political Art Documentation and Distribution) from the late 1970s, which is now housed at the MoMA Library in Queens.

The same aesthetics—Pop Art—embraced in U.S. society as reactive to the superabundance of consumer society were adopted in its absence. Susan Sontag, in a 1970 article about Cuban poster art in *Art Forum*, writes:

One only hopes that the Cuban genius for the impractical moral ambition for limited, seemingly arbitrary, yet extravagant gratification of the senses—from the posters to the Coppelia ice-cream palaces—can be sustained, that it will not diminish. For just this taste for the gratuitous gives life in Cuba its feeling of spaciousness, despite all the severe internal and external restraints, and gives the Cuban revolution more than any other communist revolution in progress, its inventiveness, youth, humor and extravagance. (214)

Sontag's description is undoubtedly essentialist, and her reading of Cuban graphic design's circumvention of commodity culture, furthermore, is overly radical (206). Yet, despite coexisting with an "aesthetics of hunger" or an "aesthetics of imperfection" (García Espinosa),⁷⁵ the chromatic palette and the iconographical "abundance" of Cuban Pop Art—that extended to book culture and design in this period—that Sontag describes is apt, as is the connection that she establishes between posters and graphic design and "public" and "communal" circulation and subject formation.⁷⁶ Her observation of the

⁷⁵ An example of this "aesthetics of imperfection" in print culture is the magazine *Revolución y Cultura*, directed by Lisandro Otero, which contrasted from the vibrant pop aesthetics of the magazines *Tricontinental* or *Casa*, or from book projects such as Ediciones Huracán or Cocuyo, in its intentional embrace of sober typography, graphics, and paper. See "Tres preguntas a Lisandro Otero," *Revolución y Cultura* 1.2 (1967) for an explanation of the magazine's theorization of print aesthetics and visuality as they concern underdevelopment.

⁷⁶ It is important to recall when making this comparison that Pop art was formulated in diverse manners in different geographies and among different artists in the 1960s. The exhibit "Arte destructivo" (1961) at Galería Lirolay in Buenos Aires is described by Argentine art critic Andrea Giunta in the following fashion: "En verdad gran parte de los objetos se habían recogido en la quema, una zona donde se depositaban los desechos de la ciudad, y a la que K. Kemble y Luis Felipe Noé (...) habían ido a buscar el material de la exposición. Allí recogieron los ataúdes (uno con un disparo de bala) y la bañera. Otros materiales los aportaron artistas amigos, como sucedió con un paraguas que Macció dio a López Anaya. O también, los materiales que este último encontró en el barrio de La Boca, en el puerto de Buenos Aires, provenientes de barcos viejos" (61). Art as

non-commodity-based conception of design and art in Cuba is also worth noting, though Sontag perhaps simplifies Pop art's relationship with industrial production. Industrial production was not just a counterpart to capitalist consumption—as Sontag proposes, but rather very much present, if not venerated, in socialist artistic discourse in general, and Cuban artistic discourse of the 1960s and 1970s in particular. Sontag's 1970 analysis proves most prescient, however, through her correlative discussion of the subsequent commodification of radical political posters in private collections in the United States and Europe. Relating this passage to interiors, the intimate, and tourism, her reflections take a similar path as those of Whitfield, Quiroga, and Pertierra regarding the Cuban culture market of the 1990s.

Likewise, in the 1990s, the “spaciousness” and chromatic vibrance of Pop art and psychedelia that Sontag found in the 1960s was tempered by precarious circumstances; its capaciousness contracted, inviting new aesthetic proposals, and a new propinquity with the realm of commodity and private negotiations of identity. Inscribed upon the rougher surfaces of the Post- Cold War Era, Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro are colorful, yet sober. The consumer culture that was absorbed in the United States and Europe by Pop art, or differentially filtered in Cuba in the 1960s, is not absent. Rather, like Cuadernos Papiro's *El gran vidrio: último discurso de Zaratustra*, these two press appropriate the figure of the commodity and consumption as if in X-ray—mediated, blunted, and fractured.

These screens and transfigurations of consumption dot Cuban book culture and

“desecho” in Pop art's Argentinean avatars in the 1960s raises the question of differential representation in the face of shortage or underdevelopment in art that works with consumer objects.

cultural criticism in varying levels of explicitness, relating a transition from a productivist to a consumer model of economic and material organization. Graphic designer and art critic Jennifer Ehrenberg's analysis is worth exploring in this regard. Ediciones Vigía's "poverty-based aesthetic," Ehrenberg writes in a description that could be extended to Cuadernos Papiro, vacillates between necessity and aesthetic intentionality, that is, shortage as intention and aesthetic proposal. She cites the books' binding materials, decorative elements—"vintage ephemera," and its paper, consisting of scraps collected from local newspapers, butcher shops, and factories in the 1990s. In the 2000s, however, Ehrenberg notes, the press' paper is "made from bagasse, a fibrous by-product of sugarcane processing." She continues, "the plentiful sugarcane pulp is so difficult to break down, an inordinate amount of acid is used in the papermaking process, resulting in a tan-colored paper [...]" Ehrenberg closes, significantly, calling the paper "similar to grocery bags in color, texture, and archival qualities" (90). The simile "similar to grocery bags" is stark and initially disorienting, yet Ehrenberg's final translation of Vigía's materials to the references of a North American audience is both perplexing and apposite. Sugarcane as an historic Cuban monoculture crop has been systematically forged as a national metaphor and as a cipher for colonial commodity exploitation, especially by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. The first paper made out of bagasse was developed in Cuba in the 1950s by Jesús Azqueta, owner of the Papelera Moderna de La Habana (Smorkaloff 322), but in the 1960s and 1970s, this bagasse paper heralded the de-colonializing project of the Cuban Revolution. Notwithstanding, in lieu of citing the paper's origin in sugar fields and factories and other spaces of mass *production* and *cultivation* and its historic ties with colonialism—all of which would have been perfectly

reasonable analytical maneuvers, Ehrenberg instead—signaling a shift in epoch, in production, and in the artists’ book as genre—compares Vigía’s paper aesthetic and material to grocery bags. She thus ties the paper’s qualities to practices of mass *consumption*, associated conceptually with Lippard’s grocery stores of late-capitalism referenced by Drucker, rather than to production or non-market-based and/or contestatory models of exchange. Ehrenberg’s articulation is also tied with the paper’s capacity to be artistically maneuvered as support and archive (“similar to grocery bags in color, texture, and archival qualities”).⁷⁷

The paper and recycled objects that were used in Vigía and Papiro’s original book objects *do*, nonetheless, relate to daily life, as opposed to the archive, as well as to industrialism. They gesture toward and incarnate fragments of serial, industrial manufacture and commodity exchange, from which the books make use of fringes and residues. In the case of Vigía, gauze and string are not used to sew—even the books themselves, which are stapled or glued, figure, somewhat paradoxically, as an exercise in in-utility. In fact, the utilitarian elements of the objects, including the book itself, trace maps of meaning as they are reconfigured under the logic of montage and gesture not unlike the archives in which they circulate.

The archive is a symbolic deposit based on an operation of distance and de-contextualization, as well as re-contextualization. In the 1960s, the masses, as a mobile and public discursive space of enunciation, became privileged readers of history and symbolic languages. The archive of the 1990s, however, conditions a different

⁷⁷ Some of the books’ objects, furthermore, are drawn from nature: sand, crushed shells, dried flowers, driftwood, at variance with the mechanical or industrial aesthetic to which Ruscha subscribed, yet, strangely invoking traces of the tourist’s environment that since the 1990s has surpassed Cuba’s historical sugarcane economy.

deployment of the object and its corresponding subject variables. Does the archive have a reader? Is the archive itself a reader of sorts? If so, what does the archive read through the clarity and distortion of its epistemological remove from the object's original context? Neither Ediciones Vigía nor Papiro, at least in the 2000s, are intended to be read in a traditional sense. What is interpreted, instead, is the concept of the book as object, medium, and material artifact, and how this artifact is located in history understood as a complex filter of the economic and the social. If the book in Cuba—and elsewhere—in the 1960s became a metaphor for the insertion of the social in the public, Ediciones Vigía and Cuadernos Papiro in the 1990s and 2000s are a metaphor for the introduction of the social in the private, the archive, and the market.

CHAPTER 2: The Coup as Publishing House: Nosotros los chilenos and 1970s Chile

“Lo único que yo puedo decir se refiere al lenguaje. Yo no tengo mucha cultura, sólo la necesaria, y tuve que emplear varias veces el diccionario para entender algunas palabras. Pero los que no cuentan con este medio, se quedan con la duda. Sería conveniente hacer una expresión más popular” (qtd. *Chile Hoy* 24-5).

—Eduardo Herrera, union leader, commenting on *Movimiento Obrero* (1972), by Patricio Manns, *Nosotros los chilenos*, vol. 27 (Print run: 50,000)

“El escudo de armas, por su parte, que debió quedar siempre reservado sólo a señalar la presencia del mando supremo, ingresó también al afecto popular y, aunque hubo una ley que pretendió fijar sus características, la obra anónima y exigente del pueblo le introdujo cambios de significación. Sólo el himno, con la salvedad de una reforma provocada y pequeñas variantes de orden técnico, subsistió *inconmovible*, después de penetrar de golpe a la ciudadanía, lo que explican su propia naturaleza melódica y la psicología de la masa en multitud que lo cantó” (5-6).

—Luis Valencia Avaria, Academia Chilena de la Historia, *Símbolos patrios*, *Nosotros los chilenos*, vol. 1, Nueva época (1974) (Print run: 20,000)

“En la avenida La Estrella, entre Pudahuel y Cerro Navia, no hay supermercados. El mall más cercano está a una respetable media hora en micro. Tampoco ha llegado televisión por cable. Solo se observa un kiosco, que vende más dulces que diarios. Incluso los autos son pocos, lo que es mucho decir. No hay gimnasios ni teléfonos públicos en las calles funcionando” (6).

—Manuel Délano, *Zapping al Chile Actual* (2004) (Print run [approx.]: 1,500)

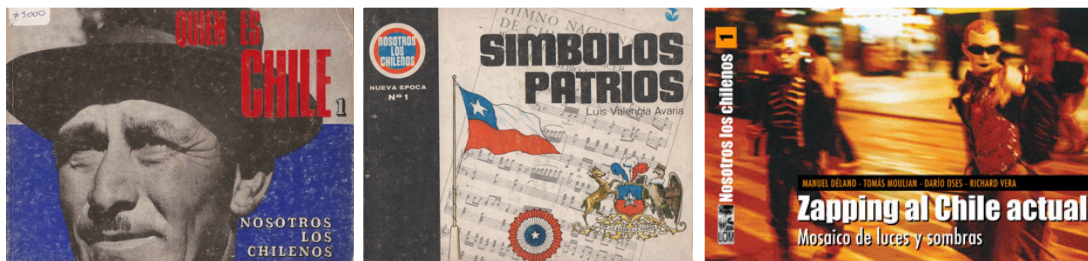


Figure 13: *Quién es Chile*, *Nosotros los chilenos*, Editora Nacional Quimantú, Oct. 1971; Figure 14: *Símbolos patrios*, *Nosotros los chilenos*, nueva época, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, April 1974; Figure 15: *Zapping al Chile actual*, *Nosotros los chilenos*, LOM Ediciones, 2004.

Three collections: All three varieties are pocket, landscape format, 19 by 14 centimeters. The first two dating from the 1970s carry the same postal address in their interior: 76 Avenida Santa María, Santiago, Chile. The third from another address near

the subway stop Los Héroes, on Concha y Toro, also in Santiago. All three collections are entitled *Nosotros los chilenos*. The first is imprinted with the name of a publishing house: Editora Nacional Quimantú, with a circular logo containing an inverted P, resembling a Mapuche weave. The second, similar, yet published by the publishing house, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral starting in 1974, is marked by another circular logo, this time an open book in negative relief, pages splayed like a bird in flight. The third, published by LOM Ediciones, dating from the mid-2000s, through its name and logo, shares an interest with the first for Chile's indigenous past, but its glossy covers seem to communicate an abyss between it and the first two. How to make sense of these books in certain ways identical and, in others, radically distinct?

The collection *Nosotros los chilenos*, initially published by the Editora Nacional Quimantú under Allende, from October of 1971 to September of 1973 totalling forty-nine bi-weekly volumes, can be read as a nucleus of meaning as regards Chilean national identity. The project, made up of non-fiction “testimonial” *revista-libros* (magazine-books), was reproduced under three separate governments and three distinct publishing houses. The collection spanned three epochs of Chilean historiography: the Allende period (1970-73), the dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet Ugarte (1973-1989), and the electoral democracy established in 1989. With every reincarnation — whether the collection of eighteen volumes published monthly beginning in April 1974 by the military Junta by means of the state-run publishing house Editora Gabriela Mistral, or the collection of sixteen volumes edited by the Chilean independent publishing house LOM conceived thirty years later, the title of the collection remains the same. Although the title and pronoun abide intact, the external referent of the first person plural, the ‘we,’ or

‘nosotros’ in Spanish, proves protean, transforming with political winds: a “we” that expands and contracts, whose linguistic coherence hides its diversity and conflictive contingents. The symbolic appropriation simultaneously conserves and erases; it retrieves and expurgates, relating a narrative of symbolic seizures and appropriations that have characterized public and private policy in Chile in the last forty years.

Embedded in a larger panorama of lettered culture and its relations with power and in particular the state, the pages in this fragmented collection of books reproduce these disputes. These three periods and series as interlaced case studies, however, are not only revelatory of questions involving book materiality and the construction of the reader, but are also pertinent as regards the elaboration of collective formations and the writing and erasure of memory, the symbolic violence of the archive. These questions may be synthesized broadly upon three axes: How do places of distribution rethink the book as object and the reader as subject? How do visual elements of book objects, especially state-sponsored projects, construct new subjectivities and reimagine historiography? And, finally, how do formats or material things correlate (or not) with cultural and political democratization and redistributive practices as they bridge disparate historical intervals?

The Book Between the Market, the Disciplinary State, and the Library

The ideological and political tensions of the 1960s emerged in Chile like few other countries in Latin America. In this period, Chile would live the so called “revolución en libertad” championed by president Eduardo Frei (1964-1970), a project that changed the *rhythms* of modernization in Chile, and that, in turn, implied changes in

the stratification and ordering of formerly excluded subjects within public life. As Joaquín Brunner wrote in *Un espejo trizado* (1988) published at the dusk of the dictatorship, in the period of the “revolución en libertad:”

[d]esaparecen los últimos vestigios de la sociedad oligárquica y tradicional: la hacienda, el universo católico preconiliar y las jerarquías paternalistas que regulaban la obediencia intergeneracional. El país se urbaniza aceleradamente, la población se educa, el Estado se tecnifica y el sector rural se agita bajo la presión de la reforma agraria y de la sindicalización campesina. Los jóvenes de clase media y de las capas más cultas inician su emancipación y reelaboran sus comportamientos a la luz de una nueva ética de valores juveniles, rebeldía y compromiso político-cultural. (48)

These changes that Brunner signals in the country’s social demography, shifting structures of class, geography, and age would reach a preliminary crescendo on the fourth of September of 1970 when Salvador Allende, with 36% of the popular vote, became the first socialist president to be elected under electoral democracy in Latin America.

Although his political coalition, the Popular Unity Party—constituted by communists, socialists, and radicals—was continually fraught, an historic effort to realign the reigning socio-economic system was launched: its measures encompassed the nationalization of coal, copper, cement and a continuation of the agrarian reform began in the 1960s by Frei. The national rooting and particularity of Allende’s project attempted to propagate a democratic and pluralist vision, what Enrique Lihn in 1971 would call a “rejection” of “ideological monolithism” (17) and a broadening of what was understood as the “people” represented by a revolutionary government (“se apuntaría a fundar esa alianza, más allá de la táctica, ensanchando el concepto de pueblo y su correlato objetivo” [44]).

On a symbolic plane, the country underwent a period in which it questioned mass, commercial culture, on the one hand, and the figure of the expert and specialist, on the other. In the sphere of mass culture, recalling Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart’s

Para leer al Pato Donald (Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso, 1971), the imaginary of print culture in Chile was associated closely with the comic genre, understood as a foreign and colonizing presence. Due to the ubiquity of advertizing that by the 1970s—if not decades earlier—permeated all symbolic spaces including print culture, the pages of magazines and cheap paperback editions were filled with the images of other commodity objects, such as perfume, cars, haute couture, and beauty salons. These commodity elements had linked to and become indistinguishable from the editions' textual content. Advertising strategies thus constructed a continuum of mass culture and mass commodities. The film documentary *Venceremos* (1970), directed by Hector Ríos and Pedro Chaskel during Allende's campaign for president, likewise, unfolded a sequence in which varied elements of commercial culture, cars in showrooms, a female model with pearls, are interspersed with American comics featuring Superman, Hopalong Cassidy, Batman, and Gene Autry.⁷⁸ Superman, Hopalong Cassidy, Batman, and Gene Autry, along with the commodities that they accompany, evoke concepts such as imperialism, understood through the Far West (Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry) and the economies of oil, visually alluded to by the visual conceit of the automobile, figures and topics whose gravity are veiled by perfumes and colognes, the accouterments of modern bourgeois

⁷⁸ Mattelart and Dorfman's study in *Para leer al Pato Donald* was brought into practice when Mattelart directed the Departamento de Estudios y Investigación and Ariel Dorfman worked on the División de Publicaciones Infantiles y Educativas of the Editora Nacional Quimantú during the Allende administration (Navarro 57; Rodríguez Bethencourt 15). *Para leer al Pato Donald*, according to its English language prologue dating from 1975, was censored and burned in Chile. Chaskel, likewise was a pivotal player in the Experimental Film Group of the University of Chile, directing the National Film Society (Pick 113), whose reserve of photographic stills would be employed especially in the cover designs of the *Nosotros los chilenos* series, further emphasizing *Para leer al Pato Donald* and *Venceremos*'s relevance in this historical stage setting.

seduction.⁷⁹

The criticism of the imaginary and commercial spaces of comics and other mass instantiations of print culture finds its counterpart, however, in a skepticism towards the beclouding and exclusionary language of the expert and of the verticalization of culture. The article “Por la creación de una cultura popular y nacional” published collectively by a group of intellectuals in Chile called the Taller de Escritores de la Unidad Popular in the journal *Cormorán* in December of 1970 declares itself against “una actitud paternalista, como la suposición de que habría una cultura lista para ser envasada, etiquetada, y distribuida, y que sólo faltaría ponerla al alcance de las masas” (qtd. Lihn 28-29).⁸⁰ The vision of culture articulated by the Taller de Escritores saw culture as something that should not be chosen by an expert or anointed minority among already existing cultural manifestations, but that, instead, must be produced by the “people”⁸¹, or, as Ernesto Saúl put it, “Una cultura que nazca de abajo hacia arriba. Una cultura tomada en sentido activo; que el pueblo haga cultura sin importar cuáles sean los productos de ella” (6). This call to arms would find its expression not only in the reimagining of the place of print culture, but also in the expansion of the national university system, of the

⁷⁹ *Venceremos* “inaugurated the Popular Unity period of Chilean documentary.” It is on deposit in the Cuban cinemateca archives in Havana (Pick 114-29). We will return to the importance of Chaskel in establishing the textual and visual strategies maneuvered by *Nosotros los chilenos*.

⁸⁰ For a critique of the alignment of the Lihn essay with the interests of the Popular Unity coalition, see César Albornoz, 151-2; 162-3.

⁸¹ A key reference from the period on the “people” is Marta Harnecker and Gabriela Uribe’s *Dirigentes y Masas* (1973). The text published with a print run of 30,000 by Quimantú provides a didactic map (complete with a list of reading comprehension questions) on collective formations: class, the people, dominant groups/the enemy, in particular. It critiques not only paternalism, but also bureaucratism and what Harnecker and Uribe call “subjectivism.” This analysis can be applied to the cultural field.

Canto Nuevo, and of national theater and television; accompanied by initiatives in rural sectors of the country (el Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario (INDAP) and the Confederación Ránquil, for example), as well as by broader Pan-american projects.⁸²

The verticalism of the contested figure of the expert, for its part, leads us to the role of the state and its relationship with lettered culture, a binomial that in 1960s Chile had come to be seen through an equivocal, if not disciplinary, prism. A disciplinary interpretation of the State's relationship to lettered culture can be traced to the historical ties between literacy contingencies and political enfranchisement. As the sociologist Sergio Gómez recounts, joining literacy and political subjectification, the *Ley de Sindicalización Campesina* (1947), among other similar laws, “ponía como requisito que más del 50% de los posibles afiliados supieran leer y escribir, en aquella época, era algo absolutamente imposible” (174-5). This disciplinary lens may also be conceived through the more abstract theoretical reflections, such as those of Licia Fiol-Matta, speaking from the perspective of her research on Gabriela Mistral through which she traced the “panoptical” nature of the schoolroom and public education; a genealogy of “power” and “knowledge” that may be extended to other realms of culture.⁸³

Leer el Pato Donald (1971) by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart articulated this broad connection between “power” and “knowledge” well at the dawn of the Popular

⁸² See Arturo Navarro for a discussion of Popular Unity-era cultural patronage, or Albornoz, who also gives a general panorama albeit with a focus on El Nuevo Canto.

⁸³ As Verónica Cortínez and Manfred Engelbert remark, the disciplinary nature of the Chilean countryside can also be detected in earlier manifestations in literary genres (“obras criollistas” [25]). Cortínez and Engelbert cite work in particular by Antonio Acevedo Hernández, Mariano Latorre, Reinaldo Lomboy, Eduardo Barrios and Isidora Aguirre.

Unity Period, “Para acceder al conocimiento, que es una forma del poder, no podemos seguir suscribiendo con la vista a la lengua vendada, los rituales de iniciación con que las sacerdotisas de la ‘espiritualidad’ protegen y legitimizan sus derechos, exclusivos, a pensar y opinar” (9), subsequently reframing the reader of the text, the image, and the sound as a “producer” rather than “consumer” (9). However, what was it exactly that Donald “reader” was consuming as he or she was “entertained”? History, social order and its limits? Prior and parallel to this intended “awakening” of the reader in print, there was another awakening related to the understanding of the audio-visual document. In 1957 Pedro Chaskel and Sergio Bravo, founding the Centro de Cine Experimental de la Universidad de Chile, introduced in Chile the first documentary projections (John Grierson, Joris Ivens, among others) whose cameras gave testimony to the narratives of subjects whose visibility was occluded by the star system, until then the dominant representational paradigm in Chile.⁸⁴



Figure 16: *Láminas de Almahue*, 1962

In 1960 Sergio Bravo’s *La marcha del carbón*, on the historic Lota coal miner’s strike, inaugurated new circuits and scenes of the image of the worker subject as the

⁸⁴ See Jacqueline Mouesca’s interview of Sergio Bravo in which Bravo discusses the star system in Chile and viewings of National Film Board documentaries, principally those of John Grierson.

documentary passed through screenings in labor organizations (Pick 112).

In *Láminas de Almahue* (1962), Bravo documented the tempos of labor, endemic to the land fed by the Almahuino Canal. Pedro Chaskel, before *Venceremos*, filmed his first documentary *Aquí vivieron* (1964) in which the archeological excavations of Jean Christian Spahni are revitalized, made “testimonies,” of the Chango Indians. Among dozens of documentaries produced at the Centro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile emerged a new social function for the image and montage. The documentary narrative machine in Chile generated a visual and textual substrate upon which to relate the marginalized subject.

In this fashion, these new testimonial aesthetics and modes of reception that come to the fore by way of film in the 1960s do not merely represent an antecedent that informs the discussion of Quimantú and *Nosotros los chilenos* that follows. They also establish a way of confronting ‘lo propio,’ ‘lo latinoamericano’ (Littín, qtd. Ossa Coó 89) through “modes of verbal and visual address” (Burton 28) that runs through the textual and visual mechanics and strategies of *Nosotros los chilenos*, literalized through the use of graphic material from the Filmoteca de la Universidad de Chile, named in the early volumes of the collection.⁸⁵ This presence—both symbolic and institutional⁸⁶— served as a means of rewriting and reappropriating history,⁸⁷ but also of redrawing the paths through which culture moved. If the circuits (streets, factories, fields, mines) and viewers (peasants,

⁸⁵ For more on the origins of Latin American textual testimonios and on their intermedial nature, as well as their relationship with cinematic montage, insofar as testimonies, especially of the 1960s, incorporated “diversos puntos de vista, incorporando entrevistados, personajes, documentos y textos de prensa, canciones y fotos” (118), see Víctor Casaus.

workers, shantytown dwellers) in which and by whom Editora Nacional Quimantú and *Nosotros los chilenos* were read, viewed, and distributed were originally forged by the workers' press and cordel literature (*las liras*) (Castillo 32), these same paths were cemented in the 1960s by Pedro Chaskel and the Experimental Film Group and National Film Society, as well as the Central Única de Trabajadores (CUT), whose documentary distribution and exhibition networks would likewise be re-traced and re-signified by Editora Nacional Quimantú's books, and the claims on "truth" (Macdonald 2) and history that they would propose.⁸⁸

The First Incarnation of Nosotros los Chilenos: The Worker, the Street, and the Book Under the Popular Unity Party

Founded in 1919 by Agustín Edwards Mac Clure—founder of the Santiago *El Mercurio*—and Gustavo Hoffman, the publishing house Zig-Zag in 1971 found itself anguishing in a sea of debt. Although it was not part of the initial plans of the Allende government, one of the attempts to respond to the questioning of the sources and constitution of knowledge was the purchase and subsequent nationalization of Zig-Zag, an investment institutionally designated as part of the "Plan de Democracia Educacional." At the time, mediated by Price Waterhouse, the purchase of the company by the state on February 12, 1971, was seen by some as almost accidental (Dittborn, personal interview;

de vista, incorporando entrevistados, personajes, documentos y textos de prensa, canciones y fotos" (118), see Víctor Casaus.

Bergot 3).⁸⁹ Yet, instead of disappearing as a forgettable incident of short duration, in the eyes of history, the project—like the other two cases of this study—can be located within a narrative of the significant large-scale state publishing projects of Latin America. In fact, the purchase of Zig-Zag by the Allende government may be construed as an important layer in the constitution and the understanding of the authors of knowledge in written culture in Chile.

Zig-Zag's new name, borrowed from a dictionary of Mapudungun, an indigenous language endemic to South-Central Chile and West Central Argentina, at the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile by one of the publishing house's workers, would be the Editora Nacional Quimantú (*Quim*=knowledge, *Antú*=sun) (López, personal interview; Corvalán, *El Gobierno* 30). During its short lifetime, the Editora Nacional Quimantú published 12 million books representing a diverse gamut of genres and titles that ranged from Oscar Wilde's *El fantasma de Canterville*, Conan Doyle's *La liga de los pelirrojos*, "Julio" Verne's "Motín a Bordo" and "Un Drama en México," and *Herman Melville's Bartleby*, to manuals, such *Manual de ajedrez*, and children's literature, *El rabinito que volvió* – imported from China, alongside classic Chilean naturalist literature, among them Baldomero Lillo's *El Chiflón del diablo*. This varied catalogue would be paired by collections of the publishing house's own design. Averaging a staggering 800,000 volumes per month, roughly equivalent to Zig-Zag's yearly production (Subercaseaux, "El estado" 281), one of Editora Nacional Quimantú's advertisements featured a metal

⁸⁹ The participation of the multinational British accounting firm Price Waterhouse in the purchase calls to our attention that, despite attempts to reconstruct certain elements of the economy of reading and readership, Editora Nacional Quimantú maintained within the confines of capitalist structures.

key suspended diagonally with an ornate padlocked wooden door as backdrop. The accompanying slogan, “una llave para abrir cualquier puerta,” proposed Quimantú’s books as tools to open rooms, buildings, that is, spaces closed not by a physical key, rather by the enclosures of social and symbolic capital that these publications attempted to penetrate.⁹⁰



Figure 17: Editora Nacional Quimantú Advertisement, “una llave para abrir cualquier puerta”

Yet, the publishing house’s proposals were much more complex than this perhaps mechanistic articulation. Books and writing had historically been understood, on one extreme, as a luxury object, as well as a mark of class, added adornment in the private,

⁹⁰ Republished by the blog *Quimantú para todos* (http://quimantuparatodos.blogspot.com/2011_02_01_archive.html)

closed-off spaces of bourgeois domesticity, isolated from the “nudity and sordidness” (“la desnudez y la sordidez” (Rama 111)) of the factory, and, on another extreme, as in *El Chacal de Nahueltoro*, as a disciplinary tool of institutional power. The book, within the matrix of Editora Nacional Quimantú, was instead integrated into the imaginaries of work and placed in a novel systems of objects and “things.”

In Patricio Guzmán’s cinematic trilogy, *La Batalla de Chile (The Battle of Chile)* (1975; 1976; 1979), whose visual archive arguably makes up the international image of the Popular Unity period, the Editora Nacional Quimantú’s press appears three times unidentified by the voice-over in Part III of the trilogy alongside other historically more pedestrian industries. These appearances include (1) a magazine called *La pelea por el cobre*; (2) a banner carried by workers in a protest upon which is painted “Quimantú”; and (3) the press itself in the process of serially manufacturing books.⁹¹ These filmic representations are visually presented parallel to shots of the textile industry, bicycle and playing card manufacture, as well as other industries whose historical production in the collective imaginary would have been separate from that of letters. Production, distribution, and readership joined under a single aegis, came full circle in symbolic imaginaries.⁹²

⁹¹ The Quimantú press had 1,300 workers, who worked 3 shifts, responding to the production exigencies of the period (Dittborn, personal interview).

⁹² *Batalla de Chile* is illuminating when considering *Nosotros los chilenos*’ relationship to other industrial objects, but also when we later evaluate the international acquisition of *Nosotros los chilenos*. Produced by Patricio Guzmán under the auspices of Chile Films in an effort to reconceive the politics of cinematic representation by documenting the present of the Popular Unity Period (Lopez, “*The Battle...*” 270), *Batalla de Chile* was not screened in Chile until 1998 (Guzmán, *La memoria obstinada*); and had yet to be transmitted on Chilean public television even well into the 2000s (Richard 199). Instead of being received by the public for whom it was created in dialogue with its present,



Figure 18: *Historia del cine chileno*, vol. 4, Carlos Ossa Coo, Editora Nacional Quimantú, Nosotros los chilenos



Figure 19: *Así trabajo yo*, vol. 18, Editora Nacional Quimantú, Nosotros los chilenos

Batalla de Chile became instead a testimony for international audiences of the deterioration of the Popular Unity government (Lopez 275). How then to consider the representational battles waged in these cultural objects (*Nosotros los chilenos/Batalla de Chile*) extracted from their intended milieu?

