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**DECOLONIAL INTERSTICE IN CARNAVAL MONTEVIDEANO: MURGA AS
HEGEMONIC DISSENT AT THE TABLADO DE BARRIO**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

By

Paola García

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in American Studies

Kennesaw State University

December, 2016

Para Leonardo y Enzo
¡Les debo todo, son los mejores compañeros del mundo!

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Preface

The sounds of murga were an important part of my childhood. My family fled Montevideo in 1973 to escape the military dictatorship (1973-1985), and I was born after they settled in Atlanta, Georgia. My parents were immigrants in exile suffering from acute nostalgia and along with other Uruguayans in their community, waited for the dictatorship to end.¹ When the dictatorship ended, we could resume life in Montevideo – the most anticipated event that I recall as a child. It was important that I learn to be Uruguayan so that when my family returned to Montevideo I could seamlessly fit in to my new environment. My father was a lifelong fan of murga, so listening to murga was popular in my home. According to him, one of the ways that I could learn about culture was through carnival from cassette tapes that played continuously. One of these cassettes, “Carnaval 1” by Omar Romano y Los del Altillo, is the soundtrack of my early memories.² While the dictatorship eventually ended in 1985, we never moved back to Uruguay, and I never stopped listening to that tape. Visiting Uruguay during carnival was difficult because it did not coincide with my school breaks. We usually traveled to Uruguay in December, a month or two before carnival. I never experienced murga in person as a child; I only understood murga through the cassette tape.

More than thirty years ago, I did not understand many things about murga. “Carnaval 1” contains a compilation of numerous murga recordings from various years, but only the presentación and retirada portions of the performances are included. I thought a murga

¹ For poetry and commentary about nostalgia and exile, see Uruguayan writer Cristina Peri Rossi, *State of Exile*, trans. by Marilyn Buck (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2008).

² Omar Romano y Los del Altillo, *Carnaval 1*, Sondor (4155-4) 1980, cassette tape.

performance consisted of only these two parts. Presentación and retirada are the first and last portions, respectively, and enact nostalgic functions to ensure carnival's cyclical tradition. Presentación serves as a greeting and fulfillment of the last years' promise of returning to the stage. Retirada closes the performance and promises to return for next year's carnival. The nostalgia was similar to expressions of exile in my community, so those were easy to understand. I did not understand the difference between murga and popular music from Uruguayan artists, also in exile during the dictatorship, whose music played frequently in my home. Favorites like José "El Sabalero" Carbajal and Los Olimareños incorporated carnival rhythms like marcha camión and candombe into their protest music. Finally, without access to virtual images and videos available through internet today, I did not realize that murga is also theatrical performance – not just music. Experiencing murga in person in 2005 was the beginning of my curiosity to see what else I did not know about murga.

On a warm summer February night in 2005, I sat in the bleachers of Malvín tablado anxiously waiting to see my first murga performance. A night at the tablado is a lengthy activity because there are numerous performances that usually follow the same order: Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos, Humoristas, Revistas, Parodistas, and Murga. I arrived late that night and missed the first four performances. I had looked forward to the first because I like candombe, but I did not know anything of the middle three. From a friend's description, the middle three did not sound appealing to me. Many years later, I would confirm through experience that I do not like those genres as much as murga. The bleachers seemed to fill up just before the last performance, and it was clear to the audience that the anticipated performance of the night was by a murga group named Agarrate Catalina.

When Agarrate Catalina came on stage, I expected to hear the presentación and retirada. I was unprepared for, and surprised by, a cuplé. I watched while everyone else in the tablado seemed to interchangeably laugh, remain silent, and clap, as if by cue during the 50-minute performance. The cuplés voiced disagreement with various occurrences, but I had never experienced anything similar. It was not angry or frustrated outrage channeled into shouting demands; instead, it was mocking humor and laughter. It was not straightforward entertainment. It requires that one think about the intention of how the cuplé performs to understand its meaning. I quickly picked up what was happening as I watched. Murguistas take a topic or event and portray it satirically to convey disagreement with what happened with humor. Watching the performance and *getting* murga's satirical message relies on whether the audience feels doubt about whether the same topic or event was appropriate or indicative of what is correct from the perspective of each individual. My reaction was that we were going to get into trouble for going along with this, based on knowing what usually happens to people who protest in the United States.³ We were in public cheering on Agarrate Catalina's complaints about government, but no one around seemed to be worried except for me.

I was particularly interested in a cuplé titled Sueño Americano. The cuplé describes a fictional communist fast food chain symbolically represented by Ronald Guevara, which treats employees and customers in a particular way.⁴ Mocking McDonald's neoliberal capitalism,

³ It is necessary to clarify that while I am aware of my constitutional right to overthrow government, I am also a product of the immigrant experience that follows different rules. My mother went through the naturalization process when I was young, and she had to swear under oath not to overthrow the U.S. government as a condition of U.S. citizenship. Though I was born in the U.S., my mother's experience of vowing *not to resist government* influences how I understand my own rights. Also informing my perception of what happens when people protest is recent police reaction to Black Lives Matter demonstrations (at the time of this writing, the most recent occurring in the death of a protester in Charlotte, NC, September 21, 2016). A violent institutional reaction to protest seeks to deter dissent and teaches spectators that dissent is bad.

⁴ Agarrate Catalina combines two symbolic figures to create a new character. Ronald McDonald, symbol of McDonald's global corporation, with Comandante Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna, symbol of Cold War communist resistance to capitalism. The new character, Ronald Guevara, evokes a communist version of the fast food global empire to represent the triumph of global communism.

employees produce communist ideals and burgers. In the end, Agarrate Catalina shows that communism results as problematic for its employees as does the (real) capitalist version of the fast food chain because communist values (portrayed in the cuplé by serving homeless children) produced individualism and greed, not solidarity with the poor as advertised by communist rhetoric. The performance seemed to beg for an alternative to the binary socioeconomic options of capitalism or communism by showing that, while both appear to be opposites on a spectrum, they result in similar social outcomes. The temporal context of this night's performance is important because the first Frente Amplio president took office in 2005, and the party's followers held high expectations for something new that would depart from traditional two-party Blanco and Colorado politics. Hoping to show that communism was not the antidote for Uruguay's problems, Agarrate Catalina expressed the need for the leftist party to produce an alternative to communism and capitalism. The night at the tablado was over, but I listened to that performance several times to understand every cuplé after returning home to Atlanta.

Several years later, I returned to college to obtain a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. I enjoyed philosophy courses and took as many as I could. In one of those, I read Walter D. Mignolo, a thinker who believed that capitalism and communism were not so different insofar as they both relied on the same colonial ordering of the world in order to manifest variations of similar socioeconomic policies. For Walter D. Mignolo and other decolonial philosophers, capitalism and communism are like two sides of the same coin. The coin is colonialism. On the surface, communism advertises to exchange the accumulation of wealth (capitalism) for equal access to resources (socialism), but rarely disrupts the colonial legacies that sustain social, political, and economic inequality along lines of gender and sexuality, for example. I immediately remembered the cuplé and could not believe that Agarrate Catalina had already explained the same concept to

me years ago while making fun of McDonald's at the tablado. A cuplé lasting a few minutes could sum up a lengthy reading and lecture. I knew that murga had taught me how to be Uruguayan as a child, but I thought it was only because I lived in the diaspora. I became curious about what other things murga teaches its audience.

Around the same time, I became fascinated with a Uruguayan film that makes a connection between literacy and murga. Released in 2005, "A Dios Momo" tells the story of a child named Obdulio who sells newspapers on the streets of Montevideo to help support his grandmother and younger sister.⁵ In order to work, he no longer attends grade school. Thus, Obdulio is illiterate. Momo, played by Jorge Esmoris, is a night watchman at a printing press. One day, Obdulio meets Momo and agrees to a deal. In exchange for free newspapers from Momo, Obdulio promises to learn to read. Momo uses murga lyrics to help Obdulio learn, and Obdulio becomes interested in the local murga group in his neighborhood. Obdulio is the only person that can see Momo, depicted anthropomorphically following the film's genre of surrealist fantasy. There are several important topics addressed in the film besides children's literacy, like race (Obdulio is Afro-Uruguayan) and migration (Rusito, Obdulio's best friend, moves with his family to Europe), but the film allowed me to think about murga as a device for learning in Montevideo. While the pedagogical nature of murga becomes evident in the context of the film, it is unexplored in academic research.

Seeking to fill that gap in research as a graduate student, I travelled to Montevideo for an internship at Museo del Carnaval from May to July 2015. For the internship, I interviewed individuals who work in community centers to organize tablados de barrio for carnival performances. I learned that murga and tablado are important to them, and its influence lingers

⁵ *A Dios Momo* [Goodbye Momo], directed by Leonardo Ricagni (Mojo Film and True Cinema, 2006), DVD (Art Manhattan Productions, 2007).

after carnival ends. I also spent some time in the museum building rapport with employees and learning about the museum's activities and goals. The employees were curious to know about me and my research, and I spent hours explaining how I was raised, how I think, and how I ended up in the museum. My informants also helped me learn more about myself than I anticipated or planned. I was a curiosity to them – I sounded and acted Uruguayan, but still a “gringa”. After answering all of my interview questions and the recording device stopped, every group of informants asked me to explain exactly how it was that I turned into who I am. Why didn't my parents ever move back? Why did I speak English so well? Why did I speak Spanish so well, with a *real* Uruguayan accent? Why do I still live in Atlanta? Why do I care about what happens in Montevideo? Why would other “gringos” care to understand their lives? Like my informants and museum peers, I, too, have been confused about my identity, and our conversations helped us all understand some of the complexities of a Uruguayan gringa. While learning about myself, I also gained insight into the significance of murga and tablado in working class neighborhoods in Montevideo.

Acknowledgements

This work was possible because of the devotion and care that I received from many people. I am grateful to the faculty at Kennesaw State University who helped me think about murga in different ways, especially Drs. Stacy Keltner, Kenneth Maffitt, Scott Ritchie, and Gabriel Soldatenko. To Dr. Kenneth M. Williamson and Alejandro Rubbo for supervising my internship at Museo del Carnaval, and to my capstone thesis committee, Drs. LeeAnn Lands, Debarati Sen, and Nathalia Jaramillo, for extraordinary guidance. Special thanks to Kelsey Medlin for her expertise, patience, and excitement. I am indebted to the staff at Museo del Carnaval for treating me as one of their own and allowing me to use their interviews in this thesis and to the informants who welcomed me into their homes to share with me their stories: Mabel, Alfredo, Daniel, Kitty, Andrea, Marion, José, Alba, Gute, Pocha, Juan, Tania, and Juan Luis. To my family and friends, who offered steady support and went along with my crazy idea of going back to school.

Glossary of Terms

This thesis contains Spanish text that does not follow the Chicago Style convention to italicize non-English words. Conforming to the domination of English as the universally accepted language of truth reproduces long-standing notions that non-English languages cannot produce truth. This work does not engage in that type of reproduction. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua explains her choice to do the same for an edited collection about sovereignty movements in Hawai'i:

Following Hawaiian and Indigenous studies scholars, we chose not to italicize Hawaiian words because that marks them as foreign. In a book by and about Hawaiian people, the Hawaiian language is essential, and we avoid “other-ing” the language. This may require a bit of extra work on the part of those unfamiliar with the Hawaiian language. But we hope this additional effort reminds the readers that the Hawaiian struggle cannot be easily known and understood through reading alone.⁶

I agree with Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's reasoning for excluding English translations for Hawaiian text because it aims to stop the subjugation of subaltern knowledges. Nevertheless, literature and research can also bridge communities to make lived experiences relevant, and the dissemination of practices of dissent should be easily accessible to those who need it, English speakers included. To compromise both positions – that some languages should not be subordinate to others but that intercultural communication can forge positive changes – the following work does not italicize the Spanish language. A glossary provides English translations of terms, and translations of citations are included in-text. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright, eds., *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 30.

Candombe – Carnival performance rooted in Afro-Uruguayan experiences, present and past. Requires use of three drums: piano, chico, and repique. There are archetypal performers, like *mama vieja*, *gramillero*, *escobero*, *vedette*, and *tamborilero*. Candombe includes singing when performed on a *tablado*, but not in street processions.

Carnaval – Carnival.

Carnaval montevideano – A specific form of carnival celebrated in Montevideo, city and capital of Uruguay. See Introduction, Carnival in Uruguay.

Coro – Chorus.

Cuplé – Middle section of a *murga* performance consisting of several *cuplés*. The *cuplé* comes after the *presentación*, but before the *retirada*. In some cases, the *popurrí* may occur between *cuplés*. Topics addressed are social, political, and economic in nature and serve the purpose of ridiculing an event or public perception through satirical discourse.

Dios Momo – Uruguayan interpretation of Momus, Greek god of satire. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a male contestant winner embodies Momo and crowned along with queens of carnival. In Uruguay, Momo is an invisible and omnipresent figure that is spiritually present during performances but not anthropomorphically embodied.

Directores Asociados de Espectáculos Carnavalescos Populares del Uruguay (DAECPU) - Associated Directors of Popular Carnival Shows in Uruguay, the institution that oversees carnival in Uruguay.

Gringa/o – Slang to refer to individuals from the United States, or United Statesians. In some cases, the term references a derogatory tone.

Liguilla – The final competition round in *carnaval montevideano*.

Marcha camión – Typical murga rhythm created with two percussion instruments, bombo and platillo. Similar to candombeado, which uses the same instruments.

Mecha – Transition from one part of murga performance to next, usually lasts a few seconds. The improvised content changes from one competition round to the next and incorporates news and events that occur during the competition. This is the only change to murga performance permitted by competition judges. For example, in 2016 the audio system in Teatro de Verano Ramón Collazo (official performance stage) was notoriously unreliable throughout the first round of competition. In the second round, nearly all murgas incorporated a mecha about audio failure into their performances. While none of the performances focused on this occurrence, it reflected the frustration felt by performers towards continuous audio failure. Judges do not consider mechas as part of competitive performances.

Montevideano(s) – Individuals from Montevideo, Uruguay.

Murga – The term refers to three related aspects: the competitive genre in carnaval montevideano, the actual performance, and groups within the genre. The murga genre is one of five competitive performances in carnaval montevideano. A murga performance consists of four sections and one type improvised transition; see presentación, popurrí, cuplé, retirada, and mecha. A murga performance group carries its own artistic name but is also called a murga. For example, murga Agarrate Catalina.

Murga Joven – Carnaval montevideano space dedicated to young murga performers who cannot yet participate in formal competition. According to regulation, participant age in murga joven can range from 12-35.⁷ This non-competitive performance occurs prior to carnaval.

Murguista – Murga performer.

⁷ “Reglamento,” Carnaval del Uruguay, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://carnavaldeluruguay.com/reglamento-de-murga-joven-2015/>.

Popurrí – Beginning of middle section of murga performance that briefly overviews numerous social, political, and economic events that occurred throughout the year, or since the last carnaval. This section usually occurs between the presentación and the first cuplé, but may occur between two cuplés. Generally, the popurrí relates to the theme or topic of the cuplés but when it does not, it serves as a space for the murga writer to address topics that are not included in the cuplés.

Presentación – Beginning of murga performance that presents the topic or theme and serves the purpose of greeting the audience and re-introducing the murga groups' return to stage for the current carnaval.

Retirada – End of the murga performance that concludes the topic or theme and serves the purpose of bidding farewell to the audience and promising to return the following year.

Sambódromo – Sambadrome Marquês de Sapucaí, downtown Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Sueño Americano – American Dream.

Tablado – Permanent or semi-permanent stage for carnaval performances. The stage takes its name from the original use of tablas, planks of wood, held up by metal or wooden tanks.

Tablado comercial – Privately-owned stage with higher admission fee than neighborhood stages. See tablado.

Tablado de barrio – Neighborhood stage run by a neighborhood commission that sometimes shares the same public space of a clubhouse or basketball court. Admission is less expensive than at tablado comercial and current state programs subsidize some costs. See tablado.

Torta frita –Fried flatbread.

Abstract

Murga is a popular carnival genre in Montevideo, Uruguay. Carnival in Montevideo lasts 40 days in the summer months of January through March but is different from carnival celebrations in Argentina and Brazil. Carnival performances are competitive and occur in neighborhood stages (tablados de barrio) and private stages (tablados comerciales). A government body judges performances to determine a winning group from each of the five performance genres: Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos, Revista, Humorista, Parodista, and Murga. Murga is a musical and theatrical performance that utilizes satire to convey dissent towards quotidian occurrences of heteronormativity. Numerous communities outside of Montevideo express dissent through satire, but these expressions are usually not part of mainstream culture. In Montevideo, murga's satirical dissent informs popular culture and identity; what this thesis refers to as hegemonic dissent. From the perspective of Transnational Feminism, and through the methods of critical discourse analysis and ethnography, murga offers its spectators a lesson in critical thinking through its satirical discourse. When complicity with murga leads to visibility of oppressive systems of power, it becomes an interstice that makes oppression visible and open for discussion. Visibility of, and dissent towards, oppressive systems of power may lead to decolonizing the mind. When a group of individuals participate collectively in this exercise at neighborhood stages (tablados de barrio), decolonizing the mind can be a politicized act of hegemonic cultural citizenship that makes sense of the world outside of heteronormativity.

Keywords: Montevideo, Uruguay, Carnaval, Murga, Agarrate Catalina, Tablado de Barrio, Satire, Dissent, Hegemony, Transnational Feminism.

Chapter I: Introduction

Murga is a popular part of carnival tradition in Montevideo that is closely associated with working class life and left wing politics. The *cuplé*, one part of a murga performance, utilizes satire to teach spectators to pay attention to current events and to instill awareness of its implications in everyday life. The use of satire is highly effective to generate implied discourse that is not directly expressed but drawn from the audience's complicity with the satirical discourse. When the audience engages in satirical complicity with the *cuplé*, the didactic experience leads to critical thinking and, in some cases, to dissent towards systems of power. The *cuplé* mocks public figures and occurrences to make visible the heteronormativity that guides rhetoric about social, political, and economic goals for the present and future. While the *cuplé* does not offer a solution for the problematic situations it uncovers, the *cuplé* does encourage that spectators learn to *see* problems and realize that something is wrong in order to think about possible solutions.

Scholars state that murga does important things for its spectators in Montevideo. For its place in popular culture, Pilar Piñeyrúa describes the power of murga to replicate quotidian situations on stage and fosters a space where citizens may interact with national identity in order to enact collective changes to the abstract notion of being Uruguayan. Similarly, Isabel Sans believes that murga is a dialectical practice that allows individuals to gain insight into their local and global place and identity, to better understand themselves. Additionally, Ginette Dubé sees murga as a vehicle for protest, specifically referring to its tactical role in overturning Uruguay's military dictatorship (1973-1985). Dubé also claims that murga is a space from which to

(re)create democracy. This thesis builds upon these existing scholarships but offers a new way to think about murga's cuplé.

This thesis contends that the murga cuplé fosters a collective space that functions as an interstice for decolonial thinking. Never before have murga cuplés been analyzed for the decolonial meaning behind its satirical discourse, and three cuplé analyses are provided to illustrate how murga's dissent works. Topics discussed in the analysis of the cuplés include children's citizenship and agency, intersectionality, and discriminatory racial and ethnic generalizations that structure national identity. Coupled with discourse analysis of performance cuplés, the ethnography targets working class neighborhood committee members who organize tablados de barrio.

Ethnographic data offers narratives from individuals in Montevideo to describe the use and value of public spaces where murga performances occur. Decolonization must be political in nature to dialogue with heteronormative ways of thinking that currently determine the present and future, so this work follows Hannah Arendt's affirmation that politicized actions only occur in public spaces.⁸ Ethnographic findings reveal that when working class citizens gain access to the tablado de barrio, they also achieve collective and politicized cultural citizenship. When a murga cuplé teaches critical thinking to its spectators in the tablado de barrio, and dissent – or disagreement with (hetero)normative views – follows, the murga cuplé serves the purpose of decolonizing the mind.

Purpose

This thesis examines murga performance and tablado de barrio spaces to find the meaning of murga discourse and the significance of tablado de barrio in working class neighborhoods in Montevideo. It proposes that Montevideo's subaltern audience learns a

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

particular form of critical thinking through murga discourse, and when it takes place in the public setting of the tablado de barrio, the exercise becomes a transformative political project to decolonize the mind.

In this study, “subaltern” describes a group of individuals who internalize hegemony but are not included in the production of the dominant knowledge that informs the same hegemony. Hegemony usually refers to imperial dominance from a geopolitical group, for example, U.S. hegemony, and therefore carries a negative connotation to mean a set of dominant social, economic, and political rules defined by a dominant group and perceived as “Truth.”⁹ To avoid confusion with a later discussion, heteronormativity – a specific type of hegemony that produces a troublesome binary between dominance and subalterity – will refer to the negative association of imperial hegemonic dominance.¹⁰ While the dominant-subaltern relationship produces advantages and privileges for the dominant group, it also results in disadvantages and injustices for the subaltern group.

An alternative social arrangement that achieves equilibrium for both groups is appealing for the subaltern because it grants access to resources and the production of knowledges but may appear as violent aggression towards the dominant. A positive change for the subaltern results in disadvantages – by removing existing privileges – to the dominant and is less likely to originate from those in dominance. Social justice, or the recognition and value of human differences, must come from the subaltern. Colonization is the origin of the dominant-subaltern relationship in the

⁹ Truth (capital T) refers to indisputable knowledge that renders alternative truths as false. truths (little t) is plural because it acknowledges that more than one truth is necessary and possible to give meaning to human differences.

¹⁰ Due to the popular use of term hegemony to signify heteronormativity, when cited sources utilize the term hegemony, it means heteronormativity unless otherwise noted.

present, so the decolonization of legacies from the past is a viable path towards achieving social justice.¹¹ But who is the subaltern that may benefit from this type of project?

Troubling the task of decolonizing is the lack of solid boundaries between the dominant and subaltern positions in society. When individuals follow heteronormative rules, they accept a “Truth” manufactured by and serving those in dominance. Critical thinking occurs when an individual interrogates the heteronormativity to consider the possibility of “truths” in place of “Truth”. In part, heteronormativity is effective because individuals “think” of themselves in ways to fulfill those normative expectations and reproduce heteronormativity through themselves. Decolonizing the mind allows individuals to “think” of themselves in ways that are alternative to heteronormative expectations. In other words, decolonizing the mind removes the limits of heteronormativity as the only recourse for understanding the world and allows critical thinking to (re)imagine the “self”.

An individual’s identity – whom one is as “self” – contains permeable intersections that can associate with dominance or subalterity, thereby complicating the location of a subaltern “group”.¹² One individual may obtain dominance in one area of identity, for example gender, but subalterity in another, say, class. Some of these intersections are gender and sexuality (desire, assigned sex, and performance), race, class, indigeneity, ability, age, beauty, reproduction, citizenship, religion, language, and geographic location. In the U.S., heteronormativity places the heterosexual, masculine, white, upper to middle class, non-indigenous, able-bodied, young, attractive, English-speaking, urban, U.S. citizen, Christian male in the dominant category. The infinite possible combination of dominant and subaltern aspects of an individual’s identity complicates the binary of the dominant-subaltern relationship. Therefore, the decolonial project

¹¹ Colonization is further discussed in Chapter III, Transnational Feminism.

¹² See discussion of intersectionality in Chapter IV, Las Banderas.

is for everyone. However, socially, politically and economically marginalized communities are good places to begin such a large task.

This work targets the subaltern working class individuals in Montevideo, Uruguay. While some people within this large group certainly count on some dominant aspects of identity, socioeconomic boundaries delineate institutionally disenfranchised divisions for working class individuals from more affluent ones. Not quite poverty-stricken but not quite affluent, Montevideo's working class is a good starting point for the discussion of how decolonizing the mind can be instrumental for all individuals. I argue that Montevideo's working class neighborhoods learn ways to decolonize the mind through satirical murga discourse, which teaches hegemonic dissent through its cuplé performances. Murga's working class audience gains access to hegemonic dissent at the tablado de barrio, and the public location of this space is instrumental for a politically active life. A necessary aspect of a decolonial future is a politically active life.

In the pages that follow, several areas of scholarship support this study. Murga, as a part of carnaval montevideano, occurs in specific social, political, and economic circumstances. A transnational feminist theoretical framework guides research questions to observe murga and public spaces, and to explain colonization and decolonization. To show that murga is pedagogical in nature, a brief overview of key critical pedagogy work is provided, demonstrating that learning occurs in cultural spaces outside of a classroom. Two case studies related to the pedagogy of performances, in youth and adulthood, show that sites of cultural production are conduits for learning. Two bodies of evidence, produced by different methods, support the application of transnational feminist methodology. Critical discourse analysis allows for interpretation of satirical murga discourse, while ethnography permits community members

associated with the tablado de barrio to state the importance of their spaces and experiences, in their own words. The conclusion synthesizes the findings and significance of this research and suggested sites for further inquiry.

Significance

This project contributes to the field of American Studies in several ways. This thesis engages with the transnational turn in American Studies, one that strives to produce critical analysis of systems of power. The methods deployed within this thesis, critical discourse analysis and ethnography, demonstrate the interdisciplinary scholarship of American Studies. This work shares existing practices of dissent in Montevideo that may otherwise appear as heteronormative cultural practices associated with the (re)production of the nation. A closer look into the practice of engaging with hegemonic dissent, through murga cuplés in the public space of a tablado de barrio, exposes an interstice that questions the premise of the nation.¹³ The consideration of a decolonial alternative to the nation state is an important matter for scholars of indigeneity within American Studies.¹⁴ Finally, transnational feminist contributions of scholarship in American Studies with an aim to better the understanding of global/local knowledges, aligns with this works' observation of Uruguayan practices from the location of U.S. scholarship.

Scholarship that disseminates practices of dissent supports the goal of connecting transnational feminist communities to build strong ties between seemingly distant communities that share a common goal of decolonization. This work offers a case study to the scholarly community about a group of individuals in Montevideo that utilize dissent to decolonize the mind to generate a collective consensus of cultural citizenship and politics. This thesis dialogues

¹³ See Chapter IV for discussion of national citizenship.

¹⁴ For a discussions about decolonization as post-national, see Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) and Alyosha Goldstein, ed., *Formations of United States Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

with existing research of other studies of transnational feminist activism to enlarge a growing collection of narratives for communities to learn from each other's experiences.¹⁵

Murga is an example of a subaltern practice that voices dissent towards heteronormative systems of power but also gains attention as an immensely popular cultural celebration. Murga discourse teaches its audience to contest state and international dominance. Dissent that circulates through popular culture offers potential and possibilities for imagining the decolonial project because established and normative channels of culture may be viable paths towards a decolonial future. The satirical composition of murga allows for easier conversations, insofar as they generate laughter about serious topics. Exposing murga cuplés to individuals outside of Montevideo makes one possible practice of heteronormative dissent visible and useful to others seeking to enact similar practices. In Montevideo, dissent within popular culture generates political tendencies from discussions of national topics to question the heteronormativity of dominant system of power—ones that appeal to and may seem desirable to communities outside of Uruguay.

Uruguay had the world's poorest president from 2010 through 2015, and his radical legacy makes his term in office important. During his presidency, José Mujica “[lived] on a ramshackle farm and [gave] away most of his pay” which was quantified at 90% of his salary that is donated to charity.¹⁶ Mujica was seen as a non-traditional president because he kept a working class lifestyle throughout his term, instead of taking on the affluent status of his job. Many people considered his 2010 election as political smite because Mujica was prisoner for twelve years during the military dictatorship (1973-1985) for his leadership in Movimiento

¹⁵ For examples of existing literature, see M. Jaqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Nancy A. Naples and Manisha Desai, eds., *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁶ Vladimir Hernandez, “Jose Mujica: The world's ‘poorest’ president,” BBC Mundo (Montevideo), November 15, 2012, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20243493>.

Liberación Nacional – Tupamaros (MLN-T). Mujica, who led the anti-capitalist guerilla movement for nearly a decade in early 1960s, kept his decades-old anti-capitalist perspective as seen in his anti-neoliberal speeches at the United Nations.¹⁷ Under Mujica’s mandate, Uruguay took a radical stand on the war on drugs in December 2014. Even though loophole laws already permitted legal consumption of marijuana, Uruguay became “the world’s first national legal marijuana market” by decriminalizing the distribution of marijuana.¹⁸ Marijuana legalization followed earlier counter-heteronormative gender legislation by Tabaré Vázquez, Mujica’s predecessor from the same political party, Frente Amplio.

Recently, Uruguay passed a number of progressive laws that challenge heteronormativity. In April 2013, Uruguay became “the second country in Latin America” to legalize same-sex marriage.¹⁹ This law did not represent a radical shift in social order. It was yet another step in a sequence of inclusionary laws present since early 20th century.²⁰ According to Hedva Sarafati and Youcef Ghellab, recent social security reform in Uruguay

has maintained the statutory retirement age [for women] while relaxing the rules for access to a retirement pension by decreasing the number of years of activity required (from 35 to 30) and granting women who have had breaks in their careers to raise children additional entitlements. Women will be credited with one additional year of work per child, whether their own or adopted, up to a maximum

¹⁷ About Mujica’s 68th General Assembly speech on September 24, 2013, see “Uruguayan President focuses on climate change, environment in UN assembly speech,” UN News Centre, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45989#.VyOKhoQrLIU>.

¹⁸ Hannah Hetzer, “Uruguay Unveils Details for World’s First National Legal Marijuana Market,” The Huffington Post, WorldPost (Montevideo), May 6, 2014, updated July 6, 2014, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hannah-hetzer/uruguay-marijuana-market_b_5275735.html.

¹⁹ Andrew Villagomez, “Uruguay Celebrates: Marriage Equality Passes,” The Advocate, World, April 11, 2013, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.advocate.com/news/world-news/2013/04/11/uruguay-celebrates-marriage-equality-passes>.

²⁰ In 1934, the same-sex sexual activity law decriminalized homosexual encounters; the common law protection of 2008 recognized civil union after five years of cohabitation extending marriage rights to those who could not legally marry; and in 2009, a law allowed same-sex joint adoption and stepchild adoption by a same-sex spouse. Since 2009, transgendered individuals can change their name and gender on all official documents without permission from a doctor or proof of treatment to the body. This identity law acknowledges that the free will of self-identity should dictate gender and sex categories on official documents. It was noticeable that the common law civil union legislation lacked adequate protection for non-heteronormative relationships, one that the 2013 marriage equality law sought to fill. See Walter Howard, “National Report: Uruguay,” *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & The Law* 19, 1(2011):366-367.

of five. This benefit can be used to supplement insufficient working years or to increase the amount of the pension.²¹

While parents in other nations can only fantasize that governments will one day recognize motherhood as a task worthy of employment recognition through retirement credit, Uruguayan women achieved this right. These progressive tendencies are not solely the product of murga discourse, but they come from the same collective identity that helps Uruguayans understand themselves on a global stage – a topic that permeates murga performances. Communities that seek to enact resistance towards heteronormativity may take note from the Uruguayan experience, one that stems from a carnival tradition.

Carnaval in Uruguay

Uruguayans proudly boast about their carnival, but not all Uruguayan regions celebrate the same way.²² While some aspects remain constant, Uruguayans practice several interpretations of carnival. Throughout the nation, carnival occurs in the summer months of late January through early March, and carnival generally lasts for 40 days. For areas closer to Brazil like Rivera and Artigas, carnival looks and sounds like carnival in Rio de Janeiro. The internationally recognized carnival in Rio de Janeiro includes the procession of thousands of costumed people surrounded by decorated floats across the 700-meter competitive stage in the Sambódromo; the event usually lasts a week, although preparations can take up to a year. Northeastern cities in Uruguay hardly draw as much tourism from their Brazilian inspired celebration and rarely make international headlines. Uruguayans inhabiting the vast space between Montevideo and the Brazilian border produce their own hybridization of carnival

²¹ Hedva Sarafati and Youcef Ghellab, *The Political Economy of Pension Reforms in Times of Global Crisis: State Unilateralism or Social Change?*, Industrial and Employment Relations Department, Social Security Department, International Labour Office (Geneva), Working Paper No. 37, February 2012, 34. Accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/publication/wcms_176346.pdf.

²² See Appendix A for map.

drawing from popular carnival traditions in Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro, while Argentinean carnival practices influences carnival in some regions in northwestern Uruguay. Carnival montevideano, the focus of this work, is a particular type of celebration that began during colonial times.

Carnaval started when Spanish settlers founded Montevideo in 1724. While African slaves built Montevideo for the masters, slave culture and nostalgia birthed the expression of *candombe* – the oldest celebrated carnival performance in Montevideo.²³ First celebrations were associated with Three Kings’ Day and included court elections and majestic costume and processions.²⁴ Nearly a century later, those European settlers had become Montevideanos and, according to George Reid Andrews, “were not only willing to tolerate *candombe*; many actively embraced it.”²⁵ Groups called Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos performed *candombe* and grew to immense popularity in Montevideo. By 1900, a group of judges awarded the first official competition prize to a group of Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos.²⁶ Popular reception of *candombe* groups inspired other genres of performers to join carnival celebrations, leading to the institutionalization of carnival montevideano.

Established in 1952, the Directores Asociados de Espectáculos Carnavalescos Populares del Uruguay (DAECPU) was created to institutionally oversee carnival montevideano.²⁷ Performers of various genres were usually working class individuals, yet carnival celebrations attracted spectators from all socioeconomic ranks. Around this time, carnival’s top popular performances, *candombe* and *murga*, became references of national culture and identity in

²³ For *candombe* and Afro-Uruguayan history, see George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 26. Emphasis belongs to author.

²⁶ “Historia de D.A.E.C.P.U.,” *DAECPU*, accessed February 2, 2016. <https://www.daecpu.org.uy/Daecpu/historia-de-daecpu-por-isabelino-larraz-adamo-ano-2002.html>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Montevideo. It was almost patriotic to belong to a performance group carrying historical names predating DAEPCU, like Araca la Cana, La Milonga Nacional, Curtidores de Hongos, and La Gran Muñeca. There was a geospatial relationship between performance groups and their neighborhoods regarding competition and territoriality, similar to a duel. A listing of prizes awarded in the first half of the twentieth century to candombe and murga groups shows a handful of groups repeatedly winning year after year, or rotating between a few groups representing popular neighborhoods. At that time, perhaps no one imagined that in 1973 carnival celebration would change drastically.

A military dictatorship from 1973 to 1985 affected the constitutional rights of all citizens, but three specific attributes of the dictatorship changed carnival. The decade before the dictatorship was an unstable sociopolitical time of divided support for the Cold War. Some Uruguayans encouraged by the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, sought socialist alternatives to capitalism as did the MLN-T, while other Uruguayans welcomed CIA assistance through Plan Condor to eliminate MLN-T guerilla insurgents.²⁸ The decade long struggle culminated in death, torture, imprisonment, and exile for many Montevideanos. Exile produced a large group of Montevideanos seeking political refuge in other countries that were no longer present in their neighborhoods to organize and participate in carnival. Then President Juan María Bordaberry dissolved the constitution on June 27, 1973, enacting strict measures of public comportment that would last until 1985. Two of these measures were critical for carnival: the ban of public gatherings of more than 3-5 individuals and the requirement that a censorship committee pre-approve carnival performance scripts. Despite these restrictions, carnival

²⁸ For MLN-T, see Arturo C. Porzecanski, *Uruguay's Tupamaros: The Urban Guerrilla* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973). For Plan Condor, see J. Patrice McSherry, "Death Squads as Parallel Forces: Uruguay, Operation Condor, and the United States," *Journal of Third World Studies* 26, no. 1 (2007):13-52.

survived the long dictatorship, but when democracy returned in 1985, there were changes to the tablados.²⁹

Tablado

Before the dictatorship, it was common for each of Montevideo's 62 neighborhoods to have more than one stage for carnival performances. The original tablado was a semi-permanent structure that could be moved around to different street corners within a neighborhood, and took its name from common materials used: large wooden or metal barrels supporting wooden planks, or tablas. The tablado de barrio was a permanent structure that often shared space with a community center or basketball court. One tablado de barrio per neighborhood served as a space for pre-carnaval performance rehearsals and other local activities throughout the year. A third type of tablado, the tablado comercial, became the only choice for some spectators following the dictatorship.

Initially, the tablado comercial did not negatively affect the circuit of tablados de barrio in Montevideo, but the end of the dictatorship affected tablado attendance. In the past, carnival performances were so popular that enough spectators in Montevideo could fill any carnival performance space on any given summer night, making the tablado comercial non-competitive to the affordable admission of the tablados de barrio. Lingering repercussions of the dictatorship affected economy and social life for several decades after its formal end. Meanwhile, post-dictatorial neoliberal policies maintained socioeconomic conditions that kept working class neighborhoods struggling to make ends meet. It was not a priority to maintain a tablado de barrio if people could not eat. The public did not quickly shake off the persecution enforced during the dictatorship in 1985, especially a younger generation that only understood their nation and lives

²⁹ As will be discussed in the next chapter, murga was a vehicle for resistance to the dictatorship; see discussion of Ginette Dubé's work in Literature Review.

under a regime. Thus, regular tablado attendance was not an exercise to reflect national culture for the younger generation. For those who did attend, tickets to the tablado comercial were costly and inaccessible to working class individuals who could rely on experiencing carnival in their own neighborhoods. But when the tablados de barrio closed, masses of lower class people ceased participation in national culture and identity by way of carnival. Only individuals who could afford a ticket to the tablado comercial contributed towards national culture and identity.

Competition and performances continued despite slow recovery from the dictatorship.

Performance styles changed before, during, and after the dictatorship, but basic group structures for the competition remained.

Competition and performers

As with sports, a governing body sets the rules of carnival competition; in carnival montevidiano, this entity is DAECPU. Numerous groups try out for official competition months before an inaugural parade opens carnival festivities. DAECPU judges award performance groups in each category based on the inaugural procession and a number of queens that represent different aspects of carnival. Then, performances are judged daily at the Teatro de Verano Ramón Collazo stage in Parque Rodó, Montevideo over a span of 40 days. Competition includes three rounds. In the first and second rounds, DAECPU judges award points to all participating groups along five musical-theatrical performance rubrics. The groups within each category with most points move on to the third round, called *liguilla*. DAECPU awards one first place prize in each category following the *liguilla* competition round. The awarding ceremony closes carnival.

The five categories of performance in carnival montevidiano are Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos, Revista, Humorista, Parodista, and Murga. Each has specific guidelines.³⁰ Sociedad de

³⁰ “Reglamento del Concurso Oficial de Agrupaciones Carnavalescas Año 2016,” DAECPU, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.daecpu.org.uy/images/pdf/reglamento-2016.pdf>.

Negros y Lubolos has similar restrictions to the other categories but is an exception from the others because humor is not the goal. Sociedad de Negros y Lubolos is limited as to the types of percussion instruments used, the duration time of performance, and the number of performers (45-60 individuals) allowed on stage.³¹ The content of their performance is explicit. Their performance must evoke the original purpose of candombe from the colonial period and can

“optar por la recreación de los orígenes africanos y su ancestralidad, [ó] podrá basarse en la actualidad, en argumento que transcurre en el tiempo o una fantasía que se nutra del candombe.”³²

[opt for the recreation of African origins and its ancestry, [or] may base itself on the present, in an argument that transcends time or a fantasy that is based on candombe.]

To accomplish that goal, specific characters must be present onstage: Gramillero, Mama Vieja, and Escobero. These characters are such a fundamental part of candombe that their interpretation may not be satirical or humorous because this would be disrespectful of their intimate ties to candombe itself.³³ Other characters appear on stage in elaborate costume and headdress but count on artistic freedom of song and dance. This category is a space for cultural preservation of Afro-Uruguayan history and culture, and this genre does not contain humoristic interpretation. Regulations are less explicit for the next category.

The Revista category entertains its audience with “cuadros [que] alternaran los artístico con lo divertido dentro de un clima alegre y colorido” [scenes [that] alternate the artistic with the fun-filled within a colorful and cheerful climate].³⁴ Topics addressed within these performances must be original productions that include song and dance, but few restrictions grant artistic freedom to groups within this genre. Performers onstage are limited (18-28), and for a penalty in

³¹ Ibid., 16.

³² Ibid., 16.

³³ Ibid., 17.

³⁴ Ibid., 18.

points, music can be pre-recorded in lieu of live performers.³⁵ DAECPU does not offer more guidance to specify the category and creates confusion. Composer and director of a murga group since 1990 and writer about carnaval, Guillermo Lamolle explains,

Las Revistas...son algo más difícil de definir. Ni siquiera el reglamento de carnaval da una idea de lo que es una revista. Digamos que en ellas se baila y se canta, y hay algún tipo de historia donde se enaltecen valores como el amor, la bondad, la creatividad, la fantasía. Algo así. Aunque confieso que nunca entendí bien cuál es la idea.³⁶

[The Revistas... are somewhat more difficult to define. Not even carnival guidelines give an idea of what a revista is. Let's say that in them there is dancing and singing, there is some type of history that honors values like love, kindness, creativity, fantasy. Something like that. Although I confess that I never understood very well what the idea is.]

Lamolle describes a common confusion for the audience, but this confusion does not detract fans from attending and enjoying Revista performances. Adhering to a “cheerful climate”, as prescribed by DAECPU, sometimes produces humor and laughter, but the last three categories demand large doses of humor in performance.

The genre of Humorista must accomplish one task: make the audience laugh as much as possible. There is little limit to topics or type of humor. For 45 to 55 minutes, between 12 and 17 performers must evoke laughter from tablado spectators. What differentiates this category from the next is that humorista performances “no [pueden] basarse en argumentos de una obra literaria, hecho o suceso real” [cannot [be] based on arguments from literary works, fact or real event].³⁷ The exception noted in regulations is that literary influences may occur sporadically but not as the focus of the performance.³⁸ Judges award points for audience reaction to the performance, not for the level or type of humor performed. Different types of humor are present,

³⁵ Ibid., 18.

³⁶ Guillermo Lamolle, *Cual retazo de los suelos: Anécdotas, invenciones y meditaciones sobre el carnaval en general y la murga en particular* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2005), 11.

³⁷ “Reglamento del Concurso,” DAECPU, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.daecpu.org.uy/images/pdf/reglamento-2016.pdf>, 18.

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

from satire to slapstick comedy, and the same performance can obtain roaring laughter one night and plummet into humor abyss the next. The following group also seeks laughter from the audience but must conform to literary works.

Parodistas must parodize “el argumento de obras, historias de hechos y/o personas del público y notorio conocimiento” [the argument of literary works, histories of events and/or public individuals of notorious recognition].³⁹ There are at least two things happening during this type of performance: the parody of a literary work and contextualization of the performance to life in Montevideo. An example best illustrates the genre. In 2016, winning parodista group Los Muchachos parodied the popular film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. Each major scene of the movie was present in parody form, so sad parts of Benjamin’s life appeared humorous. The film’s story line catered to the Montevideo audience and does not follow the film’s. Benjamin’s life happened within Uruguayan context, but the general idea of a person who is born old and dies as an infant remained. This is important to note because widely recognized literary works may appear barely recognizable by non-Uruguayan audience. Uruguayan jargon and humor related to local events and public figures fill the film’s script, which is performed by 15 to 20 individuals for 55 to 75 minutes. Parodistas may utilize any type of humor, but the last category specifies that satire is required.⁴⁰

Murga is the main act at the tablado and usually occurs last during competition because of its popularity as “una de las más elocuentes expresiones del folclore uruguayo” [one of the most eloquent expressions of Uruguayan folklore].⁴¹ Performances utilize satire to depict Uruguayan everyday life experiences vis-à-vis national and international occurrences through popularly recognized music, with murga lyrics in place of the original ones. The function of

³⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴¹ Ibid., 19.

satire must lead the audience to draw clear conclusions from performances, meaning that in the best scenario the audience will understand the indirect point of satire; points are associated with this accomplishment.⁴² Laughter measures appropriate audience reactions in other categories, but murga performances tend to draw from its audience's laughter, silences, and clapping to show that a message is understood. This genre must engage in serious non-satirical moments during performance to ensure the continued complicity between the performers and audience, but regulation limits these serious tones so that the 18 individuals on stage mainly perform in satire.⁴³ As the most popular genre, murga has a great influence on Uruguayan culture and identity.

⁴² Ibid., 19.

⁴³ See Chapter II, Satire.

Chapter II: Literature Review

What is Murga?

Scholars and non-academics alike contest the origin of murga.⁴⁴ For some, murga originated in Cádiz, Spain. Legend says that a murga group lingered after their planned return home to Spain and taught to others in Montevideo what would later become murga in Uruguay. Others argue that while the Cádiz group was influential to future Uruguayan murguistas, the version performed in carnaval montevideano is unique and artistically departs from the Spanish genre, which is still in practice. The confusion of origin is common in things traced to colonialism. The tradition of European carnival that was introduced in its colonies incurred geopolitical and cultural changes to tailor unique interpretations of the original tradition. This explains the difference between the Spanish and Italian versions of carnival, that inspired the practice in Montevideo, from carnaval montevideano. What is known for sure is that the first official murga, named “La Gatidana que se va”, won first prize in the 1910 competition and the murga genre in carnaval montevideano began.⁴⁵ Addressing murga’s contested origin in satirical murguista fashion, Lamolle states:

La cosa se está volviendo un poco circular, especular, y provoca mareos y en cualquier momento termino lanzando la idea de que el carnaval de Cádiz viene de Montevideo...y que la palabra ‘carnaval’ es una deformación de ‘Taj Mahal’,...y como siempre, todo se originó en la antigua India. Hasta que alguien descubra que los australopitecos se pintaban la cara y hacían unas danzas rituales en las que se burlaban del jefe de la manada.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Milita Alfaro, *Memorias de la Bacanal* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2008).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ Guillermo Lamolle, *Cual retazo de los suelos* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2005), 13.