This circle was reflected by some of its collections, including *Nosotros los chilenos*. Divided into three series, “Hoy contamos,” “Nosotros trabajamos” and “Primera persona,” in its advertising, *Nosotros los chilenos* was called: “Un testimonio de cómo somos, vivimos y trabajamos. Es también la historia recontada y, en sus pequeños volúmenes encontramos variadísimos aspectos de nuestras tradiciones y cultura, relatados en forma sencilla y amena para trabajadores y estudiantes, en libros cuidadosamente ilustrados” (qtd. *Memoria Chilena*). The collection –projected to complete 56 volumes, of approximately 96 pages complemented by 50-60 interior images (Albornoz 155)— re-signified what at that time was understood as Chilean national identity through the presentation of topics that ranged from class warfare to ethnography to high culture. Titles, many times conjugated in the first person, varied from *Así trabajo yo* (1971), *Lucha por la tierra* (1971), *Historia del cine chileno* (1971), *Yo vi nacer y morir los pueblos salitreros* (1971), *Comidas y bebidas de Chile* (1972), *La mujer chilena* (1972), *El divorcio* (1973), *Cuando Chile cumplió 100 años* (1973), *Chiloé: archipiélogo mágico* (1972), *Historia de la aviación chilena* (1972), *Islas de Chile* (1972), *Leyendas chilenas* (1973) seemingly encompassing a kaleidoscope of topics, ideas, and subject positions. This was also expressed through their authors, who ranged from Patricio Manns (journalist, singer, miner; 1937-), Alfonso Alcalde (journalist, professor of la Universidad de Concepción; 1921-92), Virginia Vidal (associated with *El Siglo*/La Universidad de Chile), Nicasio Tangol (ethnographic writer; 1906-81), to compilations of diverse first-person testimonials told from the perspective of non-traditional author positions (elevator operators, newspaper sellers, kitemakers, etc.).

The following volumes of the collection likewise performed a series of operations not only upon historiography and the nation, but also upon the book as “thing,” its content, and its reader-writers as these related to a newly visibilized constellation of actors and spaces. Placing traditional mercantile circuits of “books” in question by imitating the distribution and print run patterns of magazines, a new volume of the collection came out every two weeks on Thursday, frequently in editions of 50,000. The volumes were sold in kiosks, buses, trade unions and universities for 12 escudos,⁹³ the price of a pack of Hilton cigarettes (Navarro, *Cultura* 53; Corvalán, *Gobierno* 30; Corvalán, *De lo vivido* 130).⁹⁴ In a 1971 interview for *El Siglo*, a periodical associated with the Chilean Communist Party and prohibited in many factories even in 1971,⁹⁵ the

⁹³ Quimantú distributor, Enrique Penjean, quoted in *Mayoría* (N9, Dec. 15, 1971, p.20) outlined distribution patterns: “[D]e los 50 mil ejemplares de una obra, 30 mil son distribuidos en los quioscos (20 mil en Santiago y 10 mil en provincias) y 20 mil a través de otros canales (librería, instituciones, organizaciones sindicales, centros de estudio).” (qtd. César Albornoz 150). In the summer of 1971 the official exchange rate was roughly 28 escudos to the US dollar; due to extreme inflation and lack of product equivalencies, however, there is a limit to the use of this figure. I prefer to manage the monetary imaginary of Quimantú according to the products with which its books were paired (cigarettes, eggs, bread, milk). Comparatively, during the Popular Unity period movie tickets were fixed between 8-20 escudos (Vásquez 146). Prices were not printed on Gabriela Mistral-era books, likely due to the unpredictability of inflation. For historical exchange rates, see: http://intl.econ.cuhk.edu.hk/exchange_rate_regime/index.php?cid=19

⁹⁴ Contrary to a cigar brand such as the Cuban-based Romeo y Julieta that sought to determine tobacco’s social and class associations through gold-colored “anillos,” “rings,” and a literary name—literature appropriating and *elevating* tobacco, this comparison of Quimantú’s books with the inexpensive “cigarrillo Hilton,” instead, seeks to unsettle lettered culture’s historic social or class location. Tobacco leaves, furthermore, represent a flammable and disposable consumer product, adding yet another layer to the anecdote proffered by Navarro and Corvalán: its object-based ritual allows the *object* to be used only once, and, later, to be strewn upon the street.

⁹⁵ On *El Siglo*’s prohibition in factories during the Popular Unity era, see Peter Winn, 127; on the raid of *El Siglo*’s presses at the Sociedad Impresora Horizonte in September,

editorial director of the same collection, Joaquín Gutiérrez, was driven to insist that, “Si es preciso [...] usar las carnicerías para vender libros, las usaremos” (Marinello 6).

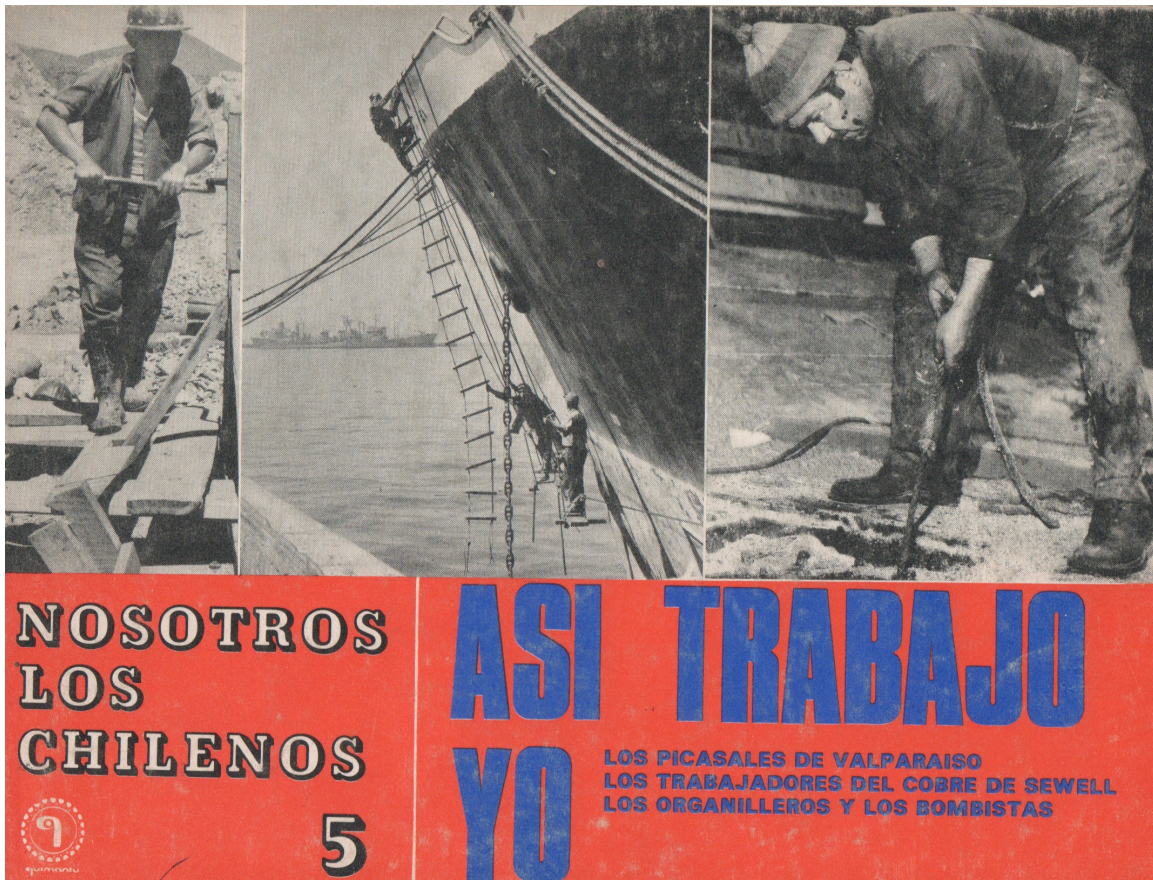


Figure 20: *Así trabajo yo*, vol. 5, Editora Nacional Quimantú, *Nosotros los chilenos* (the askew printing is part of the original volume)

Similarly, in another interview from April of the same year in *El Siglo*, Alfonso Alcalde, the future director of *Nosotros los chilenos*, reiterates Gutiérrez’s need to recontextualize lettered objects in particular, and “art” in general, yet with a different approach. First, echoing the anti-paternalist sentiments expressed in *Cormorán* regarding “culture,” in the interview in question, titled “Escribir la obra del pueblo-personaje,”

1973 by the military, see Guillermo Torres Gaona (6); on *El Siglo*’s clandestine publication in the 1980s by means of mimeographs, see *El Siglo*, 17 September, 1989, p. 15.

Alcalde avers: “Hay que estructurar de tal forma que el arte se incorpore como fuerza necesaria y no como una fuerza paternalista complementaria.” Second, he then continues, extending the assertion to the dynamics of books and their commercialization, “El primer problema del escritor es que se vendan sus libros. Un régimen revolucionario. Estamos cambiando el sistema en que el libro es una mercancía como un ataúd o una salchicha, donde se vende y compra todo: el amor, los sentimientos, un auto.” Placing an interesting spin on Gutiérrez’s implicit exhortations against the sacralization of culture, in this second point Alcalde would primordially appear to be attempting to extricate the figure of the book (or “art”) from traditional commodity systems. The two objects with which he compares the book, a “coffin” and a “sausage,” both refer to dead matter, the first explicitly referencing death, the second, processed animal flesh. By disengaging books from these spheres, Alcalde makes evident through this double movement the tensions present in the understanding of cultural commodities of the period. He places books on the one hand within circuits considered live, vibrant and essential, and, on the other, removes them from the purely material realms of “cars” and other commercial products that he mentions in his second string of equivalences and inequivalences.

If Quimantú reimagined books as objects, it also reconceived their content and subject referents. In an article from the period published in *Revista Ahora*,⁹⁶ the publishing house defines itself in the following fashion: “el protagonista de ese libro dedicado hoy a los organilleros, mañana quizá a los lustrabotas, camaroneros, garzones o ministros de Estado.” In this declaration, on the one hand, there is a subversion, or, at least, a flattening of customary social and professional hierarchies and rank. Figures, at

⁹⁶ Republished by the blog Quimantú para todos (<http://quimantuparatodos.blogspot.com/>)

the time, generally associated with a hand-to-mouth existence and untrained, informal labor, for instance, service industries (“garzones,” “lustrabotas”) or, in the case of organ grinders, with itinerant, immigrant labor, dissimulated begging and urban cacophony, are placed on par as subject matter and subject with men whose position is managed not by production or labor rather by the administration of symbolic exchange (“ministros de Estado”). On the other, subjects historically external to the state’s regulatory mechanisms are made affiliate within the phrase’s equivalences as the state in turn is tied to the street and public space through these subjects and the books themselves.

In the same article from *Revista Ahora*, the horizontalization of the book object and its content is extended to the books’ readers. While books are reimagined as sustenance, nourishment, and daily goods (akin to “bread, milk and eggs”), the “people” are brought to spaces “the temple of literature” from which they were formerly barred: “Si [el organillero] se tienta y comienza a adquirir esos libros semana por semana, y lo mete en la misma bolsa que el pedido del pan, la leche y los huevos, entonces los integrantes del equipo Editorial de Quimantú podrán darse por satisfechos. Una de sus misiones, al lanzar en forma masiva cuatro colecciones de libros, es que el libro deje de ser una mercancía elitaria, sólo al alcance de unos pocos. Quimantú quiere romper definitivamente las barreras entre la cultura y el pueblo, e incorporar a todos los chilenos a este templo —antes sagrado y privilegiado de unos pocos— de la literatura.”

Distribution logics thus became on the one hand a vehicle to circulate culture, and, on the other, a metaphor of a new book-object and reader-subject. In this new imaginary, the reader was not confined to the figure of the specialist ensconced in the library or within university’s walls; he or she was instead a subject and inhabitant of the city streets, an

individual and collective (*pueblo*) who frequented the kiosk⁹⁷ and not the bookstore.

The collection, in this fashion, attempted to redefine the outlines of Chile's readers and writers, two parallel subject categories that can be understood as a particularization of a broader understanding of collective national subjects. Quimantú's worker-reader-subject, exceeding a factory-based subject referent, is conceived in broad permutations. Not only does the representation of the coalminer— the classic national martyr, surrounded by mineral tunnels, immortalized in Chilean national mythology by the writer Baldomero Lillo, find its way into the pages of *Nosotros los chilenos* (Montecinos 30), but also a plethora of other figures. The outlines of these figures can be aggregated as a burgeoning redefinition of the worker and collective posited by the collection. This collective is comprised by the street photographer, whose eyes are placed in jeopardy “como los obreros, los mecánicos y los campesinos se estropean las manos, las piernas y a veces hasta los pulmones” (Ulibarri 77-8); the elevator operator scaling Valparaiso's hills in turn-of-the-century British-installed machinery (Silva 8); the whaler off the coast of Quintay, whose existence is compared to that of Moby Dick or Jorge Manrique (Coloane 65); the solitary interprovincial truck driver, starving for a roadside

⁹⁷ For an historical description of kiosks in Chile as the series itself constructed them, see “Los suplementeros,” (36-69), Luisa Ulibarri, *Así trabajo yo* (Vol. 18):

A veces, en el mismo cajón que servía de anaquel, las mamás les daban de mamar a sus críos, o tomaban ellas tecito con pan amasado y tejían. Ahora eso de los comistrajos queda pa los barrios más retirados. En el centro eso ya no se estila. Ve que del simple kiosco de madera de 3 por 3 metros pasamos al kiosco de metal y vidrio que usted puede ver en el centro ahora? Esa conquista es reciente! Claro que la *casita* o el negocito este le sale arriba de siete mil escudos! Son más la comodidad y la luz, pero de calor seguimos achicharrándonos...

‘Cuando existían los puros canillitas, existía también el doble de accidentes entre los suplementeros. Había que salir al trote, y era fácil caerse de los carros (cuando por fuerza había que pescar el carro). Y teníamos callos por todas partes. (46-7)

companion to keep him vigilant and his eyes upon a road, alone in mammoth, imported machinery, worth multiples his yearly salary (Thomas 71). The street photographer, the elevator operator, the interprovincial truck driver, and the myriad of other subject positions represented in the collection mirror a recalibration of cultural actors and agents proposed by the collection.

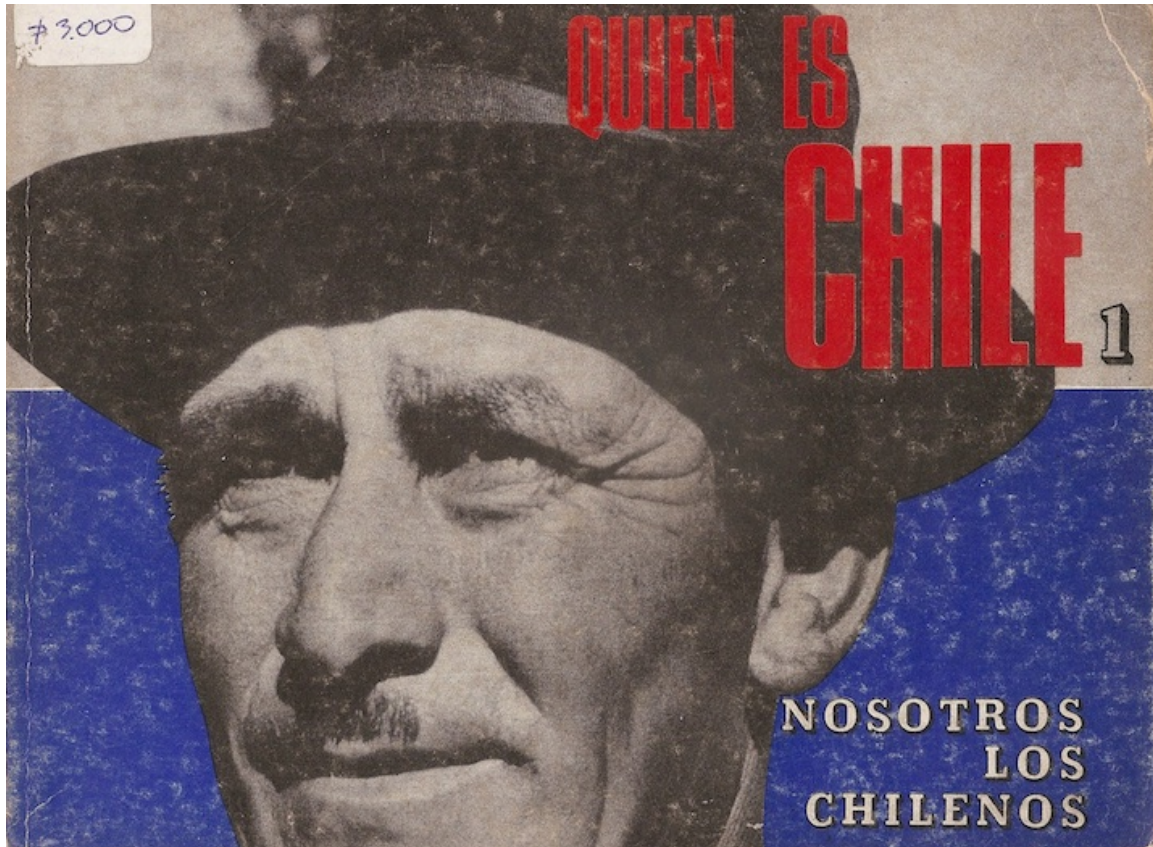


Figure 21: *Quien es Chile*, vol. 1, Editora Nacional Quimantú, Nosotros los chilenos

Even in the first volume of *Nosotros los chilenos*, *Quien es Chile* this new subject is inaugurated. In an edition of 50,000 volumes, the interior of the revista-libro, divided into sections (“Tarjeta de identidad,” “Chile País de La América Andina,” “Nuestra Cultura,” “Nuestra economía,” “Cómo somos,” “Panorama político,” “Un Nuevo mundo llamado Chile”), retraces history, geography, culture, work, and subjectivity in order to

rewrite it in light of the Popular Unity project. Yet, it is in the cover where the volume's proposals take flight. The expressive face—shot from below, emerges in a tight headshot from a blue background. On the one hand, abstracted to the point of losing individuation, the face is extracted from historical and social time by its visual excision from the background.⁹⁸ On the other, the photograph's shadows, wrinkles and the ravages of age and sun radically condense historical time, like the volume's title, collapsing geography in subject. The constant and distant gaze of the man leads the reader-spectator towards an invisible horizon, a past or a future contingent upon a desired subject as this representation visually extends to the first person typographical collective "Who"/"Quién" and "We"/"Nosotros."

⁹⁸ See Gilles Deleuze's analysis of close-ups (97), appropriated here selectively and with caution. Despite its iconographical eloquence, *Cinema I* systematically extracts cinema's imaginaries from its conditions of production and historical context, commandeering isolated taxonomies of images as a mode of analysis.



Figure 22: *Quien es Chile*, vol. 1 (back cover), Editora Nacional Quimantú, *Nosotros los chilenos*

This redefinition of reader-collectives, joined by the collection's reformulation of the reader's spaces and practices, in the brief interval of three years, would place the reader and *book* in new mercantile, social, and spatial positions. The kiosk, the factory and the trade union had become its points of distribution and consumption. Even the butcher shop, a sign of relative bounty, yet distant from the usual circuits of letters, was now a place of potential sale. Thus, instead of being compared with the domestic, and many times foreign, props of the economic elites, the book was rhetorically placed in the category of mass-production and local products, within the ambits of popular consumption and circulation. The reader, so vividly invoked by its first-person testimonies and its cover images, in turn, entered—at least rhetorically, to quote once

again *Revista Ahora*, the “templo —antes sagrado y privilegiado de unos pocos— de la literatura.”

Yet, like any testimonial document or object, if *Nosotros los chilenos* constructed novel subject positions and spaces of reading and habitation through both visual and textual means, how, by whom, and where were these books and their contingent subjectivities and spaces truly produced? If Quimantú’s name was rescued from the recesses of the Biblioteca Nacional, was “nosotros” of the collection’s title incarnated in Alfonso Alcalde, Patricio Manns, or Virginia Vidal, or instead the anonymous *campesino*, the face in which Quimantú’s history would be both invested and occluded, the figurative *organillero* who would place his book in his bag with eggs and milk? Were *Nosotros los chilenos* and their revista-libros a vehicle of collective “power” (Dorfman/Mattelart)? Or, were they surfaces and objects of uncertain ends, prey to inevitable and unpredictable appropriations? How would these book objects traverse history? That is say, broadening for heuristic purposes the question to an almost impossible breadth, did *Nosotros los chilenos* endow with any durational agency those who produced and consumed them? Or, were they a fleeting strategy reducible to the gestural?

Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época: A Double Narrative and A Second Archive of the Quotidian under Dictatorship

Following the violent coup d’état of September, 11, 1973, the Editora Nacional Quimantú was raided and the collection’s publication came to a standstill. Despite the United Nation’s diplomatic recognition of the new dictatorial regime in September of

1973, the dictatorship's internal normalization was of an extreme fragility; the Christian Democrat party expected that power would be turned over to electoral democracy. Thus, the dictatorship's project of legitimation was of a difficult nature. For this reason, in 1974 when the military junta seized Chile's political organisms, the process was carried out with the intention of reconfiguring not only the conventional juridical and political space, but rather with the objective of reconfiguring the sensorium of the quotidian. The public and architectural space, sartorial and hygienic codes all became points of contention. The murals and political language of the city's walls were whitewashed: by decree, "el aseo exterior de los edificios públicos y particulares debe efectuarse entre el 10 de julio y el 10 de septiembre [...] de cada año de acuerdo a las pautas estipuladas, entre las cuales 'se prohíbe el uso del color negro u otros tonos violentos en las fachadas, para no perturbar la armonía del conjunto'" (qtd. Errázuriz 142). Long hair, evoking simultaneously antimilitarism and Fidel Castro or Ernesto Guevara, was cut (Sanfuentes 213; Errázuriz 145); the flowing skirts with indigenous motifs, characteristic of the hippie culture, were tailored.⁹⁹ Even the white 11-inch Antú IRT televisions, sponsored by the Popular Unity government, would undergo a change: its dial, imprinted with the multicolored Chilean coat of arms, under Pinochet would be replaced by "el logotipo de la empresa fabricante, IRT" (Palmarola 277-8), a gesture that would indicate the alliances with the corporate sphere that the new government would weave in the audiovisual sphere paired with the closure of Chile Films (Corvalán, *Gobierno* 31), and "agreements signed with the Motion Picture Association of America" only a few years later in 1978 (Pick 124-5). These

⁹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of sartorial tendencies during the Popular Unity era, see Olaya Sanfuentes.

iconographical and object-based transformations would be accompanied by transformations in the object of the book.

The military dictatorship understood the importance of Quimantú's parameters: the spatial distribution of knowledge, the questioning of culture as commodity, the desacralization of the cultural object, the reformulation of a worker subjectivity. For this reason, instead of shutting down the Quimantú press (the tactic employed with Chile Films), a strategy was conceived to retract the transformations implemented by the latter. Quimantú was thus rebaptized as la Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, taking on the complexities that Mistral's figure would absorb both during the dictatorship and before it. Gabriela Mistral's gender positioning and identity as a public figure was decidedly ambiguous, yet in state-discourse — and her own public self-fashioning — she had long been transformed into an unequivocal mother and schoolteacher (Fiol-Matta). This public fashioning would form part of the dictatorship's two-pronged transformation of the book as object. Lettered culture was feminized, at the same time that it was masculinized through the military culture and imagery that filled its pages. As Heidi Tinsman writes concerning the role of women in the imaginary of the dictatorship, "The sacrificing Mother became the female counterpart of the patriotic male Soldier," "[T]he mothers centers of Chile, now headed by Pinochet's wife," she adds, "instructed women in the arts of homemaking and preached that a woman's true worth lay in her self-abnegation and maternity" (275). In the military discourse of the dictatorship, femininity could be understood as a metaphor for passivity, submissiveness, and obedience, while Mistral, as an ossified figure, deceased in 1957, allowed the dictatorship to evacuate the book from the streets. The book's physical presence, thus, was returned to the disciplining force of

the school, to the domesticity of the home, distancing it from the public sphere that had become politics' stage in the past decade, as well as from the hybrid object that Quimantú had incarnated.¹⁰⁰

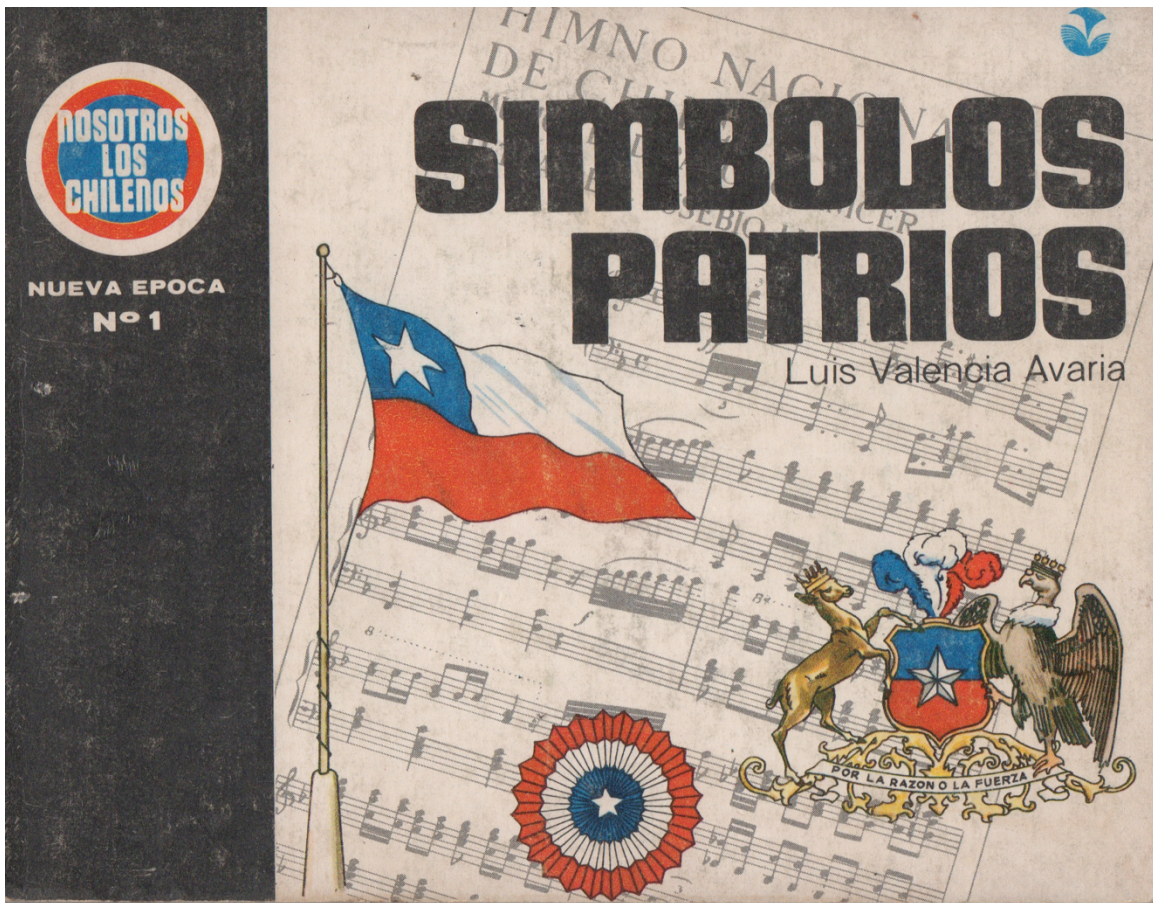


Figure 23: *Símbolos patrios*, vol. 1, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, Nosotros los chilenos, *nueva época*

The incipient dictatorship, specifically the writer-general Diego Barros Ortiz, named “máximo directivo” of the publishing house, thus in an effort to simulate and simultaneously replace the quotidian presence of the Popular Unity era, in 1974 launched

¹⁰⁰ For an inventory of the books published by the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, see Jara Hinojosa, 290-293.

the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral collection *Nosotros los chilenos* from the same facilities on the Avenue Santa María, in which the same machinery, the same materials, and even the same titular icons were used, however, sold this time exclusively from bookstores (Jara Hinojosa, “Graficar” 146). The collection was called *Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época*¹⁰¹ While the first collection’s compilers, contributors, or informants were associated with worker movements or the Universidad de Chile, the new epoch’s authors, without the same testimonial emphasis, would primarily hail from the Catholic University, from *El Mercurio*, and from older generations, though, like Quimantú, its participants were far from ideologically uniform. Examples of its writers include: René León Echaiz (1914-76; liberal lawyer, politician, and historian, member of the Academia Chilena de la Historia), Jorge Inostrosa (best-selling novelist and radio and television writer; 1919-75), Cristián Zegers (in the 1970s, director of *El Mercurio*’s *Revista del Domingo*, now director of *El Mercurio* proper; 1940-), Grete Mostny (social scientist and museum *modernizer*; 1914-91)., a clipping, without date or author in the digital collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, states as the reason behind the intervention in the publishing house as the need to “denunciar el intento de falsificación de la historia nacional de parte de la Editorial Quimantú.” The dispute launched in the dictatorship’s appropriation and transformation of the symbolic realm can be traced through the volumes of the collection—its topics, its desires, its projections. The details of that battle can be reconstructed from the conception of the books’ covers, the redefinition of the collection’s logo, and the axes of their verbal content once again determined by “experts.”

¹⁰¹ Later ‘*nueva época*’ became ‘*nueva serie*,’ implying continuity and innovation.