[The thing is getting a bit circular, speculative, and provokes dizziness and any minute I will throw out the idea that Cádiz's carnaval comes from Montevideo...that the word 'carnaval' is a deformation of 'Taj Mahal',...and, as always, everything originated in ancient India. Until someone discovers that the australopithecines painted their face and performed dancing rituals to mock the group's leader.]

If murga practiced today in Montevideo originated in Cádiz, it has since become Montevidean. If murga practiced in Montevideo originated in Montevideo, it still lives there.

Defining murga involves less contested arguments. As an institutional competitive performance, definitions sometimes vary between performers and their judges, the state and the people. For murga, this is not the case. DAECPU defines murga as:

un natural medio de comunicación, transmite la canción del barrio, recoge la poesía de la calle, canta los pensamientos del asfalto. Es una forma expresiva que trasunta el lenguaje popular, con la veta de rebeldía y romanticismo. La murga, esencia del sentir ciudadano, conforma una verdadera autocaricatura de la sociedad, por donde desfilan identificados y reconocidos, los acontecimientos salientes de la misma, lo que la gente ve, oye y dice, tomado en chanza y en su aspecto insólito, jocoso y sin concesiones y si la situación lo requiriera, mostrará la dureza conceptual de su crítica, que es su verdadera esencia.⁴⁷

[a natural mode of communication, it transmits the song of the neighborhood, it picks up poetry from the street, it sings thoughts from the pavement. It is an expressive form that replicates popular language, with rebellious wit and romanticism. Murga, essential feeling of the citizen, conforms a truly auto-caricature of society, through which are paraded identifiable and recognized, the occurrences of the same, what people see, hear, and say, taken by chance in its novel perspective, humorous and without apologies, and if the situation requires so, it will show its conceptual harshness of critique, which is its true essence.]

DAECPU's definition places murga in a role that is inseparable from national consciousness, culture, and identity. Murga is a performance that critically examines everyday life in Uruguay to make sense of what is happening through its qualities of 'rebellious wit' and 'unapologetic' stance of 'harshness of critique', according to DAECPU. Understood this way, murga is a thermometer that measures the temperature of local (neighborhood) interpretations of larger

⁴⁷ "Historia del Carnaval, Qué son las Murgas," DAECPU, accessed December 1, 2015, <https://www.daecpu.org.uy/Historia-del-Carnaval-Uruguayo/que-son-las-murgas.html>.

national and international occurrences. Murguistas incorporate the task of self-reflection of the social role of murga performance and corroborate DAECPU's depiction. In their 1968 *retirada*, La Milonga Nacional explains "murga is the people, and murga is a fraternal magnet that draws together the spellbound audience to laugh and cry."⁴⁸ The discourse conveyed in murga performances rests on its satirical element, one that is inherent to the ways in which these performances can, and should be, understood.

Satire

Satire is a form of humor that requires complicity between the speaker and listener, one that can be successful or unsuccessful. The speaker's literal statement does not express the intended meaning; rather, it relies on insinuation to transmit an encoded message. The listener must draw an indirect message from clues in contextual irony to understand what the speaker intends to convey. Paul Simpson explains that the widely used and recognized discourse of satire works because of its "internal dialectic...[that] functions as an antithesis which... induces a collision of ideas or appeals to a line of reasoning that falls outside of the straightforward."⁴⁹ Therefore, the speaker's imbedded intention must be deciphered in order to become apparent to the listener. An example: Speaker says A, but means B. Listener hears B, but understands A. The complicity between speaker and listener to communicate without explicit and intentional dialogue is imperative to satirical success. When complicity is not present, satirical communication is unsuccessful. An example: Speaker says A, but means B. Listener hears B, and understands B. Simpson calls the unsuccessful satirical communication a "misfire."⁵⁰ A misfire causes the speaker and listener to miscommunicate, and for the listener to misunderstand

⁴⁸ See Appendix B for lyrics and translation.

⁴⁹ Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

the speaker's intended message. When successful, satire can establish a medium of communication that generates meaning for a group of people.

Satirical discourse allows its users to uncover wrong or unacceptable aspects of life, as defined by its users. Satire is “a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn” and “trenchant wit, iron, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly.”⁵¹ The function of satire is to show discord with a situation by exposing its negative aspect. Satire is a vehicle for communication and thus replicates the established norms and ideals of its users. Satire does not have an inherent framework of thought; it is just an empty container. If satirical discourse users depict ideal feminine beauty as a woman's slender body by making visible the grotesque obese body, then the task of enforcing the slender norm is accomplished. If satirical discourse users depict racial equity by making visible institutionalized racial discrimination, then the task of enforcing a norm of racial equity is accomplished. Satirical discourse reinforces its user's values by ridiculing the opposite to establish a palpable difference between the norm and its counter. In Montevideo, murga discourse exposes working class values to ridicule the opposite and establishing those ideals that are *not* aligned with working class norms. Murga discourse utilizes satire to make working class dissent visible.

Satire has been used throughout the world to critique the oppressive regimes of dominant systems of power. Maria Hynes, Scott Sharpe, and Alastair Greg analyze Australian television show *The Chaser's* satirical approach to neoliberal media discourse about APEC and post 9-11 portrayals.⁵² *The Chaser's* use of satire as social criticism encourages the audience to feel hope for an alternative to neoliberalism and “[makes] resistance memorable and reproducible.”⁵³ The

⁵¹ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “satire,” accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/satire>.

⁵² Maria Hynes, Scott Sharpe, and Alastair Greg, “Chasing Democracy: Dissent, Humour and APEC,” *Social Alternatives* 27, no. 1 (2008):34-38, accessed January 8, 2016.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36.

effect of *The Chaser's* satire upon a community of dissenters “[affirms]...belonging to a shared world, they also show us the familiar world in a new way in which we can imagine our ways of being and seeing transformed.”⁵⁴ Offering more than relief from neoliberal media discourse, satire is an active and transformative part of creating a culture of dissent. The authors find that satire “can help address the problem of alienation from the political process, because of the way that it invites the audience to participate in the act of recolonizing public space and to laugh together at the clowns in power.”⁵⁵ While professional comedians produce and televise *The Chaser's*, research also shows that the production and distribution of satirical dissent may also come from amateur citizens.

Elsewhere, Mohamed El Marzouki observes the relationship between satire and citizenship in Morocco. His work “explores user-generated satirical YouTube videos as forms of citizen-made, participatory cultural production in the context of post-protest Morocco” and argues that these amateur expressions “[give] rise to new articulations of dissenting political culture through the enabling of (counter)publics...[through] the use of political satire as a communicative strategy to criticize regime power, negotiate democratic change, and demand solutions to social and economic problems.”⁵⁶ El Marzouki finds that “in performing a cultural dimension of their citizenship young Moroccans satirized issues and public figures of cultural, social, and political significance and, in the process, created an amateur cultural form of expressing their dissent vis-à-vis state public discourses and policies.”⁵⁷ Viewers who engage with the YouTubers’ satirical expressions belong to a community of dissent and share the vision

⁵⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁶ Mohamed El Marzouki, “Satire as Counter-discourse: Dissent, Cultural Citizenship, and Youth Culture in Morocco,” *the International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 3 (2015): 282-3, accessed January 8, 2016.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 294.

of an alternative future “to sustain counter-hegemonic communities and identities.”⁵⁸ The production of a specific cultural group allows its audience to belong to that community by forging cultural membership with others. Thus, satire serves as a vehicle for dissent while also offering membership and ties to citizenship to its followers. Murga’s popularity and social effect can be better understood this way, as a community based on dissent.

So far, definitions of murga from DAECPU and murguistas, and an explanation of satirical discourse’s structure and potential of murga, explain the intent of this genre in carnaval montevidiano. Importantly, and perhaps in contrast to other satirical traditions, murga is widely popular in Montevideo. Murga is not an underground genre followed by a small group of Montevideo’s population; it is mainstream culture. Research on murga, however, is a small and young corpus of work.

Paulo de Carvalho-Neto conducted the first study of murga as part of a larger ethnographic research of carnaval montevidiano.⁵⁹ Carvalho-Neto’s participant observation and interviews took place in Montevideo from 1953 to 1954, and his work delivers diagrams and definitions of all aspects of carnaval montevidiano. Carvalho-Neto writes about historical perspectives of performance genres from informant narratives and concludes that carnaval montevidiano is unlike Brazilian and Andean carnaval.⁶⁰ Carvalho-Neto’s 1967 publication of his work peaked research interest in the field of Uruguayan carnaval. The following section reviews scholarly work that seeks to understand what murga *does* for its audience.

What does Murga do?

⁵⁸ Ibid., 295.

⁵⁹ Paulo de Carvalho-Neto, *El Carnaval de Montevideo: Folklore, Historia, Sociología* (Sevilla: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1967).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Pila Piñeyrúa observes semiotic and discursive functions of murga discourse.⁶¹ For Piñeyrúa, semiotic meaning occurs when three necessary aspects of murga performance are present: variety of spoken discourses, numerous methods of intertextuality, and alternating responses from the audience.⁶² The different types of discourses refer to arguments, which are present in *cuplé* and *popurrí* sections of performance, and narratives and poetics, which refer to the *presentación* and *retirada* portions of a murga performance.⁶³ Piñeyrúa explains that intertextual meaning comes from a combination of different types of humor, specifically parody and satire, and certain types of word play. The last aspect of meaning behind murga discourse relies on “diferentes respuestas que se buscan en el público: emocionar, pensar, reír, sorprender, etc” [different reactions sought from the audience: emotive, thinking, laughing, surprise, etc].⁶⁴ Once these aspects are present in murga, it is interwoven with popular culture in Montevideo and becomes a cultural text.⁶⁵

According to Piñeyrúa, murga as cultural text allows the performance onstage to embody a microcosm of life in Montevideo: to represent reality.⁶⁶ The murga chorus represents ‘the people’ and the *cupletero*, or character on stage, represents one of many quotidian topics in Montevideo.⁶⁷ The chorus might interrogate and convince the character onstage, an exchange that represents the discursive interaction between the people and current events.⁶⁸ The relationship highlighted by Piñeyrúa between performers and audience should be interpreted as

⁶¹ Pilar Piñeyrúa, “Aproximación Semio-Discursiva a la Murga Uruguaya. La Palabra Carnavalera,” BA thesis, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2002, accessed January 8, 2016.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-66

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

an exchange in the production of collective and abstract meanings, one that is important for Piñeyrúa's work.

Piñeyrúa hypothesized that “la murga es un género cultural que permite y promueve cierta construcción del sentido, y especialmente la sátira y la crítica a los sentidos dominantes que transitan socialmente” [murga is a cultural genre that permits and promotes certain meaning constructions, and especially the satire and critique of the dominant notions that transverse socially].⁶⁹ What she found through research is that not only does murga offer a semiotic space, but a transitional one as well. Piñeyrúa concludes,

En efecto, los rasgos del género que pudimos detectar...funcionan como formas propicias para la construcción de sentidos alternativos o de resistencia a la cultural hegemónica, a través de la sátira y la crítica de los más diversos discursos sociales.

[Indeed, the genre's detected traits...function as conductors for the construction of alternative meanings or of resistance to cultural hegemony, through satire and criticism of the most diverse social discourses.]⁷⁰

Following the findings by Piñeyrúa, murga discourse reflects Montevideo life but also serves as a space to reimagine society. This dialogical facet of murga is important for its capacity to transcend those aspects of society deemed unwanted, whether the exercise is undertaken as a group or as individuals.

Focusing on Uruguayan identity, Isabel Sans sees murga as a cultural practice from the perspective of postcolonial theory to understand murga's purpose and relationship to identity.⁷¹ Her work finds that murga helps its followers understand themselves within the context of globalization. Sans defines identity as:

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁷¹ Isabel Sans, *Identidad y Globalización en el Carnaval* (Montevideo: Fin de Siglo, 2008).

identidad local y globalización conjuntamente, por tratarse de problemas íntimamente vinculados, en tanto son los extremos de fuerzas sociales y económicas opuestas y al a vez complementarias.⁷²

[local identity and globalization together, because they are closely related problems, as are the extremes of social and economic forces opposing and at the same time complimentary]

For Sans, murga triggers identity making through carnivalesque discourse, which is:

una organización discursiva en que la línea épica hace posible a los participantes afirmar el significado de su experiencia social e histórica, al mismo tiempo que la tensión carnavalesca asegura la necesaria autocrítica, la regeneración, la diversidad, el debate, la negociación colectiva y la gestión popular.⁷³

[a discursive organization in which the epic line makes possible for the participants to affirm the meaning of their social and historical experiences, at the same time that the carnivalesque tension assures the necessity of auto critique, regeneration, diversity, debate, collective negotiation, and popular creation]

Sans utilizes discourse analysis of murga lyrics to understand how carnivalesque discourse functions in relationship to identity.

Through discourse analysis, Sans uncovers the dialectical messages within murga's carnivalesque discourse and concludes that two levels of self-recognition occur. She explains the relationship between local and global as:

el teatro de carnaval discute la identidad local en medio de las tensiones que generan las escasas posibilidades para el país y sus habitantes de lograr una existencia que tenga sentido. Los artistas utilizan utopías y sueños para proyectar deseos y propuestas.⁷⁴

[carnaval theater argues the local identity amid tensions generated by the small possibilities for the country and its inhabitants to accomplish meaningful existence. Artists utilize dreams and utopias to project wishes and propositions.]

The global sense of self-recognition draws from the incorporation of international events and figures to introduce the possibility that those global notions may fit in Uruguayan context.

⁷² Ibid., 22.

⁷³ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 274.

Understood this way, the space of murga performed on a tablado is like a dressing room where global varieties of self are ‘tried on for size.’

Sans’s research shows that murga is a tool from which individuals may utilize and understand abstract notions, such as identity making. This is particularly useful because murguistas are usually working class individuals who depict and inform national culture. Sans’s conclusion implies that tablado performance teaches the audience to engage with abstract thought. While Sans observes murga’s influence on identity, it does not connect identity with sociopolitical practices.

Ginette Dubé finds that murga affects sociopolitical practices.⁷⁵ Dubé views murga from the perspective of cultural studies, specifically Gramsci’s cultural hegemony, and draws analysis from ethnographic fieldwork. Dubé argues that murga was “a disguised medium to develop and express critique of authoritarian rule” during Uruguay’s military dictatorship (1973-1985).⁷⁶ Dubé describes the tablado as a place to “build social ties and develop a sense that there was a collectivity that opposed military rule” within the heteronormative circumstances of the dictatorship.⁷⁷ Dubé concludes that murga in carnaval montevidiano was partially responsible for ending the dictatorship, because “murga was a site of resistance to authoritarian rule in Uruguay, and...murguistas and their audiences were key players in a larger struggle for redemocratization.”⁷⁸ Her research makes a grand proposition that murga can influence sociopolitical currents through its counter-heteronormative discourse.

Murga’s discursive resistance was not open and direct because of the social circumstances surrounding the dictatorship, which limited public interaction and censorship.

⁷⁵ Ginette Dubé, “A Sonorous Silence: Uruguayan Popular Culture and Resistance to Military Rule” (master’s thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2000).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Rather, as Dubé notes, murga's "humor hid the potentially revolutionary or corrosive face of carnival."⁷⁹ The satirical complicity between individuals who interpreted murga discourse as counter-heteronormative was invisible to those who did not. For example, if murga discourse says A but means B, complicit listeners hear A but understand B. Non-complicit listeners hear A, but understand A. The importance of the dictatorship's context makes the difference: the censorship committee and military officials, non-complicit listeners, allowed A, but would not tolerate B. Complicit listeners appeared (to non-complicit listeners) to hear and understand A, thereby not openly committing public resistance to the heteronormative dictatorship. The importance of complicity in a public space generated a counter-heteronormative collective identity, which was responsible for the end of the dictatorship.⁸⁰

Dubé's theorization of murga is particularly useful if taken outside of the dictatorship's temporal context. She poses the question, "[H]ow did they get away with such acts of resistance? The answer lay in disguises and masks, something that is in the very nature of carnival itself."⁸¹ Dubé believes that carnival can innately disguise acts of resistance and her research "illuminate[s] the role popular culture can play in strategies of resistance."⁸² Dubé contends that murga is inherently resistant to heteronormative discourse, and that murga inculcates counter-heteronormativity as collective identity. The dictatorship ended thirty years ago, but murga still teaches counter-heteronormative resistance through satirical humor. What does it mean and do for the audience, and what does murga resist today?

⁷⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 80-81. Note: Uruguay's dictatorship ended with a plebiscite vote. Military officials were confident that Uruguayans supported the dictatorship, so citizens were encouraged to vote in favor of keeping military in rule. Mass support from a counter-heteronormative collective identity led to the return to democracy that was, ironically because the regime was still in power during the vote, achieved democratically.

⁸¹ Ibid., 93.

⁸² Ibid., 93.

This thesis builds from the literature reviewed and proposes that murga serves an additional purpose in Montevideo. When murga is performed at a tablado de barrio, making it accessible to working class citizens, the cuplé offers its spectators a lesson in critical thinking. When critical thought leads to dissent towards heteronormativity, the murga cuplé serves the task of decolonizing the mind. When a group of spectators participate in this exercise, decolonizing of the mind becomes a collective and politicized action to generate cultural citizenship that is grounded in counter-heteronormativity. Today, murga continues to resist oppressive systems of powers because those are still present and are larger than the local dictatorship.

Chapter III: Methodology

Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism posits that dominant systems of power are beneficial to a small group of individuals while controlling or limiting freedoms for others. The systems of power highlighted by transnational feminists are imperialism (the state power of one dominant group superimposed onto a subordinate group), colonialism (the European imperial contact and conquest of the New World starting in late 15th century), neocolonialism (relationships and ideas from colonialism that transcend ‘post-colonialism’ or colonial ‘independence’ of late 20th century), and neoliberalism (the economic imperialism of dollars and euros over other currencies that carries sociopolitical implications of unequal power).⁸³ Transnational feminist scholars and activists seek to dismantle the current paradigm, made up of the listed systems of power, to achieve liberation. Liberation is possible when all systems of oppressive power are transcended in favor of an equitable system, or when decolonialism is achieved. Decolonialism benefits all people, oppressed or (seemingly) not. Complicity in oppressive relationships (knowingly or not) is hardly avoidable and leaves no corner of the world unscathed.⁸⁴ Decolonization is a necessary task for everyone, especially those individuals who occupy disenfranchised sectors of communities.

⁸³ For a discussion about the interactive relationship of these systems in the western hemisphere, see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁸⁴ See Barbara Ehrenreich, “Maid to Order,” in *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, ed. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2002). Speaking about multi-directional oppressive relationships in U.S. households between working mothers and domestic workers, Ehrenreich suggests “We can try to minimize the pain that goes into feeding, clothing, and otherwise provisioning ourselves – by observing boycotts, checking for union label, and so on – but there is no way to avoid it altogether without living in the wilderness on berries.” (101).

Decolonization faces the messy task of defeating multi-layered and tangled oppressions that result from overlapping dominant systems. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty define decolonization as a task that “involves both engagement with everyday issues in our own lives so that we can make sense of the world in relation to hegemonic power, and engagement with collectivities which are premised on ideas of autonomy and self-determination.”⁸⁵ Praxis, or the inseparable relationship between theory and practice, allows transnational feminist scholars and activists to show a connection between abstract systems of power and their influence on local experiences. The transnational component of the work refers to relationships between like-minded communities outside of (national) boundaries established through systems of power, and the simultaneous erasure of distance between scholarship and activism.⁸⁶ Understood this way, two seemingly distant communities can forge solidarity based on similar experiences with systems of power, rather than rely on cultural memberships of language or place, to enact and support decolonization.

Transnational feminists suggest the first step towards decolonization is to decolonize the mind, or make oppression visible where heteronormativity currently renders it invisible. Heteronormativity keeps the system of power invisible because individuals internalize the dominant norms of the system’s imbalance of equity and resulting oppressions. The visibility of oppression occurs in an interstice, a space where oppressive practices of the abstract systems are noticeable and recognized. Locating interstices is crucial to decolonization, and Alexander and Mohanty emphasize its value: “As spaces for progressive transformation shrink in the face of

⁸⁵ M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), xxxvii.

⁸⁶ For the restraints of following global-local binary, see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, “Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity,” in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, eds. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). For discussion closing the gap of scholarship and activism, see Leela Fernandes, *Knowledge, Ethics, Power: Transnational Feminism in the United States*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

transnational capitalist domination...the interstices, [are] the few collective spaces available for envisioning and enacting alternative futures.”⁸⁷ Positioned within an interstice, individuals can see and understand how systems of oppression affect their community. There they begin to imagine alternatives to those situations through the exercise of decolonizing.⁸⁸

Decolonizing systems of power must occur with actions, as defined by Hannah Arendt, that are political when they take place in public spaces.⁸⁹ The process of colonization was, and is, a large political task that included contact and conquest. Colonization was effective because it occurred in public spaces where laws and practices drew directly from the colonizers’ experience during contact and conquest. When decolonial scholars identify similarities in present-day laws and practices to the colonial period – legacies of colonialism in the present – it is because coloniality remains in public spaces today as heteronormativity. Heteronormativity might be challenged successfully in private spaces, but resistance will not modify dominant systems of power until it occurs in public. Another effectiveness of colonization was that it changed the way individuals think.

In order for colonial strategies to gain normative status, colonized individuals had to be convinced that colonialism was the only viable option to make sense of the world. A slow process, colonizing the mind was successful because generations of individuals learned that heteronormativity was the only option to understand the world, with no other available models.⁹⁰ Colonization monopolized the individual’s mind with language and culture that made sense of contact and conquest – to the advantage of the colonizer – to develop corresponding ideology, or colonial thought, that could (re)produce the colonized worldview for future generations.

⁸⁷ Alexander and Mohanty, “Introduction,” in *Feminist Genealogies*, eds. Alexander and Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), xxxix.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xl-xli.

⁸⁹ See Chapter V for discussion of Hannah Arendt’s concept of action.

⁹⁰ See Quijano’s discussion of Colonization of Imagination. Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2-3 (March/May 2007): 168-178, accessed July 20, 2016.

Language is an important gateway to the (re)construction of ideology, and discursive texts can alter how individuals interact with, and perceive, the world. Linguistic anthropologists believe that language plays an important role in how people think, but language, thought, and culture equally interact with each other.⁹¹ Carol Cohn personally experienced the effect of language interacting with ideology while conducting research with “defense intellectuals” (pro-nuclear military) in a nuclear facility.⁹² Before her research, Cohn adopted an anti-nuclear ideology. She wondered why some individuals thought nuclear weapons and strategies were good, so she spent a year at a nuclear facility to find out the reasoning.⁹³ Cohn’s fieldwork exposed her to pro-nuclear ideology at the facility, and she found it increasingly difficult to maintain an anti-nuclear stance when surrounded by pro-nuclear language and thought.

Cohn finds that “trying to out-reason defense intellectuals in their own games gets you thinking inside their rules, tacitly accepting all of the unspoken assumptions of their paradigms...[and] language shapes your categories of thought and defines the boundaries of imagination.”⁹⁴ Cohn’s thinking about nuclear topics was affected by “learning to speak the language” of pro-nuclear ideology, because “language is a transformative, rather than an additive, process...when you choose to learn it you enter a new mode of thinking – a mode of thinking not only about nuclear weapons but also, de facto, about military and political power.”⁹⁵ Cohn’s experience illustrates that language can, and does, manipulate ideology. It is possible that since the 15th century, colonized individuals in America experienced a transformative linguistic process similar to Cohn’s. Colonized individuals learned colonial languages and adopted, by

⁹¹ Laura M. Ahearn, *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 65-71.

⁹² Carol Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12, 4 (1987): 687-718. Accessed October 17, 2016

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 688.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 714.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 716.

force in the case of conquest, an ideology and culture that makes sense of the world for the colonizer including a colonial system of power. They learned to be colonized.

A decolonial future relies on individuals unlearning colonization. According to Alexander and Mohanty, “decolonization has a fundamentally pedagogical dimension – an imperative to understand, to reflect on, and to transform relations of objectification and dehumanization.”⁹⁶ For this reason, decolonizing the mind, or unlearning colonial ideology, relies on a teaching individuals that alternatives to coloniality are possible and real.

Critical Pedagogy

The field of critical pedagogy contends that education is a platform to achieve social justice, and that pedagogy can occur outside of a classroom. Paulo Freire’s work demonstrates that education is a gateway to colonial liberation or it may reinforce colonial dominance, and with access to appropriate tools, oppressed individuals may become agents of change to enact a liberated future.⁹⁷ Following Freire’s influence, Augusto Boal believed that liberation could be fostered and practiced through theatrical performance. Boal showed that performance allowed non-actors to identify dominant situations and gain experience in a “rehearsal of revolution” that allowed practice for the “real act in fictional manner.”⁹⁸ Boal explained that spectacle theater, performed by actors, mitigated the possibility of social revolution because the audience experienced catharsis (release of anxiety for change), but that rehearsal theater was successful in enacting revolution because “the cathartic effect is entirely avoided” as non-actors rehearse revolution through performance.⁹⁹ While Boal is correct that rehearsal theater can result in social

⁹⁶ Alexander and Mohanty, *Feminist Genealogies*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), xxviii.

⁹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012).

⁹⁸ Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (New York: Urizen Books, 1979), 141.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

change, spectacle performances can inspire an audience to incorporate counter-heteronormative realities into everyday life.

Robin Redmon Wright's research, for example, demonstrates that television characters' performance can inspire youth audiences to learn counter-heteronormative gender behavior during formative years.¹⁰⁰ Wright's case study analyzes the influence of Dr. Catherine Gale, the female leading character in the *Avengers* television series, upon a young female television audience. Wright describes Dr. Gale's television role as "the vehicle for the self-knowledge that study participants needed to resist gender oppression."¹⁰¹ For the young audience in Wright's study, Dr. Gale's character led young female viewers to "[change] the trajectory of their lives and made them imagine futures quite different from the ones they had been conditioned to accept."¹⁰² Wright's informants learned that a woman's gender performance could evade the dominant stereotype because Dr. Gale taught an alternative option through performance. When the audience is beyond formative years, performances may correct previously learned heteronormativity.

Nathalia Jaramillo, too, contends that performance can help the adult audience unlearn internalized heteronormativity. Jaramillo analyzes a nude protest in Mexico City for the possible effect of liberation for the audience.¹⁰³ For Jaramillo, the nude protest encouraged "unlearning by exercising collective voices...where resistance meets transgression in the act of collective defiance."¹⁰⁴ Jaramillo explains that the audience "willingly or by force...was motivated to see and hear fellow Mexican citizens and confront their own rage at the unknown 'other' that lives in

¹⁰⁰ Robin Redmon Wright, "Unmasking Hegemony with the Avengers," in *Handbook of Public Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰³ Nathalia E. Jaramillo, "A Pedagogy of Defiance," in *Handbook of Public Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 503.

all mestizo/as.”¹⁰⁵ Jaramillo’s observations of adults in nude protest show that adults may unlearn dominant narratives through performance, which may “[create] the possibility for a critically self-reflexive grasping of everyday practices in their historical and social relations.”¹⁰⁶ The nude protest interrogates dominant assumptions about Mestizo/a obedience and shame, to push the audience to re-examine closely held norms about national identity.

By extension, this thesis contends that murga performances are not just popular culture; they are acts of critical pedagogy. Murga performance follows Boal’s definition of rehearsal theater insofar as murguistas are average citizens, not actors, who perform at the tablado. The possibility of catharsis that is traditionally associated with carnival diminishes to allow instead a transformative process of learning. Instead of relieving anxiety to maintain established social order, murga’s cuplé makes visible a problematic social order and thus fosters a transformative process of learning. The tablado is a space open to adults and children, and while they may take away different learning experiences from murga, the case studies from Redmon Wright and Jaramillo indicate that audience members of all ages engage with pedagogical exercise from performances to some degree. To better gauge the type of lessons taught by murga discourse and the importance of the tablado space, the methods of critical discourse analysis and ethnography can provide useful data.

Methods

Complicit understanding of murga’s satirical discourse in the public space of a tablado de barrio forms an interstice from which to observe heteronormative thought and imagine a decolonial alternative. To describe and illustrate this interstice, the methods of critical discourse

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 502.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 505.

analysis allows a complicit satirical read of murga cuplés, and ethnographic narratives from working class individuals explain the value of their own tablado de barrio.

Critical discourse analysis allows a reading of text that reveals subaltern knowledges and meaning. Theo van Leeuwen explains, “critical discourse analysis is, or should be, concerned [with]... the way in which linguistic analyses can bring to light...inequalities between addressers and addressees, or systematic omissions and distortions in representations.”¹⁰⁷ Embedded in discourse is heteronormativity and the speakers’ negotiation of heteronormativity. In other words, the two components of discourse can reveal expectations of the individual from systems of power, and how personal experience allows the individual to makes sense of the system of power. van Leeuwen calls the two components field structure (heteronormative discourse) and generic structure (personal experience, or subaltern knowledge).¹⁰⁸

In satirical murga discourse, the two possibilities of satire as a discursive device produce a complicit reading of discourse (subaltern knowledge, generic structure) and the misfire, or non-complicit, reading of discourse (heteronormative, field structure). In other words, in satirical discourse the speaker says A, but means B; whereas A is misfire/heteronormative/field structure, and B is complicit/subaltern/generic structure. The difference between the two readings is precisely what led Dubé (previously discussed in literature review) to marvel at the ease in which murga discourse utilizes counter-heteronormative discourse that was not understood as protest by military authorities. By analyzing murga discourse in both satirical forms (complicit and misfire), both possible outcomes of audience reception are considered. The complicit reading shows murga’s counter-heteronormative message, which is intended to challenge systems of power. The misfire reading shows the heteronormative target of the cuplé. Murga, as with any

¹⁰⁷ Theo van Leeuwen, “Genre and Field in Critical Discourse analysis: a synopsis,” *Discourse & Society*, no. 4(2) (1993): 193-223, accessed January 25, 2016, 193-194.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

discourse, conveys both heteronormative and counter-heteronormative knowledge because these are inseparable, but the satirical aspect contrasts both to make heteronormativity visible. A complicit reception of murga discourse is an exercise in decolonizing the mind, thus, murga discourse serves the purpose of an interstice. Individuals that utilize the interstice divulge collective meanings associated with the space.

Ethnography produces empirical data from interviews and participant observation. In an in-depth open-ended interview, unstructured questions relieve the informant of coercion from the researcher by agreeing or disagreeing with the question and encourages that informants explain their own rationale for answers.¹⁰⁹ The informant may freely explore the topic without structured questions that anticipate certain ideas or answers. The informant is encouraged to explain answers and illustrate with examples. The purpose of this method is to engage in dialogue with an individual from which a personal narrative may represent a specific historical account that strays from macro historical narratives. Ethnography is particularly useful as a method to obtain subaltern narratives, as these tend to remain invisible in the history recited by dominant systems of power. As such, ethnography seeks subaltern subjectivity instead of positivist objectivity.

This work utilizes ethnographic interviews produced during an internship in summer 2015 with Museo del Carnaval (MdC) in Montevideo that documented the value of reviving the tablado de barrio. Interviews conducted with members from participating neighborhoods intended to inspire non-participating neighborhoods to reactivate their own tablado spaces. As explained in the introduction, tablado de barrio was a space difficult to maintain under neoliberal forces surrounding the return to democracy in 1985. For some time, the tablado comercial was the only option for access to carnaval montevidiano, an experience unattainable for working

¹⁰⁹ Stephen L. Schensul, Jean J. Schensul, and Margaret D. LeCompte, "In-Depth, Open-Ended Interviewing," in *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaires* (New York: Altamira Press, 1999), 121-148.

class individuals who could not afford such attendance. Revitalization of the tablado de barrio began in 2007 and sought to return carnaval montevidiano to working class neighborhoods so those individuals could once again participate in the production of carnaval. In effect, this effort sought to revert the neoliberalism, as a system of power, that filled the vacuum created by the end of the dictatorship in carnaval montevidiano.

Interviews yielded audio recordings and transcripts of data intended for MdC's public archives.¹¹⁰ Thirteen individuals from five neighborhoods discussed the value of access to carnaval montevidiano through the tablado de barrio, the effects of inaccessibility to a tablado de barrio, and the importance of murga in everyday life. Discussions about murga surfaced because informants perceive tablado and murga as synonyms per murga's popularity. The informants who participated in these interviews shared candid stories and opinions about the tablado de barrio and, as is common for group interviews, narrated the history of the community as a combined effort of collective memories. Not sought during interviews is informant interpretation of murga cuplés.

Utilizing data from this fieldwork alongside discourse analysis of cuplé performances may seem counterintuitive insofar as the ethnography does not record, or account for, audience reaction to the murga cuplé. Given the structure of murga's satirical discourse, there are two possible outcomes of audience reception: complicity or misfire. A survey of audience reception would serve to quantify the receptive experience of audiences in tablados, but that is not the goal of this work. Rather, informants herein all engage in the complicity reading of murga's discourse as they depict the lament of losing murga's guidance in the reproduction of the neighborhoods'

¹¹⁰ See Appendix C for schedule of interviews, and see Appendix D for IRB approval. Note: interview data is public archival record and pseudonyms are not used.

critical praxis. Members of the neighborhoods visited lamented the loss of an interstice that ran counter to systems of power, such as neoliberalism.

The ethnographic data illustrates the effect of communal complicity with murga discourse and importance of the political agency offered in public spaces through a reflection of what was lost when the tablado de barrio was not active. In other words, committee members explain the meaning of these aspects of daily life in reference to a time when they were not available during the dictatorship. For example, in Colón, the neoliberal tendency to favor privatization of spaces over public ones left its neighborhood feeling insecure because people feared being in public spaces. As explained in Chapter V, the return of tablado de barrio reduced crime and allowed the neighborhood to re-appropriate public spaces, returning feelings of security. For this and other topics discussed in Chapter V, the inclusion of secondary analysis of ethnographic data in this thesis allows for new and non-existing research in the field of carnaval montevidiano studies; one that explores the effect of murga discourse on quotidian life in working class neighborhoods.

Chapter IV: Agarrate Catalina

Murga groups in Montevideo tend to gain popularity through historical grounding or ties to neighborhoods. Formed in 1912, Curtidores de Hongos won first place in 1922 and have since obtained twelve additional first place prizes, the most recent in 2004.¹¹¹ La Gran Muñeca, founded in 1921, is the most recent winner (2016) with four first place prizes.¹¹² Like these, many murga groups perform for decades. While performers come and go, the group maintains a spirit that grounds the identity of the murga group. Some groups are also associated with certain neighborhoods in Montevideo and thus provide a geographical link to identity. For example, Araca la Cana (1934) has intimate ties to the Paso Molino neighborhood. Newer murga groups tend to lack historical and geographical ties, but some, like Agarrate Catalina, quickly achieve popularity and recognition.

Agarrate Catalina no longer participates in formal competition but achieved a lot in nine years of active performances. Since the group formed in 2001, Agarrate Catalina accomplished the first crossover from amateur juvenile performance in Murga Joven to the formal competition. Agarrate Catalina competed in formal competition for the murga category from 2003-2008 and 2010-2012, and won first place prizes in 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2011.¹¹³ Since 2012, Agarrate Catalina continues to perform non-competitively and year-round, not just during carnival. In 2015 and 2016, the group toured Uruguay and Argentina with a performance titled “Un Día de Julio,” which means “a day in July” and/or “a day in the life of Julio.” The repertoire of

¹¹¹ “Ganadores, Murga” DAECPU, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.daecpu.org.uy/Ganadores/murgas.html>.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “Historia,” Agarrate Catalina, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.agarratecatalina.com.uy/>.

competitive performances left behind in nine years of competition was immensely popular, as were the ways in which Agarrate Catalina challenged the norms of murga groups when they actively competed.

Even as murga discourse conveys dissent towards heteronormativity, the formation of murga groups in Montevideo tends to follow some prescribed notions of heteronormativity. Agarrate Catalina avoided these. While most murga groups consist of all male murguistas, Agarrate Catalina counted on women murguistas in the group. Most murga groups choose practical topics for their performances, which is not necessarily a negative method. Agarrate Catalina coupled discussions of everyday life with abstract concepts in order to show quotidian actions *and* the reasons behind them. The murga genre is inherently wedded to left-leaning sociopolitical stances, but Agarrate Catalina has questioned left-center party Frente Amplio when deemed necessary for its less progressive policies and actions. Using Agarrate Catalina's *cuplé* performances for analysis in this thesis draws from the murga group that not only writes counter-heteronormative performances, but also stands counter-heteronormatively in comparison to other groups for these three reasons.

First, women murguistas appear more often in murga groups over the last few decades, but many groups continue the historical pattern of all-male murguistas. Agarrate Catalina has consistently counted on female murguistas that perform a range of interpretations on stage. Agarrate Catalina does not utilize female murguistas to perform female characters in performance. Instead, the male performers impersonate most of the female characters on stage. In an example explored later in this section, *cuplé* titled *Las Maestras*, none of the three female murguistas performing that year impersonated the characters of the two main female teacher

characters. Women murguistas in Agarrate Catalina perform as *sobreprimos*, a higher vocal range, and are recognized for theatrical-musical ability, not assigned gender.

Next, if murga is to achieve self-reflection and auto-critique of everyday life in Montevideo, it must incorporate abstract notions to illustrate the ideological reasoning behind everyday life experiences. Murga discusses events that appear mundane, and this allows the audience to identify with characters developed for performances. Agarrate Catalina adheres to this practice but also incorporates discussions of abstract notions to make sense of everyday activities.¹¹⁴ In academic scholarship, praxis is understood as the inseparable relationship between theory and practice. Similarly, Agarrate Catalina deploy theoretical grounding through their discussions of abstract notions to explain the practices of routine life in Montevideo. In other words, the *cuplé* explains *what* is happening and *why* it happens. This facet of Agarrate Catalina's performances leave little room for guessing the meaning behind practices, and it allows for an accurate critical discourse analysis that is aligned with the *cuplés* intention.

Finally, Agarrate Catalina is not afraid to question the progressive nature of Frente Amplio's actions. The murga genre evokes progressive sociopolitical views, and murga performances echo this tendency. Agarrate Catalina, like other groups, writes performances from left-leaning perspectives and understands the world – how it works, and what is wrong with it – from this view. Agarrate Catalina has been vocal about their support for the Frente Amplio political party, on and off stage, but remains open to criticizing Frente Amplio when it veers away from its leftist platform. Agarrate Catalina has both venerated and criticized Frente Amplio to show that all political intentions and actions should always remain under watchful scrutiny.

¹¹⁴ Agarrate Catalina received criticism for including too many abstract concepts and not enough everyday experiences in their performances and, in murguista critique, made fun of this criticism by randomly including current produce prices in some of the *mechas* in non-competitive performances outside of the Teatro de Verano stage. The point was clear: Agarrate Catalina is not willing to depart from the use of abstract notions in their performances and without an inclusion of abstract notions, “current events” in Montevideo are rendered useless for the *cuplé*.

Agarrate Catalina maintains a salient line of satirical discourse in their *cuplés*, even when it means standing against Frente Amplio.

Agarrate Catalina and all other *murga* groups share the common use of satirical discourse, but some audience members fail to enter into the complicit relationship required by satire to understand intended meaning.¹¹⁵ While conducting fieldwork in Montevideo in 2015, I attended a theatrical *murga* performance with friends and family at Auditorio Nacional del Sodre Dra. Adela Reta.¹¹⁶ After the performance, an older man and I trailed behind our group to light cigarettes on our way to the parking lot. He turned to me and said, “I thought we weren’t supposed to talk about lesbians like that...the way they did.” He was genuinely confused about the term “*torta*” because someone told him not to use it because it conveys hate towards lesbians, but Agarrate Catalina used the same term and no one appeared offended.¹¹⁷ He did not understand the context in which the *cuplé* deployed the slur. I was speechless. It never occurred to me – in fifteen years of knowing him – that he did not understand the satirical nature of *murga* discourse. For this reason, it should be clear that while the average audience member in Montevideo understands the satirical basis of *murga* discourse, because it is inherent of the genre, not all do.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, when *murga* discourse is understood outside of its satirical context, it fails to convey the intended dissent and instead appears as heteronormative discourse. A non-satirical analysis of the performance does not account for the complicity that is required for satire to work at the *tablado*: the audience and performers expect to see aspects of their own lives ridiculed and anticipate laughing at themselves instead of being offended.

¹¹⁵ See discussion in Chapter II, Satire.

¹¹⁶ The performance by Agarrate Catalina did not happen during carnival (I was there in June and July), and it was a theatrical performance similar to a “best of” compilation of their most famous *cuplés*. At the time, Agarrate Catalina was no longer competing in carnival, but they continue to perform outside of competition.

¹¹⁷ “*Torta*” is a slur similar to “*dyke*” in English. “*Torta*” also means “*cake*” in Uruguay or “*sandwich*” in other Spanish speaking communities.

¹¹⁸ See discussion in Chapter II, What is *Murga*?

The following analyses focus on three cuplé performances that best represent Agarrate Catalina's discursive approach: *Las Maestras*, *Las Banderas*, and *El Novio de mi Nieta*. No two performances of the same cuplé are identical because murga, like theater, counts on an improvisational component. The cuplé performances used are noted for reference. Each analysis consists of four parts: description of the cuplé performance, non-satirical interpretation, satirical interpretation, and a discussion of how the performance teaches an aspect of decolonial thought. The analysis will show that murga discourse instructs the audience to think critically about dense topics through humor. By identifying negative aspects of oneself through the parody performed onstage, thinking about positive alternatives is easier while laughing. Murga discourse does not indoctrinate the audience with political propaganda because it does not offer a solution to the problems raised in the cuplés; it only pleads that people *see* the problem.

*¡Cuidado, Sr, cuidado Sra! Usted presenciará
un espectáculo en el que los personajes caricaturizados
se le parecerán, lo inquietarán, y se reirán de usted.
Cualquier parecido con la coincidencia, es pura realidad.
-Agarrate Catalina¹¹⁹*

*Las Maestras*¹²⁰

In this cuplé, a group of schoolteachers – led by two main teachers – express discontent with the terrible state of humanity, specifically contemporary pedagogical practices in Uruguay. From the perspective of their traditional values, the two main teachers (Figure 1) begin by explaining human origin to preface exactly what they think is wrong with society today.

¹¹⁹ “Be careful, ladies and gentleman! You will experience a spectacle in which characters will resemble you, will make you uncomfortable, and will laugh at you. Any resemblance with coincidence is pure reality.” Agarrate Catalina, *El Viaje* (Gira Mundial, 2014), 5. Pamphlet from author's private collection, not published. Translated by author, per English translation on page 6 is not precise.

¹²⁰ Cuplé “Las Maestras” [The Teachers], *El Corso del Ser Humano*, 2007. All translations by author unless otherwise noted. Spanish transcript based on the following link, with corrections and formatting by author: <http://agarrate-catalina-mai.blogspot.com/2011/08/2007-las-maestras.html>. Video corresponding with transcript can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6o6Lk5eZ-Y>. Note to reader: for the full experience of a cuplé, watch the performance.



Figure 1. Las Maestras, Agarrate Catalina, 2007. Image from La Gente del 8 (<http://lagentedelocho.blogspot.com/>).

- Maestra 1 El ser humano. Como especialista en el ser humano, serhumanóloga, digamos, debemos referirnos a esta particular especie que nos nuclea. A partir de su origen, con un vocabulario técnico, científico, detallado. Así que adelante, colega.
[To be human. As specialist in the human being, human-being-ologist, let's say, we must refer to this particular species at our center beginning with its origin, with a technical, scientific, and detailed vocabulary. So, go ahead, colleague.]
- Maestra 2 Érase un vez, un planeta triste y oscuro. Y se hizo la luz. Pasó el tiempo y llegamos hasta hoy.
[Once upon a time, there was a sad and dark planet. Then there was light. Time passed and here we are today.]
- Maestra 1 Con eso, ya está.
[That's fine, it's enough.]
- Coro No se sabe cuál es el origen del ser humano, ni tampoco el del pez.
[The origin of the human being is unknown, neither is that of the fish.]
- Maestra 2 Pero el pez mucho no se lo cuestiona.
[But the fish doesn't question itself as much.]
- Maestra 1 Ah, eso es cierto, sí.
[Oh, that's true, yes.]
- Coro ¿Será Buddha o Allah? ¿La teoría de Charles Darwin? ¿Popol Vuh o Amun-Ra? ¿O el secreto del código Da Vinci?
[Could it be Buddha or Allah? Or Charles Darwin's theory? Popul Vuh or Amun-Ra? Or the secret of the Da Vinci Code?]
- Maestra 2 Todo evolucionó desde aquel hombre primitivo a los niños de hoy, que ahora vienen cada vez más avispados.

[Everything evolved from that primitive man to today's children, who are quicker each day.]

Coro Érase una vez, un planeta triste y oscuro.
[Once upon a time, there was a sad and dark planet.]

The first teacher gets closer to the point – that bad education is at fault for society's downfall – by first describing the social value and role of a child, an unevolved version of human adults.

Maestra 1 El ser humano. El ser humano mucho antes de llegar a ser el ser humano, es un niño. Y el niño tiene lo esencial del ser humano: la maldad. Porque el niño es malo, es grotesco, es corrupto y es avaricio... como Saravia, avaricio Saravia. Diga que es bobo sino gobernaría el mundo. El niño, entonces, en resumidas cuentas es malo y bobo. Todo concentradito en chiquito como un jugo "Caribeño" de esos que rendían 5 litros y traían veneno, como se decía. Y mirá que no es gran cosa lo que una le pide, que repita todo el ciclo escolar, eh. Con que repita la palabra prócer, la palabra penillanura y la palabra nariz aguileña, sote, te felicito, abanderado, el botija. Y no le entra, una le repite le repite y le repite y no le entra. Habría que hacer con el gurí lo que se hace con los barcos en la botella. Se agarra el barco y por afuera se le hacer un envoltorio de botella. Lo mismo, poner el conocimiento y por afuera hacer un botija. Pero genéticamente sería muy difícil. Y justo, que me [...] todas las preguntas, por favor. Pero ojo, porque resulta que los nuevos pedagogogos andan diciendo por ahí de que el niño tiene razonamiento, por favor. Ahora resulta que el niño tiene intelingencia. ¿Qué es ese disparate? Lo que falta es que nos vengan a decir el niño, el niño, es también un ser humano.