The first volume of this second collection physically (dimensions, paper, etc.) could be the second installment of the Quimantú collection. Yet, written by Luis Valencia Avaria of the Academia Chilena de la Historia, the volume is manifestly developed around the concept of “símbolos patrios,” rather than around national subjectivity (the *Quién* of the first Quimantú volume). This subjectivity is still elaborated, of course, albeit in a field of absence. The Chilean flag raised over a bronze flagpole—also present in the first volume of Quimantú—reappears, but this time accompanied, collage-style, by the national coat of arms with its slogan, “Por la razón y la fuerza,” and a rosette from the Independence period structure. The musical score of the national anthem, symbolic of hyper-codified language—albeit musical—only accessible to experts, is imprinted in the background of the cover. The introduction of this volume states: “La historia de los emblemas es beneficiosa y trascendente y por ello es necesario y justo que se escriba. Como símbolos de la existencia de una nación y como representación tangible de su voluntad común y de su *continuidad* en el *tiempo* y el *espacio*, cumplen una misión respetabilísima e imprescindible en las relaciones y afecciones humanas” (5). This preamble is followed by an apology of the “unshakeability” of certain symbols representative of the military order. This logic and historiographical vision inspired by a logic of *grand récits* and liberal individualism was a history formed not by conscripts but by Independence heroes; not by the worker, but by industrial magnets:

Tienen un léxico propio, fácil de entender en todas las lenguas a todo nivel y se expresan con dignidad y *autoridad*. [...] La demagogia patrioterica suele lanzar los emblemas o el himno patrio a la calle, sin respeto, con menoscabo de su función de unidad y de encuentro sin *barreras* sociales ni políticas. [...] Parte de la historia que pretendemos reseñar es la de la formación de la conciencia pública que aceptó en Chile cobijarse o sentirse representada y expresada por el himno e insignias nacionales. [...] El escudo de armas, por su parte, que debió quedar siempre reservado sólo a señalar la presencia del mando supremo, ingresó

también al afecto popular y, aunque hubo una ley que pretendió fijar sus características, la obra anónima y exigente del pueblo le introdujo cambios de significación. Sólo el himno, con la salvedad de una reforma provocada y pequeñas variantes de orden técnico, subsistió *incommovible*, después de penetrar de golpe a la ciudadanía, lo que explican su propia naturaleza melódica y la psicología de la masa en multitud que lo cantó.¹ (5-6, italics are mine)

The previous anchors itself in the word “demagogy.” Taking into account its etymology, *demos-*, the people, *-agogos*, guide, the introduction situates the motherland and her emblems in terms of her relationship with the people, the *demos-*, whose voice it attempts to discipline.¹⁰² The people, according to this characterization, do not create, rather they corrupt. Their corrosive nature (“suele lanzar los emblemas o el himno patrio a la calle, sin respeto, con menoscabo de su función de unidad”) is spatially infused, rendering the street a space of danger. The mass, visually differentiated and subjectified in Quimantú’s books, here is textually subsumed in a melody, in a linearity, a unitary and anonymous entity, “una masa en multitud.” this multitude, however, is visually absent from the images of the volume. It serves, nevertheless, as a counterpart, present in its latency, to the verticality of the patriotic symbols and the Independence heroes that populate its pages.

The cover of *Símbolos patrios* likewise is structured by a black vertical band — a color prohibited in the public space at the time due to its violence (Errázuriz 142)— parallel to a flag post, indicating gravity and authority. This first volume’s design and themes would establish the tone and the project of the collection made up of exegeses of national symbols, materials recalling the dawn of the nation. These volumes rewrote and

¹⁰² Here I defer to Jacques Rancière’s usage: “The demos is not the population, the majority, the political body or the lower classes. It is the surplus community made up of those who have no qualification to rule, which means at once everybody and anyone at all” (53).

exercised the erasure of national history, relying upon a commemorative logic: patriotic symbols, military battles,¹⁰³ the presidents, the pioneers, the ‘discovery’ of the Americas. Contrary to the Quimantú books that interrogated historical concentrations comprised of the individualized hero, arriving at a more systematic and structural representation of systems of production and the subjectivities that it generated, the volumes published by the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral return the reader’s gaze to a verticalized representative surface, in which the nation’s subjects, whether soldiers or the detained, are maintained external or at least oblique to the books’ frame-cover.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ These include importantly volumes early in the collection, such as *21 de Mayo de 1879*, vol. 2, *Combate de La Concepción*, vol. 3, *18 de Septiembre de 1810*, vol. 5, among others.

¹⁰⁴ In *Frames of War* (2009), Judith Butler writes of the expulsion of coffins and of the war dead from the US media’s visual field during the 2000s, as a means of “regulating the visual modes of participation in the war.” She discusses this in terms of representability. “[W]hich frames permit for the representability of the human and which do not,” she asks, posed as an heuristic question. Although Butler is responding to a very different visual field than that of the 1970s, a field in her case saturated by images that go from the proliferating surface of the internet, to print, film, and television media enmeshed in a dense web, her observations continue to be pertinent to the mechanics of visual representation in post-coup Chile; in the case of the covers of the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, a battle without blood, nor discernible arms; torture unrepresented, that is, a field of representability constituted by its exclusions (73). Seeing, as it relates to the “position” and “disposition of the subject,” later also proves relevant as regards the management of classified government archives, as Cristián Gómez-Moya develops in his research on the archive and the ocular-clinical regimen in Chile. The difference, however, between the covers from the dictatorship and those of the Quimantú era is the predominant use of non-photographic means of representation in the former, thus extracting these images from the evidentiary pretensions of photography (what Susan Sontag to whom Butler is responding and critiquing would see as openly interpretive, rather than implicitly so). The challenge is to find a differential way of understanding photography and more impressionistic means of interpreting reality (*tempera*, for example) and their corresponding relationship with collective understanding of the real.



Figure 24: Covers, *Nosotros los chilenos*, Nueva época, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral

The images of Nueva Serie/Nueva época, printed from April of 1974 to December of 1975, at first glance, are banal, seemingly innocuous, unimaginative: reproductions of *costumbrista* paintings by Juan Mauricio Rugendas, military scenes by Thomas Somerscales, scale models of naval ships, many poorly reproduced from the holdings of the Museo Histórico Nacional. In contrast to the photographic images that dominated the books from the Quimantú period, tempera is the prevalent media in the first volumes of the second series. The technique lends itself to landscapes, yet, upon taking up the challenge of a human figure, unlike the high-contrast photographs of the Quimantú

period, tempera (like the watercolors and oil reproductions that also populate the series) or simply scale obscures the books's subjects, reducing the human figure to non-conflictive outlines or simply omitting them, eschewing the “realist” documentary logic of Quimantú. Different from the Quimantú-period images that tended to depart from traditional conventions of perspective, denaturalizing and resignifying its subjects, the designs of the Nueva serie return perspective to its most traditional coordinates, many times simultaneously eliding the subject's individuality.

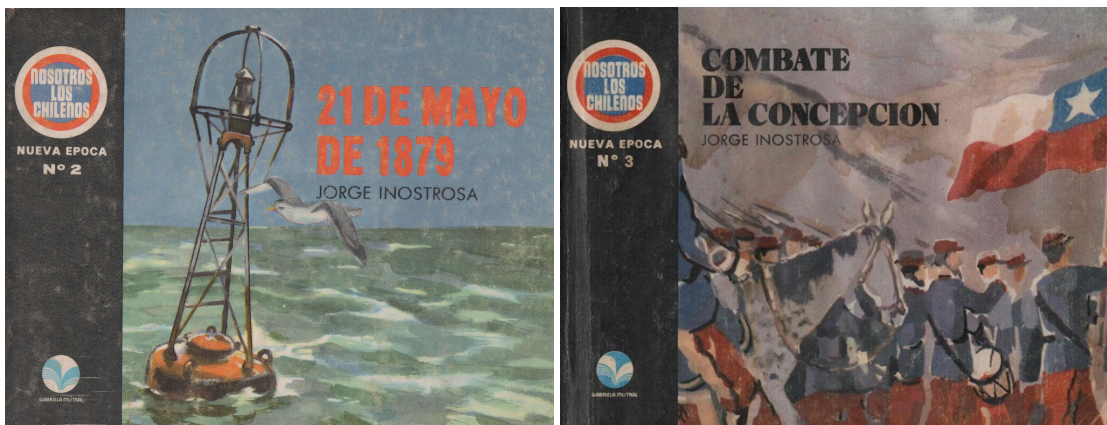


Figure 25: *El 21 de Mayo*, vol. 2, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época; Figure 26: *Combate de La Concepción*, vol. 3, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época

Volume two, *El 21 de Mayo*, commemorating the Battle of Iquique during the War of the Pacific painted by Gustavo Carrasco Délano,¹⁰⁵ serves as illustration. While

¹⁰⁵ Apart from the reproduction of classics, two artists are visible in the new collection: Mario Igor (vol. 1) and Gustavo Carrasco Délano (1907-99) (vol. 2/vol. 3). Previous to the founding of Quimantú, both worked for Zig-Zag. Carrasco, a member of the Generación del '28, spent 1971 and 1972 in France. According to a “testimonio” dictated by the painter's nephew, the poet Enrique Lihn, at the University of Texas, Austin in 1985, Carrasco was a painter forever “frustrado” after a trip to Europe to see the great European masters. Lihn acted as a model as a child for Carrasco's book covers (Martínez 161); emphasizing a slippage between generations and collections, which I will address in the following section.

the interior of the volume is imprinted with jingoistic seascapes made up of canons and smoke, the cover portrays a buoy—marking the vacant site of the sunken navy steam corvette, Esmeralda—bobbing in the grey-green water, while a seagull flies benignly overhead. *El 21 de Mayo*, thus, expels from the plane of representation not only the machinery of war, rather its subjects and collectives strewn upon the battlefield or figured upon a seascape. This expulsion continues throughout the seventeen volumes of the series. A cartoon-like caravel by Francisco Olivares (vol. 6); a lilac-colored silhouette of a pioneer upon a cookie-cutter background of mountains and fossil fuels (vol. 7); studious and pacific youngsters whose faces are never in the foreground (vol. 8);¹⁰⁶ museums as architecture disconnected from the subjects that fill them (vol. 11); national geography reduced to numbers (*Las nuevas regiones de Chile*, vol. 10/11) and undulating waves of colors; a barren ocean textualized as a source of commercial bounty (núm.13).

On Cultural Blackouts and Other Metaphors

Despite the differences laid out between the two collections, the format, themes, and premises remain in place: an attempt to define and address the national collective upon a shared surface. The critical tendency is to dissociate the two collections:¹⁰⁷ the

¹⁰⁶ The introduction to this volume is especially interesting; it relates the “confusion” of youth during the Allende-era mobilizations, and their return from the violent “streets” (6) to sanctioned spheres such as “el trabajo” and “la Universidad:” “Los jóvenes que fueron y se sintieron actores de la vida nacional durante la ardua lucha, no quieren volver a ser ‘niños cuya opinión no cuenta’. Comprendieron que cada uno tiene un papel importante que cumplir en las actividades que desarrollan” (D’Albuquerque 7).

¹⁰⁷ There are a handful of critics based in Chile who have attempted in the last decade to approach the symbolic production of the dictatorship in a new fashion. These include Luis Hernán Errázuriz, Gonzalo Leiva, and Isabel Jara Hinojosa.

first an emancipatory utopia, the second a base, utilitarian imitation that predictably reinscribes the national landscape with subject-less industry and commerce; expelling political actors from the turbulent stage of the streets, and regimenting their movements and rhythms. In fact, the temptation would be to completely disregard the dictatorship's collection as an insignificant fluke of history. But, what happens if, to the contrary, we construct a continuum, albeit tenuous and ambivalent?

Dictatorial and Military Neoliberalism and electoral Socialism in the Chilean context have been configured in aesthetic and cultural ambits under a logic that does not permit interpenetration. Aesthetic production and the modes of cultural circulation of the dictatorship and of electoral democracy take shape in the collective imaginary as antithetical spheres: they are seen under an inflexible lens of mutual opposition. To speak of unanticipated similarities, continuums, and legacies, is to speak in a space of prohibition, to border on aesthetic and political blasphemy.

In fact, until only a few years ago, the period of the dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet (1973-1989) was subsumed under the category of the "apagón cultural." Coined by a marine official circa 1978 (Orellana 12), the "cultural blackout" posited that, apart from the production of avant-garde dissidents (el Grupo CADA, for instance), the aesthetics disseminated and cultivated under the dictatorship were not "aesthetic" productions, rather the production of a void of the "aesthetic." Functioning as a mode of dissent and rejection of military cultural production, the rhetoric of the cultural blackout was taken up and developed by critics from the 1980s and from the first decades of the Transition to Democracy (1989-2010). The sociologist Joaquín Brunner, the writer Jaime Collyer, and the art historian Nelly Richard are among the critics who have developed the

concept of the “apagón cultural” in varying fashions. Brunner employs the term of “enfriamiento” (52), cooling off, evoking metaphors associated with the temperature of cultural labors, as if a burning coal had lost its potency, or burning metal had exhausted its transformative quality, freezing in a static and final state. Jaime Collyer, for his part, invokes concepts associated with the secret, the illicit, and with death: “Clandestinizada la vida cultural por efecto del golpe de Estado, reducidos en su accionar a las catacumbas de la intelectualidad disidente, cuando al menos en los primeros años de la dictadura, la única vía de salida con que contaban esos jóvenes narradores para su producción incipiente eran, precisamente, las publicaciones marginales, los recitales en entidades alternativas al régimen, los certámenes y talleres literarios” (127).

In the sphere of Chilean art criticism, however, Nelly Richard, French-born academic, resident in Chile since the 1970s, established certain discursive norms regarding symbolic production under the dictatorship that simultaneously created a vocabulary with which to speak about the dictatorship at the same time that it established an analytical dominance within the critical field. Using theory informed by Walter Benjamin and post-structuralism, Richard forged a way of speaking of a process that was difficult to grasp with the critical tools of the moment, a discourse and a mode of critical positioning that was subsequently appropriated by a generation of critics. Characterizing 1973 as an historical rupture, Richard describes it as a “zona de catástrofe [donde] ha naufragado el sentido, debido no sólo al fracaso de un determinado proyecto histórico — el de la Unidad Popular —, sino al quiebre de todo el sistema de referencias sociales y culturales que, hasta 1973, garantizaba ciertas claves de entendimiento colectivo” (16); in

Richard's analysis, the "categoría de sujeto," thus, finds itself in a "estado de dislocación [...] una unidad devenida irreconstituible."

On the one hand, the daily imaginary of the dictatorship supports this thesis. Let us recall the dark silhouettes that were placed in the streets during the dictatorship to reference the disappeared, as well as the blackened or empty frames of newspapers and magazines where photos had been censored (Moreno): spaces where meaning had arguably been emptied. To base our analysis of that period, however, on "failures," "shipwrecks," and "fractures" of meaning, makes bridges and continuums with the past difficult to construct; it cuts the conducting threads that make an historical comprehension of the dictatorship as a producer of meaning and subjectivity possible.

It is here where it becomes important to bring to the fore certain alternative readings of *Nosotros los chilenos*. The second collection may be interpreted not only as the annulment, rather as the reverse of the imaginary of the original collection. *Los pioneros*, vol. 7, of the new collection, that works with vignettes of enterprising individuals ("emprendedores"), imaginaries of self-sufficiency, is a good example. The last section, dedicated to Matías Cousiño (1810-1863), the owner of the mine town Lota, invisibilizes once again the figure of the worker, in particular, the miner, burying the emblematic subject of the Popular Unity era under a military, oligarchic, and commercial iconography, "chang[ing] the nation's developmental model from one based on the expansion of the domestic market and progressive incorporation of diverse social groups to one directed toward the international market" (Portales 251). Inverting the place of art and symbolic capital constructed two years before, in Volume 10, *Los museos de Chile*, written by Austro-Chilean social scientist Grete Mostny and published in March of 1975,

the “function y finalidad” of museums, is to “‘vender’ información y conocimientos.” Objects are re-placed behind glass, paintings are framed and hung on interior, rather than exterior, walls: “Las tiendas han dado las pautas: saben muy bien que para vender sus mercancías deben presentarlas en forma atrayante al presunto comprador” (Mostny 15).¹⁰⁸ Stores, merchandizing, and the buyer now become the dominant metaphors for culture and its circuits.

But, it is in another pairing of the two projects where the crux of the project, or at least the heart of its dilemmas, may be located. In Vol. 7 of *Quimantú’ Nosotros los chilenos*, published in December of 1971, in an edition of 30,000, there is a section titled “Los mineros del carbón,” comprised of transcribed testimonials of a miner father and son, both named Domingo Nova. There is a corresponding photographic series of miners in Lota (totaling twenty-seven photos—seven in color, twenty in black and white), attributed at the time in the book’s credits to José Carvajal, Carlos Tapia, Pedro González and Mario San Martín, from the photographic “pool” of Quimantú. In April of 1975, volume 12 (Tome 2) of the “nueva serie” was published by the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral. Titled *Las nuevas regiones de Chile*, it was written by Pilar Creceda Troncoso and Adolfo Ibáñez Santa María, geographer and historian, respectively, both affiliated with the Instituto de Historia de la Universidad Católica de Chile. A stray photo, by all appearances borrowed from the 1971 Quimantú photographic series was included in the volume.

¹⁰⁸ The brief comparison that Jon Beasley-Murray carries out between the dictatorship-era “caracol” malls in Santiago and the architectural structure of the Guggenheim in *Post-hegemony* is worth noting, as it points towards a shared logic that underpins both the spatial disposition of shopping and of museums that has taken shape in Chile with greater clarity in the last thirty years.

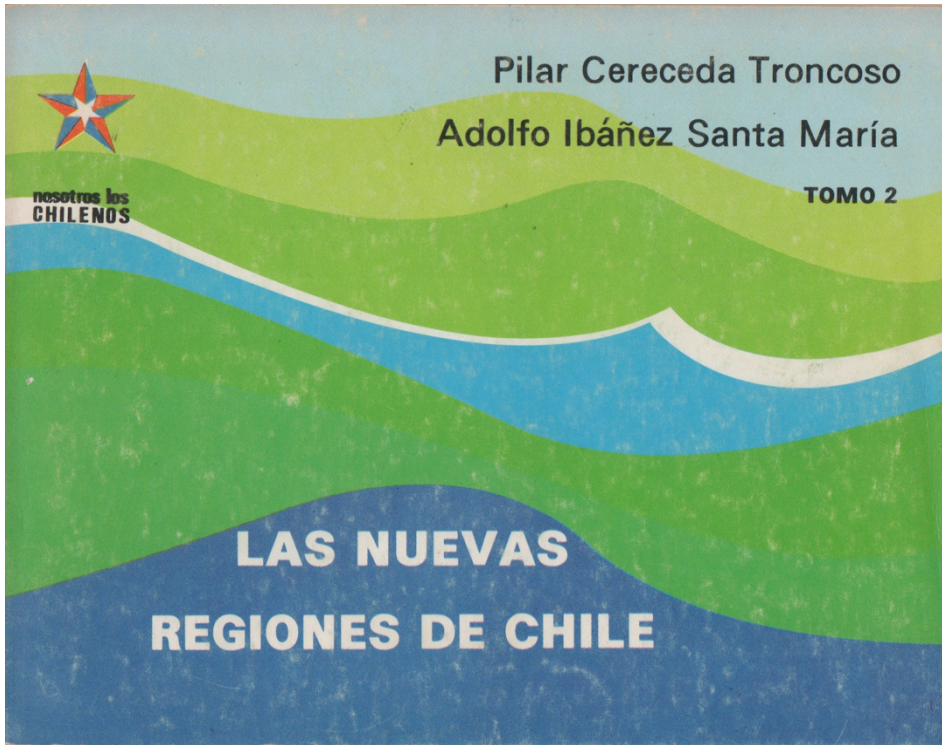


Figure 27: *Las nuevas regiones de Chile*, vol. 12, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, *Nosotros los chilenos*, nueva serie



Figure 28: *Así trabajo yo*, vol. 7, Editora Nacional Quimantú, *Nosotros los chilenos*

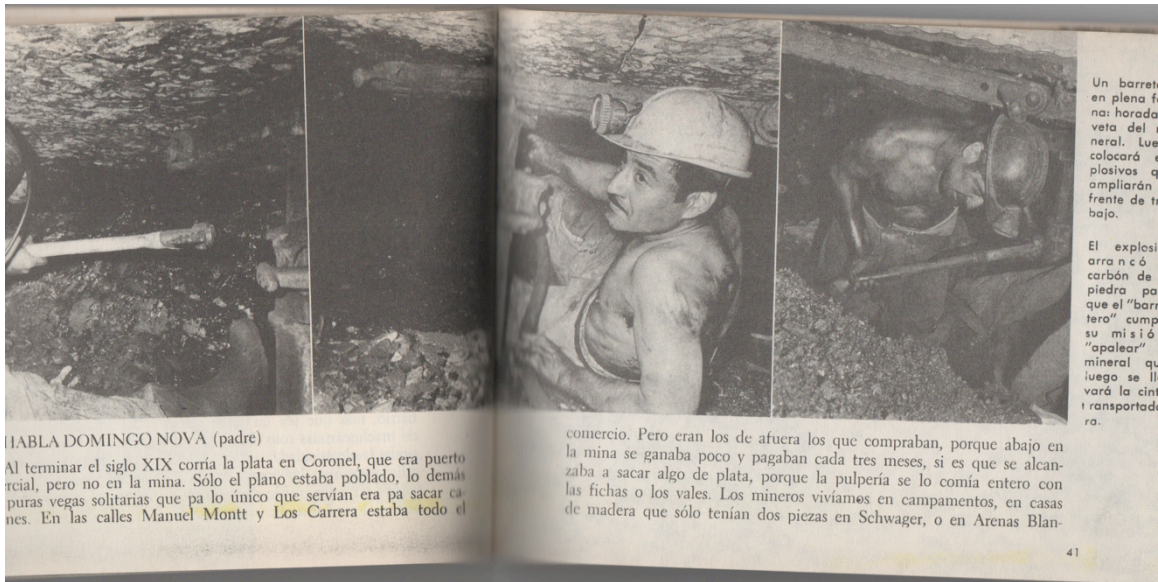


Figure 29: *Así trabajo yo*, vol. 7, Editora Nacional Quimantú, *Nosotros los chilenos*, Lota miner photo series, December, 1971

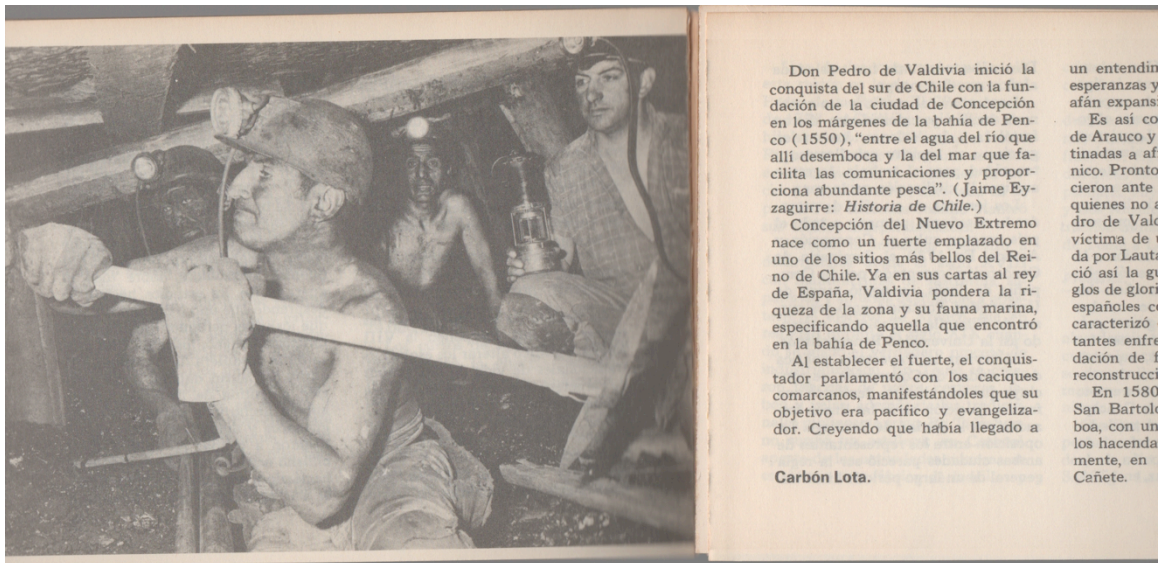


Figure 30: *Las nuevas regiones de Chile*, vol. 12, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, *Nosotros los chilenos*, nueva serie, “Overlapping” Lota miner photo, interior, April, 1975

What to do with the overlapping photo? The bare-chested miner with his pick, mouth pursed, biceps poised, concentrates his gaze upon an inner wall of the mine. Three of his fellow workers are in the background: the first, his face covered with soot looks toward the wall; the second, with a lantern less intensely observes his fellow miner’s

work; the third, however, looks at the camera, his brow furrowed, mouth slightly open, eyes curious, if not bewildered, at the lens implied by, but that never enters the frame, “outside,” yet “clearly ‘in’ the scene as its constitutive outside” (Butler 80). Had this third miner spoken to the photographer? Would he soon speak to him? What words would be shared?

But, perhaps, more importantly, what expectations did the man have for his image? In this transported and appropriated photo, are they the same men, the same subjects that they were in 1971? What changes in meaning does the photo’s displacement carry out? Is the photograph a bridge between the two series? Or, does the isolation, strangeness, and exceptionality of this shared photo illustrate the intransitable distance between the two projects and the subjects that they seek out as readers, and embody through their images and texts even as the two book projects share the same printing presses and workshop?

As Judith Butler wrote, when a photograph “becomes a topic of public debate, the scene of the photograph is extended. The scene becomes not just the spatial location and social scenario [...], but the entire social sphere in which the photograph is shown, seen, censored, publicized, discussed, and debated. So we might say that the scene of the photograph has changed through time.” What is the “scene” or the “scenes” of the photograph of the four miners? The visual representation of the miner in Chile, or of how to “frame” the miner, has a long been in dispute. Starting in the 1920s, “mining companies commissioned promotional films on their enterprises in the north, without mentioning the brutal repression of their workers,” expelling poverty from the screen (110 Pick), while these same images would be reconstructed under a lens of exploitation by Sergio Bravo in the 1960s and their reception in labor organizations. How may we

frame the mines, and the miners of the Lota photograph caught between two poles of representation?

Bravo's images, like those of Quimantú, framed these subjects as exploited sites of struggle. The mine of the Editora Gabriela Mistral, to the contrary, is rewritten by its accompanying text as a "polo de desarrollo;" the worker's movements are the necessary effort to construct the nation. The mine of the Editora Gabriela Mistral neutralizes the worker, and his exploitation. "La explotación del mineral de carbón ha dado origen a pintorescos pueblos, como Lirquén, Coronel, Lota y Curanilahue" (40), wrote Cereceda Troncoso and Ibáñez Santa María. The subject of exploitation is now "coal" not the worker, that is, the semantically neutral "extraction" of coal, giving rise to the "pueblos pictorescos:" charming and quaint villages, presumably not to terrains of disputed subject-positions. In this miner subject and in this photo is, of course, contained a larger question: How, where, and in whom to frame the Chilean? Upon which pages, or representational surfaces? The expulsion of the Popular Unity-era subject may be read not as an aesthetic void, rather as a dialogue of diverse casts: two projects and two regimes that exist in a relationship of permanent continuity and rupture; of kinship and contradiction; outlines and inversions.

Rewriting and Reappropriating Historiography in Print: Book Burnings and Stamps

During the Quimantú period, *Nosotros los chilenos* volumes were so bountiful that, according to Quimantú lore, worker-readers called the publishing house requesting that they also sell bookshelves (Navarro 59; Dittborn, interview), thus conceiving of the book not only as a basic good that intervened in the public spaces, yet also as an object

that interrupted and joined the rhythms of the domestic spaces of the quotidian. *Nosotros los chilenos* was also imagined—either implicitly or explicitly—through the mythology of these bookshelves as a good meant to survive in time. Yet, as far as Quimantú’s books are concerned, what remains, in the most concrete of senses, from this period is a building—part of Quimantú in the 1970s, today part of the Universidad de Chile—whose façade carries no trace of the past, and some books orphaned from their original context scattered throughout libraries and used book sales, also on the occasional shelf with significant less fanfare than the anecdote would suggest. Needless to say, the iconography of *Nosotros los chilenos*, that in the 1970s captivated millions of passersby and readers, in the post-dictatorial period, post even the Transition to Democracy, rests primarily not on the shelves of workers, but on the institutional, catalogued, and impersonal shelves of private collections and libraries, oscillating between anachronism, nostalgia, and, many would argue, irrelevance.

In the period that followed the 1973 coup d’état, however, Quimantú’s books were an extremely potent object of national concern. Book burnings were held in both the private and public spheres. Readers burned their own personal collections, a product of the potential repressive invasion of the state in intimate spheres.¹⁰⁹ In the public space, bonfires were mounted, according to some, the initiative of conscripts without institutional orders,¹¹⁰ according to others, acting as part of a far-reaching state project. From the Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario (Mapu) headquarters, a contingent of

¹⁰⁹ I would like to thank the journalist John Dinges for his reflections on this topic in an interview in May, 2008.

¹¹⁰ The bookseller Luis Rivano, who I interviewed in December, 2008, subscribes to this belief.

the popular unity coalition, thousands of books were thrown from the fourth floor to the street, now a symbol of refuse and wreckage. State television transmitted the destruction of the complete works of Che Guevara in four tomes. The destruction of the books at the San Borja Towers, a housing complex in the center of Santiago, due to its photographic register—recursively replicated, furthermore, has functioned as an emblem of this period.



Figure 31: Digital images of 1973 book burnings ¹¹¹

In 1980, trying to tease out the public and private vectors of photographic spectatorship, Roland Barthes wrote, “The reading of public photographs is always, at bottom, a private reading” (97). Books as affective objects, likewise, despite the publicity of the military uniforms and postures that surround them in these photos, visually appeal to the private spheres. Funneled back to the intimate spaces of what Roland Barthes called *spectatio*, the solitary ritual of photographic spectatorship, the pictures of these bonfires have come to populate a seemingly infinite digital archive, dedicated to the

¹¹¹ The first image is from the blog *Colectivo Biblioteca Libre*, while the second is from the photo blog *CNM*: 1) http://btklibre.blogspot.com/2007_09_01_archive.html; 2) <http://camilonorambuena.tumblr.com/>

period of the coup. This archive assimilates the public destruction of lettered culture as perceived from the intimate spheres.

Although the Chilean state only acknowledges the burning in 1987 of 15,000 copies of Gabriel García Márquez's *La aventura de Miguel Littín clandestino en Chile*, the 1973 bonfires of paper have rooted themselves in the national mythology, so much so as to give rise to a wide gamut of cultural expressions. The 2006 installation "Memoria de los libros (Exhumación de una historia)" by Lorena Zilleruelo (1974-) in the Centro Cultural Matucana 100, a former railcar repair station exhibition space near the Estación Central in Santiago, reproduced the destruction of books in 1973 by the military through audio projected from chairs, upon which spectators sat, and loose images of the bonfires projected in loops.¹¹² In 2013, the exhibit *Libros quemados, escondidos y recuperados a 40 años del golpe*, curated by Ramón Castillo (1966-) attempted through the donations and loans of private individuals to use the figure of the shelf, as national suture, made of wood and bearings, upon which the nation's missing and destroyed books might be replaced.

Nosotros los chilenos was no stranger to these ritual conflagrations in the national imaginary. According to the Chilean exile journal *Araucaria* (24, Madrid, 1983), authors found in *Nosotros los chilenos* were systematically destroyed in the weeks following the coup:

[Se realizó la incineración y requisiciones de las obras de] [a]utores como Pablo Neruda, Hernán Valdés, Guillermo Atías, Fernando Alegría, Patricio Manns y Armando Uribe...Recordando este clima inquisitorial, el ex rector de la Universidad de Concepción y ex ministro de Educación, Edgardo Enríquez, señaló que su biblioteca personal "hubo que enterrarla y allá en Concepción está todavía; más de una vez he pensado que así como en la Segunda Guerra Mundial

¹¹² The installation was also shown in Paris at the Bref Gallery in 2005.

la gente enterraba joyas o dinero, nosotros en Chile tuvimos que esconder o quemar libros. (qtd. Subercaseaux, *Historia* 182)

Books that a decade before were compared to bread, milk and eggs, were now compared rhetorically—albeit scornfully—to a cache of jewels. The *Araucaria* passage, apart from evincing the changes in books’ metaphors, communicates the received understanding of the fate of Quimantú’s books: a case of persecution and disappearance.

A large part of the books published by Quimantú, however, were not burned, but rather remained in the storage facilities on the Calle Santa María for a period of time closing in on a decade. The Corporación de Fomento de la Producción de Chile (CORFO) sold Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral in 1977 to the Imprenta y Litografía Fernández, which managed the press until 1981. CORFO’s report read: “A nuestro juicio no existe ninguna razón para que Gabriela Mistral siga en poder del Estado” (qtd. in Jara Hinojosa, “Graficar...” 145). Soon after, Chile would undergo a loosening of censorship (Avelar 47), but also the crippling debt crisis of 1982 (Portales 254).¹¹³ In 1982, the Imprenta y Litografía Fernández sold the remaining stock to a paper recycler where the books’ paper was reprocessed as white, disposable napkins (Subercaseaux, *Historia* 166-7; Levia 313). The product, borrowed from the mechanized, hygienic mass culture of the

¹¹³ As Carlos Portales wrote regarding the dissolution of the Chilean miracle (of the Reagan, Thatcher era): “The social conditions that resulted in a serious political crisis for the regime in 1983 were created by the collapse of the economic model in 1982, compounded by the foreign debt. The acute international recession—related to the policies of the Reagan administration—devastated Chile’s economy. In 1982, GNP decreased by 14.3 percent. The economic crisis damaged not only low-income groups and the growing number of unemployed but also the middle and industrial sectors. The resulting protest movement kept growing until August 1983, when the cabinet headed by Sergio Onofre Jarpa began a period of liberalization” (254). Idelbar Avelar, similarly wrote, “The year 1983 marked a major break: exiles began to return, censorship of books was lifted, 200,000 mourners gathered in the streets to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Pablo Neruda’s death, and a vigorous sequence of protests culminated in a general strike called by the Confederation of Copper Workers in May 1983” (47).

United States in the 1950s, can be aligned with the politics of consumerism of the dictatorship. Recalling the city streets, lettered culture was whitewashed; hygenicized; and made disposable.

A lesser-known destiny of these books, nonetheless, is that, unlike the newsreels of Chile Films, documentary material burned systematically over three days following the coup,¹¹⁴ some of the Quimantú books survived and even continued to be sold on bookstore shelves. In this context, they underwent a process of re-signification that, despite the extensive literature on censorship and book burnings in Chile under Pinochet, is yet to be discussed critically. This re-signification consisted in a manual stamp that carried the name Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, the name of the publishing house of the dictatorship. This stamp can be found in book collections within the Chilean national territory. Yet, perhaps more significantly, these stamps seem to populate with frequency books purchased for collections abroad, specifically U.S. academic libraries.

¹¹⁴ The raid of Chile Films was recounted by the civil servant Marcel Llona: “Se hizo una pira en el patio. Allí, por espacio de tres días estuvieron quemándose todos los noticieros desde el año 45 en adelante. También otros más antiguos, documentales de la represión de González Videla, los cortos del ‘tancozo’, todo lo que se había filmado sobre la nacionalización del cobre y la visita de Fidel Castro a Chile [...]” (qtd. Vásquez 156). Two documentary films were soon under production *La verdad de Chile y Los mil días* under the dictatorship’s General René Cabrera. Cabrera affirmed: “Un país sin imagen visual disminuye la imagen de su soberanía” (qtd. Vásquez 155). Unlike the books of the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, neither documentary was brought to completion.



Figure 32: Stamp of the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral in a Quimantú book, archived at Columbia University

The collection *Nosotros los chilenos*, stored next to its dictatorial counterpart on the shelves of the university libraries of Columbia, UC Irvine, Stanford, and Yale, among other academic libraries, figure among the survivors re-signified by the stamp in question.

In volume 9, *Chiloé. Archipiélago mágico* by Nicasio Tangol; volume 18, *Así trabajo yo* by Adriana Silva, Luisa Ulibarri and Hilario Cárdenas; volume 23, *Comidas y bebidas de Chile* by Alfonso Alcalde; volume 33, *Leyendas chilenas* by Jaime Quezada; and volume 41, *El fútbol en Chile* by Antonio Vera,¹¹⁵ all published by Quimantú and

¹¹⁵ Vol. 18 tiene has a stamp of a different size than vol. 9, vol. 22, vol. 33, and vol. 41; in vol. 18, vol. 23, and vol. 33, the stamp is only in the interior of the cover; while in vol. 9 and vol. 41, the stamp is inscribed at the beginning and at the end (the second above the

archived at Butler Library at the University of Columbia, the emblem of the publishing house of the dictatorship — a manual stamp in purple ink of an open book — is printed upon the interiors of the books. The books of the original Allende-era collection, contrary to the acquisition policies of the library, were not acquired by Columbia the year of their publication, nor were they burned, rather they were sent at least a year later, by unknown means,¹¹⁶ re-signified by this manual stamp and the matrix of meaning that it implies. In the context of the archive, the name of the dictatorship's publishing house superimposed itself upon the surfaces of the Allende-era books, creating a double identity, in which history retroactively appropriated its past.

The only copy that is missing from this collection at the University of Columbia, whose collection ranges from volume 1, published in October of 1971, to the collection's final installment from August 23rd, 1973, is volume 40, *Historia del ejército*, by Sergio López Rubio. It may well be a coincidence, but it would seem to beg a significant reading: the “people,” the “worker's” revolution, all of these topics were admissible and re-signifiable. The biography of the same institution that now found itself in power—the military—written from the optic of the Popular Unity era, however, would have been more difficult to assimilate in the new government's larval historiographic constructions. A manual stamp would not be sufficient to neutralize the postulates of this volume. Thus, still leaving the possibility of coincidence open to the particular archival circumstances in

index in the first, and in the second above the credits page). The volumes printed by the Editora Gabriela Mistral do not donn the manual stamp.

¹¹⁶ Within the Columbia library bindings of *Nosotros los chilenos* (original) the date stamp reads “Nov 5 1975.” *Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época*, according to the date stamps, arrived in several shipments: October 8, 1975, February 24, 1976 and April 6, 1976; the second half appears to have been acquired before the first.

which I carried out my initial research, I would argue that the volume is still of great significance in the collection when taking into account its later appropriation. The constitutionalist army, depicted in this missing volume, represented a constitutive danger. It established a connection between the masses and the military spheres, based on less hierarchical visions of the military order. The volume's dedication to René Schneider Chereau — author of the so-called Schneider doctrine against military intervention in state politics, and assassinated in 1970— emphasizes the rule of civil law: “Al cerrar las páginas de lo que va corrido de la historia del Ejército de Chile, bien vale reiterar lo aseverado por quien fuera ilustre Comandante en Jefe del Ejército: ‘Podemos tener la conciencia tranquila y presentarnos ante el juicio de la ciudadanía y el país, habiendo cumplido con nuestro deber conforme con las misiones y tareas que nos impone la ley, haciendo honor a una tradición de más de ciento cincuenta años.’”

According to the famous Benjaminian treatise, volume 50,000 is as authentic as volume 50,001. The same phenomenon that attempted the democratization of reading in the Allende era is complicated by its usurpation by the military regime. The daring gesture to continue with the Popular Unity collection on the part of the dictatorship does not only imply the doubling of a form, the outline of a word, the reproduction of a format, rather the reproduction of the legitimacy and the authority of the Popular Unity era. By expropriating its title and its format, the military regime, in addition to attempting to take up an already existing project and extending it towards the future, proposes to contaminate and appropriate the past: a distant past, replete with Independence-era heroes and age-old glories, but also a more recent past, dating from three years immediately before. It is a campaign to disintegrate collective memory by superposition, to deploy

itself in the opposite direction, backwards. It is a two-fronted temporal ambush: one that is both projective and retrospective.

The dictatorship, in its effort to invisibilize the Popular Unity era, instead carried out a veiled homage to the previous government. Despite its efforts to discredit the period of the Popular Unity government, by appropriating *Nosotros los chilenos*, inextricably related to Popular Unity presence, and positing itself as a succession, the Editora Gabriela Mistral inevitably recognized the need to speak in Quimantú's terms, to exercise its own project within Quimantú's discursive context, all the while maintaining significant gaps and hiatuses in the content of that appropriation.

In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Susan Buck-Morss postulates a vision of the 20th century whose leitmotif is the utopia of masses, a fragile world of dreams. She articulates this hypothesis through seemingly disparate cultural objects: Hollywood film posters and a Soviet palace; industrial bathroom materials and technologies; filmic time. These examples that range from the epic to the profoundly quotidian, have significant repercussions when considering 20th culture. Buck-Morss, drawing from the premises of the historic avant-gardes, yet extending them to other contexts and modalities of production, insists upon the power of a cultural object being nothing less than the capacity to “arrest the flow of history;” culture may “open up time for alternative visions.” She writes:

It is the aesthetic experience of the artwork (or of any other cultural object: literary text, photograph, cinema, theater performance, musical recording, etc.— but also theoretical texts, also this one) that counts in a cognitive sense. The power of any cultural object to arrest the flow of history, and to open up time for alternative visions, varies with history's changing course. Strategies range from critical negativity to utopian representation. No one style, no one medium is invariably successful. Perhaps not the object but its critical interpretation is avant-garde. What counts is that the aesthetic experience teach us something new about

our world, that it shock us out of moral complacency and political resignation, and that it take us to task for the overwhelming lack of social imagination that characterizes so much of cultural production in all its forms. (63)

The cultural manifestations of the Allende period, for some, opened this space. Like the manifestos of the historical avant-garde, cited by Buck-Morss, “Art of the proletariat is not a holy shrine where things are lazily regarded, but work, a factory which produces new artistic things” (Punin 55), the quotidian art of the Allende period wove a web of representation that attempted the formulation of new fields of subjectivity, new constructions of history, to which the military government would offer parallel answers.

Nuestros presidentes, volume 4 of the *Nueva época* from July of 1974, lays out a lineage of Presidents, linked together one after another like a gallery of eminent busts. This volume stands out due to the graphic characteristics of its title that suggests the movement of its typographical elements, a style that was already appearing in television graphics.



Figure 33: *Nuestros presidentes*, vol. 4, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, Nosotros los chilenos, nueva época

Closer to a poster that signals a disco hall than the hallmark of a work of historicization, this volume redefines the starting point, beginning with the period of the military juntas of the Independence-era wars, as well as the end point established by conventional historical time: the chronology ends in October of 1971. Salvador Allende is omitted from this lineage. Like the numeration of the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral collection that begins with a volume marked as its first, rather than as its 50th, *Nuestros presidentes* is a way of retracing historical steps, closing and tensing the aperture that the

Allende period meant historically, and of rewriting this detour with its signature, simultaneously traditionalist and media-based.

The pigeonholing of the Allende government as a “Marxist-Leninist regime” (“régimen marxista-leninista”) or as a “totalitarian dictatorship” (“dictadura totalitaria”) was the first step in the legitimization of the command of the military Junta (Jara Hinojosa, *De Franco* 303) and to the redefinition of the collective referenced in the collection’s title. The Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral functioned as a discursive and object-based arm of that operation. Books such as *Técnica soviética para la conquista del poder total: la experiencia comunista en Chile* (1973), *En la batalla política* (1974) and *República de Chile: primer año de la reconstrucción nacional* (1974) were key to this process (Jara Hinojosa, *De Franco* 304). These books cultivated what Carlos Portales calls the “notion of the internal enemy” (251). This state legitimation founded upon Soviet allusions was a way of rhetorically redefining the national collective, its inside and outside, that the phenomenon of the *desaparecidos* and forced exile enacted corporeally. This was coupled with a rewriting of historiography: it was imperative to insert itself within the elemental notions of the nation. To this end, the dictatorship compared itself time and time again to the original Juntas from the 19th century, iconographically intermingling with foundational figures: Augusto Pinochet blends with O’Higgins and Diego Portales; while Allende disappeared in the figure of president José Manuel Balmaceda, whose suicide closed the Civil War of 1891 (Jara Hinojosa 310). This rewriting of a synthetic historical continuum was not destined for chiefs of state, rather for a rearticulation of the “daily.” In this series of rewritings, *Nosotros los chilenos* was a mode of legitimation that was stored, not in state cabinets, but rather as a memento in

trunks and shelves. Like the missing book in the Columbia library collection, there are missing pieces in the dictatorship's resuscitation of the past, buttressed upon the constructive omission.

Third Installment: Transition-era Chile and Conclusions

In the 1990s, the triumphant chimes of formal democracy were heard over Eastern Europe and Latin America. At the time, the Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Costoriadis wrote of the fallacy of democracy, manifested by an incoherence in the distribution of the public and private in Western formal democracies or what he calls "liberal oligarchies." He intoned: "present 'democracy' is anything but a democracy because the public/public sphere is in fact private. It is in the hands of a political oligarchy, not of the body political" (125). Chile was no exception in the opacity and exclusions of its state during the Transition to Democracy.

This was perhaps most clearly manifested in the government documents of the dictatorship that came to materialize an unsutured collective past. Not unlike the mechanics of the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral that took reading from the exteriors of the streets to interiors of either the home or the school, the phenomenon of the state secret in its paper-based manifestations moved symbolic circulation towards enclosure. The state, as the nominal institutionalization of the public, in fact, made the public document private and "classified," if not hermetic and covert. Released in the 1990s, many documents from the CIA files on the 1973 Chilean coup only reveal title and date, topic and temporality, their content blackened (Kornbluh XVI). The Public is ink-stained and resists decipherability, what Cristián Gómez-Moya calls in his research on the

archive and the ocular-clinical regimen of human rights, “las tachas y borraduras de sus actos de desaparición informativa” (44). The documents in question were marked with the following terminology: “TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE, EYES ONLY, NODIS [No distribution to other agencies] NOFORN, [No Foreign Distribution]” (XVII). “Eyes only,” meaning no copies, would appear to assign a strange role to the “eye” and to vision, contrasting it to machines as a means of unlawful dissemination. The figure of the eye is understood as organizational intimacy—information that never leaves the insular corporeal circuits of the institution. Archives, stamps and redactions dominate the institutional imaginaries of the Chilean dictatorship and its afterlife, as paper, bureaucracy and ink came to be unequivocally associated with the state (public/private).

Notwithstanding, publishing, another mode of paper circulation parallel to the classified document in its relationship with an unresolved recent past as registered on paper, was strangely consonant not with the insularity of the state-based classified document, rather with the economic ideologies of the dictatorship: books, imagined only a few decades before as patrimony of the “public,” fled to the private sphere (private/private) and the market.

LOM Ediciones, founded in Santiago in 1990, at the dawn of democracy, in 2004 was the largest independent publishing house in Chile. At this juncture, Chile had experienced seventeen years of dictatorship and more than a decade of a so-called “transitional government,” and it was in this context that LOM decided to publish—with moderate success—the third avatar of *Nosotros los chilenos*. This re-birth or “renacimiento de interés” (Bergot 3) was accompanied by a new publishing house (“independent” and with conventional print runs (1,000-3,000)) called Editorial Quimantú founded in 2001 (and

still in existence). The exhibition “Quimantú 1971-1973, un suceso editorial” curated by Pola Iriarte and Mónica Villaroel in 2003, with the participation of the publishing house Cuarto Propio, the Universidad de Chile and the Consejo Nacional del Libro, is also significant when considering the 1970s-era Quimantú’s future incarnations. The exhibition compiled covers from Quimantú and commissioned posters from former illustrators from the original publishing house (Urbina, personal interview). What had been a mercantile and social object became an art or display object, circulating in new systems of value, utility, and representation.¹¹⁷

Like the new Editorial Quimantú and “Un suceso editorial,” the third installment of *Nosotros los chilenos* published by LOM condensed tense problematics of the market, memory, and national identity that both represented continuities with the original Quimantú and Gabriela Mistral-era editions, and irreparable chasms with the latter two editions; redrawing the outlines of subjectivity and their relation to material and immaterial circulation, the LOM books circulated in postindustrial economies, as relative as this term may be in Chile even in the 2000s, proposing distinct metaphors of “being” (Rancière) by means of their glossy covers, blurry photography, and many times internet-based circulation.

The first volume of the LOM *Nosotros los chilenos* collection titled *Zapping al Chile actual: mosaico de luces y sombras* through the use of the verb “zapping” referenced a different type of reader than the reader of either Editora Nacional Quimantú or Gabriela Mistral; the Transition-era cultural consumer in 2004 was distracted, and trained in an

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of changes in modes of production and their relation to culture (“art”), and “things” in Transition-era Chile, see Federico Galende’s *Modos de producción: Notas sobre arte y trabajo* (2011).

almost totalizing fashion in the visual logic of television in the concrete, and the image in the abstract. Among other online venues, the LOM books were sold by Ripley department stores at 4,000 Chilean pesos, roughly \$8 US. A multinational Chilean retail store and one of the first Chilean companies to promote the use of credit cards, the use of Ripley as a distribution mechanism for the LOM collection attested to the entrenchment of the dictatorship's economic project even in the context of an "independent" publishing endeavor such as LOM; it also evinced a transition in distribution imaginaries from the weighty historical connotations of the 1970s kiosk, tied to the street, and a "common" reader, now displaced in the post-industrialism and speculative capitalism that the credit card as a monetary instrument invokes.

Within the pages of the LOM collection, we read epochal changes, but also economic, political, and cultural shifts particular to the Chilean national context: the Neoliberal legacy of the Chicago Boys, the kiosks that sell more sweets than newspapers (Délano 6), neighborhoods defined by the presence of malls or lack thereof. The city's walls as imagined by the LOM collection are no longer covered by the political murals of the sort painted by the Brigada Ramona Parra or the political "slogans" or symbols of the Allende era; neither are they whitewashed antiseptically by the dictatorship. Rather, they are scrawled with gibberish, or passionate romantic outpourings, graffiti "reigning" king on city surfaces ranging from commercial establishments to houses of worship: "En muchas cuadras no se observan consignas entre las pintadas murales. Reina la pintura, negra, blanca o de cualquier color, siempre que contraste. Muros de capillas, botillerías, almacenes se rinden al graffiti. Sólo los negocios con rejas se salvan" (Délano 14).

The passage of historical time obliges the series to include new nuclei of

meaning: Vol. 13 *Exilio y retorno* (2005) and Vol. 15 *Represión en dictadura (el papel de los civiles)* (2005) serve as examples. The title “Repression in dictatorship,” not “in the dictatorship,” generalizes the dictatorial phenomenon almost to abstraction, while “Exile and return,” without qualifying markers, evokes classical visions of human movements. The subtitles of the latter emphasize this sensation: “el exódo desde Chile,” “geografía de la dispersión,” “peregrinos en tierra ajena.” The color cover photo shows a close-up of aged hands that foreground a 1970s I.D. card issued from the Chilean General Consulate of Madrid. The I.D. card obstructs the mouth of the woman as if the woman’s words had been replaced by the bureaucratic visualization of her exile—the black and white portrait registered by the consulate in Spain. The face of the present of 2004 is in color, in the background, distant, slightly out of focus, what Juame Peris Blanes has described as the “anti-realist logic” of photography of the transition period, a “subjective evocation” that references the subjective filters of memory, a “phenomenology of memory.”¹¹⁸

Contrary to the volumes of the original collection with overwhelmingly “categorical titles” (*La lucha por la tierra, Así trabajo yo*), the titles of the Transition—

¹¹⁸ Peris Blanes compares the documentary logic of the 1970s to the visual representations of the Transition, specifically the cover image of a publication by the Barcelona-based publishing house Blume from 1977 to the image of its Chilean republication (*Relato en el frente chileno*, Michel Bonnefoy, LOM, 2003). Peris Blanes describes the second photographic image as “retocada, voluntariamente desdibujada para crear un efecto de desenfoque que la acercaba a un estilo impresionista y fenomenológico, desligándola de cualquier voluntad documental,” what he calls a “lógica antirrealista.” Although Peris Blanes is principally interested in the photographic registers of repression and violence in testimonial exile publications immediately following the Popular Unity era, as Peris Blanes suggests, by calling the images of exile a continuation of the pre-coup “lucha social y política,” his observations can also be extended to the documentary photography of the Unidad Popular in its visual “urgency.” The title of his article (“De la prueba documental a la evocación subjective”) synthesizes the difference that Peris Blanes posits between the photographic representations of the two periods.

notwithstanding the volumes on exile—tend to be, however, characterized by “prudent modesty” both in a geographical and a temporal sense (Navarro, “Pres.”). They dispense with the almost messianic optimism of the original collection. According to Arturo Navarro Ceardi, director of the Cuncuna section of Quimantú: “Ese término *actual* ... no ocupábamos. Simplemente porque no pensábamos que habría otro Chile posible o diferente al intenso país que vivíamos.” Without a doubt, the relationship that historiography maintains with *time* and, in particular, with the present in post-dictatorial Chile has changed. Unlike the Adamic messianism of the 1960s, contemporary critics see post-dictatorial Chile as having entered an eternal present marked not by progressive utopianism, but by consumerism and its attendant Neoliberal logics, and the atomized, destabilized subjects that its temporalities engender (Idelber Avelar, for instance). Other critics place emphasis on the Southern Cone’s constant search of its 1970s past to the neglect of its “present future,” giving birth to what Andreas Huyssen, addressing a larger global phenomenon, has called a “memory boom.” Despite his emphasis on productive remembrance, Huyssen’s “boom,” marked by a mercantilist logic in its very lexicon, would appear to imbue this rescued past within a matrix also mediated (albeit perhaps not exclusively) by the market: that is, the insertion of a traumatic past in an academic, institutional, human rights-based system of symbolic and monetary exchange. These two market-based relationships with time and the subject-based corollaries of remembrance and forgetting, simultaneously complicit and adversarial, condition a constant oscillation between these two poles—past and present—of temporal saturation.

Here, it is perhaps useful to quote the introduction of the first volume of the Transition-era collection published by LOM that connects the final collection to its predecessors: “[R]etomamos esa posta interrumpida hace tres décadas para constatar qué ha cambiado y qué es indeleble en esta nueva colección de Nosotros los chilenos. . . Las drásticas transformaciones del país en estos treinta años que separan las dos aventuras de Nosotros los chilenos, hacían indispensable emprender esta nueva exploración” (Délano 4-5). What is this new collection’s relationship with time? There are a few words I would like to call attention to: “retomar,” to “restart” or “to take up again,” indicating a continuity, albeit interrupted, or the use of the term “interrumpido” or “indeleble.” The first, indicates a punctuated process; the second, the idea of permanence. This lexicon is juxtaposed with the concepts of “change” and “drastic transformations.” There is no mention of the second version of the collection from the dictatorship-era Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral. In a new optimism, albeit a moderate and cautious optimism for which the Transition has become known, one could say that three collections were reduced to two. By “taking up” the collection again, LOM was also engaging in an historiographical labor. The 17 years of the dictatorship were rewritten in chronologies that suffered from parallel and inverted voids as those carried out by the dictatorship. To think within the metaphors of our object, the historical erasure, this time by omission rather than by force, thus, passed to new authors, or editors.

How to understand the content of those books that no longer remain in these editorial or object chronologies? What are the semantics of absence and of loss? In both the missing volume from Butler Library at Columbia and the framing of LOM’s project that eliminates the dictatorship as antecedent absence and destruction become legible

concepts—concepts that speak and divulge in negation. As Fernando Báez insists in *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books*, “If on the other hand someone burns a book, he does so to negate its paternity, reject its function of being a father: ‘The auto-da-fé acts out in veiled but extreme form the hatred and rejection of the father’” (166). If we are to use Báez’s Freudian analysis, to the contrary of oblivion and emptiness, these destructions point to the unbearable weight of paternity. The dictatorship’s *Nosotros los chilenos* can be read as a response to the Allende-era collection; LOM’s *Nosotros los chilenos*, a response to the dictatorship’s refutations, materialized in print cartographies of silences and omissions.

Yet, what to make of the parallels and the presences? Boris Groys’s readings of the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s and of Socialist Realism from the 1930s and 1940s, two aesthetics that, although they are colored by their specific geographic and temporal exigencies, perhaps serve as an interesting parallel to the juxtapositions found in the case at hand. Groys writes: “Like the avant-garde, Stalinist culture continues to be oriented towards the future; it is projective rather than mimetic, a visualization of the collective dream of the new world and the new humanity rather than the product of an individual artist’s temperament; it does not retire to the museum, but aspires to exert an active influence upon life” (Groys 13). Non-emancipatory culture, as Diana Taylor has explored in the Argentine dictatorial context, does not necessarily “negate,” rather may “produce” history (73).

In 1974 the Asesoría para Asuntos Culturales de la Junta and the Departamento Cultural de la Secretaría General de Gobierno, was created. Managed by Enrique Campos Menéndez —author of the first speeches given publicly by Pinochet, editorial adviser to

the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, and recipient of the 1986 Premio Nacional de Literatura, the dictatorial institution was galvanized by an understanding of culture as “la memoria de lo bello, de lo digno, de lo trascendente” (Campos, cit. en Jara Hinojosa 263). The strangeness of the asseveration, of course, is that this classic definition of culture proposed by Campos is what problematizes the entry of the dictatorship’s cultural production in conventional canons, as its symbolic objects are considered utilitarian, rather than “beautiful” or “transcendental.” Likewise, it is difficult to place Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral within a tradition of democratization of lettered culture, as democratization — oddly faithful to its lexical root— is almost invariable paired with projects associated with the political left or electoral democracy.

The Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, as much as it may have degraded over the years to the manufacture of “etiquetas, envases y revistas para terceros” (Caselli 141), cannot, however, be inscribed within the parameters of the “apagón cultural;” nor can it be erased as essayed by the LOM collection. With its initial print runs of 10,000 to 20,000 copies and its monthly publication schedule, Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral is far from constituting an symbolic void positioned irrevocably towards the past; rather, it must be interpreted, like Quimantú before it and LOM after, within projective paradigms. The historical pasts and construals promulgated by the Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, the Editora Nacional Quimantú, and Ediciones LOM through *Nosotros los chilenos*, like any other retrospective chronology, invert their manifest temporal logic, relating more closely to notions of futurity than to those of their purported historicity.

Encapsulated in the collection/s *Nosotros los chilenos*, and their material and bibliographic bridges— shared formats and printing presses, stamps and archives, and

visual language—that graft the three projects together is a narrative that does not flatten, nor distance. It is a narrative that conceives the intimacy of these three collections as a system of competing relations that may be understood within the parameters of the concept of “nationhood” and “publishing,” as well as through the politics and violence of the archive: the archive that gives birth, and the archive that forgets (Derrida, “Archive Fever”). Crossing diverse ideological systems, the bridges created by these publications, contrary to creating false alliances,¹¹⁹ instead keep certain questions open that tend to be prematurely foreclosed. The *Nosotros los chilenos* triad, thus, problematizes received understanding regarding the modes and authors of the democratization of culture in Latin America, resituating mass culture and its material forms, within more heterogeneous spheres. Extending Groys’s ideas about art in a more general sense, the printed word and image is not always exempt from questions of “power,” nor does it always propagate the idea of “individual liberties” (7). If we fail to question these assumptions, certain darker symbolic productions —that, returning to the words of Boris Groys, do not ascribe to a “rosy notion” of culture—are clouded by a forced illegibility.

¹¹⁹ Here I am referencing Slavoj Žižek’s criticisms of Hannah Arendt and her flattening concept of totalitarianism *Did Somebody Say Totalitarian?: Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (2001).