[The human being. The human being, before becoming a human being, is a child. And the child has the essence of the human being: evil. Because the child is bad, grotesque, corrupt, and greedy... like Saravia, Avaricio Saravia.¹²¹ Too bad the child is stupid, otherwise he would rule the world. The child, then, in summary, is bad and stupid. All concentrated and small like the "Caribeño" juice, those that turned into 5 liters and had poison, like they said. And it's not a grand thing that we ask for, that the child repeat the whole school year, ok. As long as he repeats the word "founding father", the word penepain and the word aquiline nose, A+, congratulations, highest honors, for the kid. And it doesn't sink in, we repeat, and repeat, and repeat, and it doesn't sink in. We should do for the kid what they do with those boats in a bottle. The same: put the knowledge and around it make a kid. But genetically, it would be too hard. And that he would [...] all of the questions, oh please. But watch out, because it turns out that the new pedagogues¹²² are out there saying that the child has reasoning, oh please. Now it

¹²¹ The Spanish name of public figure "Aparicio Saravia" is parodied with misspelling (Avaricio) to portray the teacher as uneducated to produce a satirical effect.

¹²² The Spanish word "pedagogos" is exaggerated with an extra syllable (pedagogogos) to portray the teacher as uneducated and produce a satirical effect.

turns out that the child has intelligence.¹²³ What is that absurdity? The only thing left for them to say is that the child, the child, is also a human being.]

The chorus continues with an explanation of proper educational practices, from their traditional perspective, and offer criticism of a contemporary shift in pedagogy they call “new pedagogy.”

Coro Son los niños los humanos pequeñitos. El futuro de este mundo por venir. Los pichones de salvajes, a los que hay que corregir. Estos ángeles cual blancas palomitas son las larvas del engendro que vendrá y nosotras con firmeza, los debemos educar. Son demonios disfrazados de corderos. Malcriados por su núcleo familiar y por la pedagogía que empezaron a aplicar. Qué me vienen con teorías posmodernas de sicólogos traumatizados de París. Un sablazo con la regla y se endereza ese gurí. Si hace falta un rebencazo, un rebencazo. Si hace falta más dolor, más dolor. Cuando sea un ser humano, se lo tratará mejor. Ojo que tampoco somos anticuadas. No es cuestión que se arrodille en el maíz. Hoy el gas paralizante lo sosiega al chiquilín. A ver, tú, niño, alumno, ser humano. Va, proyecto futuro. Ramita torcida. Ramita torcida, del tronco partido del árbol podrido de la sociedad. Tú, niño. Sí, tú! ¡Claro!, ¿quién va a ser? Niño, ven. Dame un beso, eso ahhh. Ponte derecho, hazte la moña. Cruza los brazos, limpia tu roña. Toma distancia, hazla más baja. Hazte la moña, hazte la moña, te dije la moña, pedazo de un nabo, tenés quince años, a la dirección!

[Children are miniature humans. The future of the world to come. The fledglings of savages that must be corrected. These angelic white doves are the larvae of future monsters and with our firmness, we must educate them. They are demons disguised as lambs. Spoiled by their immediate families and by the new pedagogy they started using. Don't give me that postmodern theory from traumatized Parisian psychologists. A smack with the ruler and that kid is straightened out. If a whoopin is needed, a whoopin. If more pain is needed, more pain. When he becomes a human being, we'll treat him better. Listen, it's not that we are antiquated either. It's not about kneeling on corn. Today, mace softens up the kid. Let's see, you, child, student, human being. Well, future project. Bent twig. Bent twig from the broken limb of the rotten tree of society. You, child.¹²⁴ Yes, you! Of course, who else? Child, come here. Give me a kiss, that's it, ahhh. Stand up straight, tie your bow. Cross your arms, clean your filth. Take some distance, make it lower. Tie your bow, tie your bow, I said your bow, you idiot, you're fifteen years old, go to the principal's office!]

The two teachers provide examples of actions from “practicing” teachers who believe in “new pedagogy.” There is a nod to the legalized recreational consumption of marijuana, a heated and

¹²³ The Spanish word “*inteligencia*” is exaggerated with an extra letter, (*intelingencia*), to portray the teacher as uneducated and produce a satirical effect.

¹²⁴ Performer disguised as a child enters stage.

debated topic that year, to couple the abstract notion of pedagogical theories with practical current events.

- Maestra 1 Ay, Santa José Pedra, Santa José Pedra virgen laica y gratuita y obligatoria y que el CODICEN este conmigo y con tu espíritu, ANEP.
[Oh, Saint José Pedra, Santa José Pedra secular, free, and mandatory virgin that CODICEN be with me and with your spirit, ANEP.]¹²⁵
- Maestra 2 ANEP.
[ANEP]
- Maestra 1 Por favor que este vándalo no caiga nunca en las manos de una pranticante.
[Please, don't let these vandals fall into the hands of a practicing teacher.]¹²⁶
- Maestra 2 Cruz diablo, pranticante.
[Cross of the Devil, a practitioner.]¹²⁷
- Coro Las maestras practicantes de hoy en día, ¡Dios me libre! cómo está la educación.
[Practicing teachers these days, oh my God, education is a shame.]
- Maestra 2 De mañana magisterio y de noche al Bacilón.
[During the day they teach and at night they go to clubs.]
- Maestra 3 Qué atorrantas, qué vergüenza, qué descaro. Mucho curso de didáctica infantil...
[What tramps, what a disgrace, what nerve. So many courses about children's didacticism...]
- Coro ...y las ves en el tablado, con un porro grande así.
[...and then you see them at the tablado with a joint as big as this.]¹²⁸
- Maestra 4 Dan sus clases con canciones de La Vela¹²⁹. Si las dejan enseñar manualidad...
[They teach their classes with songs from La Vela. If they let her teach crafts...]
- Coro ...el gurí en cuarto de escuela ya aprendió a desmorrugar.
[...by fourth grade, the kid already learned to grind.]¹³⁰

¹²⁵ This is a parody of Catholic prayer to describe public education. CODICEN is an acronym for Consejo Directivo Central (Main Board of Directors) but takes the place of "Dios" (God) in prayer. ANEP is an acronym for Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (National Administration of Public Schools) but takes the place of "Amen" in prayer.

¹²⁶ The Spanish word "practicante" is exaggerated through misspelling (pranticante) to portray the teacher as uneducated and produce a satirical effect.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Extended arms portray the referred size, meaning the joint was very large.

¹²⁹ La Vela Puerca is a popular Uruguayan musical band that plays Rock Nacional genre, which utilizes a fusion of rock, reggae, and carnival rhythms.

¹³⁰ The Spanish slang word "desmorrugar" describes the act of grinding marijuana leaves prior to smoking.

- Maestra 4 Esas hippies partidarias de la orgía, aberrante de la educación sexual.
[Those hippie fans of orgies, teaching abnormal sexual education.]
- Maestra 5 Dicen útero y vagina...
[They say uterus and vagina...]
- Coro En el ámbito escolar.
[In a school setting.]
- Maestra 5 Un repollo, una semilla, una cigüeña... a lo sumo, manguerita, pichulín.
[A cabbage, a seed, a stork...at the most, wee-wee, ding-a-ling.]
- Coro Pichulín.
[Ding-a-ling.]
- Maestra 4 Son ejemplos más decentes...
[Are more decent examples...]
- Coro ...y no se alza el chiquilín.
[...and the kid is not aroused.]

After suggesting traditional and euphemistic terminology for the penis and vagina, deemed more appropriate for children, there is a sudden change in the tone used by the teachers. The chorus reveals a weakness in their traditional stance and thus a potential value in the “new pedagogy.”

- Maestra 5 Si a una nena le enseñás dónde está el clitor, cuando crezca se lo va a querer buscar. ¿Y mirá si se lo encuentra?
[If it's a girl and you teach her where her clitoris is, when she grows up she will want to find it. Can you imagine if she finds it?]
- Coro ¡Que nos diga dónde está! A ver tú, niño, maqueta de persona. ¿Qué hacés con el dedo escarbando esa zona? ¿Te estás intentando rascar las neuronas? En donde aprendiste esa cosa divina, usar de bolsillos tus propias narinas. A ver, che, no sigas hurgando, ¿qué cosa tenés? ¿Será la bandera de los 33? Mirá que se envicia la ñata después. No ves que sos grande y tenés que entender. ¡No me abras la boca, que sos muy chiquito para responder!
[Tell us where it is! Let's see, you, child, mock of a person. What are you doing digging in that area?¹³¹ Are you trying to scratch your neurons? Where did you learn such a thing, to use your nostrils as pockets. Let's see, hey, don't poke around, what do you have there? Is it the liberator's flag? Watch out, the nose gets addicted later. Can't you see you are old enough to understand? Shut your mouth, you are too little to talk back!]

¹³¹ Performer portraying a child is picking his nose.

When the chorus begs to know the location of the clitoris from one of the students of “new pedagogy,” this prepares the audience for the coming break in satire. Before the cuplé ends, however, the first teacher makes a final critique of the hardships of teaching today’s children.

Maestra 1 Ay, dónde se vio, válgame Dios, educación sin un golpecito, sin una patadita en la nuca al botija. Porque al fin y al cabo una termina siendo como una guardia de seguridad, que tiene la arma y no la puede usar. Porque para el padre, madre y/o tutor, es mucho más fácil. Lo aguantan veinte minutos, le enchufan la “pasta Barney” y el botija queda idiotizado frente al televisor. Pero una, fumárselos cuatro horas hablándoles de los Charrúa y los cúmulo-limbo. Por eso hay que llevar siempre en la cartera lo que no debe falta en la cartera de una buena maestra: un buen nun chaco y una piña americana.

[Oh, where have you seen, goodness gracious, education without a little nudge, without a little kick in the back of the head to the kid. Because, in the end, we end up being like a security guard, that has the weapon but cannot use it. Because for the father, mother, and/or guardian, it’s much easier. They put up with him for twenty minutes, they plug him into that “Barney-crack” and the kid becomes an idiot in front of the television. But us, we deal with them for four hours talking about Charrúa and clouds. That’s why you should always carry in your purse what should always be in a good teacher’s purse: nunchucks and brass knuckles.]

In the final moments of the cuplé, the chorus abandons satirical discourse to explain the outcome of traditional methodology defended by the teachers: a nation of individuals destined to fail.

Coro Menos mal que va quedando la bandera. Nada iguala su lucir, su lucir. Demasiado peligroso que la toque ese gurí. Que la moña no se le desate nunca, que la letra no se salga del renglón. Que mantenga bien la fila, que se quede en el rincón. Qué placer da verlos con esa mochila tan pesada y tan difícil de cargar. Lo que llevan ahí adentro es el peso de Uruguay. De a poquito va doblándoles la espalda, los prepara bien para lo que vendrá. Enfrentarse a esa montaña. Reventarse y fracasar.

[Good thing we still have the flag. Nothing like it’s splendor, it’s splendor. It’s too dangerous for that kid to touch it. May his bow never untie, may his writing stay within the lines. May he stay in single-file line, may he stay in his corner. What pleasure seeing them with that backpack, so heavy and hard to carry. What they have in there is the weight of the nation (Uruguay). Little by little, it curves their backs, it prepares them well for what is to come. Face that mountain. Break and fail.

A non-satirical interpretation of this performance shows that traditional teachers are concerned about moral decline in the classroom in hopes to stimulate the audience-as-citizenry to

take a stand against modern pedagogues and methodology. Citing several examples of immoral situations like pot smoking teachers that use words like vagina and penis in the classroom, the traditional teachers fear that Uruguayan society will fail unless teaching ideologies revert to past, or positivist and traditional, norms. These norms include corporal punishment for school-aged children whom are no more than puppets-in-training to become fit citizens in the future for the nation. This interpretation of the *cuplé*, which results outside of the scope of *murga* discourse and popular culture, ignores many satirical cues that remind the audience that satirical complicity should continue until the end of the *cuplé*.

Agarrate Catalina deploys signals to ensure that the audience enters into a complicit satirical relationship with the *cuplé*. The caricature-like presentation of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 is only a comical glimpse into the discourse these characters will deliver. At the beginning, there is a conflict between Teacher 1's promise of a detailed and scientific explanation of human origin and Teacher 2's rudimentary summary in three short sentences, to which Teacher 1 confirms, "that's enough." The audience should now anticipate a farcical dialogue after the broken promise. Additionally, the teachers lose credibility, and thus seriousness, when the deliberate mispronunciation of certain words signals lack of knowledge. While it is possible for an audience member to fail to engage with the satirical complicity during this performance, these cues seek to avoid such interpretation. Intended meaning can be drawn from a satirical analysis.

The *cuplé* focuses on the traditional concept of children as non-agentive members of society but also as the center of notions of citizenship. In the beginning, the *cuplé* illustrates children as unevolved humans who must learn how to become human through education. Once human, or 'civilized' to follow positivist language, at the end of the educational experience, corporal punishment is no longer necessary and children-now-human-adults finally have access

to agency. The cuplé ends with a discursive illustration of a heavy book bag that carries the weight of citizenship, but the children carrying it cannot touch the flag. Here Agarrate Catalina articulates that while children are the focus of citizenship, they cannot “touch” citizenship. In a performance of less than nine minutes in duration, Agarrate Catalina explains and argues against the current state of children’s social roles and notions of citizenship. In lengthier publications, two prominent scholars help explain what the tablado audience learned from the cuplé, Las Maestras.

A social arrangement between adults as gatekeepers tasked to protect innocent children upholds the heteronormative structure of a neoliberal society. Kerry H. Robinson explains that neoliberal societies perceive children as innocent, non-agentive social members and thus result in censorship of social topics considered taboo, specifically focusing on sexuality in her research.¹³² For Robinson, institutional surveillance produces innocent children that become “instrumental in constituting, regulating and maintaining adult/child and broader socio-cultural relations of power in society.”¹³³ Surveillance, in turn, relieves children from the task of developing agency, which she defines as “the power of an individual to actively engage in the construction of their self (or *subjectivity*).”¹³⁴ Western colonial thought proposed, “the child, viewed as lower on the evolutionary scale, was considered to be progressing toward the pinnacle of rationality – epitomized by the adult.”¹³⁵ While the social arrangement between children and adults is beneficial for adults in power, it “is detrimental to children’s wellbeing and their development as competent, responsible, resilient, critical-thinking” members of communities.¹³⁶ Conversations about sexually and other taboo topics do not disappear in this scenario, they become “subjugated

¹³² Robinson, Kerry H., *Innocence, Knowledge and the Construction of Childhood* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8. Emphasis belongs to author.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

or difficult knowledges” and are “relegated to private spaces, such as the family and the home.”¹³⁷ Though the child is disallowed agency in public spaces, the manipulation of children’s innocence serves a vital purpose for a notion of public life: citizenship.¹³⁸

To envision citizenship, an abstract concept, based on the portrayal of an individual, the child, who is not an active member of the nation, is bound to be problematic. Lauren Berlant writes about the formulation of *infantile citizenship* in the United States because “the nation’s value is figured not on behalf of an actually existing and laboring adult, but of a future American [sic], both incipient and pre-historical; especially invested with this hope are the American [sic] fetus and the American [sic] child.”¹³⁹ This is possible because “there is no public sphere in the contemporary United States” and so public life, according to Berlant, occurs in the *intimate public sphere*, which is a private space that has replaced the public.¹⁴⁰ The same situation can exist in nations other than the U.S. which follow the neoliberal pattern of enlarging private spaces and practices in exchange for diminishing public ones. Following Robinson’s proposal that this child/adult binary is conducive to a certain power dynamic, Berlant confirms that “the fetal/infantile person is a stand-in for a complicated and contradictory set of anxieties and desires about national identity...[and] whose citizenship will direct America’s [sic] future, ” but also serving an immediate purpose “for a crisis in the present: what gets consolidated now as the future modal citizen provides an alibi...for the present.”¹⁴¹ The infantile citizen, then, is a real member of society but “whose naïve citizenship surfaces constantly as the ideal type of patriotic personhood” but does not allow the child social agency to define or manipulate that

¹³⁷ Ibid., 21-22.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 32-35.

¹³⁹ Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 6.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

personhood.¹⁴² In other words, as explained in the cuplé, the child carries the heavy book bag filled with national identity but cannot touch the flag that represents citizenship.

*Las Banderas*¹⁴³

In this cuplé, a young girl (Figure 2, right) wishes for all of humanity to live in peace by unifying and pledging allegiance to one flag. An adult citizen (Figure 2, left) quickly convinces her that human nature and culture does not allow this possibility, so she discards her utopic wish.



Figure 2. Las Banderas, Agarrate Catalina, 2007. Image captured from YouTube video (https://youtu.be/I_ROAw8T-N4).

- Ciudadano 1 ¡Mi amor!
 [Sweetie!]
- Niña Hola.
 [Hi.]
- Ciudadano 1 Que niña más linda.
 [What a beautiful girl.]
- Niña Vista, que cosa más linda
 [Yes, what a beautiful thing.]
- Ciudadano 1 Que preciosa barbita, mi amor
 [What a beautiful little beard, sweetie.]

¹⁴² Ibid., 21.

¹⁴³ Cuplé “Las Banderas” [The Flags], *El Corso del Ser Humano*, 2007. Spanish transcript based on the following link, with corrections and formatting by author: <http://agarrate-catalina-mai.blogspot.com/2011/08/2007-las-banderas.html>. Video corresponding with transcript can be seen here: https://youtu.be/I_ROAw8T-N4.

- Niña Son los anti-conceptivos. Un día los humanos seremos todos felices, bajo la misma bandera.
[It's the birth control. One day all human beings will be happy, under the same flag.]
- Ciudadano 1 Hay, que lindo mi amor, pero es difícilísimo eso.
[Oh, how nice sweetie, but that's really hard.]
- Niña No, si yo lo único que pido es un mundo unido, un mp4, un gancho de chorizos, medio cordero para después...pero todo bajo una misma bandera.
[Well, all I want is for the whole world to be united, an mp4, some sausages, half a lamb for later...but all under the same flag.]
- Ciudadano 1 Todos en una misma bandera andalo descartando, mi amor, porque es imposible.
[Everyone under the same flag, you can scratch that, sweetie, because it's impossible.]
- Niña No, no debe de ser tan difícil. Explicame.
[No, it can't be that hard. Explain it to me.]
- Ciudadano 1 Bueno. ¿Viste que estamos los seres humanitos? Bueno, si bien el ser humano, antropológicamente es un ser gregario por naturaleza, presenta pulsiones instintivas básicas que lo predestinan genéticamente a un patrón conductual egocentrista, razón por la cual somos y seremos básicamente entidades individuales coexistiendo en una frágil alianza temporal con nuestro homónimos.
[Ok. You know how there are itty-bitty human beings? Well, if in fact the human being, anthropologically speaking is a social being, carrying basic instinctive impulses that predestine him, genetically, to an egocentric behavior pattern, for which we are and will be, basically, individual entities co-existing in a fragile and temporary alliance with our own kind.]
- Niña Ah, viste que era una pavada. Hubieras empezado por ahí. No hay caso, cada cual con su bandera.
[Oh, you see, that was easy. You should have started with that. There's no way then, each one to his own flag.]

As the young child character exits the stage, the adult character and chorus explain how society once claimed unitary alliance but later became divided into many flags, or allegiances. Starting from the historical moment of post-dictatorial Uruguay in 1985, a homogenous society begins to notice previously ignored differences.

- Coro En los ochenta todas las personas se decían compañeros. Andaban siempre bajo una bandera cantando “porompompon”. Se comportaban como en el video del

“Candombe de la Aduana”. Con sus peinados y su ropa extraña tarareando una canción.

[In the eighties all people called each other comrades. They always paraded under the same flag singing the same cheer. They acted like people in the video of “Candombe de la Aduana”.¹⁴⁴ With their hairstyles and strange clothes, humming a song.]

- Director No había ni una sola discusión...
[There was not a single argument...]
- Coro pendiente.
[unsettled.]
- Director Se hablaba de una gran concertación...
[There was talk about emerging...]
- Coro ...naciente. Y aunque eran todos gente muy distinta, convivían sin problemas. Tal vez debido a que solo pasaban tarareando esa canción. Y aunque tenían ciertas opiniones y matices de criterio, mientras cantaban era impracticable que emitieran opinión.
[...consensus. And although they were all very different people, they coexisted without trouble. Probably because they only hummed that song. And while they had certain views and varying opinions, while they were singing it was impractical to express an opinion.]
- Ciudadano 1 Y aún aunque tomaran posición...
[Even though they would take stands...]
- Coro ...un día.
[...one day.]
- Ciudadano 1 Los otros que cantaban la canción...
[The others who sang the song...]
- Coro ...ni oían. Pero un buen día tuvo un cambio fuerte como todo grupo humano y por una pavada, como siempre, la manzana se pudrió.
[...didn't hear it. But one day there was a big change, as is everything human, and for something silly, like always, the apple rotted.]
- Ciudadano 1 Si bien parece que fue una banana la que desató el conflicto.
[In fact, it appears to have been a banana that started the conflict.]
- Coro Un gordo que iba caminando al frente resbaló y se reventó. Jajajajaja.

¹⁴⁴ The reference to this video insinuates harmonious cohabitation of individuals whom appear to belong to varying socio-economic statuses.

[A fat guy walking by slipped and hurt himself. Hahahahaha.]¹⁴⁵

Ciudadano 1 Y al ver que era una cascarita de...
[When he saw it was a banana...]

Coro ...banana.
[...peel.]

Ciudadano 1 Y encima que era una partida ecua...
[And to make matters worse, it was an Ecuadorian...]

Coro ...toriana. El gordo dijo, a mí me parecía que esto no era nacional.
[...item. The fat guy said, I don't think this is national.]¹⁴⁶

Ciudadano 2 Nacional, dijiste gordo? Que dijiste vos?
[Nacional, you said, fatty? What did you say?]

Coro Qué estás diciendo, dijo un flaco rubio, a Nacional no lo putees.
[What are you talking about, said a blonde guy, don't mess with Nacional.]¹⁴⁷

Ciudadano 2 Tenías pinta de gordito manya, comunista y maricón.
[I knew you looked like a manya¹⁴⁸ fat kid, communist and fagot.]

Ciudadano 3 Callate Tupa que saliste Bolso y además no se te para.
[Shut up, Tupa¹⁴⁹, because turned out to be Bolso and surely you can't get it up.]

Ciudadano 2 Pero por lo menos no salí cornudo...
[At least I'm not a cuckold...]

Ciudadano 3 Sos judío que es peor.
[You're a jew and that's worse.]

Coro Y así la gran bandera se partió en muchas. Y cada uno como pudo prosiguió su
lucha.
[And that's how the great flag was cut into many pieces. As best he could, each
one carried on.]