CHAPTER 3: The Biblioteca Ayacucho: Black Gold Between the Library and the *Barrio*

Estimado Ángel Rama, Biblioteca Ayacucho, Venezuela:
Recibí los ejemplares. No podía creerlo. Me parecía la *Guerra y la Paz* por el tamaño! Es sensacional por lo completo de cronología y demás. Creo que fue un acierto no ‘peinarlo’. Pocos autores pueden escribir así y ser grandes escritores.
En tren de hacer observaciones diría q’ la tapa no me convence. Podría servir para cualquier escritor. Pero se trata de una edición estupenda. Es de esperar que el lector no se asuste por el tamaño y lo compre. [...]
Mirta Arlt, Julio 9, 1978 (*30 años* 88)

La revolución cultural empieza por la lectura, y el libro es mucho más que un objeto de papel: el libro es una experiencia, un juego, un arma de lucha. Revistas, carteles, internet, murales, graffiti, periódicos, en todos los formatos y en distintos soportes, leemos para entendernos y para liberarnos.
Website, Editorial El Perro y la Rana, 2015

Like the epigraphs that begin the previous two chapters, the textual fragments above join two very distinct historical moments—a letter from the Biblioteca Ayacucho Archive in Caracas, Venezuela, dating from the 1970s, and a statement extracted from a Bolivarian-era state-sponsored website in 2015. Both quotes bear witness to an epochal relationship to the writer, the reader, and the book. In the first, the book(s) in question still circulate by means of snail mail. They slowly make their way from Buenos Aires in the 1970s to Caracas—in the form of first editions¹²⁰ dating from the turn of the second decade of the 20th century—and back to Buenos Aires in a newly-minted critical edition: volume 27 of the Biblioteca Ayacucho prologued by Adolfo Prieto. As the carping Mirta Arlt (Roberto’s daughter) kindly reminds Ángel Rama (the recipient of the letter) in a thinly veiled complaint, the book is large, unwieldy enough to solicit a presumably

¹²⁰ The two novellas that make up the edition that Mirta Arlt references in her letter are *Los siete locos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Latina, 1929) and *Los lanzallamas* (Buenos Aires: Colección Claridad, 1931).

unfavorably comparison to *War and Peace* (read: Tsarist-era melodrama) and to consequently “scare” potential reader-buyers. The second moment—2015—still places reading and the book in a place of protagonism. This book may still even be printed upon paper (“un objeto de papel”). Yet, the book(s) in question, despite circulating also by means of the state, are of a very different breed. They are portrayed, moreover, in a vastly different manner and in a distinct system of relations that conceives textual and image supports broadly: These surfaces range from magazines, to posters, to murals, graffiti, newspapers, and the internet. Both epigraphs imagine a reader who sees him or herself reflected in a textual “object.” Notwithstanding, one finds himself in a library, and the other, considering the objects invoked (posters, murals, graffiti, newspapers), in the streets, or in a vertiginous process of digital cross-referencing.

The Biblioteca Ayacucho, a publishing project established in December of 1974, founded by presidential decree No. 407 under Carlos Andrés Pérez, merges these two moments. The project’s continuation, with comparatively austere material qualities, during Hugo Chávez Frías’s presidency (1999-2013) is nourished by both continuities and ruptures with its 1970s precedents. Through the lens of both discursive *and* material factors, this chapter regards state-run publishing in Venezuela from the 1970s to the present as the diachronic rewriting of both canons and their contingent subject categories, specifically, the *people*, understood in my analysis as the reader, and, at moments, as the writer. Considering these lettered objects accumulated and aggregated over more than forty years, I posit that the concept of canon is not only spatial, but also temporal, as it relates to questions of epoch, history, and the passage and interrelation of time.

La Gran Venezuela (1974-1979): Fossil Fuels in the Library

A general shift occurred in Venezuelan policy under the auspices of the *Gran Venezuela* project of the 1970s. The oil industry was officially nationalized on January 1, 1976; iron and steel a year earlier, creating new—although perhaps illusory—pacts between the Venezuelan state and its people (Coronil). The historic presence of foreign business interests (Standard Oil, owned by the Rockefellers, being a notable example) was mitigated, albeit far from eliminated. These economic displacements mirrored and also enacted changes in the cultural sphere.

Sustained and emboldened by the very particular circumstances of the oil bonanza resulting from new OPEC legislation and a flowering political exile community of intellectuals from the Southern Cone, Venezuela in the same period became a cultural refuge and a point of reference for the rest of Latin America (Achugar 25).¹²¹ Characterized by conspicuous oil-begotten largess, Carlos Andrés Pérez, whose first presidency spanned from 1974 to 1979, established the new *Ley de Cultura* (1975), as well as its contingent institution, the *Consejo Nacional de la Cultura* (CONAC) (1975). The latter facilitated the creation of an intricate web of cultural entities and agencies. Benefiting from the new institutions, the Biblioteca Ayacucho,¹²² roughly equivalent to

¹²¹ This perception has been problematized by several prominent critics. Fernando Coronil, in particular, attempts to shatter the myth of Venezuela as an ‘exceptional democracy,’ revealing a dark underbelly of structural inequality largely masked by petro-prosperity until the late 1980s.

¹²² The state-publishing house Monte Ávila Editores, founded in 1968 by Simón Alberto Consalvi, represents another meaningful publishing endeavor of the period. Monte Ávila Editores is known for having published some of the first Spanish-language translations of the Frankfurt school in Latin America. The Venezuelan Ministerio de Cultura also published the Biblioteca Popular Venezolana in the 1940s and 1950s. Although the Biblioteca Ayacucho was an important model of lettered culture in Venezuela of the

the Library of America in the U.S. (founded in 1982), or Bibliothèque Pléiade in the private sphere in France (1930s-present), was brought into being under the guidance of the Venezuelan politician and intellectual José Ramón Medina and the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, its literary director. The collection proposed the creation of an affordable collection of Latin American classics ranging from Pre-Hispanic to contemporary works.

Founded upon the assumption of a Latin American singularity, in Rama's words, the lens used in the selection of texts was "culturalista,"¹²³ thus communicating the collection's embrace of a broad view of 'culture' (as opposed to an adherence to belletristic precepts), as well as indicating the collection's exploration of social and symbolic constructions particular to Latin America as a spatial and identitary unit ("construcción de una cultura original que se han ido cumpliendo en el continente desde sus orígenes"). The Biblioteca Ayacucho included works from "las variadas disciplinas de las letras, la filosofía, la historia, el pensamiento político, la antropología, el arte, el folklore y otras" (30 años 71). The latter amalgam was intended to relativize the seemingly false autonomy of genre, and to represent the hybridity of discourse that had historical marked lettered fields in Latin America. The prologues, written by Latin American intellectuals from throughout the continent, scattered throughout the university

period, it was not the only one. Because of the participants involved and the logic of the collection, it does, however, serve as an important barometer of the role of the book and the reader.

¹²³ Rama writes: "Es ante todo una Biblioteca concebida con un criterio culturalista latinoamericano que intenta recoger las aportaciones centrales de construcción de una cultura original que se han ido cumpliendo en el continente desde sus orígenes. Eso significa que junto al aporte central representado por las letras en sus diversos géneros, se atiende igualmente a la filosofía como a la historia o al pensamiento político; a la estética o la teoría de las artes como a la antropología, a la economía y a la sociología" (30 años 1).

systems of Latin America, North America and Europe, became, in the sense of Julio Ramos's analysis of turn-of-the-century prologues in *Desencuentros de la modernidad*, not only anticipatory of the internal texts and of fractures in former systems of thought, but autonomous spaces to generate not only new projects, but spaces of enunciation.

The originality of the Biblioteca Ayacucho collection, today numbering 247 volumes, was not found in the authorial inception of the volumes—that belonged to another stage in the life of the text, but in the choice and breadth of titles and genres and in the ordering and juxtapositions of these texts within the particular “culturalista” logic of the project. The Biblioteca Ayacucho, thus, would represent the solidification of a shift toward the conception of literature as a “social document,” rather than as an autonomous literary sphere (Franco 47). Jean Franco and Claudia Gilman, among others, have detected this change in the contrast between certain Latin American publications and publishing organisms of the 1960s, in particular *Mundo Nuevo* (1966-1968), edited by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, and Revolutionary Cuba's *Casa de las Américas*; or in the opposition located in the rivalry between Rama and Monegal at the Uruguayan periodical *Marcha*, which in personalist terms underlines and synthesizes a discrepancy in methodology and in their construction of literature as a critical and ideological object. It is important to recall that on November 14, 1982, in the context of Rama's U.S. residency battle in which Rama's residency would eventually be denied on political grounds, an article in *The New York Times* described The Biblioteca Ayacucho as “a Venezuelan-based publishing house, which like the magazine *Semanario Marcha*, frequently publishes the works of Communist writers.” The article is conditioned by the exclusionary forces of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act and by the paranoid and distorting

gaze of the Cold War era in which Communism at moments had become a blanket and emptied term describing no more than a nebulous enemy espousing oppositional economic claims. It is indicative, however, of more than just sensationalism: it instead shows the importance of the collection in a period battle waged between North and South; left and right; materialism and liberalism.

The Biblioteca Ayacucho collection's significance, thus, can be localized in the construction of a new or parallel vision of what constituted the Latin American canon. The 1980s and 1990s precipitated a rewriting of the scholastic canon(s) along gender and racial lines, and simultaneously bore a countermovement of Western Canon apologists, as well as their attendant critiques. In the United States, John Guillory is an important critical reference vis-à-vis the first movement. Harold Bloom is a key standard-bearer of the second, what Román de la Campa evocatively called "the voices that now seek to contain and reorder discursive dispersal from within the bosom of Western art and philosophy" (143). Although I will not pursue this question further here, Guillory's treatment in *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993) of exclusion on the level of literary production (rather than on that of selection), literary liberal pluralism and its relative neglect of class, as well as what he sees as the compensatory aspects of canon formation as regards voids in political representation have interesting points of contact with the formation of the Biblioteca Ayacucho.

The last two decades, however, have brought new, albeit complementary, modes of reading canonical constitution. Seth Lerer, speaking from the disciplinary coordinates of book history posits that the notion of canons—and their rewritings, can be redrawn not only by titles, but also through the ordering of objects. Thus, in Lerer's formulation

canon constitution is also a spatial and material process that takes place, quite literally, upon the context of a shelf, and later as an abstraction (231), a process that I argue can be located in the Biblioteca Ayacucho collection as we follow it across decades, and geographies. The original Biblioteca Ayacucho, long before its digitalization, spatialized as a material and conceptual object a new cultural logic and embedded this logic within both institutional and private collections. Its original design and typeset—initially Fairfield and Garamond, serif Venetian Old Face types in the interior, and a variant on Diderot on the cover—connoted a return to tradition. The embedded B and A of the collection’s logo, designed by the exiled Argentine graphic designer Juan Fresán, through its negative space and thick rounded lines pulled toward post-war modernism, and gestured towards the influence of exile.

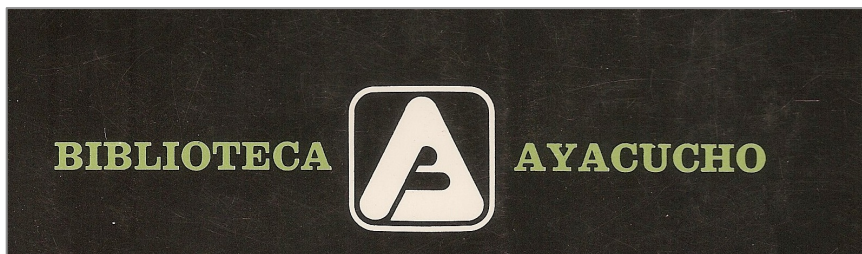


Figure 34: Logo designed by Juan Fresán for the Biblioteca Ayacucho

Signs of a Decade Exhausted: Appraising the Latin American 1960s from Venezuela

Ángel Rama’s diary, published in 2001 by Ediciones Trilce in Uruguay, places the Biblioteca Ayacucho in new light. The diary’s personal digressions are peppered with reflections on Rama’s editorial work. The entries transform, for a broad academic public, the Biblioteca Ayacucho’s ubiquitous editions, today indistinguishable from many of the very titles that the Biblioteca Ayacucho salvaged and consecrated across Latin America,

into a project not only defined by textual content, but also by its material and organizational vectors.

It is in the context of the diary that we may see the Biblioteca Ayacucho as both the continuation of the utopian projects of the 1960s—a decade characterized by its democratizing ideals and redistribution of cultural capital (Franco 86; Gilman 40)—as well as the exhaustion of some of these paradigms. In Venezuela, as in many other countries, the questioning and crisis of institutionalized lettered culture reached a peak the 1960s. The first Rómulo Gallegos Prize, awarded in 1967, would be fraught with conflict. The recipient, Mario Vargas Llosa, at the time supported the Cuban Revolution, while the Venezuelan state of the period found itself tarnished by policies of guerilla pacification. Internally, this questioning took shape most famously in the artistic movement *Techo de la Ballena*, from which arose Caupolicán Ovalles’s poetry printed on bricks, and other artistic configurations of discontent. The social unrest that permeated the epoch, thus, manifested itself in the violence of the poetic gesture, the shapes and modes of culture (Calzadilla).

Two years later, upon Rafael Caldera’s anointment as president in 1969, these conflicts became institutionalized on another level and with a greater explicitness through the student strikes of the same year. Thus, though Rafael Caldera’s election has been termed the turning point in liberal “democratic consolidation” in Venezuela (Velasco 170), the students were loath to cede to this period’s institutionalizing tendencies. The 1969 manifesto written by philology students at the Universidad Central de Venezuela—where Rama would soon teach—contains, among other memorable declarations, the insistence that “Para nosotros la televisión es más inquietante, y propone más que

Rómulo Gallegos a pesar de vuestra palabrería. La sociedad oficial venezolana, que es casi toda nuestra sociedad incluida en ella, la Escuela de Letras, maneja un lenguaje prestado.” The use of “vuestro”/ “your,” a peninsular demonstrative pronoun in disuse in Venezuela would appear to parody the cultured, borrowed language of the Venezuelan professors whose empty words they reference, yet the “nuestra” would appear to include the students in their own denouncement. The manifesto continues with the accusation, “Uds. profesores de letras. Uds. que viven con el temor de perder un sitio en el estacionamiento de la biblioteca. Uds. que ni siquiera saben caminar.” The manifesto constructs the University as a space of exclusion, of elites, a bastion of the status quo populated by men and women ensconced in their oil guzzling cars, unable and *unwilling* to set foot upon the city streets, understood as the spatialization of democratized public discourse. The documentary *Renovación* (1969), directed by Donald Myerston and Fernando Toro, is an unmatched visual record of these fissures in lettered authority. The striking pan shots of the modernist Universidad Central campus are paired by shots of desk chairs, inverted and piled high, and of hundreds of white pages evicted from the University’s windows upon professors’ vehicles, symbolic of the social divide between the segregated circuits of the automobile and those who continue to “walk” the city street.¹²⁴ Although *Renovación* announces the emptiness of lettered culture, replacing it with the realm of the image, is also in this documentary that we are visually informed that the student manifesto was read from typed pages, while the targeted professors followed along, their noses buried in their own printed copies. Registered by the lens of a 16 mm

¹²⁴ This division is aptly represented in Adriano González Leon’s *País portátil* (1968), winner of the 1968 Biblioteca Breve prize, and dystopic ode to Caracas as a horizontal city dominated by commercial and automobile culture, which I will discuss in my conclusion.

camera, lettered culture declared its crisis upon lettered pages.



Figure 35: *Renovación* (1969), Dir. Donald Myerston and Fernando Toro

The 1970s, in contrast to the upheavals of the 1960s, was a period of fragile consensus. The Ayacucho project, like Rama’s diary, was launched in 1974, the same year that the Venezuelan Ministry of Education instituted an educational reform initiated in 1969.¹²⁵ Essential to the contextualization of the Biblioteca Ayacucho, this reform was articulated as a result of and as part of the formerly mentioned *política de pacificación*. “Pacification” was associated with the extermination of the armed guerrilla struggle (Olivares 9) and a logic of economic developmentalism, that, among other gestures— including not insignificantly a program of tele-education, run by the then state-run

¹²⁵ Despite the usefulness of this periodization, as Alejandro Velasco insists, the mid-1970s in Venezuela were not entirely pacific as regards lettered spheres. The mobilization of high school and middle-school students in high-profile popular protests in the public housing complex 23 de Enero, for instance, continued throughout the 1970s. The protests in June of 1974, in particular, are an example of how subjects associated with institutionalized education continued to confront—rather than merely affirm—the state and established authority (Velasco 172). Hence, the importance of the adjective “fragile” when speaking about the Venezuelan consensus of the 1970s.

Compañía Anónima Nacional de Teléfonos¹²⁶ de Venezuela and other government entities (Olivares 253), would expand access to the university system and open new state-run campuses. Eight new public higher educational institutions thus were created between 1969 and 1972; in the same period the student body in institutions of higher education increased by 83% (Olivares 41). A precedent to the educational expansion of the late 1960s and early 1970s can be found in the period of the 1948 Gallegos presidency, in which 50 million Bolívares were allocated for the construction of the Universidad Central Campus, and “37,000 adults learned to read and write, and a record number of 5,500 people entered the halls of higher education” (Pino Iturrieta 39). These inclusions in the lettered city were countered, however, by their implicit obverse of illiteracy: “30 percent of the populace was illiterate. Only .08 percent of all Venezuelans had more than a secondary-school education” (Pino Iturrieta 41). Regardless, the outlines of the student subject in the 1970s had changed drastically, including new sectors of society, while the figure of the guerilla was systematically extinguished in the state imaginary.

In both Venezuela and in Latin America, 1974 implied a passage from one era to another: a year that simultaneously evoked closure and aperture, culmination and a terminus a quo. The right-wing military coup by Augusto Pinochet Ugarte and the subsequent seizure of President Salvador Allende’s state-press *Editora Nacional Quimantú*, among other notable shifts in state political power, cast the *Biblioteca Ayacucho* as recipient of a legacy displaced, shifted north of the Southern Cone and to the west of Cuba, whose revolutionary swan song had been sung three years before at the close of the Padilla incident in 1971.

¹²⁶ The Compañía Anónima Nacional de Teléfonos was privatized in 1991 under the second Pérez administration; it was renationalized in 2007.

Rama had supported Cuba's Revolutionary government, and had referred to it as a "Revolución en las puertas del Imperio" (Rama, *Diario* 130), yet, at the genesis of the Biblioteca Ayacucho, like many other Latin American intellectuals during the *quinquenio gris*¹²⁷ had become (publicly and, to a greater extent, privately) disenchanted with Castro's Cuba as a cultural and political project. For Rama at this juncture Cuba was a space sullied by the Padilla incident and by what the latter's incarceration meant as regards creative freedom on the island. The literary journal and publisher, Casa de las Américas, to which Rama had contributed in the 1960s, in 1974 had a poetry section that Rama described in his diary as "desoladora," published alongside "editoriales pseudo revolucionarios," replete with "pacotilla retórica" (Rama, *Diario* 45). Turning our gaze south, all the Editora Nacional Quimantú and many other Latin American publishing projects, especially those in the Southern Cone—the Centro Editor de América Latina (CEAL)¹²⁸ being a notable example—could offer Rama's project were their exiles: Fernando Alegría (Quimantú) and Daniel Divinsky (Ediciones la Flor) are only two examples, paralleling Rama's own "uprooted" circumstances.¹²⁹

The Archive of the Biblioteca Ayacucho in Caracas is filled with letters colored

¹²⁷ Term coined by the Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet.

¹²⁸ Once again, despite the heuristic usefulness of the tentative periodization that I propose above, we must recall that shifts in a certain mode of state-run editing and cultural projects occurred before the foundation of the Biblioteca Ayacucho, as well as after its founding. Any periodization, however, is inevitably fractured as history rarely begins and ends choreographically.

¹²⁹ In 1974, acting as a visiting professor at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, Rama had found himself in forced exile in Venezuela, his Uruguayan passport revoked by the right-wing military regime that had taken power in Uruguay.

by the dark events of the period in the Southern Cone:¹³⁰ academics requesting their letters never to be sent to their homes, marginalized in the university system of their home countries. The Latinamericanism (composite of Latinamerican(ist) thought) constructed by Biblioteca Ayacucho is epochal. On the one hand, it is a product of a temporary economic center as conditioned by the oil boom of the 1970s; on the other, it is conditioned by the aftershocks of the 1960s reread through the gaze of exile and marginalization that, in the period, had become a daily reality for large portions of Latin America. Recalling Said's famous reflections on the concept of exile, the Biblioteca Ayacucho may perhaps be seen as a paper and ink "invention" of a continental, collective "self" (184), an archival "us" (177) borne of the "uprootedness" of the Latin American 1970s that is rechanneled through the webs of prologue writers, compilers, bibliographers and translators dispersed throughout vast webs in Latin America, Europe, and the United States, who request and receive copies of the diverse volumes.

Titles that Rewrite History

Instead of setting its sights on contemporary literary production, a gesture that would have meant attending directly to the void that Cuba's dominant cultural sphere seemed to now represent for Rama, and for a large portion of his peers, the Biblioteca Ayacucho turned primarily to the past.¹³¹ Writing in 1980, Rama insisted that the Biblioteca Ayacucho's construction of the past involved a forward march, proposing "un

¹³⁰ For a more detailed account of the Archive's epistolary contents, see Pacheco and Guevara Sánchez.

¹³¹ The publication of the Boom writers represents an exception: Julio Cortázar (1980), José Donoso (1990), Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1990), Gabriela García Márquez (1989), and also would appear to suggest a commercial feature of the collection.

futuro.” He wrote: “[S]iendo una vasta recuperación de pasado, en gran parte perdido u olvidado, la integración cultural es un intento revolucionario que, en cuanto tal, se propone un futuro, construyendo la visión utópica de un continente y de una sociedad ideal. En estas condiciones, el pasado no es recuperado en función de archivo muerto, sino como un depósito de energías vivientes que sostienen, esclarecen y justifican el proceso de avance y transformación revolucionario” (“Biblioteca Ayacucho” 63). Rama bases his “revolutionary” reading of the collection on a premise of futurity contained within an archival past. Upon the cover flaps of some of the books from the early 1980s, are repeated similar promotional statements from intellectuals of the period: Leopoldo Zea, Ernesto Sábato, Álvaro Mutis, among others. Alberto Lleras writes: “Se trata de libros que fueron, en sus días, eminentes, pero que la indolencia americana olvidó en algunos casos, y las nuevas generaciones desconocen...libros que sí se salvaran de una catástrofe suramericana dirían bien qué significó para la humanidad de su tiempo este trozo del mundo nuevo.” Lleras, echoing Rama, would appear to describe a forgotten archive, re-archived as an explanatory capsule of 1970s Latinamericanism.

Thus, when futurity, in its more traditional conceptions, had been arrested in a large part of the Latin American continent by dictatorships, Rama imagined an alternative future and realm of possibility in the elasticity of the past—incarnated physically and conceptually in the form of books. It is perhaps what Svetlana Boym, referring to other contexts, would call a past that is simultaneously “retrospective” and “prospective.” Consonant with Boym’s conceptualization of the past, the commemorative date recognized on the Biblioteca Ayacucho covers—the announced and manifest date at the moment of its inception, was not that of the fall of a large part of Latin America’s

parliamentary democracies—that is, its present, rather the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Ayacucho of 1824: “Creada en 1974 como homenaje a la batalla que en 1824 significó la emancipación política de nuestra América, ha estado desde su nacimiento promoviendo la necesidad de establecer una relación dinámica y constante entre lo contemporáneo y el pasado americano, a fin de revalorarlo críticamente con la perspectiva de nuestros días.”

Unlike many projects of the 1960s with equally constructive premises that would have seemed to live in an eternal present, the Biblioteca Ayacucho’s vision of its own present instead bolstered itself upon a logic of excavation

There was a sobriety in this rationale that signaled a return to an origin, albeit constructed; it is a gesture that communicated the collection’s footing in the past, while the frenzy and optimism of the previous decade appeared to be in remission, detained by force, as if to have approached the present head-on would have been to face the outlines—however subjective they may have been—of a failure. The firebrand Argentine critic, David Viñas, understood this transition clearly when he articulated a sort of “parábola” crossing through the 1960s and early 1970s:

Quizás estas impresiones alrededor del proceso de la nueva narrativa de América Latina marquen un itinerario que va de la euforia a la depresión. Circuito que—con sus renovadas, más recientes y hasta saludables contradicciones—traza una suerte de parábola que, me parece, puede ser fechada entre los comienzos de la década del 60 y los inicios del 70. Podría agregar que se desplaza de un ‘momento caliente’ hacia otro ‘momento frío’ (caracterizado, en general, por su inmovilismo). [...] Una coyuntura de fervor. [...] [Que conduce a] los setenta—en lo que a América se refiere—se me aparecen connotados por un ritmo más pausado y necesariamente más analítico (13).

The “analytical” and “paused” rhythm referenced by Viñas is key in any discussion of the Biblioteca Ayacucho. Departing from the half-epic tone that permeates

almost any discussion of the 1960s, this rhythm informs the perhaps most interesting moment in Rama's diaries found early on in the register of self-questioning and complaint. On September 25th, 1974, Rama writes:

Me temo que no va a ir a ningún lado. Además, que yo no duraré mucho en este lugar.

Escovar Salom¹³² cuestiona el primer título, los escritos de Bolívar, con este argumento: Ya son muy conocidos! Es tan asombroso que es inútil decirle que los libros que justamente deberán formar la Biblioteca son los más conocidos. Me limito a argumentar que en otras áreas del continente, desgraciadamente no es igualmente conocido. (!) (42)

This exclamation within the diary reveals with clarity the axes of the project: it is not the celebration of a minor or cult writer, the most recent literary star, or even exactly the lost work, as Rama's archival theoretization would perhaps initially have seemed to suggest, rather the editorial rethinking of the classics of Latin American history and narrative—perhaps a lost work of another ilk, understood in this case, as continental cultural “heritage.” In other words, the volumes of Biblioteca Ayacucho are none other than the declarations and the proclamations; the “national” novels; the history of the motherland; a far cry from the obscure avant-gards that other editorial projects had resuscitated. It was instead a canon, but in a certain sense, due to its geographic place of enunciation of Latin America and its rejection of classic Hispanism, a rogue canon, a canon that avoided the usual paths of the former metropolis and so-called “universal” literature, that even in 1974 continued to reign over the reprints of classics in Latin America. This rejection of classic Hispanism can be traced to projects such as that of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, especially their collection Tierra Firme that dates from as

¹³² According to the diary's explanatory notes, Escovar Salom was a Venezuelan politician, Chancellor of the Republic, and a member of the Biblioteca Ayacucho Editorial Commission.

early as the 1940s and that also aspired to disseminate a vision of Pan-Americanism; as well as to earlier endeavors, such as the first Biblioteca Ayacucho, comprised of Latin American works of history, printed in Spain in the 1920s by the Venezuelan writer and intellectual Rufino Blanco Fombona from Spain.

This impulse toward a Latin American canon, however, continued to be relevant. To consider but only one example, in an interview from the 1970s of Julio Cortázar by Joaquín Soler Serrano, Cortázar spoke of the 1960s Boom of Latin American literature, as a significant turning point in the reading patterns of Latin American readers: “Hemos sido leídos por primera vez por nuestros compatriotas. Yo pertenezco a una generación que no leía a los escritores latinoamericanos, sino con cuentagotas. Teníamos a Borges. Teníamos a Arlt. Y, allí se acababa. Estábamos envueltos en Europa.”¹³³ Cortázar’s declaration is of course hyperbolic and is conditioned, like any anecdote, inevitably by personal experience, even if that individual may be a protagonist of the Boom. That being said, Cortázar’s anecdote regarding the Latin American writer read “a cuentagotas” is a useful perspective to maintain in our purview while analyzing Biblioteca Ayacucho’s project: a project that under an unfair microscope may appear unnecessarily conservative.

This continued resistance is apparent in both local and international criticism. On a local level, a critical editorial in the Caracas-based newspaper *El Nacional* from the 1970s, for instance, attests to a persistent skepticism toward a Latin American canon. The editorialist insisted that the Biblioteca Ayacucho would never be able to compile 300 *Latin American* works — that is, without including titles by Spanish authors, unless they were to include “basura” (Rama, *Diario* 39) like José Carlos Mariátegui. Latin American

¹³³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nY9eX-BDvs&feature=related>.

writers were, thus, often deprecated and associated with waste and the disposable, deemed below the standards of durational canon formation. Furthermore, we must not forget that even the first title published by the Cuban presses following the Revolution fourteen years earlier was none other than *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Harold Bloom's intervention, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994), moreover, dating from twenty years after the Biblioteca Ayacucho's initial publication, would seem to prove nothing other than the persistence of certain value structures contained in so-called classic literature. Written in response to a perceived crisis within "the 'learned world,'" despite the inclusion of Neruda and Borges in his study, Bloom newly invested the West with a continued meaning and authority over texts of the periphery.

The idea behind the Biblioteca Ayacucho, thus, is not the novel title, but a novelty understood through the format and the editorial project in its totality, and the symbolic reassignment thereby implied. The texts' originality was not to be found in their verbal content, but rather in their format and editing. It would be within the material and physical paths of the collection where its novelty principally would reside and resides: its innovation was found in its diffusion and the visual-sensorial properties of both the book itself and its distribution cartographies.

Continuities and Ruptures: Forms and Readers

What has previously been read primarily in terms of cultural policy, webs of intellectuals, the redefinition of canons through verbal or textual content, can be complemented and sometimes redefined under the lens of material questions. Books are constructed with the idea that there is meaning to the tactile sensations, size, format, color

saturation, paper texture and density of a book. These factors give us a vision of the reader imagined from the perspective of the publication.¹³⁴ Covers speak to this question as they both construct readers and appeal to them. A classic, such as those published by the Biblioteca Ayacucho, will be published a hundred times in the span of 100 years throughout Latin America, yet its distinct covers and formats will indicate for whom it is intended or imagined and in what spaces and states of mind it is intended or projected to be read. An extremely small format, for example, 7 by 5 by 0.4 inches may be designed and manufactured, as in the case of the Allende-era minilibros (Chile, 1971-1973), among other popular editions of these dimensions, such as *Nosotros los chilenos*, either for reading in any space, and/or as a sort of talisman —pocket bible—carried flush against the human body as if it were part of one’s daily personal articles. Or, it can be designed, as the Bibliothèque Pléiade based in France, with similar height and width dimensions to the Biblioteca Ayacucho (7.2 by 4.6 by 1.8), yet more than four times thicker, leather bound, printed on impossibly fine bible paper, with Garamond type in its interior and precious gold lettering on the spine. In this case, culture is sacralized through its materiality, yet bound, as a painting is framed, in an effort to convey value, permanence, and a demarcation from quotidian life.

¹³⁴ For a historicized discussion of the social and class implications of formats, especially the paperback and the pocketbook, see Gérard Genette.

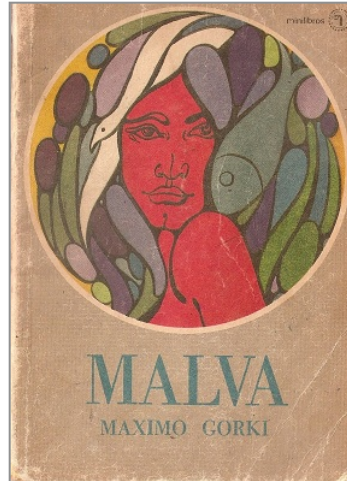


Figure 36: *Malva*, Máximo Gorki, dimensions: 7 X 5 X 0.4 inches, Editora Nacional Quimantú's minilibros (1971-1973)

The covers of the Colección Clásica of the Biblioteca Ayacucho adhere to a formula devoted to tradition. Especially if we consider the critical notes and timelines that accompany the editions, the dimensions (12 x 8 inches, with a minimum depth of an inch), therefore, medium-sized, instead of pocket, incline the reader toward a solitary experience in the silence of interiors, that is, private spheres, rather than the 'public' reading encouraged by pocket editions. Instead of choosing original drawings or images, each work is adorned by the reproduction of a painting or another form of artwork, many from the national museum system. It would seem to be based on an "elevated" idea of culture that lends itself to reverential readings.



Figure 37: *Arte y arquitectura del modernismo brasileño*, vol. 47, The Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978

The collection, however, re-signifies these works under its own particularized aegis. This particularity is not only found in its geographic localization in the Americas—territorially expanded through the inclusion of Portuguese-speaking Brazil and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and chronologically amended in its inclusion of pre-Columbian works as sites of interrogation—but in the re-reading of certain far-reaching axes of identity, such as class, race and ethnicity. Attempting to capture a broad “sociological” band of society, cultivated writers were conscientiously juxtaposed with those only recently initiated into lettered culture or with narratives forged by an oral tradition. The collection represented a restructuring of canons, elite writers are juxtaposed with autodidacts: el Inca Garcilaso, son of an Inca noblewoman and a conquistador, is printed within the same canon as Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala, writers recently integrated into lettered culture. What in another context could

have been construed as works of the elite, for instance the poetry of Ruben Darío, the founder of Latin American modernist poetry (*Poesía* 1977, N°9), or arguably works of the *people*, such as the novellas of Roberto Arlt¹³⁵ (*Los siete locos* (1929); *Los lanzallamas* (1931) 1978, N°27), are brought under a new logic of readership and spectatorship that solidifies previous less definitive attempts at canonization.

The project's prologues mirror this re-localization. The Uruguayan critic Carlos Real de Azúa reveals—and scourges—the underlying power structures, institutional spaces, and readership implicit in the original reception of the flowery rhetoric that constitutes Rodó's *Ariel* (N°3). Darío (N°9) is transformed (or historicized), by Rama, into “el primer *escritor*, lato sensu, de Hispanoamérica,” not because of his “genio,” rather for being “un intelectual riguroso, moderno, austero en su producción” (X). The Argentine critic Adolfo Prieto, in turn, codifies Arlt's (N°27) lunfardo and poor “syntax” and “lexicon.” Prieto depicts a writer who, in Arlt's own self-portrayal, in the prologue to *Los lanzallamas*, from which Prieto quotes liberally, wrote with a lack of frills imposed by the working conditions of the *edificio social*, yet who later capitulates to the cultural codes of style and artistic prose. Almost all of the initiatory texts furthermore lay bare the original distribution and promotional mechanisms of the texts at hand, demystifying the writerly profession—no longer the world unto itself of formalism, rather a material world integrated into the world of class and commerce, “el trabajo intelectual.” In these movements back and forth across a spectrum of textuality, the canon's sacralizing gestures are problematized by the hybridity of discourse and by the embrace of the writer as a professional—rather than as an anointed creator. Yet, looping back to the format at

¹³⁵ Argentinian writer that, at least in his journalistic work and his first editions, was commonly associated with a working-class readership.

hand, the canon is paradoxically reaffirmed: the textual support of a definitive, prologued edition is seemingly constitutive of the concept of canonicity itself.

The art that adorns the book's covers, likewise, forms an intricate cartography of visual and textual relations, resituating certain works, while canonizing certain previously underrepresented collectives through media and its subjects: Huamán Poma's drawings are published interspersed within his text sprinkled with Quechua, the writings of Guatemalan Independence-era leader José Cecilio del Valle are complemented by a detail of a mural painting from the Bonampak Temple (730 and 810 A.D.); the cover of Fernando Ortiz, and his *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, dons a nineteenth century lithograph borrowed from a cigar label. These pictorial objects that at another moment could have been categorized as ethnographic, archeological, and commercial, are placed alongside the works of academic painters interested in social subjects, such as Arturo Michelena (1863-1898); or muralists, associated with social realism, such as the Mexican Diego Rivera (1886-1957), and the Venezuelan Héctor Poleo (1918-89). The covers may also be considered part of a process of tardy canonization of the colonial, as well as an affirmation of the modern so-called kinetic artists embraced by the state in the previous two decades as a "metaphor" for the energy fueled state (Balteo), a thesis that ties them to the artistic institution from which they were drawn. As a recent exhibit at the Galería Nacional, an institution founded parallel to Ayacucho in 1976, suggested that the Ayacucho cover art represented an historical alliance between the museum and the publishing house, nourishing a fruitful exchange between the national museum system and its covers (*Lecturas*), both serving as vehicles in the expansion of Americanism as a prestige category. The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (MACC), formerly

kown as the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas Sofía Imber, likewise was founded in 1973. The interactive exhibition *Lecturas: Biblioteca Ayacucho en la Galería de Arte Nacional* (2010) displayed both artwork associated with Biblioteca Ayacucho, as well as the books themselves with which the spectators were encouraged to interact.

There were indeed exclusions in this object construction of the Americas. For instance, despite including a large part of the Latin American canon of liberal thought, albeit with many a scathing prologue, there is still a backgrounding, of twentieth century economic liberals. This may be read through the prioritization and visibility, or lack thereof, of their writings within the collection, and hierarchizations implicit in their volume numbers. Rama addressed, or perhaps, better said, was forced to defend this question when he came under political fire in the United States in a Letter to the Editor (dating from 1982) in the *New York Times*:

Works and authors are selected according to artistic range and historical influence. Each volume is prepared by specialists, among them distinguished U.S. scholars. The political thought of an author is not a determining factor in the selection.

[...]

[T]he biblioteca has included such writers as the Nobel Prize poet Pablo Neruda and José Carlos Mariátegui, whose works are studied in Latin and North American institutions of higher learning. But it has also included the works of an apologist of militarism Leopoldo Lugones (vol. 54), which were published with a prologue by Jorge Luis Borges.

These decisions in favor of political pluralism were far from easy in the political climate in which Rama was working. The Argentine intellectual Juan Carlos Ghiano, for example, refused to participate in the Lugones volume due to Borges's inclusion. Ghiano wrote on September 8, 1975: "Te pido disculpas por mi saludable empecinamiento y quedo a tu disposición para una colaboración que crea aceptable." It is also important to

note that, contrary to geographic, ethnic, racial and economic particularity, gender was decidedly less legible subject position in the context of the Biblioteca Ayacucho's project. Here may be read an exclusionary impulse working parallel to its inclusionary project.

The question, of course, is not only how the collection democratized authorship, whether artistic or textual, but also how it democratized its real or imagined readership: that is, its democratizing ambitions as seen through its textual and material imagining of the subjects that would confront its pages—Walter Ong's "writer's audience" applied to an editorial context. Rama's correspondence would appear to suggest a certain tension in his prefiguring of the reader, reflected in the language of his correspondence and the previously discussed physicality of the editions. While its topics may reflect an expanding vision of the subjects of lettered culture, its format would seem to point to a city within the city—that of the university, albeit a structure launched on the course of modernization understood in inclusionary terms. Thus, on the one hand, the Biblioteca Ayacucho not only appeals to, but *reflects* the modernization of this vision of the university, publishing works necessitated by the implicit broadening of subjects inserted within its system and with access to the symbolic capital associated with these spaces. On the other, it would appear to represent a restricting and delimitation of audience—books meant to be read within enclosing walls and within the confines of circumscribed roles. Let us take an example from Rama's correspondence. The letter dating from August 26th, 1975 is addressed to Gonzalo Losada, founder of the Argentine publishing house Losada, and requests the rights to *Canto General* by Pablo Neruda and to three works by Miguel Ángel Asturias. Rama writes:

No sé si ya le han llegado noticias de este espléndido proyecto de una biblioteca latinoamericana que ha decidido patrocinar el gobierno venezolano. Se trata de un intento de recoger las grandes obras del pasado desde el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega y Simón Bolívar en adelante, en ediciones pulcramente anotadas y prologadas con serios estudios, además de completadas con cronologías informativas. Pienso que es una excelente contribución al mejor conocimiento de nuestro pasado, que será de gran utilidad para los *estudiosos* y *profesores* de toda América. (emphasis is mine)

In this articulation, Rama clearly designates as the Biblioteca Ayacucho's readers "*estudiosos*" and "*profesores*," that is, the learned class; he does not even mention the student population. The Spanish word "pulcro," that I have translated as "immaculate," furthermore, is significant in this respect. The term not only indicates a question of care; it also has connotations of "aesthetic" immaculateness, and points toward questions even of good taste. In a letter from June of 1976, Rama adds, "Como verá también no hay ninguna posibilidad de que pueda competir con sus ediciones, no sólo por el precio (doce dólares) sino por sus características académicas." The expensive editions are an additional mode of distancing the collection from the pocket editions that Rama had edited in the past.

This proposed immaculateness was not always carried to fruition. In a letter from August, 5, 1976, Losada writes: "La edición me parece seria y, desde el punto de vista gráfico, atractiva. Por cierto que el ejemplar que hemos recibido tiene varias páginas en blanco, así es que le agradecería que me enviara alguno nuevo para tener un libro como Dios manda." Or, in a letter that Rama writes from Washington D.C. on April 1, 1979, in reference to research he has carried out at the Library of Congress:

El problema más complejo al que he venido dedicando atención es el referente a la pulcritud de los textos que publica la Biblioteca Ayacucho. Hecho un estudio de algunos de ellos aprovechando las notables ventajas bibliotecarias de las Universidades de Washington y de la Biblioteca del Congreso, cuyo director de la

Hispanic Division Sr. Carter se ha puesto gentilmente a nuestra disposición, se encontró que algunos de los textos que ya fueron utilizados en nuestras ediciones adolecen de imperfecciones, algunas graves.

La pulcritud, rigor y exactitud de nuestros textos es asunto capital para asentar el buen nombre de la Biblioteca en el medio académico internacional, por lo cual he comenzado a recoger materiales inhallables en nuestras bibliotecas y archivos para la preparación de los textos.

In this second quote, Rama clearly ties his dissatisfaction with the editions with his desire to publish “academic” texts; “pulcro” translates in this case to a “good name” in the International academic community. Yet, this public itself shifts from correspondence to correspondence.

In another letter from December 12, 1975 addressed to Fernando Alegría, a former participant in Editora Nacional Quimantú, then in exile, Rama specifies the criteria for the prologue that Alegría will write for the second volume of the collection, referencing a different readership base. Here, Rama insists that “las notas van dedicadas a un público general—no de especialistas—y, por lo tanto, son preferentemente informativas e históricas.” Here, the project would appear to seek out a different sort of reader than the learned subject sketched out for Losada, perhaps even a democratization of what sort of reader these texts, many, for centuries, relegated to the exclusive—and elite—readership circuits of archives, would be *intended for* and *for whom they would be legible*. These are difficult questions, of course, as they are dependent on shifting readership practices and marked by the varied motivations with which Rama writes to the varied subjects with whom he sustained correspondence throughout his tenure at the

Biblioteca Ayacucho.¹³⁶ It does, however, open a line of inquiry regarding the reach or implications of generating a *lettered* readership through critical editions.

The word “democratize” implies questions of broader publics and the reproduction and massification of previously unattainable cultural goods. It also suggests an obscure relationship with notions, as indicated by its lexical root, associated with the political system, that in its ideal or “idealistic” state takes the form of a “government by the people for the people” (Rancière, “Does Democracy Mean Something?” 47). Despite these general coordinates, democratization has passed through many visions, permutations, and owners. Each project carried out in its name would appear to construct a particular definition of this term, a new layer to a timeworn etymology that can no longer be traced to any clear origin. For certain left-leaning projects of the 1960s, to democratize meant to create worker’s books and a worker-reader. Ayacucho proposes a different sort of democratization of much more sobering dimensions; it is as much the assimilation of new subjects within a particular symbolic order—that is, the definitive, scholarly edition, as it is a retreat from the expansion of readership. It is a vision from which emerges a continental and integrated people [*pueblo*] who will be guided once again by the figure of the expert, an expert who defines which texts one must read and how. In the most concrete of senses, the burden is now devolved upon the “specialists of diverse disciplines” (Rama, “La Biblioteca Ayacucho” 71) who met in 1976 in Caracas for the Seminario de la Cultura Latinoamericana to plan Ayacucho’s future collection.

¹³⁶ In the case of Losada, Rama is trying to negotiate the rights to the works. This perhaps forces him to distinguish his project from Losada’s public and editions to avoid invading his editorial territory. In the case of Alegría, he is perhaps attempting to temper the latter’s academic voice, or to create a palatable offer for the exiled writer already ensconced in the comfort of Stanford and Palo Alto.

The intellectuals who would attend included Leopoldo Zea, Luis Alberto Sánchez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Ernesto Sábato, Tulio Halperín Donghi, Gonzalo Rojas, Miguel Otero Silva, José Emilio Pacheco, Carlos Real de Azúa, Antonio Candido, Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, and Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot. Nevertheless, under the rubric of classics and its implicit passage of time, these texts form a collection of “elevated” culture that is relocated from the salons of the elite, to the rooms of the university library, to the world of academics and intellectuals. The debate is redeployed to new, yet still delimited, cultural stages or settings.

As difficult as its democratizing aspirations or lack thereof may be to determine, what did occur with the Biblioteca Ayacucho is a very particular reinterpretation of how history is constructed. Rama, who in the early 1980s, would yield his protagonism in the project as he took on a new teaching position at the University of Maryland, would still leave a definitive mark upon the collection.¹³⁷ As an intellectual figure, Rama acted as a link to certain historiographical impulses of the 1960s that may be linked to a materialist, as opposed to a liberal, lens.¹³⁸ The Biblioteca Ayacucho revisited this decade, whose left saw history as cyclical and teleological, as economic and political. To make history under this logic was to change historical distributions and weights, to shift one’s historical gaze from the universal to the local; or, from Europe to the periphery. In the case of the Biblioteca Ayacucho it meant to redirect these analyses toward a redefinition of the past, which, in turn, redefined the past-present of the Venezuelan 1970s. Biblioteca Ayacucho

¹³⁷ Rama died, along with his wife Marta Traba and several other Latin American intellectuals, in a plane crash in 1983.

¹³⁸ I believe this is a fair statement in the context of the collection as a whole. Some of its participants, however, speak from a liberal political perspective (for example, Augusto Mijares, and Tulio Halperín Donghi).

was indistinguishable from this commitment with time and space and its subsequent reorganization: it was reinterpetative, and continuously resignifying. The question, nonetheless, to which we must return, on the one hand, is for whom this was it legible, and, on the other, what sort of readers was it constructing. What *is* clear is that Biblioteca Ayacucho proposed to establish a dialogue with a reader who was interpreting the history of the Americas, in its diverse permutations, whether visual, textual or oral.

Though the continuities between Rama's 1970s and Venezuela's present are elusive and lend themselves to reductive readings, it would seem reasonable to posit a connection, albeit a tenuous one, between the initiatory volume of the Biblioteca Ayacucho, *Doctrina de Simón Bolívar*, and certain historiographical allusions contained even within the renaming of the country—The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in honor of this Independence-era hero. Incomprehensible for Rama's contemporaries due to its very ubiquity, this volume through the lens of the diary is definitive in establishing the historical logic of the collection. It acts as a conducting thread between Rama's redefinition of history through print, and Bolívar, the rhetorical keystone of contemporary Venezuelan politics. Following Christopher Conway, Hugo Chávez, through his appropriation of the figure of Simón Bolívar, "self-consciously surrender[s] himself to History" (152). Yet, this "History" with a capital "H" through which Chávez and his government filters Bolívar's figure is a vision of history that the Biblioteca Ayacucho played a part in naturalizing and canonizing within a paradigm of 1960s and 1970s Americanism. The Biblioteca Ayacucho prologue for this edition, published by the liberal

Venezuelan historian Augusto Mijares (1897-1979) in 1976 and republished in 2009,¹³⁹ is woven throughout Chávez’s speeches, as is Pablo Neruda, the author of Ayacucho’s second volume, in particular his depiction of El libertador in *Un canto para Bolívar* (1941) that is not included in the Ayacucho edition of *Canto General* (1938-1949).¹⁴⁰ The Biblioteca Ayacucho’s rewriting of history, read through Augusto Mijares’s prologue and the selection of texts, was not military strategy, but, rather, disproportionately social and educational reform. This Republic of “morals and lights,” as Bolívar articulated it in the Congress of Angostura, is in part what has made the current historical allusions to the figure decipherable. It is what makes legible the union of Che Guevara, the 1960s Marxist revolutionary, and Simón Bolívar, the Independence-era Liberal.

The Texture of the Present: State Publishing Under Chavism

In *Entre la pluma y el fusil: debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina* (2003), Claudia Gilman attempts to define and give outlines to a particular era—the 1960s, a period that she situates between the year 1959 and the year 1973 (or 1976), brought to a close by the Chilean coup d’état. In an effort to define her object of study, she confronts the 1960s from different coordinates: from a perspective

¹³⁹*Doctrina de Simón Bolívar* was republished in 2009 with the same prologue and text selection—albeit with a much more instructive index, and an updated bibliography; and with a similar initial print run of 3,000. The chronology was simplified, excluding certain columns present in the original Biblioteca Ayacucho editions—including “Historia de Venezuela y Latinoamérica,” as well as “Historia Mundial.”

¹⁴⁰ Chávez quotes Mijares explicitly in his parting address delivered from the Palacio de Miraflores, the 8th of December, 2012 before leaving for his final operation in Cuba: “la respuesta de todos y de todas los patriotas, los revolucionarios, los que sentimos a la Patria hasta en las vísceras como diría Augusto Mijares, es unidad, lucha, batalla y Victoria.”

described as a “problematic knot” of texts and debates, from that of the classic question of “beginnings” or of “origins,” so famously brought into conflict by Foucault, then returning to questions of the mercantile and the political, the infamous duo that in the twentieth century progressively wreaked havoc upon aestheticizing visions of Literature with a capital “L.” This is delineated through the optic of the category of epoch, a term many times used ingenuously as neutral, to which Gilman adds new angles and complexities: “una época se define como un campo de lo que es públicamente decible y aceptable—y goza de la más amplia legitimidad y escucha—en cierto momento de la historia, más que como un lapso temporal fechado por puros acontecimientos, determinado como un mero recurso *ad eventa*” (36). This “epoch” is conceived as a sort of conceptual aperture common to a historical moment, the suspension of certain norms and restrictions.

Jean Franco, in *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City* (2002), works with similar suppositions of era and aperture. Her work opens up an analysis of the political in conjunction with culture and literature in the context of Cold War Latin America, whose apex is delimited by the temporal window that Gilman describes. In Franco’s analysis, the writer of the era in question is a privileged subject: culture in Latin America is not a synonym of the political, rather its arbiter. Speaking from the place of enunciation of the “writer,” the political is generated in the context of an expanded public sphere populated by new social actors (students, immigrants, the rural population that then found itself inserted within the problematics of urban life).

Against Gilman, who in many senses constructs her analysis in terms of an unfulfilled (“incumplida”) promise of the era in question (by suggestion, suspended in

history), Franco frames the same temporal space within a narrative of decadence, not absent in Gilman's analysis, but without the protagonism that Franco gives it. In Franco's words, it is a "collapse in the belief of utopia" (275). Although the restructuring of the cultural field in these national spaces in the 1960s and a strong change in logic in subsequent decades is undeniable, upon constructing a periodic narrative that reads this social panorama not only as a limited historical aperture, but rather as a loss, would appear to perhaps overdraw the case.

While Franco and Gilman both detected a "decline and fall of the lettered city" in 2002 and 2003 respectively, mass literacy, through Misión Robinson, and state-sponsored publishing in paper in ink in the 2000s was far from neglected in Venezuela's state-sponsored cultural sphere. There were rather both continuations and breaks with previous publishing traditions. Both the Biblioteca Ayacucho and Monte Ávila Editores grew, publishing larger print-runs and a wider variety of titles.¹⁴¹ The National Culture Council (CONAC), historic champion of the state-run publishing houses, nevertheless, was discontinued in 2008. In 2005, The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, furthermore, established its own publishing house called El Perro y la Rana, complement and refractory heir to already existing projects from the 1960s and 1970s, whose catalogue can be described as nothing but heterogeneous and capacious, ranging from historical and political texts, to national classics of fiction (*Doña Bárbara*), U.S. produced Latin

¹⁴¹ This affirmation is tentative, as it has been suggested that there is an inflation of print-run statistics, as well as the exclusion of certain authors whose political beliefs run contrary to the government's. For the moment, I prefer to work with official statistics as yet another question rather than as certitude. As regards the continuation of the project's massivity, in 2013 and 2014 paper shortages in both public and private endeavors have significantly reduced print runs, quickly making the phenomenon historical, due to practical constraints.

American literary theory (*Desencuentros de la modernidad*), and regional Venezuelan writers. These works were sold alongside books from the Biblioteca Ayacucho and Monte Ávila, in a state-sponsored bookstore chain called *Librerías del Sur*, at book fairs, and, at least in theory, in a program called *Bodega Cultural*, in which books were sold alongside basic foodstuffs and *artesanías* through the windows of private homes in the *barrios*, the precarious neighborhoods built of clay blocks that dot the hills and ‘empty’ spaces of Venezuela’s cities. Most of their prices ranged from fifteen to thirty Bolívars, that is, between two to three dollars (official exchange). In an effort to contextualize these prices, in July of 2013, the official exchange rate was 6.5 Bolívars to a dollar. Dollars were sold on the parallel market (black market) at 30-33 Bolívars to a dollar, making it difficult to establish exact equivalencies. However, in concrete terms, a beer bought in a middle class area of Caracas cost ten bolívars; a ride in a bus five Bolívars. If we conceive of these prices in the fashion of the Editora Nacional Quimantú—a book for a pack of cigarettes, Bolivarian policy offered a book for three bus rides, or a beer and a half.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Changes in price as regards the Biblioteca Ayacucho’s editions, are also significant. In his initial letters dating from the 1970s, Rama references a price range from 5-10 American dollars—depending on the letter and the edition.

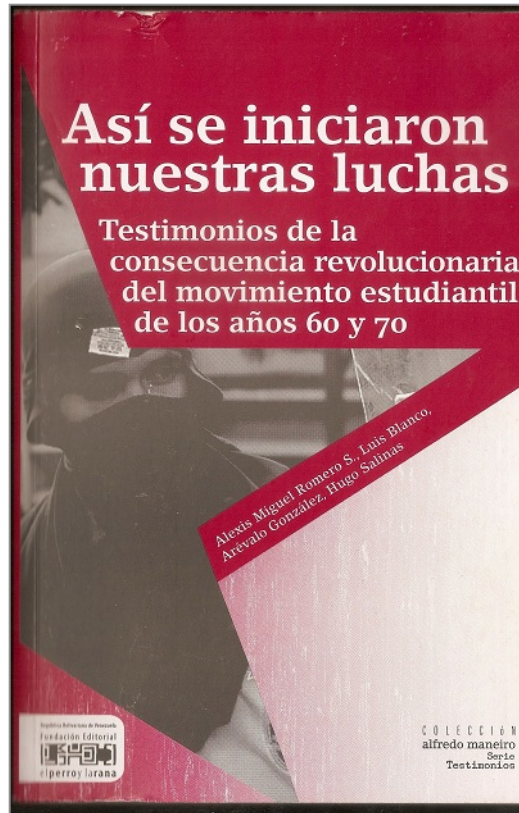


Figure 38: *Así se iniciaron nuestras luchas: Testimonios de la consecuencia revolucionaria del movimiento estudiantil de los años 60 y 70*, El Perro y la Rana, Colección Alfredo Maneiro, Serie Testimonios, 2010

Despite these perhaps pedestrian comparisons, lettered culture was articulated within Bolivarian judicial framework in momentous terms: declared none other than the “radical democratization of knowledge.” The juridical framework of “la Política del Libro y la Lectura” (2007-2013) in particular its “Línea Estratégica 5” is worth citing:

“Democratizar radicalmente la socialización del conocimientos, permanentemente actualizados, contribuyendo a la emancipación, el aumento del nivel de conocimiento de nuestro pueblo y la afirmación de los valores socialistas.” “Permanently renewed,” “radical democratized,” “emancipatory,” all echo sentiments and lexicon of classic publishing projects of the 1960s. Yet in the case of Bolivarian Venezuela these concepts

and processes are displaced to a sphere in which “paper” carried a different epochal weight as substrate; where “conocimiento” slowly became unhinged from the historical book object; and “emancipation” gradually has been retired from large swaths of political vocabulary.¹⁴³

Notwithstanding, the turn of phrase—“radical democratization of knowledge”—unto itself creates friction in an unproblematic diagnosis of declension of lettered culture. Yet, if we opt to read the present in an alternative fashion to the deep-rooted narratives of loss, the question is how? How to translate the historical concept of a publishing house of the “people” and “for the people” to our own present? How to read our present not as symmetrical to our past, but neither as its decadence—linearly expressed—or as its decline?

Space Materializes

In the last two decades critics have expounded upon a changing relationship with space—understood as a materialization and representation of shifting social and economic paradigms. These spatial constructs have been characterized by the expulsion of the masses from the public squares and boulevards and from the city streets, and by their relocation in the private spheres. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has described this recasting of the masses as “a sum of microanarchies and solitudes” who no

¹⁴³ Similar statements are found on the website of El Perro y la Rana: “Nacida en Revolución, la Editorial El perro y la rana se inventa permanentemente. Somos una Editorial Escuela, laboratorio de estrategias colectivas de socialización de saberes; creemos en el oficio editorial como una herramienta descolonizadora.” In future work, it would be valuable to interrogate further the particularity of meaning of “conocimiento” and “saberes” as it relates to lettered culture in the 2000s, and in particular to lettered culture in Venezuela of the period. (<http://www.elperroylarana.gob.ve/politica-editorial.html>)

longer desire to “make history” and who has vacated the public sphere (18). Following Sloterdijk, while a thinker, such as Elias Canetti in 1960 could still construe the masses as a corporeal moment in which suddenly everything was “replete of man [schwarz von Menschen]” (qtd. Sloterdijk), in our contemporaneity, “this expression echoes a tone that, if not anachronistic, neither is it totally of our day.” “Replete of man” instead “introduces a certain stale aftertaste, given that it makes reference to a phase of social modernization in which the new mass subject, let it be called the people, the masses, the proletariat or public opinion, could still congregate before a determined situation of interest and make its appearance as a multitude conscious of its presence” (Sloterdijk 15). For Sloterdijk, this “consciousness” is replaced by the consciousness afforded by media’s symbolic representations.

This is especially important in the context of contemporary Venezuela—“whose media landscape has remained under constant dispute during Chavez’s presidency” (Couret 502). The public space historically both visibilized and embodied a certain structuring of subjects—including the reader—and their ability to exercise their presence and voice in public affairs through the activities they carry out in these spaces (Rancière, “Does Democracy Mean Something?” 58). Yet, Luis Duno Gottberg, among others, have argued that “Contemporary political tensions in Venezuela suggest that the struggle for the streets not only occurs in public spaces but also in the private sphere, where citizens consume media messages. Streets are thus mediated” (294).¹⁴⁴ Sloterdijk’s discussion is thus relevant not only in evaluating the figure of the “people, the masses, [and] the

¹⁴⁴ Nilo Couret’s “The Revolution was Over(televised)” despite representing a vastly different political positioning than that espoused by Duno, builds on Duno’s media-based understanding of the “streets” and “public space.”

proletariat,” but also when distilling the figure and the imaginary of the reader who once occupied these spaces and subject positions.

This contemporary reader-subject may be involved in an auditory rather than a visual practice; this reader may also be within his or her car (especially in the Venezuelan petrostate) —that space that is public in its visibility, yet private, what Sloterdijk calls an “involuntary” congregation (19)—; or, he or she, instead, may be underground—in the public sphere, yet divorced from the public square, historic forum of civic and political interaction, the architectural and communal spaces of the city.¹⁴⁵ These imaginaries,¹⁴⁶ force us to redefine the reader as a wider paradigm that stretches from paper to an interface; from the visual to the auditory; from the word to the image. However, despite the multiple axes upon which culture pivots in contemporary Venezuela, the traditional formats of lettered culture persist. That is, instead of pushing digital technology toward novel ways of constructing a reading subject, the printed word, and its digital reproductions, continues to be ceded space meaning, and value within the state cultural institutions, and to be reinvested with collective dimensions.

In an era in which independent publishing ranging from boutique presses to the Cartoneras working with photocopies and collected cardboard covers abounded or

¹⁴⁵ The Caracas Metro was completed in 1983, and shuttles the working class from the east of the city to the center and the west where they work (Fernandes 16). It is both a conduit between what could be called the two cities of Caracas—east and west—and a mode of invisibilising a large segment of the population in certain civil centers.