After a silly linguistic misunderstanding, the confusion between the term national and Nacional, a popular soccer team, led the citizens to point out specific parts of each other's identities that

¹⁴⁵ A murguista slips on a banana peel.

¹⁴⁶ The Spanish word "nacional" means national but is also the name of a national soccer team. The nickname for this team is bolso, and its followers are called bolsos.

¹⁴⁷ The Spanish word "flaco" means "thin" in English, but in Uruguay the same word is also slang for "guy".

¹⁴⁸ Peñarol is Nacional's classic game rival. The team is nicknamed manya and its followers are called manyas.

¹⁴⁹ Short for Tupamaro, or Movimiento Liberación Nacional – Tupamaro (MLN-T).

were different. The exchange illustrates the contrast between a utopic community that does address differences to one that insults and separates people based on difference. The group resolves to form two groups and begins to divide its members according to social memberships.

This turns out to be harder than anticipated.

Ciudadano 3 Para este lado que vengan los manyas.
[To this side, come the manyas.]

Ciudadano 2 Para este lado los del bolso.
[To this side, the fans of bolso.]

Ciudadano 4 Y yo qué hago que soy de Danubio?
[What do I do, I'm a fan of Danubio?]¹⁵⁰

Coro ¡La puta que te parió!
[Son of a bitch!]

Ciudadano 2 Para este lado vengansé los Tupas.
[To this side, come the Tupas.]

Ciudadano 3 Para acá vengan los Bolches.
[To this side, come the Bolches.]

Ciudadano 5 Yo soy Bolche pero soy del Bolso.
[I'm a Bolche but a fan of Bolso.]

Ciudadano 6 Yo tupa y de Peñarol. Para este lado vengansé los blancos,
para aquel los Colorados. Bueno, tá, venite para este lado...
[I'm a Tupa and a Peñarol fan. To this side, come the Blancos, to that other side
the Colorados.¹⁵¹ Ok, fine, come to this side...]

Coro ¡estás haciendo un papelón!
[you're embarrassing yourself!]

Ciudadano 7 Los judíos y los negros juntos.
[Jews and blacks together.]

Coro Nos estás discriminando, eso es bien de tortillera loca ¡vaya con el maricón!
[You're discriminating against us, that's typical of a crazy dyke, go with the
fagot!]

¹⁵⁰ A soccer team that is less popular than Peñarol and Nacional.

¹⁵¹ A performer who identifies with the Colorado party lingers alone trying to figure out where to go.

Ciudadano 5 De aquel lado váyanse los niños, acá estamos los mayores.
[Children must go to the other side, over here, we are adults.]

Ciudadano 1 Los mayores pero no los viejos, ¡vaya y cobre su pensión!
[We might be adults, but not elderly – go pick up your retirement check!]

The task of dividing the group into two categories proves problematic because the variety of differences among them requires more combinations: not all soccer allegiances align with political, religious, age, or gender identity combinations. In other words, people are not identical in their differences and thus performers scramble back and forth across the stage to try to fit into the two groups. Seeing that grouping by identity differences does not work, the group of citizens attempt to sort themselves based on abstract social and ideological differences.

Coro De este lado va la gente rica, de aquel lado van los pobres. De este lado va la gente linda, de aquel lado no. De este lado los intelectuales, de aquel lado la ignorancia. De este lado va la tolerancia, de aquel lado no.
[This side is for rich people, poor ones go on the other side. This side is for beautiful people, the others go over there. This side is for smart people, ignorance goes over there. This side is for tolerance, the others go over there.]

Ciudadano 1 De este lado la verdad absoluta...
[This side is for absolute truth...]

Coro de aquel lado la mentira.
[but lies go over there.]

Ciudadano 1 De este lado la justicia eterna...
[This side is for eternal justice...]

Coro de aquel lado no. De este lado va la democracia, de aquel lado el terrorismo. De este lado una bandera sola...de aquel lado no.
[but others go over there. This side is for democracy, terrorism goes over there. This side is for one flag only...but not over there.]

The performance ends with all citizens tangled up into one flag. Contrary to the little girl's wish at the beginning of the performance, pledging allegiance to one flag did not bring peace. Rather than unify, the flag symbolically swallowed the citizens into inexistence.

An interpretation of this *cuplé* outside of its satirical context appears to be a solemn reminder that lack of social membership and association with certain privileges results in subjugations that lead to poverty, genocide, and war. In other words, the non-complicit audience may not notice anything strange or new in the *cuplé* because it mirrors everyday life. While this *cuplé* is less exaggerated and comedic than *Las Maestras*, there are a few clues that remind the audience to stay complicit with its satire.

The first conversation between the young girl and adult sets a comical tone with a reaction to the performer's inability to look like a young girl because of his goatee, which is not offset by feminine and juvenile attire, including a stuffed animal. There is also the trigger that led a harmonious community to turn on each other, the banana peel. For the Uruguayan audience, the first soccer differences mentioned are comfortable to acknowledge because these can generally remain within the context of sports and do not result as alarming as the later ones. The *cuplé* gently guides the audience towards higher degrees of discomfort. Finally, the performers scrambling back and forth between the binary options on stage is comical especially for the political reference of *Colorados*, the far-right political group, who remain unpopular in comparison to *Frente Amplio* or *Blancos*, center-right party.

This *cuplé* teaches its audience that identity is a complex phenomenon, and a community is the sum of many complexities that are incompatible with a binary, or at least not without complications. It seeks to show how one individual can hold membership with many social groups and that by allowing some membership to be disqualifiers of others, looks as ridiculous in reality as it does on stage during the *cuplé*. The audience has the opportunity to learn that intersectionality is an inherent part of identity and that single-identity politics fail to represent groups with complex interests and desires.

The key lesson in this *cuplé* is the notion of intersectionality, that individuals negotiate many aspects of a complex identity to belong to a community. In a society ordered by heteronormative preferences, intersectional negotiations generate exclusions for some individuals to belong when membership relies on single-identity politics. Kimberle Crenshaw analyzes the legal and judicial struggles of women of color victims of violence to illustrate the intersections of race, gender, and class.¹⁵² Usually, the topic of domestic violence is portrayed as a single-identity issue of violence against women, thus focusing on gender and omitting race and class factors among female victims. Crenshaw explains there is negative result from single-identity politics, that “it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences...[and] ignoring difference *within* groups contributes to tension *among* groups,” which then leads the individual to be marginalized within the identity group.¹⁵³ In other words, not all women share identical racial and economic experiences and therefore hold different membership in those other categories. For example, a wealthy woman of color may not have the same experiences as a working class woman of color. While each subscribes to the same gender group, their judicial experiences with domestic violence varies. These intersecting identities, carried by the same individual along with other various subjectivities, can associate privilege in some instances or create further marginalization in other circumstances.

A counter-heteronormative intersection of identity, like sexual desire, may allow some individuals to gain identity recognition in mainstream culture, but this comes at the cost of subscribing to other dominant aspects of heteronormativity. In other words, some individuals that stray from heteronormativity may be accepted into systems of power, through select single-identity issues, but they are usually swallowed into the system of power without producing

¹⁵² Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299. Accessed September 1, 2016.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 1242-1244. Emphasis belongs to author.

changes to heteronormativity. Writing about activism centered on single-identity politics, Cathy J. Cohen reaches a similar conclusion to Crenshaw. Focusing on queer identity, Cohen finds that “lesbian and gay political agenda based on a civil rights strategy, where assimilation into, and replication of, dominant institutions are the goals” does not achieve the intended social change that comes from the destabilization of heteronormativity.¹⁵⁴ For Cohen, “numerous systems of oppression interact to regulate and police the lives of most people” along various intersection of identity and a “single-oppression framework [misrepresents] the distribution of power within and outside of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and therefore limit the comprehensive and transformational character of queer politics.”¹⁵⁵ Cohen concludes that avoiding dichotomies and recognizing the relationship between differences and power will destabilize heteronormative dominance to produce positive social change.¹⁵⁶ In order to do so, however, it is important to visualize the heteronormative binaries because they tend to be invisible and therefore unexamined; this way, the true culprit of social unrest is clear. In their cuplé *Las Banderas*, Agarrate Catalina demonstrated an audio-visual sample of intersectional social memberships so that the audience may recognize their own. The cuplé signals the culprit as the constant dichotomy, or binary, and the flag, which symbolizes an abstract prescription for ideal and static membership to heteronormativity.

*El Novio de mi Nieta*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, eds. Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter (New York: Routledge, 2013), 74-95.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89-92.

¹⁵⁷ Cuplé “El Novio de mi Nieta” [My Granddaughter’s Boyfriend], *El Viaje*, 2008. Spanish transcript based on the following link, with corrections and formatting by author: <http://agarrate-catalina-mai.blogspot.com/2011/08/2008-el-novio-de-mi-nieta.html>. Video corresponding with transcript can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hw0Fk4UN5Bk>

The last cuplé features a group of elderly individuals who are trying to figure out today's date.



Figure 3. El Novio de mi Nieta, Agarrate Catalina, 2008. Image from Youtube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hw0Fk4UN5Bk>).

- Viejo 1 ¿Qué día es hoy? ¿Se puede saber qué día es hoy?
[What day is it today? Can someone tell me what day it is?]
- Viejo 2 ¡Sábado es hoy!
[Today is Saturday!]
- Coro ¡No!
[No!]
- Viejo 1 Estoy preguntando el día, ¿qué día es hoy?
[I'm asking for the day, what day is today?]
- Viejo 3 ¡Domingo!
[Sunday!]
- Coro ¡Sí!
[Yes!]
- Viejo 1 Seguro, domingo. Ta, domingo. Ahora, ¿qué numero?
[Of course, Sunday. Ok, Sunday. Now, what date?]
- Viejo 2 ¡Treinta, es hoy treinta!
[Thirtieth, today is thirtieth!]
- Viejo 1 No, no, no...debe ser más, debe ser más.
[No, no, no...it has to be more, it has to be more.]

- Viejo 2 Treinta y uno, entonces, ¿no?
[Thirty-first, then, right?]
- Viejo 1 Mucho más, mucho más.
[Higher, higher.]
- Viejo 3 ¡Treinta y dos!
[Thirty-second!]
- Coro ¡Sí!
[Yes!]
- Viejo 1 Seguro, treinta y dos. Ay va, domingo treinta y dos de otoño, si la memoria...no te puedo creer, yo tenía algo que hacer. Domingo treinta y dos, que tenía...
[Of course, thirty-second. That's it, Sunday thirty-second of Autumn, if my memory...I can't believe it, I had something to do. Sunday thirty-second, what did I have...]

Suddenly, one member of the group remembers that today he will meet his granddaughter's boyfriend. The group quickly describes the qualities they would prefer the boyfriend possess but eventually resort to naming the characteristics they wish to avoid.

- Viejo 2 Pará, pará, pará. Hoy viene el novio de mi nieta. Hoy voy a conocer al novio de mi nieta.
[Stop, stop, stop. Today my granddaughter's boyfriend is coming. Today I'm going to meet my granddaughter's boyfriend.]
- Viejo 4 Bueno, che, tranquilo, tranquilo. Lo importante es que el botija sea una buena persona.
[Alright, hey, calm down, calm down. All that matters is that the kid is a good person.]
- Coro Lo principal es que el muchacho sea sanito, que no me fume, ni me tome, para empezar. Que haga deporte y se levante temprano, que coma sano y no le guste trasnochar. En lo posible que sea cauteloso y cauto, que eso en un hombre es la virtud ¡fundamental!
[The main thing is that the boy is healthy, that he doesn't smoke, or drink, for starters. That he play sports and wake up early, that he eat healthy and not like to stay up late. If possible that he be wary and cautious, because in a man it's the fundamental virtue!]
- Viejo 2 Si no es así, que por lo menos tenga un auto...
[If that's not the case, that he at least have a car...]

- Coro ...porque la nena está aprendiendo a manejar.
[...because the girl is learning to drive.]
- Viejo 5 Si es por pedir, yo pediría que sea lindo.
[Given a choice, I would ask that he be handsome.]
- Viejo 6 Para que los hijos salgan lindos como él.
[So that the children be good looking like him.]
- Coro Y si no es lindo por lo menos que sea bueno...
[And if he's not handsome, that he at least be good...]
- Viejo 2 ...o por lo menos tenga un padre Coronel.
[...or at least have a father who is a Coronel.]
- Coro Si es bien blanquito...
[If he's really white...]
- Viejo 3 ¡Sí!
[Yes!]
- Viejo 1 Si es bien blanquito...
[If he's really white...]
- Coro ¡Sí!
[Yes!]
- Viejo 1 Si es bien blanquito habrá que conocer los suegros...
[If he's really white we'll have to meet the in-laws...]
- Coro ...y averiguar cómo es la rama familiar.
[...and find out what his family tree is like.]
- Viejo 1 No sea cuestión que tenga algún pariente negro...
[To make sure he doesn't have a black relative...]
- Coro ...y andar mezclando el chocolate con el pan. Los rubiecos...
[...and end up mixing chocolate with bread. The blonde ones...]
- Viejo 3 ¡Sí!
[Yes!]
- Viejo 1 Los rubiecos...
[The blonde ones...]
- Coro ¡Sí!

[Yes!]

Viejo 1 Los rubiecos suelen ser casi un milagro...
[The blonde ones tend to usually be a miracle...]

Coro ...pero algo turbio también pueden esconder.
[...but it can also hide something shady.]

Viejo 2 Después te dicen que les gusta el “Queso Magro”...
[Later they tell you that they like “Queso Magro¹⁵⁸”...]

Coro ...y tienen toda la familia en Israel. ¡Que no sea chino!
[...and all of their family is in Israel. I hope he’s not Chinese!]

Viejo 3 ¡No!
[No!]

Viejo 1 ¡Que no sea chino!...
[I hope he’s not Chinese!...]

Coro ¡No!
[No!]

Viejo 1 ¡Que no sea chino! ¡Santo Dios! ¡Que no sea chino!
[I hope he’s not Chinese! My God! I hope he’s not Chinese!]

Coro Y digo chino en el sentido general, por esos chinos de países similares que no son chinos, pero son chinos igual.
[And I mean Chinese in the general sense, for those Chinese people from similar countries that are not Chinese, but are all the same.]

Viejo 2 Le pido a Dios que no me traiga un boliviano...
[I pray that she doesn’t bring me a Bolivian...]

Coro ...y mucho menos un peruano, ¡por favor!
[...and much less a Peruvian, please!]

Viejo 7 Que sea Católico Apostólico Romano.
[May he be Roman Catholic Apostolic.]

Coro ¡Que no me vayan a enchufar ningún Mormón! Pero volviendo al tema horrible de los chinos...
[We better not get stuck with a Mormon! But going back to the terrible topic of the Chinese...]

¹⁵⁸ Queso Magro is a murga group formed in 1999 by some members of La Asociación Cultural Israelita Jaime Zhitlovsky [The Jaime Zhitlovsky Israeli Cultural Association].

- Viejo 3 ...el chino es loco por su honor y su moral. Si se le cae el cucurucho de un helado...
[...the Chinese is crazy about his honor and moral. If his ice cream falls of the cone...]
- Coro ...igual se te hace un harakiri en La Cigale.
[...he might surely perform a Hara-kiri in La Cigale¹⁵⁹.]
- Viejo 2 Que por favor no vaya a ser un macumbero, ni una lesbiana disfrazada de varón.
[I plead that he not be into black magic, nor that he be a lesbian disguised as a male.]
- Viejo 3 Que no sea plancha ni tampoco metalero.
[That he not be a plancha¹⁶⁰ nor be a metal head.]
- Coro Que no sea hippie, patovica o maricón.
[That he not be a hippie, a muscle head or fagot.]
- Viejo 7 Ni paraguayo, ni chileno, ecuatoriano. Mucho charango, mucho indio, y el color.
[Nor Paraguayan, nor Chilean, Ecuadorian. Too many charangos¹⁶¹, too much indigeneity, and that color.]
- Coro No vas andar lidiando vos con el problema...
[You're not going to deal with a problem...]
- Viejo 1 ...que en Uruguay, Rivera ya solucionó.
[...that Rivera already solved in Uruguay.]¹⁶²

After excluding a variety of aspects and characteristics that the group hopes *not* to see in the granddaughter's boyfriend, like nationality, musical preference, and sexual orientation, the group concludes that the granddaughter is fit to choose her own boyfriend. The group makes a final plea for an open-minded and accepting boyfriend.

- Coro Pero confío en su criterio y en su juicio, ella solita va a poder elegir bien.
Mientras que sea un hombre abierto y sin prejuicios...y que la quiera y que la acepte como es.

¹⁵⁹ La Cigale is a popular ice cream parlor in Montevideo.

¹⁶⁰ Plancha describes a group of young individuals who have specific tastes in music, usually cumbia villera, and attire, generally hoodie sweaters, sneakers, and baseball caps. There is a stigma of lower socioeconomic status, delinquency, and incarceration, and specific linguistic jargon associated with the group.

¹⁶¹ Small Andean guitar.

¹⁶² Refers to indigenous genocide at Salsipuedes river in 1831, ordered by first Uruguayan president Fructuoso Rivera. The Battle of Salsipuedes is erroneously believed to have eliminated indigenous peoples in Uruguay.

[But I trust in her judgement and reason, she alone will be able to choose well. As long as he is an open man without prejudice...and that he love and accept her for who she is.]

A non-satirical interpretation of this *cuplé* displays a sample of discriminatory prejudices held by some communities in Montevideo, but this type of conversation usually takes place in private spaces. It becomes evident that the elderly group understands that accepting people for who they are is the best choice, but it does not stop them from listing their preferences for the ideal boyfriend and exposing their discriminatory biases. This can appear as a progressive milestone insofar as the grandfather figure does not apply progressive notions of identity to his own mentality but by admitting that someone, the boyfriend in this case, should have an open and non-judgemental mentality. Perhaps some form of social advance towards a less oppressive future has taken place in hopes that the future, not the present, changes. At best, the elderly group believes that a loving relationship rests upon whole acceptance of the partner. At worst, the discourse reproduces strongly held prejudices already present in Montevideo.

There are abundant cues for securing a satirical interpretation of this performance. The first performer continues to feed imaginary pigeons with confetti from the previous *cuplé*, indicating that satire continues for the previous *cuplé* within the new topic. The date, Sunday 32nd of Autumn, is fictional and its absurdity prepares the audience for a complicit relationship with the *cuplés'* satire. Additionally, the caricature-like presentation of the costume suggests a hyper-antiquated group of adults that appear to be senile. Different from the first *cuplé*, *Las Maestras*, satire continues throughout the entire performance, and this *cuplé* is shorter than the first two analyzed.

El Novio de mi Nieta takes a complex conversation about national discourse surrounding race and origin that usually occurs in private spaces and makes them public. It is clear that the

elderly group has preconceived generalized notions of others, and there is hardly doubt that this type of discrimination occurs broadly in Montevideo. In other words, the *cuplé* does not seek to teach the audience how to discern or identify discrimination, nor do they seek to uncover an underlying function or cause of prejudices. The point of this *cuplé* is to expose strongly held notions of Montevidean culture in public, where overtly discriminatory dialogue seems harsh and ridiculous. In public, discrimination loses the sanctity and protection of intimacy. The paradox that occurs at the end of the *cuplé* is vital and revealing of Uruguayan consciousness: the elderly group performs discriminatory preference when conjuring the ideal boyfriend but also seek non-discrimination as a quality of ideal personhood and citizenship.

Montevidean culture suffers from this paradox. Through endearing labels derived from race and/or ethnicity for some citizens, national rhetoric about these labels supports the idea that they generate benevolent social harmony. There are many examples to illustrate this occurrence. Popular soccer players Walter Olivera, called “Indio” Rivera makes reference to indignity; Alvaro Recoba, known as “Chino” Recoba to depict an Asian phenotype; Diego Pérez, called “Ruso” Pérez, whereas Ruso describes Russians and former states of the U.S.S.R., but means colloquially means European white; and the famous Obdulio Valera, or “El Negro Jefe” which means the Black Chief, and famous candombe musician Ruben Rada goes by “Negro” Rada. Geographic locations also follow suite. When Montevideanos seek low cost items, they go to el Barrio de Los Judíos, or the Jewish neighborhood. Other common qualifiers are Tano (Italian), Turco (general blanket for Asia Minor), Gallego (Spain), and Gringo (United Statesian). While Montevideo’s population counts on historical immigration waves from the mentioned locations, the individuals that carry the labels are not immigrants. The nicknames grounded in racial or ethnic generalizations do not connect the individual with a diaspora, it merely serves to profile

the individuals phenotypical appearance. If the point of establishing a popular nickname for Ruben Rada were to connect his work to the Afro-Uruguayan diaspora, perhaps he might be called “Bantu” Rada. But he is not. Instead, his nickname is reduced to skin color only: “Negro” Rada. Some Uruguayans do not consider it racist to utilize these labels, though they result in heteronormative and institutionally racist practices whose damaging qualities remain invisible under the pretense of positive and tolerant multiculturalism.¹⁶³

El Novio de mi Nieta promotes the visibility of commonly held prejudices in Montevideo to show the racial and ethnic “othering” of some individuals. From the premise that the postcolonial exercise of nation-building failed to transcend colonialism, a necessary task of imagining a decolonial possibility is to recognize those aspects of colonialism that linger in national discourse; to *see* them. A community cannot identify racism when it remains invisible and imbedded into national discourses. If a community cannot see racism, it cannot talk about it. This cuplé limits the possibility that racism remain invisible. Individuals can continue to reproduce racist or ethnocentric national discourse, because acknowledging and changing cultural norms are separate tasks. But visibility renders real quotidian acts of discrimination as real, and it allows discrimination to be interrogated, challenged, and eliminated.

Discussion

The three cuplés – Las Maestras, Las Banderas, and El Novio de mi Nieta – teach the audience how to think critically about heteronormative values prescribed by systems of power through a discourse of dissent. Heteronormativity is a combination of dominant and normative preferences, so the cuplés dissent towards heteronormativity takes the form of counter-

¹⁶³ For discussions about institutional racism in Uruguay, see George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Programa de Las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo en Uruguay (PNUD), *Población Afrodescendiente y Desigualdades Étnico-raciales en Uruguay* (Montevideo, Uruguay, 2008); Marisa Bucheli and Rafael Porzecanski, “Racial Inequality in the Uruguayan Labor Market: An Analysis of Wage Differentials Between Afro-descendants and Whites,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, 2 (2011): 113-150.

heteronormative discourses. But dissent can be also be dominant and normative when it grounds popular cultural citizenship, as does murga.¹⁶⁴

When a group of people subscribe to dissent as cultural citizenship, it becomes hegemonic. That dissent can be hegemonic may seem unreasonable because hegemony is usually associated with the negative and oppressive dominance of systems of power. When a definition of hegemony is void of those implications, as is Stuart Hall's, it makes sense:

“a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is ‘natural’, ‘inevitable’, ‘taken for granted’ about the social order.”¹⁶⁵

Following this definition, murga's dissent is hegemonic for both reasons. Murga is popular culture and widely accepted as a way for Montevideanos to see representations of everyday life in the *cuplé* for the possibility of transformative interaction with the abstract notion of society.¹⁶⁶ This makes it applicable to a “whole sector of relations in a society of culture” insofar that while the voice of murga stems from working class citizens, murga is popular in all of Montevideo. Murga is also a recognized platform to engage with the collective (re)production of dialectical understanding of the self and other, both locally and globally.¹⁶⁷ So, in popular culture it is “legitimate, natural, inevitable, and taken for granted” that Montevideanos associate some meaning to murga at the *tablado*. While the preferred and dominant engagement with the *cuplé* is satirical complicity, the audience may “misfire”, or not engage with the *cuplés*' hegemonic dissent.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter II, Literature Review.