¹⁴⁶ Despite its focus on the nineteenth century, Julio Ramos’s *Desencuentros de la modernidad* (1989), interestingly re-published by El Perro y la Rana, represents a key text as regards the historicization of literature, the figure of the *letrado*—or man of letters, and the reader. It establishes the former categories as diachronic and shifting concepts, against Ángel Rama’s more static configuration of these concepts in *La ciudad letrada* (1984).

abound in Latin America, the gesture of emitting print culture from the centralizing force of *state* presses—whether regional or the national Imprenta de la Cultura—and from a centralized editorial staff, as was the case in Venezuela in the 2000s, has a hierarchical and didactic resonance. This friction with the state presses is not new to Venezuela of the 2000s. The well-known “independent” publisher Pequeña Venecia, founded by Blanca Streponi and Antonio López Ortega in 1989 (lasting until 2005), for instance, was established in the hopes of creating an alternative space separate from Monte Ávila Editores and the Biblioteca Ayacucho under Liberal Democracy in the 1980s (Gackstetter 305). Yet, the discursive battles waged against the exclusionary nature of the Bolivarian publishing establishment perhaps reached new crescendos: these studies vehemently insisted that as new voices were visibilized, others were silenced.¹⁴⁷

Notwithstanding these objections, the Bolivarian print apparatus did have horizontal strains of consequence. Access to printed authorship, for instance, was expanded, opening up these spaces of consecration to a wide range of local and regional writers that were published alongside high-theorists such as Roland Barthes and Tzvetan Todorov. Closer to a Foucauldian than a Barthean deployment, the editorial gesture in its juxtapositions redefined—democratizing and/or desacralizing—what it meant to be a printed “author.” Despite retaining the concept of authorship, it recast the notion as a moving place of enunciation, as a “function” or a “position to be occupied” by a variety of subject and discursive positions.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ For a critic who addresses exclusionary mechanisms of Bolivarian cultural politics, see Gisela Kozak Rovero.

¹⁴⁸ I am using Michel Foucault’s definition of the term author that he understands as a historical defined and shifting. In the essay “What Is an Author?,” Foucault displaces

Furthermore, the spatial imaginary of reading and of distribution—the public space, are also important to consider. Product of its modern rethinking in the 1950s—through a logic of highways, superblock housing complexes, and very little regard for pedestrian and public life—Caracas is marked by spatial barriers that thwart the social habitation of urban space (Achugar 21; Velasco 169). One of the first Bolivarian forays into printed culture, however, was not distributed within the enclosed, and delimited space of the bookstore or the University—much more natural considering the forbidding nature of these urban structures, but rather in the public plazas. Here I am referring to a scholastic edition of one million copies of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* published by the Bolivarian Ministerio de Cultura in conjunction, not with Monte Ávila Editores—the state-run publisher whose genre tendencies could have accommodated a text such as *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, but rather with the Editorial Alfaguara, one of the largest commercial publishers in Spain, in a Bolivarian reprint of their 400th anniversary edition of the classic work. Other pre-El Perro y la Rana publishing endeavors include, La Biblioteca Familiar (2003), pamphlet-like editions of classics, distributed in boxes of 22 titles in plazas and in the missions by the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes and La Biblioteca Básica Temática (2004), pocket-size editions, distributed in packages tied with elastic at public libraries and reading rooms. These projects represented a desire to break down the spatial barriers imposed on the reader by increased privatization and the political and social discourse of insecurity.

authorship from a straight-forward subject category to a conceptual constellation in which certain subjects—inseparable from their contingent discourses and social vectors—may be placed: “The author function,” he writes, is not synonymous with a “proper name,” rather it “is [...] characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within society” (108).

The expansion of reading and books' spaces finds its counter movement in a relative neglect of the historical state university system under Chavism, in favor of alternative educational initiatives (eg., La Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela). In June of 2013, in the first months of Nicolás Maduro's government, both the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) and Universidad de los Andes (ULA) engaged in debilitating strikes. Unlike the 1969 strikes, where students rebuked their professors with accusations of elitism and intellectual impotence, the state universities on strike in 2013, despite their main concern of much-needed professorial salary increases, on a discursive level, primarily constructed the walls of the university as an aegis against the dissolution of certain forms of knowledge and cultural capital. In other words, recalling *Renovación*, if in 1969 paper was evacuated from the university to the streets, in 2013 the student strikes attempted to re-capture paper and lettered production within University walls, as a bastion against the "anti-intellectualism" of Bolivarian production.

These horizontalizing axes (albeit fraught) associated with authorship and space may be paired with the *printed* books' material qualities. Ayacucho's pristine bone-colored pages from the 1970s and 1980s, "Antique" in industry terms not because of age, rather due to the connotations of paper of this level of quality, gestured towards the annals of high-end publishing tradition.¹⁴⁹ As Rama's own letters attest, these editions of the 1970s were construed as monuments of paper and ink, destined for a durational place in history. The Biblioteca Ayacucho editions printed in the beginning of the second decade of the 2000s—in their very constitution as ephemera, however, constructed a different thesis of culture, pointing to different spaces outside the traditional walls of the

¹⁴⁹ This information is from Maribel Espinoza, editor of Biblioteca Ayacucho in the 1990s.

University. In contrast to 1970s-era Biblioteca Ayacucho, and their high-end Antique paper, state publishers in Venezuela in the 2000s use bond paper. This type of paper, historically employed to print bonds and stock certificates, hence the name, has a grammage ranging from 40 to 60 grams per square meter, that is, on par with the grammage of conventional North American newsprint or mass market paperbacks that runs at approximately 45. One well-known collection was called “Cada día un libro.” With its frequent impressions and mass print runs, it subscribed to a production logic not unlike that of the newspaper prints that share the same machinery with these books in the Bolivarian Imprenta de la Cultura in Guarenas, an hour outside Caracas. The content, however, of these books, rather than the genre amalgamations inherent to the daily news, is made up of monographs of literature, history, and sociology, among other genres.

By using bond paper, state presses, still, inherently imbued reading with an idea of the quotidian, with daily rhythms and spaces. The books’ materiality, thus, projected a reader who moved in different circuits and in different ways than that of the Biblioteca Ayacucho in the 1970s. Hard covers and book flaps even within Biblioteca Ayacucho were temporarily eliminated;¹⁵⁰ the “book” as object and concept was pared down, brought to its minimal unit. These were books that, without a doubt, would disintegrate or be reduced to tatters in a matter of years. Their digital avatars whose immaterial constitution—despite the temporal limits of their material hard drives and the fallible nature of their servers, comparatively gave the paradoxical impression of a relative

¹⁵⁰ Edgar Páez, Executive Director of the *Fundación Biblioteca Ayacucho*, and Carlos Noguera, President of *Monte Ávila Editores*, provided me with this information regarding grammage, as well as confirmed the official elimination of hardcovers and book flaps in separate interviews on June 14th, 2012 in Caracas, Venezuela. The policy change is both a pragmatic response to shortages, and a symbolic projection of readership and the book object.

permanence. Yet, for a period, the spines of the bond editions, each branded with a modular dog and frog, some with revolutionary stars, spatialized through their physicality a notion of canon—constantly reassimilated and rearticulated by the historicization of Bolivarian political discourse.

What to make of these book objects? Or, the “scene” of the book object that they generate? Once again, invoking Walter Benjamin, yet this time, his “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting” (1931), Benjamin deemphasized the importance of “utilitarian value” for the book collector, stressing instead “the scene” of the book and its insertion in the “tactical sphere,” as these books relate to an individual owner, rather than to a public collection. How this tactile relationship and private ownership determines a continued investment in print both in the private and public spheres persists as an evolving and open question. Gabriel Zaid and his *Los demasiados libros* (1996) to which I will return in my conclusion discussed the print object in Mexico in the Post-Berlin Wall 1990s. In his 2012 introduction to the book’s re-edition, he wrote, maintaining an uneasy equilibrium between the individual, the book, and the market: “La personalidad única de cada lector florece en la diversidad y se refleja en su biblioteca personal: su genoma intelectual. Y la conversación continúa, entre los excesos de la grafomanía y los excesos del comercialismo, entre el caos de la diversidad y la concentración del mercado.” A book collection for Zaid is as unique as its owner’s genetic make-up, at the same time that it is ordered and given meaning by the market.

Writing from post-dictatorial Uruguay two years earlier and touching upon yet another Benjaminian trope, Uruguayan Hugo Achugar, resident in Venezuela in the 1970s and 1980s in *La biblioteca en ruinas* (1994), similarly interrogated the withering

relationship between subjectivity, the book object, and collective and individual identity from a Latinamericanist perspective. Like Zaid, Achugar addressed questions of the public, the national and the “Latin American,” yet, in Achugar’s work, these constellation are somehow permeated by the public policies of Venezuela of the 1970s of which Achugar was part as a researcher at the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos “Rómulo Gallegos” and by the Biblioteca Ayacucho—that other “library”—with which he collaborated.¹⁵¹ Achugar wrote in the inaugural and homonymous essay of the collection “La Biblioteca en Ruinas:”

Toda biblioteca, como todo museo, elige, olvida, clasifica, archiva, celebra. La biblioteca privada dice de una sórdida historia personal. La pública, más aun si es nacional, dice de la barbarie cometida por la comunidad hegemónica. La biblioteca es el cementerio de los que no tienen voz, su muerte definitiva. Las bibliotecas nacionales son el poder exacerbado, son la historia oficial, el panteón de los próceres, la fosa común de la clase media, el paradójal lugar sin límites al que los heterodoxos no pueden ingresar. La biblioteca pública es una ilusión, una falaz utopía de la democracia. (14)

The personal library is now “sordid” and the “public” is an “illusion,” a “fallacy.” Yet, Achugar’s essayistic style is recursive and circular, unpredictable, self-doubting, and constantly dethroning, dislodging each affirmation as soon it posited. In both a self-authorizing and destabilizing discourse of his *métier* and personal (and generational) fetishes, Achugar eternally hits up against Rama and other historical Latin Americanists. Balancing a vertiginous movement between the collective and the personal,

¹⁵¹ The essay “La Biblioteca en Ruinas” was originally published by the journal *Estudios de la Universidad Simón Bolívar de Venezuela* in October, 1993. Dating and locating his own creative process in the late 1970s in Caracas and uncertainly to his own biography, Achugar wrote in the same essay: “Estoy en la biblioteca tratando de cerrar un libro que he estado escribiendo y borrando a lo largo de casi quince años pero cuya escritura final comenzó en los últimos meses de 1991. Un libro que se fue haciendo así, sin más. Toda labor crítica, toda labor intelectual es una suerte de autobiografía y acompaña la vida. Y como ya se sabe, toda autobiografía es ficcional” (13-4).

“Latinamericanism,” “literature,” and the “quotidian” are positioned as highly individualized, multiple, and even fictitious spaces from which to speak that have perhaps reached their exhaustion; at the same time that Achugar reaches towards them as footholds for his own essayistic meanderings. These constellations find their materialization in the degraded physical (and irrelevant?) nature of books: “tapas ablandadas por el uso,” (15), “hay muchos libros viejos y pocos libros recientes” (15-16), “en un librobús, en una biblioteca/librería de un pequeño pueblo latinoamericano que los habitantes no usan, que los habitantes no pueden usar, que los habitantes—cuáles, quiénes, cuándo?—no saben para qué sirve” (16). Books are rhetorically placed amidst computers, walkmen, videos, and television, in what Achugar calls the “ruins of the library.” In a surprising (or perhaps inevitable) rhetorical turn, however, Achugar interrupts the flow of his reasoning—How to read beyond or between the ‘ruins’ Achugar asks?

The book projects of Bolivarian Venezuela in the 2000s asked this question ontologically through their existence in paper and ink. Amidst increasing digitalization and obsolescence, their physical persistence was a reminder of the continued condensation of knowledge in pulp; knowledge in print. Instead of an unambivalent affirmation, however, of a print-based modality of knowledge, in the face of our present increasingly dominated by digital logics, these printed books simultaneously took the shape of a crisis in traditional forms of lettered culture, and of a *dying* discourse, oscillating between fetish and homage, on the meaning and value of canons printed on ink and paper. Unlike Rama’s canon, which attempted to fill an empty shelf, recalling Lerer’s definition of canon with which we began, this revisiting of lettered culture would

appear to be a reworking of already constituted canons, at least as understood through their material forms. Books that were somehow quotes (in all of the alterability that that appropriation implies) of books; canons that were quotes of canons; book objects that were forever conscious of what lay beyond in the digital sphere.

If in 1994 Achugar was already waxing eloquent about “libros-casete, libros-video y hasta libros-disco para ese animal o esa mascota contemporánea que es la computadora,” the 2000s approached this “animal” and its heirs with an even greater reverence and investment. As an exhibit in March of 2012 sponsored by the Ministry of Culture so emphatically declared, the founding of Project Gutenberg, the first free online ebook distributor, coincided roughly with the beginning of the 2000s and, by extension, with Bolivarianism. Starting in 2007, the Biblioteca Ayacucho, along with the other Bolivarian printing projects, accordingly fomented literacy in PDF format, parallel and analogue to their printed works. Yet, what does print (or digital) democratization mean when a writer-reader can self-publish digitally with no intermediary other than a server? Why return to the relatively linear format of the ‘book’ —PDF being one of the file formats that maintain this linearity—when more fluid, interactive, and, implicitly, more horizontal formats have become available, formats that question the very concept of individual authorship? What does the digital mean for our understanding of materiality and its subject correlates?

These questions in the abstract have been taken up by critics of book history, such as Roger Chartier. Insisting on the uniforming nature of digital literacy and dehierarchization of discourse that is its result, Chartier wrote “Thus a textual continuity is created that no longer differentiates discourses on the basis of their materiality” (142),

pointing toward the fluidity and changing nature of typography in the digital sphere and the disappearance of material genre codes that make bookstores tactilely and visibly legible even before entering into a textual sphere. The PDFs of Bolivarianism, despite eliminating prestige categories such as bookbinding, paper quality and size, however, maintained many of the codes and hierarchies of their parallel print projects: linearity, design, typography, logos and collections. Within the prism of these questions, Bolivarian presses—whether print or the digital PDFs found on the Ministry of Culture websites—point towards a vertical paradigm of inalterability.

Yet, the use of print (and even PDFs) in the present and in La Biblioteca Ayacucho in particular may also be placed under a less nostalgic light and less in the vein of tradition. New media, after all, has far from generated a clear answer as regards democratization. Although the internet may enable circulation and the exchange and crossing of ideas, there is also a countercurrent of privatizations that has adjusted to the new rules of circulation conditioned by the digital flows of the Internet, what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call “the expropriation of the common” (188), a process that traffics not in material goods, but rather in the production of knowledge and of communication. As Robert Markley and others insist, “the transformation of modes of production and distribution does not mean that the problems of capitalism disappear; [...] simply invoking ‘information’ as the evolutionary successor of ‘writing’ does little to alter the politics of symbolic, or monetary, accumulation” (4-5). Thus, although the reader may have access to the channel of the widest breadth—the Internet, as in any space of enunciation, his or her voice must be audible amongst the filtering impulses of Google that light the way through the Internet’s communicational labyrinth and textual-

visual-aural market. After all, despite having their own digital platform, Ayacucho still collaborates with Google Books, sending their books to California for digitalization. (The collaboration began in 2007.) The publishing house also makes use of U.S. based servers in lieu of the servers based in the Venezuelan Ministry of Culture.

Furthermore, when evaluating digital democracy in Latin America, it is essential to take into the account its relationship with the so-called digital divide. According to CONATEL, the Venezuelan national telecommunications body, in 2012 in Latin America, Venezuela (40.27%) lagged behind Colombia (50%), Argentina (57%), and Chile (58%) in its number of internet hookups. Access is always difficult to ascertain, however, as many people may be using the same connection. In 2012, there were also 700 computer labs throughout Venezuela called Infocentros. CANTV, a telecommunications company, now nationalized, provided credits and loans to low-income clients to purchase computers, while two million laptops were distributed to primary school students. This increased access, however, was paired by frequent blackouts (Robertson).

It is within this bind—the varied modes of reproduction of capitalism’s inequalities in the digital sphere—that print in Bolivarian Venezuela comes to the surface. To declare, however, that La Biblioteca Ayacucho and other Bolivarian print projects, have made audible the silenced, visible the historically invisible, and filled the public sphere with type—permutations of declarations that many researchers of Bolivarian Venezuela seem compelled to affirm or impugn—would be difficult to ascertain. In the abstract, this question stubbornly belongs to the liminal space of uncertainty that the present almost always affords. In concrete, recalling certain

interrogations of sociological knowledge dating from the 1970s, this debate would appear to inhabit the transient realm of statistics, where print runs and readers are reduced to numbers, inherently quantitative, rather than qualitative, determined equally by the questions asked as by a presumed empiricism. It is perhaps advisable, instead, to reorient and resize the question to more sober dimensions, seeing these publishing projects as no more than another layer in the historicization and materialization of the written word and its subjects in Latin America, a history marked by constant displacement and reformulation.

CONCLUSIONS: A Novelistic Denouement

As much as the state in 1960s Latin America became a metaphor for the public and the collective, the New Left of the late 1960s saw in the state an apparatus of structural domination. This orientation would soon be shared by large swaths of the Latin American self-identified left. As my three case studies trace in their particularities, while the 1990s greeted the fall of the Berlin Wall and its ripples throughout the international sphere, the market in its diverse permutations (both explicit and tacit) took on new importance as a mediator of culture and symbolic circulation. Cultural producers in Latin America had replaced one harness for another (Bourdieu, “Neoliberalism...” 290).

Thus, even though the title of this dissertation contains the descriptor of “State-sponsored,” the study itself more aptly traces an arc and an oscillation between the state and the market. This is especially true as we approach the present and the increasing difficulty of treating the state and the market as discrete spheres (Castoriadis 129), and capitalism absorbs the runoff of its ebbing critiques (Boltanski XV). I would like to conclude with the analysis not of further “case studies” in the traditional sense, but rather with an exploration of two novels, *País portátil* (1968) and *Simone* (2012), that condense the topics developed in the previous chapters and that span the same historical period. *País portátil* and *Simone* trace “literarily” the vacillation between state and market that my chapters discuss through circulation, the book object, and their paratextual materials.

Separated by four decades, *País portátil* (1968) and *Simone* (2012) are joined by a system of prizes that narrates culture’s pendulation between the state and the market and by Venezuela, understood here less as a national context and rather as a conjunctural nucleus that constellates into a larger continental narrative. Both novels attempt to work

through *writing*'s relationship to collective formations and social cohesion as they confront either directly, antagonistically, or ambivalently the imperative of "action," as it was variously understood by the left in the 1960s, tightly intertwining politics with work, production, and utility;¹⁵² an imperative that has been diversely resuscitated, revisited and, at times, parodied in our contemporaneity.

These novels open up further lines of research and inquiry regarding textual practices, surfaces, and things while doubling back to certain questions already addressed in this study in a new register, tone, and vocabulary; *País portátil* and *Simone*, thus, allow us to enter the interior of the book by means of a meta-discourse of the book as material thing (in a trajectory that reaches the digital) and, in their "speculative reach,"¹⁵³ both novels allow us to arrive at broader conclusions regarding the epochal questions addressed in a local fashion in the body of the chapters regarding books' capacity to cohere collective identity as it relates to things, history, and representation. Throughout the chapters we have seen how the book as object and its corollaries raise questions in

¹⁵² See Franco, "From Modernization to Resistance: Latin American Literature 1959-1976" (1978), in which, drawing from Che's diary and from the Congreso Cultural de la Habana (discussed in Chapter 1), both dating from 1968, Jean Franco attempted to contextualize leftist cultural and literary production since the advent of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 in relation to action and the armed struggle. *País portátil* garners a passing reference, alongside Renato Prado Oropesa's *Los fundadores del alba* (1969), and Julio Cortázar's *Libro de Manuel* (1973). Franco wrote, "the very loftiness of the guerrilla example tended to suggest the superiority of the *man of action over the intellectual and writer*" (emphasis mine, 82).

¹⁵³ Methodologically I am taking cues from Rachel Price's recent book, *The Object of the Atlantic*, in which Price approaches similar questions regarding material culture from a primarily literary perspective. Price writes, "Economic, political, and technological changes of this scale can be difficult to grasp. Literature, with its richness of detail and speculative reach, often perceives and registers such change more readily—sometimes even before it takes place" (17). This methodological justification, of course, runs the risk of overly essentializing literature's explanatory power; yet, I concur with Price that literary texts may perhaps reveal an additional dimension to the questions at hand.

relation to the subjects and values that are exchanged and related through things of paper and ink. But, returning to certain classic questions of hermeneutics that this study at least in its principles perhaps too quickly disavowed, how does this study relate to the *writer* as figure? This is a question that has woven in and out of the chapters, but that is yet to be confronted directly. Is democratization of the book object under a traditional author system, and especially a mass one, a logical impossibility? In this line of reasoning, if we are to consider the reader as passive, what are the channels of democratization implied in an object that promotes the active role of one, and the passive role of 50,000, or even 10,000 or 3,000, for that matter? How do these same elements function if we instead regard the reader in an active process of interpretation?

Allowing for and underlining the vast differences in period and context, these two novels by means of a system of prizes and ratification in canons, present and thematize the material, symbolic, and subject-based transactions of the book object. Where does ‘writing as action’ end and the ‘book as object’ begin? In what contexts do we see writing occurring? In what contexts do we see reading? To what extent do these practices have an active valence, and when are they condemned to a rhetoric and imaginary of passivity? And, finally, how do the state and the market mediate these questions?

The Writer as Guerrillero?:¹⁵⁴ *País portátil* (1968) and *Simone* (2012)

“El Che no sobrevivió a sus ideas, pero supo fecundarlas con su sangre. Con toda seguridad sus críticos seudorrevolucionarios, con su cobardía política y *su eterna falta de acción*, sobrevivirán a la evidencia de su propia estupidez.”

— “Una introducción necesaria,” *Diario del Che* (1968), Fidel Castro

¹⁵⁴ Though apart from *El Diario de Che*, the majority of the books that I discuss in the previous chapters are not written by “guerrilleros,” they have a very explicit relationship with social efficacy, utility, and action.

Recipient of the 1968 Biblioteca Breve Prize awarded by the Spanish publishing house Seix Barral,¹⁵⁵ the novel *País portátil*, by the Venezuelan writer Adriano González León, tells the story of a young Venezuelan student turned urban guerrilla. From the countryside of the Venezuelan state of Trujillo, Andrés traverses the dense, modern Caracas of immigrants, cars, advertising, window displays, cigarette butts, gum wrappers, and superblock apartments of the late 1960s. The narration, which in concrete temporal terms encompasses a mere day, shifts in Andrés' memory between the almost feudal Trujillo of his family's past (Barazarte) and the hyper-sensorial chaos of the city of his present—an urban jungle of motors. Traveling through Caracas by bus, protected by the anonymity of the masses, “gente común” (15), Andrés squeezes a briefcase (*maletín*) between his knees. Throat dry and sweating from nerves, besieged by the light and sounds of the city, Andrés is camouflaged and dressed as yet another soldier of the corporate-bureaucracy, yet the briefcase with which he shares his journey through Caracas does not contain the contents that one would expect—books or documents, but rather a bomb.

Through the tropes of paper turned bomb; and student rechristened *guerrillero*, *País portátil*—let us not forget, a book of *paper and ink*, 278 pages to be exact, published from the relative economic center of Spain, with a first edition of 8,000 copies—constructs a narrative *mise-en-scène* of its very obliteration: a suicidal narrative machine that self-destructs and self-combusts, exploding its very *raison d'être*. Thought of as a

¹⁵⁵ The publisher Seix Barral, commonly known as the commercial publisher and “inventor” of the Latin American Boom, in the 1960s possessed a catalogue that included such writers as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, José Donoso.

“thing,” however, *País portátil*, the book as object, of remains as a canonical testament to this self-refusal, boycott, and abstention. This double movement puts in play a tension between writing and letters as textual polemics and questions, and writing as the “book” itself; in this case, writing thematized as action or *in-action*, and the book— *País portátil*—as an object, as a participant in a canon, and as an historical register. What does *País portátil* reveal about its time, but also its practices of inscription and its medium? How do these practices of inscription and medium imply and link institutions, markets, and politics (state or otherwise) at the same time that they call them in question? And, finally, what does this tell us about broader shifts in the role of the book and writing?

Writing takes on varied roles in the novel. The caudillos of Trujillo’s past are characterized as chauvinistic, virile, and powerful, but illiterate; the ‘escritos,’ that is, deeds,¹⁵⁶ allow their familial land to be confiscated deceptively by the Church; and Andrés’ jilted aunt Ernestina’s love letters—which she reads obsessively and repetitively— are mealy and covered with cockroach droppings. Writing becomes a symbol of the past and of human bonds, eroded by time and circumstance. Thus, although letters are not the source of power of the authoritarian man of action, at the hands of ecclesiastic authority they are a means of disempowerment and, in the hands of an old woman, of degradation.

In the present of the novel, however, lettered objects—books, like the figure of the *maletín*, are antagonistic to “action” and “need.” This bipartite and opposing

¹⁵⁶ For a reflection on deeds, power, and new ways of considering the social place of writing in non-urban communities, see Salomon and Niño-Murcia. Regarding titles and lawsuits, Solomon and Nino-Murcia write, “Today, campesino households in high-altitude villages cherish their goatskin-wrapped packets of titles and lawsuits as vital endowments” (2).

relationship is synthesized in Eduardo, Andrés' classmate and later comrade, and Eduardo's escape from a pension run by a miserly old woman, María Decena. Aided by Andrés, Eduardo flees the pension where he owes 600 *bolívares*. The getaway is narrated in the following manner: "Eduardo cambió sus libros y sus fluxes para una caja grande de leche en polvo. [...] Había un traje viejo sobre un cajón y una chancleta debajo de la cama. En el estante fueron dispuestas unas <<Selecciones>> y <<periódicos viejos>>" (29-30). *Selecciones del Reader's Digest*—a barometer of "bourgeois culture," which has reappeared throughout my case-studies (Cuba's Imprenta Omega, even within the Editora Nacional Quimantú literature)¹⁵⁷ stages a status-quo, a before-and-after. The transition from student to militant is posed as an exchange between the garb of civilian student life, and its props —newspapers, books, petit bourgeois culture—and an item of need "caja grande de leche en polvo," milk, the most basic human subsistence, reduced to an industrialized, processed form, that would seem to linguistically gesture towards "polvo," gunpowder. If in the Editora Nacional Quimantú advertisements, books were located alongside milk, eggs, and bread in the kiosk, expanding circuits of the book object and the reader, in *País portátil* milk and books are proposed as an exclusionary binary.

In fact, writing, even its most informal manifestation, that of jotting down ("anotar"), is not only configured as a sacrifice, but also as an object of prohibition, once again expressed through the figure of Eduardo:

—Acostúmbrate a ejercitar la memoria...No anotes nada...mucho menos direcciones y teléfonos.
Andrés siempre tuvo presente la advertencia y agarró casi un miedo salvaje a

¹⁵⁷ Before *El Diario del Che* was printed there in 1968, the same Imprenta Omega had printed *Selecciones del Reader's Digest* during the Republican era. Similarly, for Editora Nacional Quimantú, in its promotional literature *Selecciones* represented what was meant to be left behind.

anotar cualquier dato. La precaución se le hizo mecánica y la advertencia de Eduardo giraba constantemente sobre su cabeza. Mucha gente había caído por esa bolsería. Toda la vida se ha dicho que no se debe anotar vainas comprometedoras y se ha seguido haciendo. Al Perro Linares le agarraron una colección. En la Digepol creyeron que llevaba el registro. Tenían sus debilidades sentimentales con las libreticas, los mapas, los conejos útiles enumerados al final, las señales de tránsito y las llamadas de emergencia. Eduardo había dicho eso, aunque no fuera verdad, porque adivinó en Andrés aquel culto pueril y ocioso por las agendas. (52)

Writing (“las libreticas, los mapas”), as an identifier, constitutes a childish liability, when the guerrilla’s path must be invisible, traced by the body and not by the pen. In the narration of *País portátil*, writing—or at least the word—is transmuted and returned to the corporeal level of the voice (“consignas”), and in its most liquid and degraded version—the urine of marginal youths—writing on the walls of the enormous superblock housing of the working class.

Paper and pen are thus linguistically obliterated by action—the urgent tempo of revolution is construed as antithetical to that of the more contemplative and, later, durational nature of writing and inscription. Yet, this epochal undoing of the written word through *País portátil* as book is paradoxically *written* and, furthermore, *printed* and *instituted*, as well as *juridically* and *commercially* endorsed, through the institutional and commercial genre and medium of the novel, and through its attendant (and, at the time, dynamic) paths of prizes and canonization. With this contradiction in view, what to make of the 1960s-era proscriptions upon writing and espousal of action? Do these interdictions, like the guerrilla cells that were their emblem, dissolve with the fall of the Berlin Wall? Or, do they experience a curious afterlife? And, if so, of what nature?

*Writer as Mall Rat, and What is a Book?*¹⁵⁸

Lo cierto es que el libro ya no es el símbolo de esta época, por más que sea más leído que antes y que se escriba aún más abundantemente y que se sigan publicándose tsunamis de tinta. El símbolo es la pantalla.

—Christian Ferrer

In González León's *País portátil* writing is rhetorically supplanted by action, at the same time that the historical book was reaffirmed by a consecrating publishing industry and a buoyant mass readership. In the 2000s, writing's supplantations, surrogates, and consecratory mechanisms are of a different ilk. Writing has arguably been rendered irrelevant not by the man of action lost in the tumult of his present, but by factors determined by the demands of the market and consumption, in particular, by the commercial obsolescence of the printed book and the unequal distributions of publishing markets. The historical book has equally become an object of fetish and nostalgia, a more dynamic inhabitant of curio shops than of bookstores.

The relationship between the market, the writer, and the book object has been variously taken up by both international and Latin American writers, but the Cuban-Puerto Rican writer, Eduardo's Lalo's (né, Rodríguez, 1960) *Simone*, published in 2012, and recipient of the Rómulo Gallegos' prize—awarded by the Venezuelan government since the 1960s, attempts to tease out the place of the book and writer in Latin America at the dawn of the 21st century with a particular effectiveness. Albeit from the marginality and strangeness of Puerto Rico in the "Latin American" imaginary as a U.S. territory, in its insertion in a Venezuelan State-based prize system, *Simone* functions as a useful

¹⁵⁸ I borrow this phrasing from Drucker ("Distributed and Conditional Documents" 9), who questions the exclusivity of the historic book object in the face of the increasing dominance of digital textual practices, which she in turn ties to prequest understandings of inscriptions and signs. Her analysis seems relevant when considering the expanded terrain of writing and textuality posited by *Simone*.

gauge of the place of writing and books in relation to the market and the state in Latin America in the 2000s. The novel extends a bridge from *País portátil* to the present, at the same time that, through its thematization of textual practices and things, it coalesces my case studies (in Cuba, Venezuela, and Chile) by way of displacement.