¹⁶⁵ Stuart Hall, “Encoding, decoding,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 102.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter II, Piñeyría.

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter II, Sans.

Audience engagement with the *cuplé* varies and is better understood through Stuart Hall's research of the cycle of possible audience reception of meaning from mass-media television discourses.¹⁶⁸ Hall explains that for television, a "historical event...must become a 'story' before it can become a *communicative event*," that is, production of the event imbeds, or encodes, "frameworks of knowledge" intended to give meaning to the story.¹⁶⁹ Once the audience encounters the "meaningful discourse," the imbedded "frameworks of knowledge" must be interpreted, or decoded, to understand the story.¹⁷⁰ Various people can understand the same story differently depending on how they understand the world. Audience research focuses on reception of encoded messages to determine how audience decodes in relationship to the intended production of the story. In other words, did the audience understand the story as it was intended through encoding, or was there a different meaning produced during decoding?

Hall outlines three possible ways that a story can be decoded by the audience. First, the *dominant-hegemonic position*, "which the professional broadcasters assume when encoding a message which has already been signified in a hegemonic manner."¹⁷¹ This position accomplishes "perfectly transparent communication" insofar as the encoded knowledge during production is equal to audience decoding. To establish a heteronormative example, CNN covers the latest terrorist act and insinuates that all Muslims are dangerous suspects and viewers should be alert to suspicious activity for their own safety. The audience that believes the generalization that a small number of radicals represent an extremely large religious group have just decoded the news story in the dominant-hegemonic position through a heteronormative worldview.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 90-103.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 93-94. Emphasis belongs to author.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 94.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 101.

Heteronormativity is considered true, and the dominant-hegemonic decoding position does not require counter-hegemonic critique.

The second option for decoding a story is the *negotiated version* which “contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules – it operates with exceptions to the rule.”¹⁷² If the same CNN story is decoded in the *negotiated version*, again through a heteronormative worldview, the viewer may feel alarmed by terrorism but feel comfortable around a well-known Muslim neighbor. This audience can separate the generalization of all Muslims as terrorists, from personally knowing a Muslim neighbor that does not follow the generalization. This position does not counter the hegemonic norm, but it reconciles it with other aspects of personal knowledge and experience.

Finally, the audience may decode a story from the position of *oppositional code*, which “detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference.”¹⁷³ Following the same example, the “framework of knowledge” behind the CNN story (heteronormativity) is different from the audience member’s own understanding of terrorism. The audience member must reconstruct the story to find its meaning and may not subscribe to generalized notions of all Muslims and seek other reasons behind the act of terror. The counter-hegemonic interpretation of the story may question prolonged U.S. occupation in Asia Minor that destabilizes sovereign states as the catalyst for hateful retaliation by some individuals, for example. This position requires a critical stance towards the hegemonic-dominant discourse and access to an alternative “framework of

¹⁷² Ibid., 102.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 103.

knowledge” by which to reconcile the events of a story into a new story formulated from the perspective of the *oppositional code*. Because heteronormative systems of power are presently hegemonic on a global scale, decoding in the *oppositional code* is difficult because the audience must always engage discursive texts in opposition to the way they were encoded – against heteronormativity.

Murga’s hegemonic dissent can be decoded using the same typologies offered by Hall. What changes, is that the “frameworks of knowledge” used to encode the *cuplé* is counter-heteronormative. The *dominant-hegemonic position* of decoding the *cuplé* coincides with satirical complicity and accepts the counter-heteronormative “story”. Simultaneously, this decoding position makes heteronormativity visible, as was encoded into the *cuplé*. At this moment in audience reception, the interstice is observable. Alternatively, the audience may decode the *cuplés*’ hegemonic dissent in the *oppositional code*. When this happens, there is a satirical misfire and the counter-heteronormative “frameworks of knowledge” has been replaced with an alternative. If the alternative is a heteronormative worldview, the hegemonic dissent becomes invisible through the nature of satirical discourse: Murguista says A (heteronormative discourse) but means B (hegemonic dissent), but audience hears A (heteronormative discourse) and misfires to understand A (heteronormative discourse).

In three short *cuplés*, Agarrate Catalina discussed several topics for the audience to think about: 1) denied social agency of children who are the basis of national aspirations; 2) complex aspects of identity acknowledging intersectionality, and the complicated nature of binaries and single-identity politics; and 3) the racism imbedded in multicultural harmony. Agarrate Catalina’s *cuplés* seek that critical thinking lead to alternatives of heteronormative systems of power – social agency for children, dismantling of binaries, and acceptance of intersectional

privilege – but does not offer a solution. The humor component of *cuplés* allows difficult conversations to enter public discourses in ways that promote laughter and self-reflection, instead of anger, denial, or fragmented communities. Murga's hegemonic dissent presents an exciting opportunity for decolonization because it teaches critical thinking that allows visibility of oppressions from systems of power and (re)produces counter-heteronormative dissent as hegemonic popular culture. Murga's hegemonic dissent as politicized actions – following Hannah Arendt's definition discussed in the next chapter – occurs in the public spaces of *tablados de barrio*, spaces that are important to working class neighborhoods.

Chapter V: Tablado de Barrio

Museo del Carnaval (MdC) is a museum devoted to carnival in Montevideo that seeks to accomplish the “conservation, preservation, documentation, and diffusion of the living tradition of popular Uruguayan culture.”¹⁷⁴ Doing so has led MdC to establish public programs, such as *Tablado de Barrio* (TdB) in 2007. The MdC perceives the public setting of the tablado de barrio as the hearth of carnival tradition. Through the TdB program, MdC helps re-established neighborhood committees to prepare for carnival with monetary and logistical support and sponsors a competition of tablado decoration for participating neighborhoods during carnival. Through diffusion of successful tablados de barrio, the MdC hopes that other inactive neighborhoods organize committees to reinstate the nearly lost tradition of utilizing the tablados de barrio in Montevideo.

Anxious to share their stories, many individuals that participate in TdB public program also participated in the oral history project that sought to document the neighborhood’s collective memory for the MdC archives. Five interviews with thirteen informants of varying ages took place in four neighborhoods; one interview occurred at the MdC.¹⁷⁵ Three informants were interviewed in a private home in Sayago neighborhood whose tablado is named Parque de los Fogones. In Punta de los Rieles neighborhood, home of Punta de Rieles tablado, four individuals were interviewed in the community center. An informant who formerly lived and worked in Lavalleja neighborhood was interviewed at the MdC; the tablado in that neighborhood is named

¹⁷⁴ “Objectives of the Entity,” Museo del Carnaval, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://museodelcarnaval.org/presentacion/>.

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix C for complete schedule of interviews.

Teatro de Barrio Lavalleja. In neighborhood Las Torres, four people gathered to interview in the community center of the tablado Escenario Juan Taranto. Finally, one informant from Colón neighborhood was interviewed in the community center of Asociación Civil Monte de la Francesa.

The archival project for MdC seeks to capture a history of tablados de barrio using historical documents and present day narratives from ethnographic interviews and work started by journalist Guzmán Ramos.¹⁷⁶ Similar to Ramos' work, the present installment of the archival project hoped to increase the volume of the museum's archives with audio and transcription of interviews. The data obtained from the newer work does not conclude the on-going project, but is a portion of the fieldwork focused on a comparison of older and younger narratives in order to understand the tablados of past and present. Exploratory interviews in a group setting allowed for two benefits. First, interviewing older members of these neighborhoods allowed the museum to capture narratives from individuals who are least likely to be alive during subsequent stages of the project. Second, informants engage in an instantaneous exchange of information while answering questions during the interviews and the practice supports the transmission of local oral history. Perhaps these conversations would not have occurred outside of the interview as people go about their daily lives without reflecting on well-known spaces.

Open-ended ethnographic questions produced an extensive collection of data from the interviews to show that the tablado de barrio is an important part of everyday life in Montevideo. There are three recurrent themes expressed in all interviews. Reflections about the intimate relationship between the dictatorship, murga, and the tablado de barrio describe losses for communities. Second, discussions about neighborhood perception and the lasting effect of shared

¹⁷⁶ Guzmán Ramos, *Tablado de Barrio: Estirpe de una fiesta* (Montevideo: Editorial Intendencia de Montevideo, 2012). Note: ISBN: 978-9974-600-84-3 also appears published by Editorial Museo del Carnaval del Uruguay in some places; the hard copy does not specify editorial information, citation retrieved from WorldCat.

communal spaces once carnival is over highlight the worth of public spaces. Finally, insight to the purpose of the tablado de barrio as a vehicle to make carnival accessible to working class neighborhoods illuminates the need for access to cultural practices to achieve collective political agency.

Dictatorship

Tablado de barrio was a popular activity in Montevideo since early twentieth century. Alfredo, from the Sayago neighborhood, recalls that when he was young in the 1950s, it was common for several stages to coexist within the same neighborhood. His spouse, Mabel, explained that it was common for spectators to follow performers from one stage to another on foot in the same night and to attend multiple performances by the same artists throughout carnival. She emphasizes that attending the local tablado was an important family tradition and just as she attended with her family as a child, her young children attended “en los cochecitos...en cuna y con bolsa de agua caliente” [in strollers...in cribs with hot water bottles].¹⁷⁷ Such an embedded social tradition seemed eternal, but attending the tablado de barrio began to decline in the 1960s.

Organizing the tablado de barrio requires economic support, social gathering in public spaces, and freedom of expression. All three declined during the military dictatorship (1973-1985) and the events leading up to the regime. An economic crisis starting in the 1960s forced working class citizens to work more to cover the same necessities as before the crisis. Lack of time affected the production of the tablado since many hours of volunteer work in neighborhoods are required throughout the year in preparation for carnival montevideano. With restricted economic flow during difficult times, individuals were less likely to donate necessary items for the tablado de barrio or pay an admission fee to attend a social activity. Although tablados can

¹⁷⁷ Interview by author, Montevideo, May 29, 2015.

usually subsist solely on the re-investment of profits from one year towards the expenses of the next, this relies on the popularity of attendance. Dwindling attendance created economic hardship for tablado organizers. Alba, in her early 60s, from Lavalleja recalls that she once used one month of her personal household income to invest in the tablado to make sure it would occur and was sure she would get the money back.¹⁷⁸ Measures such as Alba's sought to keep tablados open in dire times. By the next decade, social oppression ensured its decline.

Political persecution was common in the years leading up to the dictatorship for people with left-leaning political affiliation, but not until the official coup in 1973 did public life change for the average citizen. Public gathering was outlawed for groups of larger than a few people, and the tablado requires just that, gathering of the entire neighborhood in a public space for the purposes of social interaction and entertainment. The planning commissions met government resistance in carrying out average meetings. Juan, early 90s, recalls that in Las Torres the first community meeting after the start of the dictatorship required special permission from the government. The meeting was necessary to plan for the coming carnival events, but the group experienced so many complications to get permission, that they never again attempted for the duration of the dictatorship.¹⁷⁹ The halt of community activity for the tablado de barrio had social repercussions that became apparent to neighborhood organizers after the end of the dictatorship.

In Lavalleja neighborhood, Alba describes a social deficit triggered by the lack of tablado attendance – children learning to pay attention. Alba did not grow up in Montevideo; she moved there as a child from a rural area in Durazno. When she first encountered a tablado in Montevideo, she recalls sitting quietly with her siblings and mother to watch performances. “Capaz que los otros lo entendían más que yo, pero nos sentábamos a mirar” [Maybe others

¹⁷⁸ Interview by author, Montevideo, June 19, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ Interview by author, Montevideo, June 26, 2015.

understood more than me, but we sat there to watch]; Alba recalls she never learned to watch performances, it just happened. Alba was in exile during the dictatorship but returned to her neighborhood after the return to democracy. Excited to form part of reviving the tablado in Lavalleja, she became part of the neighborhood commission.

To her surprise, children in attendance displayed problematic behavior and would not watch the performances. Instead, children would run around and ignore the unspoken rule at the tablado of quietly watching performances on stage. Determined to correct the problem, she sought help to teach children in the audience to “aprender a mirar” [learn to watch] again:

¿Vos sabes lo que fue...abrir un espectáculo de carnaval planificado a la mejor manera...y que pasen 100 o 150 o 200 gurises corriendo? Te querés matar. Entonces, llegamos a contratar animadora cultural para que entretuvieran...hicimos un tipo anfiteatro y atrás hacíamos un espacio para que trabajaran con los chiquilines. Dio resultado, por lo menos 2 o 3 años tuvimos que tener.

[Do you know what it was like to open a carnival show planned in the best way...and for 100, 150, or 200 kids to run around? It kills you. So, we had to hire a cultural host to entertain them...we had an amphitheater and behind it was a space to work with the kids. It worked, we had to have that for at least 2 or 3 years.]

Alba believes that children were not the only problem, but that parents, too, had become inattentive participants of the tablado by not watching the performances onstage or teaching their children to do the same. Alba blames the dictatorship:

...estaban desacatados era la falta de juntarse. No tenían conocimiento de lo que era juntarse. La dictadura no dejaba juntar más de 3 personas o algo así. Nos empezamos a juntar en masa y había miles, mil, mil trescientos, ochocientas personas.

[...they were unruly because of the lack of gathering. They did not have knowledge of what it was like to gather. The dictatorship did not allow more than 3 people, or something like that, to gather. We started gathering in masses and there were thousands, a thousand, a thousand three hundred, eight hundred people.]

Working with parents and children solved the problem of inattentive spectators at Lavalleja's tablado de barrio and in twenty-two years of Alba's work there, the same problem never reoccurred. Over time, a functioning tablado de barrio in Lavalleja led the community to revert the loss of social gathering and "watching" performances onstage during the dictatorship. In neighborhood Las Torres, something similar occurred.

Like Lavalleja, neighborhood Las Torres also underwent a period of closed tablados de barrio during the dictatorship. Gutenberg Colina, early 60s, recalls that before the dictatorship he would visit five tablados per night during carnival in his old neighborhood, Nuevo Paris. During the dictatorship,

todo eso se terminó. Entonces eso dejó caer muchas zonas en Montevideo. Las comisiones de barrio dejaron de funcionar, desaparecieron prácticamente...en la dictadura se abandonó todito, no había inversión de nada, de nada, de nada. Yo cuando vine a este barrio acá, no solo en este barrio, en donde yo vivía también pasaba eso. Yo cuando vine acá frente a una plaza que está abandonada...acá no venía nadie. Acá estaban los caños pelados de las hamacas y yo estando acá a los 2 o 3 años, la gurisa mía tendría 4 años. Yo había hecho una hamaca chiquita, salía de casa y la colgaba. No venían los niños y preguntaban, 'señor, señor, ¿se la va llevar?'

[all of that ended. So that caused many areas of Montevideo to decline. Neighborhood commissions stopped functioning, they practically disappeared...during the dictatorship everything was abandoned, there was no investment of anything, of nothing, of nothing. When I came to this neighborhood, but not only in this neighborhood, where I used to live this happened. When I moved here in front of an abandoned plaza...no one would come here. Here, the poles for the swings were bare and after being here for two or three years, my daughter must have been four years old. I had made a small swing, would take it out of the house and hang it up. Can you believe the children would ask, 'sir, sir, are you going to take it with you?]¹⁸⁰

Without an organizing body, neighborhoods, like Las Torres, not only lacked a tablado de barrio, but other recreational amenities as means to utilize public spaces, like a playground in a plaza.

¹⁸⁰ Interview by author, Montevideo, June 26, 2015.

Tania Ocampo explains that once the plaza was recovered in late 1980s, it was difficult for citizens to appreciate the value of public amenities:

Lo vez mismo en la escuela, en los chiquilines. Cuando nosotros conseguimos que plantaran, que trajeran de la Intendencia unos arbolitos preciosos, unas palmeras preciosas. Los chiquilines salían de la escuela y salían como cuando vos vez una caballada que le abrís la portera, que salen. Entonces los primero que se agarraban eran con los árboles, las palmeras, y rompiendo y destrozando. No se daban cuenta que eso es de ellos. Que hubo gente que trabajó para que esa palmera estuviera plantada ahí y no estuviera plantada en otro lado. Es lo mismo que los juegos, es lo mismo que todo...No se daban cuenta que eso era de ellos, que hubo gente atrás, anónimas, que trabajó para que el barrio tuviera eso.

[You see it in school, in the kids. When we got them to plant, for the city to bring some beautiful trees, some beautiful palm trees. The kids would leave school like stampeding horses. The first thing they would get a hold of was the trees, the palm trees, breaking and destroying. They didn't realize that it belonged to them. That there were people who worked for those palm trees to be planted there and not planted somewhere else. It's the same with the playground, it's the same with everything...They didn't realize that those things belonged to them, that there were people behind, anonymously, that worked for the neighborhood to have those things]

Tania gives other examples, of bus stops vandalized or set on fire in the neighborhood. She believes that some citizens of Las Torres do not value public property because of a generation gap created by the dictatorship. Tania uses her own children to explain her point: she has a 37 year old son who was a young child during the dictatorship, whom she believes represents the gap, and a 32 year old daughter born at the end of the dictatorship, that she associates with a better sense of public awareness:

La generación, por ejemplo, de mi hijo...no tienen nada inculcado de valores. No porque en mi casa no se los hubiera generado, no se los hubiera inculcado, si no que en su cabeza no les daba ni siquiera para indagar o para ver. Ya después la otra generación ya son diferentes. Pero vos tenés que vivir esta primera generación después de la dictadura que está vacía. Con hijo, criando hijos vacíos también. Entonces todo trae una consecuencia y un porqué de la falta de valores.

[The generation, for example, of my son...they don't have inculcated values. Not because they were not generated in my house, nor inculcated in my house, but because in their minds could not even inquire or see. Then the next generation,

they are different. But you have to live among that first generation after the dictatorship that is empty. With children, raising empty offspring, too. So, everything generates consequences and an explanation for the lack of values.]

Tania's point about a generation of young children during the dictatorship resonates with Alba's observation about children who did not learn to pay attention at the tablado. Both notice the value of public life that went missing during the early development of certain children's lives during the dictatorship. Whether for carnival activities at the tablado de barrio or playgrounds at the local plaza, repression during the dictatorial regime was incompatible with the use of public spaces.

Public Spaces

The dictatorship did not halt carnival celebrations, but these celebrations were not the same during the dictatorship without freedoms to express critical thought. Military officials censored performances and destroyed some living spaces to ensure compliance with the coup.¹⁸¹ Tablado de barrio decorations, part of carnival tradition and platform for expression of critical thought by the neighborhood commission, ceased during the dictatorship. Carnival montevidiano carried on each year as best it could for the duration of the dictatorship, but the return to democracy in 1985 did not reverse the effects of the twelve-year repression.

Neoliberal tendencies surrounding the return to democracy transformed the tradition of maintaining the tablado de barrio into a new practice of attending the tablado comercial. The commercialization of the tablado shifted the widespread activity into a small number of for-profit tabladillos in private spaces throughout Montevideo. To attend the tablado comercial depended on economic access to transportation outside of the neighborhood and costly admittance fees. A

¹⁸¹ For censorship of murga scripts during dictatorship, see Federico Graña Viñoly and Nairí Aharonián Paraskevaïdis, "Murgas en dictadura: Uruguay 1971-1974" (paper presented at IX Jornadas de Investigación de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Udelar, Montevideo, September 13-15, 2010), accessed May 29, 2015, http://www.fcs.edu.uy/archivos/Mesa_53_Aharoni%C3%A1n%20y%20Gra%C3%B1a.pdf. For destruction of tenements during dictatorship, see George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 141-144.

large family would experience hardship to attend the tablado comercial, and the practice of regularly attending became inaccessible for many individuals who were accustomed to participating in carnaval montevidiano. Additionally, the tablado comercial did not utilize stage decorations to depict aspects of neighborhood identity since individuals from various neighborhoods attended. The spectator of the tablado comercial could no longer forge connections with the tradition of a neighborhood identity. Instead of decorated tablados, advertisements to promote local and global goods became the backdrop for performances in the tablado comercial.¹⁸²

The rebirth of the tablado de barrio in 2007 was vital to neighborhoods. If the project of neoliberal globalization promoted the transformation of public spaces into private ownership, the tablado de barrio encouraged the (re)appropriation and use of a neighborhood's public spaces. In turn, the outcome increased social ties and social order. Writing about the Colón neighborhood, Ramos explains that during the dictatorship, “había fracasado la organización del Carnaval, ya no existían actividades sociales ni culturales...un resonante crimen le había agregado el estigma del peligro al amplio parque arbolado donde está enclavado el teatro” [the organization of carnaval had failed, social and cultural activities no longer existed...resounding crime had added to the stigma of danger in the large overgrown park where the theatre was interred].¹⁸³ Juan Luis, resident of Colón, echoes Ramos and explains that measures to provide local security drew people from their homes and back into the streets at night.¹⁸⁴ The return of the tablado de barrio allowed citizens to feel safe in their own neighborhoods again. In Punta de Rieles neighborhood, members of the neighborhood commission illustrate how the tablado de barrio is responsible for the increase in security.

¹⁸² Examples range from local telecommunications company Antel to global commodities like Coca-Cola.

¹⁸³ Guzmán Ramos, *Tablado de Barrio* (Montevideo: Editorial Intendencia de Montevideo, 2012), 44.

¹⁸⁴ Interview by author, Montevideo, July 10, 2015.

Marion Márquez, early 60s, is part of the neighborhood commission at Punta de Rieles tablado.¹⁸⁵ During carnival season, she works the ticket booth and explains that the tablado is a refuge for children who would otherwise wander the street on summer nights. She recalls an anecdote: “Yo me tengo que hacer así,” [I have to go like this] and mimics leaning over the counter to look down at a young child who cannot be seen from the window,

para ver, a ver que altura tiene el niño y le digo, ‘mi amor, ¿con quién estas?’ ‘Solo.’ Bueno, y ya al entrar el llama a los otros, ‘vení, vení, que vamos a entrar.’ Entran todos esos pero de pronto piden adentro para la torta frita. Entonces vienen y me dice, ‘tengo nueve pesos, no me alcanza,’ y les digo, ‘bueno tá, lleva esos nueve pesos y se los das al señor que está friendo las tortas fritas,’ y como está al lado y tenemos la ventanita, yo le decía, ‘José, dale la torta frita.’ Pero no era porque quería la torta frita, sino porque tenía hambre porque yo veía que la doblaba en cuatro y se la comía como que tenía hambre ese niño...por lo menos los tenemos acá dentro hasta la una y media de la mañana sino estarían en la calle.

[to see, to find out how tall the child is and I say, ‘sweetie, who are you with?’ ‘Alone.’ Well, and as he enters he calls the other, ‘come, come, we are getting in.’ They all come in but then once inside they ask for a torta frita. So they come and say, ‘I have 9 pesos, it’s not enough,’ and I say, ‘well okay, take those 9 pesos and give them to that gentleman frying the tortas fritas,’ and since he is next to the window, I would tell him, ‘José, give him the torta frita.’ But it’s not because he wanted the torta frita, but because he was hungry because I saw him fold it into four and eat it as if that child was hungry...At least we have them here inside until one thirty in the morning, otherwise they would be on the street.]

Marion believes that the tablado de barrio keeps children, like the ones she described, out of the neighborhood streets where, hungry and unsupervised, they may end up in trouble. In this way, a tablado de barrio maintains social order. Moreover, when children wander on the street without a space to belong, it fuels media tropes of working class neighborhoods as areas of crime and violence.

Working Class

The marginalization of neighborhoods in Montevideo occurs when groups of citizens encounter socioeconomic hardships that become generalized tropes of poverty, crime, and

¹⁸⁵ Interview by author, Montevideo, June 5, 2015.

violence for the lower classes. These socioeconomic generalizations, present in most globalized communities, generate boundaries that separate people within a city. Socioeconomic differences among citizens of a nation are an inherent part of the nation-state. As a product of the European modernity project that relied on nation building, the nation-state has inextricable ties to imperialism: both growing side by side through cultural and linguistic domination since the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁶ Viewed through a lens of a decolonial critique, the nation (re)produces the systems of power inherited from the period of colonialism. Observing the divisions within a nation exposes the need for decolonizing.

Boundaries, real or imaginary, separate social groups and in turn determine access to resources, including the cultural resource of carnaval montevidiano. Sociopolitical divisions in Montevideo, at least in part, cause restricted access to carnaval for some. Daniel, in his late 30s and resident of Sayago, explains, “existen dos Montevideos...es un Montevideo de Avenida Italia para la rambla, y otro Montevideo de Avenida Italia para el otro lado” [there are two Montevideos...one Montevideo from Avenida Italia towards the coast, and another Montevideo from Avenida Italia to the other side].¹⁸⁷ Avenida Italia is a roadway that runs east to west through Montevideo. Living spaces north of Avenida Italia are considered areas populated by working to lower class individuals, while those to the south, towards the southern coast, tend to be categorized as affluent spaces. Daniel believes that media portrayals fuel an exaggerated stigma of violence, theft, and poverty as inherent qualities of all neighborhoods north of Avenida Italia. Daniel elaborates,

si siempre decimos que el delito fue en el Cerro, el delito siempre fue en el barrio Borro, esos barrios quedan estigmatizados...cuando está comprobado, y es un dato que yo vi, que la mayoría cantidad de rapiñas era en Ciudad Vieja. No se le

¹⁸⁶ Benedict Anderson, “Official Nationalism and Imperialism,” in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 83-112.

¹⁸⁷ Interview by author, Montevideo, May 29, 2015.

da palo a Ciudad Vieja porque justamente como es una parte cultural de Montevideo y muy turística también. Entonces no entendés, si hay más delitos en Ciudad Vieja, de hurtos, que acá en Sayago, entonces porque en Ciudad Vieja nunca se dice nada y siempre se le da palo al...margen de Montevideo.

[if we always say that the crime was in Cerro, the crime has always been in Borro neighborhood, those neighborhoods remain stigmatized...when it is proven, and it is a statistic that I saw, that most of the robberies were in Ciudad Vieja. Ciudad Vieja doesn't get the bad rap because it happens to be the cultural part of Montevideo and also very touristic. So it is hard to understand, if there are more crimes in Ciudad Vieja, robberies, than here in Sayago, then why doesn't anyone say anything about Ciudad Vieja and the bad rap is only for Montevideo's marginalized areas.]

Daniel believes that maintaining the negative stigma in working and lower class neighborhoods, like Cerro, Borro, and, his own neighborhood, Sayago, allows media to maintain cultural boundaries rather than report actual crime rates. In turn, negative depictions create social, economic, and political stigmas that instill fear within neighborhoods, keeping them from organizing the *tablados de barrio* – the spaces that grant access to the collective (re)production of national identity.

Without access to a local *tablado de barrio*, citizens cannot readily participate in the important, regular act of citizenship. Benedict Anderson explains that citizens of a nation “[imagine themselves] as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”¹⁸⁸ However, in this case, access to resources limits agency in national discourses. Without a *tablado de barrio* to attend locally, the alternative is to attend a *tablado comercial* to exercise citizenship. Daniel explains that privatized carnival, performances that take place in a *tablado comercial*, is rarely an option for working class families:

El carnaval privado tiene unos costos que para una familia promedio clase trabajadora es muy difícil. Es muy difícil...te digo el Teatro de Verano. Yo entiendo que el Teatro de Verano es de clase media a media alta, el que puede

¹⁸⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

participar en él, en familia, ¿no? Pero una familia tipo clase trabajadora, difícil que puedan ir más de una vez o dos veces al tablado, al Teatro de Verano, en carnaval porque es un costo muy alto.

[Privatized carnival has costs that for an average working class family is very hard. It's very hard...I mean the Teatro de Verano. I understand that the Teatro de Verano is for middle to upper-middle class, for the ones that participate as a family, you know. But a working class family, it's hard for them to be able to go more than once or two times to the tablado, to Teatro de Verano, during carnaval because it's too expensive.]

The high cost of attending a tablado comercial keeps a large group of Montevideanos from repeated interaction with carnival performances that are central to Uruguay's national identity. When Montevideo's working class loses access to tablados, they lose the political agency necessary to participate in the collective construction of their own identity as a group.

Discussion

From the interviews conducted, all committee members shared the common view that public spaces are valuable and were able to identify negative social outcomes resulting from the loss of access to public spaces. It is in these public spaces that individuals exercise political agency and negotiate social responsibility. As expressed from their own experiences, these communities were cognizant of lost agency and declining social responsibility – the reason behind the need to re-establish the tablado de barrio. For these neighborhoods, the tablado de barrio denies the neoliberal tendency of reducing “public” to enlarge “private,” and it utilizes public spaces as places for action.

While construction of politics depends on public and private experiences, action, as the fulfillment of political agency, occurs in public spaces. Hannah Arendt defines action as the basis for humans to express sociopolitical plurality and it “engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.”¹⁸⁹ For Arendt, action

¹⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9.

only occurs in public spaces and her writing traces a historical shift from Greek philosophy, which required action as a requirement of citizenship in public spaces, to Medieval philosophy, which instilled the privatization of politics to produce apolitical citizenship. The shift of action from the public realm to the private realm not only created the possibility of apolitical citizenry, it also established a means to distinguish which members of society could produce politics and history – those privileged by heteronormativity. It is not a coincidence that Medieval philosophy was the worldview that informed the basis and process of colonization in early 1500s. The binary categories of “self” and “other”, fundamental to colonial thought as “civilized” and “barbarian”, are possible when politics and history are not accessible to *all* individuals. In other words, sociopolitical aspects of colonization that create inequitable access to resources and knowledge rely on the belief that the construction of politics and history is deemed fit for the “right” type of citizen. Heteronormative discourses reveal a precise, i.e. intersectional, definition of the “right” type of citizen.

If access to the public realm allows citizens to create and control history and politics – action defined by Arendt – and colonization was possible through the inaccessibility of some individuals in this space, then any attempt to decolonize must also occur in the public realm. For this reason, an interstice for a decolonial future is present in carnival montevidiano when murga’s hegemonic dissent occurs at the tablado de barrio. Independent of location, as explored in the previous chapter, murga’s hegemonic dissent can deliver a pedagogical experience of instilling critical thought that may lead to decolonization of the mind. When the space in which decolonizing the mind occurs is the public realm, the exercise becomes a part of action to build a decolonial future – as the creation of decolonial politics and the collective production of decolonial history.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This work proposed that a popular cultural tradition in carnival montevideano, the murga cuplé, is associated with the project of decolonization because it creates an interstice in which current legacies of colonization are visible and its performance in public spaces of the tablado de barrio makes it a political and historical action, as defined by Arendt. This research is important because it exposes how a community utilizes popular culture to enact dissent towards heteronormativity. By learning from others' experiences, communities and scholars with similar desires can appropriate aspects of murga's dissent that fit those locations.

Historically, the murga genre is associated with leftist anti-capitalist perspectives that challenge heteronormativity. Murga serves the purpose of voicing working-class opinion about socially inappropriate behavior in a humorous way with satire. The complicit engagement of the audience with the performed satire leads to understanding the dissent towards heteronormativity of the murga cuplé. The use of satire is observed and researched in locations other than Montevideo and is effective as a discourse for voicing dissent. In Montevideo, murga helps individuals collectively (re)create identities and exercise dialectical tasks of local and global consciousness. Additionally, murga allows citizens to protest oppression, such as the military dictatorship from 1973-1985.

To show that murga discourse is associated with the decolonial project, this work relies on transnational feminism to explain current social order. Sociopolitical aspects of colonization outlast the colonial period and legacies of colonialism are present in dominant ideologies that shape the modern world: imperialism, colonialism – in the present, to describe current colonial

territories – neocolonialism, and neoliberalism. Colonization required contact, conquest, and colonization of the mind, to establish heteronormative discourses to inform social differences that restrict access to resources and knowledge. A sociopolitical movement that wishes to eliminate the violence of colonial legacies of the present must begin by decolonizing the mind to instill the possibility of realities alternative to coloniality, ideas erased during the process of colonization. The field of critical pedagogy supports the idea that sites of popular culture, like murga, can be spaces for pedagogy to fulfill the task of decolonizing the mind.

This work relies on methods of critical discourse analysis and ethnography to show that exposure to murga's hegemonic dissent instills critical thinking that can decolonize the mind, and public spaces have important sociopolitical meaning for working class neighborhoods. A review and analysis of three murga cuplés demonstrates that satirical dissent allows visibility of heteronormativity and provides fodder for open discussions about its negative aspects in society. The heart of murga is to reflect working class desires, and in a cyclical way, working class individuals utilize murga to understand themselves and their surroundings. Ethnographic data from community members who sustain tablados de barrio in public spaces illuminates the worth of the public realm.

The informants who participated in an oral history project for the Museum del Carnaval inform the present work with narratives about sociopolitical repercussions of not having a tablado de barrio. From these interviews, working class individuals capture the meaning and value of their own public spaces to defend the need for political and historical agency. Their opinions are supported by Arendt's definition of action in the public realm as the (re)production of politics and history. Colonization relied on a worldview where some the public realm was not open or available to some individuals. A project to decolonize legacies of colonization must

occur in public spaces, so that decolonizing the mind may serve as a political and historical endeavor.

This thesis raises further questions about murga's hegemonic dissent. As discussed in Chapter III, audience reception of the satirical discourse was not sought because it would result in quantitative data to show the rates in which individuals engaged in satirical complicity with the murga performance. But from an overview of Uruguayan policy, there is evidence that the nation gravitates towards progressive, counter-heteronormative sociopolitical tendencies. The historical and popular presence of murga in Montevideo tells that most people engage with murga the way it is intended – to enter into satirical complicity with the *cuplés*' counter-heteronormative dissent. What is not clear from this research, and would strengthen the understanding of the capacity of hegemonic dissent to undermine heteronormativity, is to observe how murga's hegemonic dissent leads individuals to take counter-heteronormative stances. For example, an individual that engages with the hegemonic dissent of the *cuplé* *Las Maestras* and concludes that traditional and/or positivist pedagogy is negative because it (re)produces a lack of agency for the child, who is the central object of nationhood, will certainly encounter a quotidian experience with positivist pedagogy. How does that individual negotiate heteronormativity in everyday life situations? What is at stake for the future of heteronormativity with increased visibility, and how does heteronormativity react to the challenge of hegemonic dissent? The same inquiry could extend outside of Montevideo, at least into its diaspora.

This thesis was written from within the Uruguayan diaspora in the United States. As I write about murga from the diaspora, I cannot ignore my own experiences. Besides cultural lessons that taught me to become Uruguayan from afar, murga also taught me hegemonic dissent. In my own experiences, this form of dissent has produced a variety of situations – and outcomes

– as I negotiate heteronormativity in the United States. Without more research about how the Uruguayan diaspora utilizes murga’s hegemonic dissent in the diaspora, we may not yet understand that murga may be a tool for surviving the tribulations of immigrant life. That research might reveal that murga’s hegemonic dissent creates interstices for decolonial futures beyond the tablados de barrio in Montevideo.

Appendix A, Map of Uruguay



Map from <http://www.mapadeuruguay.org/mapa-politico-de-uruguay/>
 Uruguay's population is just over 3.4 million, and the official language is Spanish.

Appendix B, La Milonga Nacional

Lyrics: Carlos Modernell

Murga: La Milonga Nacional

Carnaval: 1968

Translated by author, from: http://forexport.galeon.com/lm_milonreti68.htm

Fue en noches de carnavales
que escuchamos al pasar
la pregunta de aquel niño:
¿qué es una murga, Mamá?
Murga, murga es una golondrina
que en su romántico vuelo
barriletes de ilusión,
va recortando en el cielo.

Murga es el imán fraterno
que al pueblo atrae y hechiza
Murga es la eterna sonrisa
en los labios de un Pierrot.
Quijotesca bufonada
que se aplaude con cariño
y en la sonrisa de un niño
hace ofrenda su canción.
Murga son las mil esquinas
que atesoran su recuerdo
con un coro que en el cielo
por siempre quiere grabar.
La murga casi sin rima
del poeta que bohemio
tejió en alas de sus sueños
romances al Carnaval.
Murga, es pueblo, ingenio, risas
es "Milonga Nacional".

It was on a carnival night
that we heard in passing
the question from that child:
what is a murga, mother?
Murga, murga is a swallow
that in her romantic flight
trails of hope,
are cut through the sky.

Murga is the fraternal magnet
that puts the audience under a spell
Murga is the eternal smile
on the lips of the Pierrot.
Quixotic buffoonery
that is applauded with affection
and with the smile of a child
is the offering of the song.
Murga is the thousand street corners
that treasure their memories
with a chorus that in the sky
forever wants to record.
The murga is almost without rhyme
from the bohemian poet
that wove on its wings of dreams
romance for carnival.
Murga, it's the people, clever, laughter
it's "Milonga Nacional".

Appendix C, Schedule of Interviews

Tablado: Parque de los Fogones

Informants: Mabel Castel, Alfredo Burgués, and Daniel

Date: Friday, May 29, 2015

Recording: 1:41:21

Transcript WC: 12,902

Tablado: Punta de Rieles

Informants: Angélica “Kitty” Mello, Andrea Basso, Marion Márquez, and José Lemos

Date: Friday, June 5, 2015

Recording: 1:56:32

Transcript WC: 15,975

Tablado: Lavalleja

Informant: Alba Norte

Date: Friday, June 19, 2015

Recording: 45:32

Transcript WC: 5,644

Tablado: Escenario Juan Taranto (Las Torres)

Informants: Gutenberg Colina, María Luisa “Pocha” Pereira, Juan Taranto, y Tania Ocampo

Date: Thursday, June 26, 2015

Recording: 1:37:57

Transcript WC: 11,602

Tablado: Monte de la Francesa

Informant: Juan Luis González

Date: Friday, July 10, 2015

Recording: 1:39:34

Transcript WC: 14,681

Appendix D, IRB Approval

Kennesaw State University

Institutional Review Board

Exemption Request for Research with Human Participants

(Prior to submission of this form, review the IRB Exemption Screening Checklist at <http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/decision-tree.html>.)

1. Project Identification

Project Title:	<i>Tablado de Barrio: Capturing the Cultural Identity of Neighborhoods through Oral History</i>
Principal Investigator (PI):	Paola Garcia
PI Department:	Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
PI Phone:	404.407.0748; in Uruguay +598 2601 2393
PI Email:	pgarcia9@students.kennesaw.edu
KSU Co-Investigators:	none
Non-KSU Affiliated Co-Investigators:	Alejandro Rubbo, Community Relations Manager at Museo del Carnaval
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Kenneth Williamson
Faculty Advisor Department:	Dept. of Geography and Anthropology, Dept. of Interdisciplinary Studies
Faculty Advisor Phone:	470.578.2639
Faculty Advisor Email:	kwill254@kennesaw.edu
Proposed Study Dates:	May 24, 2015 – July 31, 2015
Name of External Funding Agency:	none
Funding Agency's Deadline:	

2. Mark each category describing the proposed research:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Category 1	Educational Purposes. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. Research is not FDA regulated and does not involve prisoners. Submit questionnaire(s), surveys and consent documents.
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Category 2	<p>Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, Public Observation. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. If research involves children as participants, procedures are limited to educational tests and observation of public behavior where investigators do not participate in the activities being observed. Research is not FDA regulated and does not involve prisoners. Submit questionnaire(s), surveys, and consent documents.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Category 3	<p>Elected or Public Officials. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category (2), if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter. Research is not FDA regulated and does not involve prisoners. Submit questionnaire(s), surveys and consent documents.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Category 4	<p>Research with Existing Data. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. Research is not FDA regulated and does not involve prisoners. No additional documentation needs to be submitted.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Category 5	<p>Public Benefit or Service Programs. Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of federal department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs. (This category may be used for federal programs only.)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Category 6	<p>Taste Tests. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the FDA or approved by the EPA or the FSIS of the USDA. The research does not involve prisoners as participants. Submit consent documents.</p>

3. Briefly describe the intent of the proposed research. **A long-standing tradition in Uruguayan *carnaval* has been nearly lost, one that the Museo del Carnaval hopes to revive through its public program since 2007, *Tablado de Barrio* (Neighborhood Stage). The *tablado* is an open stage constructed and decorated by members of a neighborhood for carnival performances (musical and theatrical) that last 40 days in the summer. The program *Tablado de Barrio* seeks to decentralize carnival from its current commercialized spaces back to local neighborhoods as was customary many decades ago to stimulate communal identity among different areas of the capital, Montevideo. The program is comprised of several workshops to work directly with people from neighborhoods who are interested in revitalizing this carnival tradition. Participation in this program has increased since it began; five participating neighborhoods in 2007, eight in 2011, and nine in 2012, 2013, and 2014. Traditionally, neighborhoods established an identity that distinguished from others and manifested through the decoration of the *tablado*. As new neighborhoods demonstrate interest in participating in the public program, there is not (currently) a historical record of this tradition from which to**

extract past representations and meanings for interested communities. Neighborhood histories are missing from the cultural archive of the Museum because the Tablados de Barrio was not documented ethnographically in its heyday before the military dictatorship (1973-1985). The Museo del Carnaval (in Montevideo, Uruguay) seeks to capture the unique identity of each neighborhood, as it exists in the collective memory of those who participated in this activity many decades ago. This history of Tablados de Barrio allows for the continuation of previous customs in neighborhoods where newer and less familiar generations may form cultural ties through time to resurrect a historic communal identity.

4. Describe how participants, data, and specimens will be selected. **Participants will be selected by Alejandro Rubbo at the Museo del Carnaval. Data will be collected through an ethnographic life history interview. The interview will be conducted in person in a public space or the participant's home and an audio recorder will be used to capture the interview. All audio recordings will be transcribed as part of this internship and become property of the Museo del Carnaval.**
5. Does the research involve deception? Yes No
6. Describe why research procedures will not cause a participant either physical or psychological discomfort or be perceived as harassment above and beyond what the person would experience in daily life. **The informants selected by Mr. Rubbo voluntarily express interest in participating in this research project and seek to share their community experience through ethnographic interview as a contribution to the museum archives. Sharing past experiences in hope of future changes can be a pleasant and gratifying experience, and these narratives may already be part of everyday conversations before, during, and after yearly carnival celebrations.**
7. Describe provisions to maintain confidentiality of data both during and after study completion. **Mr. Rubbo will make this decision independently of my participation in their ongoing project, as this is one segment of a larger museum outreach project confidentiality is not sought in this public archival project. The informants will be aware of this aspect by Mr. Rubbo.**

8. Describe provisions to protect privacy of participants (e.g., interviews will be conducted in a private area of classroom; individuals will not be publicly identified, etc.). **The nature of this project seeks to contribute oral history to publicly available museum archives. Protection of informant privacy is not sought for this project. The interviews will take place in public spaces or in the informants' home. The informants will be aware of this aspect by Mr. Rubbo.**

9. Will the research involve obtaining data through intervention or interaction with participants? (e.g., physical procedures, manipulations of participants or their environment, communication or interpersonal contact between researcher and participant, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, online surveys, etc.) Yes No

a. What age groups will be included? **The targeted group is adult, but Mr. Rubbo chooses the informants in Uruguay from a pool of neighborhoods affiliated with the museum. I understand the informants will most likely be in late adulthood based on their experiences of collaboration in neighborhood/community work before the 1970s.***

*Within the consent document, include a statement of age groups to be included in the study.

b. Describe the consent/assent process to be used. **The consent process is handled by Mr. Rubbo and the Museo del Carnaval; interview data is destined to become archival material for the museum.**

10. Will an online survey be utilized in this study? Yes * No

*If yes, use the Online Survey Cover Letter template at http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent_documents.html.

11. List all survey instruments to be used (pre-/post-tests, online surveys, interview questionnaires, focus group questionnaires, etc.). Submit these documents along with this form.

The schedule of interview questions will be provided to me by Mr. Rubbo. These questions are framed to guide a narrative about memories regarding Tablados de Barrio as it relates to communal identity. My internship at this museum is a small part of a larger ongoing project. The documents instructed to be submitted are not of my own property, but are documents authored and held by the museum.

Submit all survey instruments, consent documentation, etc., with this form to irb@kennesaw.edu. Be advised that if your study cannot be granted an exemption by the IRB, you may be directed to submit the IRB Approval Request form to assist the board with further review of your study. This will require additional processing and review time. Direct all questions to the IRB at (678) 797-2268 or irb@kennesaw.edu.



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Study 15-427: Tablado de Barrio: Capturing the Cultural Identity of Neighborhoods through Oral History

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 To: pgarcia9@students.kennesaw.edu
 Cc: irb@kennesaw.edu

Mon, Apr 20, 2015 at 6:53 PM

4/20/2015

Paola Garcia

RE: Your application dated 4/16/2015, Study #15-427: Tablado de Barrio: Capturing the Cultural Identity of Neighborhoods through Oral History

Dear Mr. Garcia:

Your application for the new study listed above has been administratively reviewed. This study qualifies as exempt from continuing review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) - educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observations. The consent procedures described in your application are in effect. You are free to conduct your study.

Please note that all proposed revisions to an exempt study require IRB review prior to implementation to ensure that the study continues to fall within an exempted category of research. A copy of revised documents with a description of planned changes should be submitted to irb@kennesaw.edu for review and approval by the IRB.

Thank you for keeping the board informed of your activities. Contact the IRB at irb@kennesaw.edu or at (470) 578-2268 if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.
 KSU Institutional Review Board Chair and Director

cc: kwill254@kennesaw.edu

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