The idea of a technical formalization through which writing passes is a diachronic and temporally punctuated process. In the context of textual circulation, the printing of “writing” is seen as its canonizing moment, its “institutional,” “legal” and “technical gesture.” “The final corrected proof is what separates writing from text, writer from author, freedom from law” (3), writes Bernard Cerquiglini when discussing the passage between the fluid nature of writing and the static nature of text and book. This has been especially true in the forty years since *País portátil*’s publication. Many machines associated with the production and “fixability” of words have become obsolete: typewriters and faxes, for example, while new machines, which take on the dual relationship between print and the digital, have simultaneously been devised. Printed words and their surfaces have become abstracted in their digital forms and their remaining material manifestations lent a newly auratic nature.

The historical book likewise has taken on new and diverse materialities, modes of circulation, and social assignments. As sociologist Christian Ferrer wrote in the Argentine journal *Artefacto* in reference to the advent of tablet computers and their implications on reading, “lo que está en juego trasciende a la novedad tecnológica (la tableta de luz) y no concierne tanto al futuro del acto de leer sino a la posible relegación del libro como emblema de una superioridad moral” (1). Ergo, what we need to consider is not necessarily the technological innovation in the most concrete of senses, rather the

change in the status of the lettered “things” as new technologies are fully introduced.

Not only the social and “moral” place of the book, however, but also the “act of reading” and its distribution structures has already changed radically. The new modes of reading that tablets represent are both a continuation and an innovation upon the reading practices of printed books native to a large part of the 20th century, as variable as these practices themselves may have been. The internet and its search engines —along with its wide gamut of screens and surfaces —inherently de-linearize reading and information, creating new reading practices based on the logic of hypertext (Chartier, “Languages” 143). The digital document enters a new temporality of “fleeting immediacies” “Heraclitan flux” (Drucker, “Distributed...” 18).

Accordingly, following Ferrer, the digital sphere, on the one hand, liberates texts to a freer and fluid circulation—many times beyond the traditional market structures of the literary representative, the state or market-based publishing house. On the other, digital circulation subsequently submits these texts to every-more structuring forces of the market, as these texts are mediated increasingly by countercurrents of privatizations that adjust to the new rules of circulation conditioned by the digital flows and configurations of the internet. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri called this phenomenon early on in its inception (2004) “the expropriation of the common” (188), a process that traffics not in material goods, rather in the production of knowledge and communication. As an arguably mater example, Google Books has already revealed itself as a double-edged sword: it is a project that “democratizes,” at the same time that one of the most powerful capitalist entities takes possession on shaky –yet affirmed—legal grounds of a large

portion of the world's libraries lettered material.¹⁵⁹ The historic publishing market (or even the historical library) itself is increasingly under siege, as traditional modes of distribution and writing seem anachronistic and commercially unsound.

In Eduardo Lalo's acceptance speech of the 2013 Premio Rómulo Gallegos, we are able to perceive what Lalo calls "el poder devastador de la indiferencia y el silencio" (2). This powerlessness, related by Lalo to "silence" and "indifference," evinces vast changes in the circulation of books, as well as in the status of writing and reading as potent and viable social practices in Latin America, as these questions group around another central question regarding the writer as a public figure. "Allí, sobre la muralla," read Lalo, "me percaté por qué las palabras morían tantas veces en nuestras bocas y en nuestras páginas; conocí cómo la historia era una máquina de invisibilizaciones" (2). Although Lalo ends with a revindication of the power of the written word through a quote by Paraguayan writer Aché Guayaki, his reflection is buttressed upon a poetics of stillborn words, writers, and books ["indiferencia"/ "silencio"], in which the sea, or, more broadly, the writer's geographic horizon, is a "desierto" and "una zona de la muerte."

Lalo's speech is a far cry from Vargas Llosa's 1967 "La literatura es fuego" acceptance speech (mentioned in Chapter 3) in which the writer is a potent critic, "un guerrillero" of the word. Placed in dialogue, "La literatura es fuego" and *País portátil* construct two simultaneous discourses that give shape to the cultural imaginary of the 1960s: politics and writing as irreconcilable practices as they relate antithetically to an imperative of action (*País portátil*); and writing and action as ethically and obligatorily intertwined ("La literatura es fuego"). *País portátil* and "La literatura es fuego" are not

¹⁵⁹ See Robert Darnton's *New York Times* article, "Google: the Future of Books."

discursively contradictory rather two simultaneous foci of the same discursive pendulum constitutive to the intellectual field of the 1960s.

Lalo's *Simone*—as well as the accompanying Premio Rómulo Gallegos speech—not unlike the case studies of this study, instead position the Spanish-language literary market at a crossroads: geographically, between North and South, and between Europe and the Americas, and, economically, between the market and privatization and alternative modes of social and economic organization. *Simone*'s narrative can be extended beyond a Caribbean allegory or the colonial specificity of Puerto Rico (or Revolutionary Cuba, continually present or at least latent in the narration) to larger shifts throughout Latin America in the place of the writer and the place of the book as both an economic and social object. Film and literature's consumption (or lack thereof) and the place of writing in *Simone*, thus, can be extrapolated to larger symbolic questions concerning economic organization and the place of the book.

This transformation in paradigms in *Simone* is communicated through a peripatetic narration of writing that transverses not an historic public space—the plaza, the historical city, or even spaces of production, but rather San Juan's consumer “temples” of commercial exchange and consumption. Reading is hereby continuously marginalized in the narration. On one occasion, Lalo's narrator reads Mexican critic Gabriel Zaid's *Los demasiados libros* (1996). At moments an elitist apology of reading and books, Zaid's collection of essays is at the same time a cynical diagnosis of literature's increasing ornamentality and fetishization. Finding himself in a San Juan mall pastry shop, *Simone*'s narrator laces his observations of the space of the pastry shop and

its clients with quotes from Zaid.¹⁶⁰ *Simone*'s narrator confesses, "Soy el único en el local con un libro. A esta hora, ya entrada la mañana, ni siquiera alguien tiene un periódico. Al sentarme y sacar el volumen de la mochila, sentí una ligera y remota vergüenza. Era como hacer el ridículo en el patio de la escuela" (32). Ensnoced in the prototypical edifice of consumption—a mall, the narrator is "accompanied" by the others in the pastry shop, yet he is isolated. At the same time that Lalo wields his book as a badge of honor, he is slightly "ashamed" by his reading, as if it were a juvenile habit ("el patio de la escuela"—pedagogy as infantilization) that should not be exposed to the "public" eye: anti-social, pretentious, untimely.

Recalling Beatriz Sarlo's observations on malls dating from the 1990s—roughly contemporary to Zaid's book, yet echoed more recently in the work of critics such as Jon Beasley-Murray, with growing neo-liberalization spaces of consumption in Latin America underwent a transformation. The weather, the noise, the lighting, architectural variance (elements that Sarlo calls the "urban text"), as well as the urban signage of

¹⁶⁰ As Elsa Noya writes in her Introduction to the novel,

Brevísimos e intensos relatos en donde el mundo entra y se detiene en morosa fugacidad, condensando en un instante el palpitar de complejos mundos culturales. Por ejemplo, el episodio del intercambio entre el inmigrante cubano y el puertorriqueño sobre una ciudad con la que resuena irónicamente un histórico desafío comparativo, no sólo entre las ciudades de La Habana y San Juan, sino entre proyectos nacionales y culturales dentro del espectro caribeño; en la ganadora y escueta respuesta del cubano, que alardea provenir de una ciudad sin vacas, repta, como bien escribe el narrador, *una Habana que se concibe como mito de progreso y modernidad que la historia ha cegado*. (14)

Noya's extrapolation of the quotidian nature of Lalo's narration to larger questions and dynamics—the national, or the Caribbean—is essential to understanding Lalo's implicit or explicit narrative project. The novel can be interpreted as both a hyper-local urban narrative, or as an epochal Latinamericanist fable, depending on the critics' priorities. I have chosen to lean towards the second tendency of analysis. The final scene of the novel involving the neo-colonial dynamics of the Spanish publishing market would appear to affirm this.

historic cities, were transfigured in the uniforming context of malls in which “El aire se limpia en el reciclaje de los acondicionadores; la temperatura es benigna; las luces son funcionales y no entran en el conflicto del claroscuro [...]” (15); “el día y la noche no se diferencian: el tiempo no pasa o el tiempo que pasa es también un tiempo sin cualidades” (17). The cacophony of urban space— conjuring the automobile-marked Caracas of the 1960s so vibrantly invoked by *País portátil*—, like time, in the mall is carefully controlled by an “architectural” structure of sound, borrowed from the realms of factory production (Sterne 23).¹⁶¹ The space’s social practices, likewise, are ordered and highly determined. Time and money are made explicit in these practices; everything in view is offered to the buyer in a completely monetized space. Circulation is mediated by sale, consumption, and cleaning; programmed leisure is limited to conversation, while classic symbolic construction, such as reading, is elided; or rigidly “compartmentalized” (Sterne 28).

In fact, the only places where people read in “public” in *Simone* are airports (bestsellers, magazines) and in international book conglomerates, such as the now already anachronistic Borders bookstore (where a lone reader flips through a Predator graphic novel). The writer-narrator, constructed by Lalo, is a writer who writes “para nadie,” an exercise in social in-utility and atomism. In fact, the quote that begins the pastry shop

¹⁶¹ As Jonathan Sterne describes: “Stimulus progression [in programmed music] was invented to combat worker fatigue in weapons plants during World War II, functioning on a principle of maintaining a stable stimulus state in listeners at all times. Programming is designed to slow people down after exciting parts of the day and speed them up during sluggish parts of the day. It is an aesthetics of the moderate: not too exciting, not too sedate. While environmental music is no longer used exclusively in factories and production centers, it is still programmed along his line of thinking. In a shopping center setting, stimulus progression could be justified—to pick up visitor movement during the middle of the morning and afternoon, and to slow people down after lunch and at the end of the day” (30).

“scene” in question, transcribed as if part of the narrator’s stream of consciousness as he reads, is the following: “Los sentimientos de culpa de la gente que escribe son conocidísimos, y en parte explican la obsesión de poner la pluma al servicio de ‘causas útiles’, para sentirse menos inservibles’. Gabriel Zaid, *Los demasiados libros*.” (qtd. Lalo 31). In a about-face from *País portátil*’s prohibitions on writing in favor of “utility,” the Zaid quote—mobilized by Lalo—instead belittles the idea of a writerly “cause” or “service,” as if they were reducible to an expression of quasi-religious guilt in the face of the unsettled “utility” of writing.

Yet, if, like the characters of *Simone*, sleuthlike Borgesian readers, we cull the pages of Zaid’s *Los demasiados libros* in search of the quote’s original resting place we may be greeted by a surprise. The longer passage from Zaid’s *Los demasiados libros* — left in silence, yet latent in *Simone*—expands the significance of the quote found in *Simone* as it ties the question of “guilt”¹⁶² of the writer to the imperatives of political and collective “action” and “drives” of the 1960s. In the passage in question, “utility” is contextualized as a synonym for “action” and in explicit dialogue with the Revolutionary committed writer. Zaid, in turn, questions the political efficacy of “books” (“influencia de los libros”). The complete Zaid quote, which Lalo excerpts in his narration, is the following:

Muchos religiosos y revolucionarios se han sentido culpables y narcisistas cuando se han sumergido en una acción (la de escribir) cuyas consecuencias son tan poco claras. Los sentimientos de culpa de la gente que escribe son conocidísimos, y en parte explican la obsesión de poner la pluma al servicio de ‘causas útiles’, para sentirse menos inservibles. Si pudimos esperar hasta 1966 para tener en español la

¹⁶² For more on the “guilt” of the writer—albeit guilt resulting from the imposition of productivity rendered by literature and art’s insertion in institutional markets as “work,” see Mario Levrero’s *La novela luminosa* (2005) and in particular Graciela Montaldo’s analysis of the latter, “La culpa de escribir.”

Fenomenología del espíritu, sin que se haya caído el mundo de habla española por falta de Hegel, y si ahora que tenemos la traducción seguimos sin leerla, y si Castro declara públicamente que no ha leído más que las primeras páginas de *El capital*, ¿de qué estamos hablando al hablar de influencia de los libros, ya no digamos en las masas? (Zaid 50)

Of all the potential examples, Zaid invokes Fidel Castro as a barometer of books' social impotence (or lack thereof). Though the following lines could be dismissed—after all, Lalo did not choose to *include* them in his book, I would argue, however, to the contrary, that the Zaid passage, that is, the unsaid, unwritten, and untranscribed lament, in Lalo's narration, the semantic ellipsis, is instead the core of Lalo's project.

Simone is bound inextricably to the edition of *Das Kapital* that was in fact never read—the collapse of an entire collective project at the hands of little more than the proverbial poor student and undedicated reader, embodied, in this case, in a mythical and diminished Castro. Zaid and Lalo's *Simone* in displacement briskly reduce the lettered pretenses of the 20th century grand Latin American mass utopias to anecdote; the idea of the historical “masses” is rendered an imprecise and perhaps impossible phantom whose outlines are presently illegible, like the historical book object, subject to nostalgic desire, historical anachronism, and cynical and opportunistic misrepresentation. These collectives are not “readers,” the organized interpreters of meaning that certain historical moments—in particular the 1960s—had imagined; the writer, for his part, is a subject plagued (and paralyzed?) by the historical weight of his craft.

Writing as Trace

Yet, the destructive tendencies of *Simone* are arguably paired with a constructive thesis of textuality, its practices, and surfaces. *Simone's* exploration of the figure of the

writer and his invisible and potentially inexistent public in fact repeatedly alights upon the writer's less ambitious marks and traces.¹⁶³ In the narrative system of *Simone*, writing's specificity and institutional nature is relativized. Letters move from surface to surface, substrate to substrate (notebooks, flyers, walls, and emails), spiraling towards a writing whose illegibility and density is in fact its transmissive end. Rather than more traditional interpretations of text that connect signifier with signified, text becomes multiplication and proliferation. More affective than linearly communicative, resulting in a slippage between word, image and form, the characters represent the crossing of "writing" as a cohering and binding system.

Although these amorphous genres of writing and inscription are extracted from the publishing market of which its narrator is so desirous, they are placed against a backdrop in which the reader and writer in potentia is subordinated to their relationship (positive or contrarian) with the market. From the first pages of the novel, this position becomes evident. In Lalo's urban landscape in which solitude is expressed by and traverses endless malls, highways, 24-hour gas stations, subjectivity is profoundly marked by economic flows: "La mayor parte de las depresiones están formadas por sentimientos de Mercado." Lalo further mercantilizes emotions, comparing them to impersonal mass production and commercial distribution: "Las emociones que se experimentan parecen salir de una línea de ensamblaje y conseguirse en cualquier sitio. Su distribución es masiva" (19). Politics

¹⁶³ This has been referenced in the work of Elsa Noya, among others. In this sense, *Simone* may equally be interpreted as an exploration of writing, or what Armando Petrucci, would call "graphic culture." Lalo himself, for instance, calls this broadened category a "escritura-marca" in contrast to a "escritura alfabética" in the context of his photographic essay on the state Penitentiary Oso Blanco: "Aquí seres invisibilizados por el encierro dejan su marca como estelas de caracoles. Se trata, pues, de una escritura de todo un cuerpo puesto que pretende mostrar que éste existe aún" (24).

and war similarly fit into this mold: recounting street interviews on the potential duration of the Iraqi war published in a newspaper, the narrator writes, “Es extraordinaria esta forma de ver la guerra, como un consejo amoroso o una oferta de *telemarketing*” (24). The newspaper interviews reduce war to the petty assimilations of affect of the mass media and the invasion of the market in the intimacy of the home, the post-work nocturnal routines interrupted by telephonic solicitations.

The figure of the newspaper leads us to Lalo’s perhaps more significant reflection upon the commercial production of surfaces and inscription. The purchase of a blank notebook in a mall bookstore, another “libreta,” yet without the prohibitions of *País portátil*, perhaps condenses this dynamic; or, the name of a saleswoman at an arts supplies store that embodies the products she sells: “Arles como la ciudad que hizo famosa van Gogh y la marca de las famosas y costosas hojas de dibujo a la acuarela. Pages como páginas en inglés o francés. Se llama como uno de los productos que vende” (30). Likewise, paper, the page, and the writer (and reader) as a product in this fashion carries us through Lalo’s narration. The narrator’s frequently mall-ensconced writing occurs at times even upon the most explicit of commercial substrates: “Me gusta escribir al dorso de los papeles que me entregan en la calle. Mis anotaciones se hacen en hojas de propaganda y también en recibos y facturas. Ahora, por ejemplo, escribo en la parte de atrás del anuncio de una compañía que sella techos y prevee servicios afines. Antes he leído el mensaje del negocio, que como tantos aquí lleva un pomposo nombre en inglés, bajo el cual quedan consignados sus servicios en el español de todos los días” (44). Literary monetary exchange, understood at other moments of the narration through the more oblique lens of the publishing industry, is made explicit and tangible through

material: paper is construed as document, the register of commercial transactions, but also as a refuse of commerce—advertisements, receipts, street flyers; the appeal to consumer desire, its consummation, and its throwaways.

The merchandising of culture alters Lalo’s discourse, not only through graphemes and textual content, but also through surfaces.¹⁶⁴ “Escribo en cualquier sitio. La tinta corre maravillosamente sobre el papel barato,” Lalo concludes. Ink runs, both indicating a deformation and a facility—a flow, upon the cheap paper that makes up the receipts. He writes this, however, not on the obverse of a frivolous commodity, but rather upon the advertisement for a company that repairs roofs, pointing towards the home and hearth, as well as human necessity, wellbeing and utility. Marred by the empty prestige of English—constant reminder of dominant and stifling economic centers, Lalo’s writing and ink play with ambiguity: eclipsed by, coexisting with, as well as *over-writing* commerce, at the same time that writing and its materials act as self-reparation.

These receipts would appear to concretize a play between commerce, work and symbolic productions that is conjugated by (converges in?) the character of Li. Chinese immigrant to San Juan at six and humble restaurant worker, Li chooses the pseudonym of Simone Weil to communicate, initially anonymously, with the narrator. (Simone Weil is characterized by means of a used biography bought in a San Juan antique shop, Grandma’s Attic, as “una filósofa humillada,” who sacrificially “read” and “studied” upon her knees [94], teaching railroad workers by night.) Intrigued by Li’s lack of

¹⁶⁴ Petrucci in his studies of Roman and Medieval writing cultures expands our understanding of writing to surfaces that run from “manuscript, epigraphic, or printed” and to a variety of social uses including “political, administrative, religious, literary, private” employments (Chartier 38); Lalo embraces this diachronic understanding of both substrate and social use; and of “space” produced by textual practices.

integration into his world of consumption, instead inhabiting “un mundo casi cerrado en el que no había llegado aún la sociedad de consumo ni la libertad plena” (96), the narrator is fascinated by Li’s relationship with rest, leisure (“ensoñación,” “vagancia”), and art—generally associated with a non-productive symbolic sphere—that in Li is included within the logic of activity that marks her work at the restaurant. Like her self-sacrificing namesake reading upon her knees, Li’s incapacity to buy these books results in her standing in bookstores—that is, not sitting down in a meditative, passive corporal state that generally marks the imaginaries of reading to which we have returned time and time again. Somehow parallel to digital reading, her “consumption” is of the pages, not in ownership of an object, rather of a system of ideas.

As a counterpart to her reading, Li obsessively draws unsigned line drawings, rendered with pens and markers, on pharmacy-bought drawing paper, bringing attention to the absence of graphemes (words). Li, a voracious reader and a purveyor of quotes, surrenders herself to infinite lines, so dense that they become a single geometric shape. This art comes to “invade” the wall of the narrator’s university office. The university in this case (*Comparadas*)—a place of *words*, is replaced with geometry. The office wall, like the paper plastered upon it, becomes a surface, as later do the walls of a bus station, an office building’s bathroom where these “drawings” are later hung. Finally, these “stains” are placed on thirty doors of condominiums. The installation fractures the uniformity of the middle class architectural model, the mall equivalent of a home.

These nondescript stains—writing turned image—are preceded by faces. The pair—Li and the narrator—later post hundreds of copies of photographic close-ups, the faces of fifteen Chinese cooks “Una quincena de rostros que rara vez veían el sol” (114), who are

confused on the radio for “candidatos desconocidos a las elecciones” (115). The installation’s quotidian spectators assume that a face given such a representation in the urban public space may only be a political candidate. In other words, they presume that these faces cannot be part of the realm of the anonymous and still be representable in the public space. *Simone*’s now inexistent and invisible masses are no longer invested with the projects ascribed to their figures and representations in the mass utopias of the 1960s, satirized by Zaid and by extension Lalo, and arguably the premise upon which this study was begun: they are instead marginalized and sidelined figures, sequestered and only legible in the double interiors of the kitchens of commercial establishments.

Like the masses, the historical book (and historical writing) is understood as an anachronism parallel to a rusted over, corroded projector that appears soon after the installations in the narration. The masses, the projector, and the historical book—reduced to unsalvageable “monuments” (136)—are rare “ruins” in San Juan, whose crevices have been caulked over by “condominiums” and “parking lots” (135). How to make nostalgia productive? How to rethink the affective and collective valences of the mark on paper; or the image for that matter? Can an answer be found in the “fluid” and “liquid” (113) marks of Li that emulate the flows of the digital (Drucker, “Distributed...” 18), while simultaneously radicalizing the materiality of paper and its inscriptions, both dodging and embracing the logics of the market?

The Anti-conclusions of a Conclusion: Book as Confetti? Or Reading and Writing (Even a Dissertation) Against the Drift of History

In an article in the journal *Guaraguao*, “Un debate tal vez urgente: la industria literaria y el control de la literatura hispanoamericana” (2009), Pablo Sánchez, a researcher of publishing and reception theory, insisted upon the extinction of “una izquierda literaria.” As evidence of the latter, Sánchez discusses the Seix Barral Biblioteca Breve prize—of which, let us not forget, *País portátil* was recipient in 1968—and the Planeta prize. Sánchez’s conclusions, organized around the conferral of the Planeta prize to Ricardo Piglia for *Plata Quemada* (1995), culminates in the assertion: “Tal vez ahí, en la rendición simbólica de Piglia, podemos encontrar el pórtico del triunfo mercadotécnico en la literatura actual en español. El triunfo, en definitiva, de una ambivalencia esencial para el escritor: mejores condiciones profesionales a cambio de someterse a la disciplina de la industria editorial” (19). Although Sánchez recognizes that this lattice of artistic and mercantile consecration has always existed, he sees the present of the 2000s as a culmination of certain previous policies that were relativized by the existence of competing systems, such as Revolutionary Cuba (20).¹⁶⁵ Similar arguments have been advanced by Jean Franco and Claudia Gilman (discussed in the Introduction).

País portátil and *Simone* trace a narrative of Sánchez’s transition in all of its ambiguities and instabilities. The Revolutionary tale of the prohibition of the written mark of *País portátil* in 1968 found its consecration in a Spanish market, while *Simone*, which recounts an invisible Cuban-exile writer made mall rat in which the Cuban Revolution and the book are rendered anecdote and failed utopia, finds its surprising recognition in a prize of the state—and the Bolivarian state at that.

In 2013, a few months following the August conferral by Venezuelan President

¹⁶⁵ Of course, it may be debated whether the State publishing projects of the 1960s and 1970s constituted a left.

Nicolás Maduro of the Rómulo Gallegos prize upon *Simone*, when asked about whether the publishing house continued to print mass editions with the same vibrancy as only the year before, an editor for one of the Venezuelan state publishing houses, hinting at the rumored deadlock in book production, evasively told me a joke that was circulating at the time in Caracas. According to the dark witticism, paper's inflated price and the overwhelming currency inflation of the period made it more "económico" to shred *bolívares* (the Venezuelan national currency) as confetti than to produce confetti made from the now-expensive bond paper upon which the mass editions of Bolivarian Venezuela had been printed throughout much of the 2000s. The mass book projects of our present, not unlike Zaid's Castro reference—Castro who had never read *Capital*, at the snap of a finger, dissolved in a pithy quip. Mass books had degenerated into wisecrack. Money was so depreciated that it could be shredded; and paper so expensive that it could not be printed. There was a strange closeness between the anecdote in which currency and paper only recently used to print "books" was instead measured by its ability to be festively shredded and Lalo's protagonist writing upon receipts in malls across the Gulf to a supposedly inexistent readership (his addressee of "nadie"). What was being celebrated was unclear.

As we have seen, Cuban publishing in the 1960s attempted to carve out a space apart from capitalist commercial circulation, at the same time that the Cuban 1990s, at a standstill due to paper shortages, mobilized this legacy through artisanal and discarded paper and other consumer objects to newly reinsert itself in the market. The Biblioteca Ayacucho, with its pristine and polished expensive Antique paper editions of the 1970s, postulated a new Latin American canon in the sobered 1970s, only to be assimilated by

Chavism under the vastly different material qualities of bond paper in the midst of the digital circulation of texts and images (namely through Google). And, finally, in Chile, the arch that is traced with greatest definition, taking *Nosotros los chilenos* from the Popular Unity Party era, to the Dictatorship, to the Transition era, may be synthesized in the 1984 Neoliberal debt-crisis sale of Editora Nacional Quimantú's books. Filled with close-ups infused with an expectant and novel appeal to subjectivity native to the 1960s and early 1970s, the pocket books were pulped and used as bleached white consumer disposable napkins.

Through the prism of books turned white paper napkins, whose non-durational meaning is most clearly located in its single, domestic, anonymous use, wiped of all textual, visual practices, a fleeting subject is projected in the void of representation of the vacant paper surface. Uncertain configurations of the reader and his or her spaces of perception and representation may be cobbled together from this missing image. Can the people in 2015 still be inscribed as readers in the same way they were once invoked by millions of books printed in the 20th century? By the same token, are the "people" even an analytical or lexical potentiality in our critical climate? As the figures of the reader and the book stand on increasingly unsure terrain in the battleground for democratization, have other practices and objects taken their place in the fables of democratization and of mass production and consumption?

If in *País portátil* books are exchanged for the essential—*leche en polvo*—and disintegrate under the weight of history, and in *Simone* books are both shameful and indistinguishable from the market, in Venezuela in the late 2000s printed books became an economic impossibility. In Chile, apart from certain ambitious projects in the subway

systems,¹⁶⁶ books were prohibitively expensive. And, in Cuba, mass books set their gaze largely on young adults; at the same time that artisanal presses sought out a tourist and archival public.¹⁶⁷ While printed publishing projects still exist in these three contexts, they are underwritten by vastly new logics and publics. Laptop, digital literacy, and digital open access instead condense most visibly millennial social utopias. How then to conclude the constellation and the arc that is traced by this dissertation and its three case studies—Cuban state publishing, Chile’s *Nosotros los chilenos*, and Venezuela’s *Biblioteca Ayacucho*—not merely as fossils of another time, yet, also as contrary and contrarian drifts in the rapid flow of signs and currency that has become our contemporary cultural landscape as it quickly cements new localities in the digital realm (Markley 4)? What was the place of the state in these equations in which the market was ever more visible?

As paper and ink quickly enter a realm of nostalgia and anachronism, the historical state is its companion. While even a few years ago—when this dissertation was begun—it seemed possible to speak of a “pink tide” (Beverley 6), a reassessment of the state as cultural steward, in 2015 this potential, perhaps like the very 1960s with which the Academy is eternally in dialogue, would seem perhaps naïve, quickly drifting towards the defeatist narrative of “disenchantment” that John Beverley, among others, have criticized so scathingly. Yet, that disenchantment would appear to be a centripetal force

¹⁶⁶ See “Reading on Wheels: Stories of Convivencia in the Latin American City” (forthcoming *Latin American Research Review*) by Marcy Schwartz, in which Schwartz traces the urban book projects *Libro al Viento* (Bogotá, Colombia) and *Santiago en 100 Palabras* (Santiago, Chile) and their “effort to reclaim public space, boost urban identity, and reestablish interpersonal respect and trust” (2).

¹⁶⁷ Only time will tell what the continued normalization of Cuban-U.S. relations will bring.

whose pull is difficult to arrest.

In July of 2010, Slavoj Žižek, published a short article in *New Left Review* called “A Permanent Economic Emergency.” The article tied the then-current economic crisis to a vision of economy as ideology of which the privatization of education (the “privatization of general intellect”) is a key component. He connected this to contemporary political projects in Latin America (Morales, Chávez), described as “impossible” projects in which he still placed an investment. Writing at a moment in which the 2008 economic crisis was more immediate, there is an urgency to Žižek’s appraisals.

Has this not been the predicament of the Morales government in Bolivia, of the Chavez government in Venezuela, of the Maoist government in Nepal? They came to power through ‘fair’ democratic elections, not through insurrection. But once in power, they exerted it in a way which is partially, at least, ‘non-statal’: directly mobilizing their supporters, by-passing the party–state representative network. Their situation is ‘objectively’ hopeless: the whole drift of history is basically against them, they cannot rely on any ‘objective tendencies’ pushing in their way, all they can do is to improvise, do what they can in a desperate situation. But, nonetheless, does this not give them a unique freedom? And are we—today’s left—not all in exactly the same situation?

Strangely enough, less a call to arms, Žižek’s conclusions are more accurately understood as a diagnosis of what he calls “the whole drift of history.” The latter drift consistently displaces print and letters and writing from the state-based publishing cases that gave rise to this dissertation, even in Bolivarian Venezuela, which has quickly retreated to a recent past. This dissertation, in fact, will probably be never be printed, anchored instead in the binary code deposits of the corporate university’s digital archives. If the market and the consumer good are the only identity frames left to us—albeit spaces far from monolithic, ideologically buttressed upon the discourse of “choice,” diversity and variance (or “globalization,” “flexibility,” and “deregulation” [Bourdieu 289]), the imaginary confetti

made of *bolívares* as recounted by my editor friend is perhaps less a witticism than a condensation of an identity metaphor and of disciplinary imperatives. Will my few readers be little more than that “nobody” that Lalo allegorizes? If this dissertation is not only about books, but readers and writers, what sort of reader and writer was I? What is the meta-discourse that should surround my own interpretative laboratory? How to locate the academic “reader” and “writer” between the market and the state?

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